

## Synopsis: Apprentice Christian and History of a Charism

Region XI – Fall Encounter: December 2021

By Gail Terrana

Prayer to the Holy Spirit:

*Come, Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your faithful and kindle in us the fire of Your love. Send forth Your Spirit and we shall be created... And You shall renew the face of the earth.*

*Let us pray:*

*O God, Who by the light of the Holy Spirit, instructs the hearts of the faithful, grant that by the same Holy Spirit, we may be truly wise and ever rejoice in His consolations, through Christ our Lord ... Amen.*

**Thank you** for your interest to study Eduardo Bonnín and the history of our Cursillo Movement! These two books: *An Apprentice Christian* and *History of a Charism* are a great start!

When I went to the World Congress of Ecclesial Movements in Rome back in 2006, there were 125 movements present in St. Peter's Square. We were told that movements need to study their charism in order to **live the charism** of their movement.

For **living the charism** of the movement is serving our Church.

And the way to **live the charism**, is to **know the charism**,

and to **know the charism**, we have to **study the charism**,

and to **study our charism** we need to **go to the founder** of the Movement.

We need to go to the **person who received the charism**.

Furthermore, we are also to study our founder's life, his family, his friends, and the history of our Movement.

This was evident when Fr. Fidel Gonzalez (Fernandez), a Professor of Church History in Rome told the Movements, and I quote: "*Moreover, the **personal temperaments** and the **circumstances of the life** of each founder (place of birth, teachers, education received, friends) have an influence on the way he experiences and enacts the charism of God.*"

[Charism and Movements in the History of the Church, Laity Today, Volume 4, p.74]

And Fr. Gianfranco Ghirlanda, a Vatican Canon Lawyer, stated "...*the spiritual doctrine proposed, and the spiritual practice enacted - is inseparably bound up with the **circumstances in which the movement arose and its history** as well as with the **life of its founder**.*"

[Fr, Gianfranco Ghirlanda, Professor at the Pontifical Gregorian University, "*Criteria of Ecclesiality for the recognition of movements by the diocesan bishop*." Laity Today, Volume 4, P. 206]

The book, "*An Apprentice Christian*" takes on this challenge of knowing the person of the founder and our Movements history.

## AN APPRENTICE CHRISTIAN

This book is a biography on the life of Eduardo – one on one, while he was living - It has great value in knowing about his life and the history of the movement.

I would like to start by highlighting a Pope Pius XII address which is part of Eduardo's testimony on how he was inspired to begin a Study of the Environments.

**On pages 72-74**, Eduardo explains how he came across a presentation from Pope Pius XII and he felt something, it moved him. He explains that the restlessness he felt when he read the Popes "Address" is what led him to begin a "Study of the Environment" which turned into a rollo, and which ultimately led to the creation of the Cursillo Movement.

There are 2 other places where he mentions the Pope Pius Address of 1940. One can be found in his book, "*My Spiritual Testament*", pages 28-30 where he goes into a little more detail, and the other is in his presentation entitled, *The Foundational Charism*, which Eduardo gave at a V World Encounter in Korea in 1997. This presentation can be found in the book, "*The Thinking of Eduardo Bonnín, Book 1*" p. 115, which was recently published in 2019.

What I want to point out that I think is of great significance is the **date** of the Pope's Address. Pope Pius XII Address is dated **February 6, 1940**. This date, February 6<sup>th</sup> is the exact same month and day that Eduardo passed away. Eduardo Bonnín died on **February 6<sup>th</sup>, 2008**. I don't think this is a coincidence, I believe this is providential. I love pointing out this fact.

Eduardo's answers to the questions give us insight to his life, his family and his friends. All of this is important to knowing the mentality of our founder. But also he answers some of the "whys" of our Cursillo and even our Cursillo weekend which is something everyone has an interest.

If anyone is familiar with the *Rector Guide, Step by Step*, you may know (or have heard) of the *Appendixes* that accompany it. And in *Appendix 8* there is a story entitled, "*The Skiing Story*". This story is read by the Rector after the Piety rollo. Well in this book, *An Apprentice Christian*, Eduardo retells the story on **pages 102 -103**. These Appendixes are new to us, but they have been a part of Cursillo in Mallorca from the beginning. Many cursillistas are now studying the *Rector's Guide* to try to understand the "why" of each story or anecdote.

It is important for us to know the why so that we do not eliminate something that is important to the purpose of Cursillo. We are discovering that the Cursillo is preferentially for the "faraway". We may not understand why a particular Story or Anecdote is read on the Cursillo, but it is important for us to take time to study it and try to understand.

I would like to highlight this importance by reading a letter from a new cursillista. It was sent to the Rector of a Men's Cursillo in Canada, [our friends in Canada have been studying the new Rector's Guide and started implementing it in 2018]. This new Cursillista happens to be a priest who was deeply touched by the Skiing Story with the story line, "*All this for me....*"

The letter reads....

*"I would say one of the profoundest moments of my Cursillo for me was a story that Gabriel Ferdinand, the rector, told, I think somewhat extemporaneously.*

[He thought it was off the cuff... So, he retells the story, thinking no one probably knew about it... So bear with me as I continue to read his letter...

*He told of a group of students who had travelled to Whistler during their Winter Break to ski. One day, late in the afternoon, as they were making their final descent a violent storm blew*

*up and they were forced to take cover in a cabin part way down the hill. As they settled in to wait out the storm it was discovered one of the girls was not with them. Her boyfriend, deeply alarmed, set out in the storm in an attempt to find her. He discovered her unconscious, somewhat off the track, having experienced a bad fall. He hoisted her onto his shoulder and carried her back to the cabin. Once safely back he told everyone what had happened. Surprisingly he had three reactions to his telling of his experience: some marveled in admiration at his courage, a second group listened and only heard bragging and self-focus.*

*“...But the young lady, having regained consciousness, and having heard the telling of the story could only utter, “All this for me?” ‘All this for me?’ Wow! ‘All this for me, Lord!’ The grace of that story stuck with me for the rest of the weekend. Following that talk our small group went to the chapel before the Blessed Sacrament and all I could think of was ‘All this for me, Lord?’ It stuck with me the following week. I kept mulling it over and over in my mind; ‘All this for me, Lord!’ I worked the story into my homily the following weekend as we were approaching Holy Week. Yes, indeed, All this for me! All this for each one of us. What a wonderful grace that I still savour! It is always fascinating where the Holy Spirit will strike and stick!”*

Isn't this amazing!! A priest was deeply affected by the story that is in Appendix 8 of the Rector's Guide. We may not understand why the story is important, or we might say "This story wasn't part of my weekend", but yet, as the priest has shared in his letter, it does have significance. Our continued study and our openness to accept what we are learning, will help us keep the Cursillo for what it was intended, and keep it in line with its foundational charism.

I also want to point out the *Presentation* at the beginning of the book, **page 13**. We may have a tendency to skip over it and go right to the main part of the book – the questions and answers. The *Presentation* is written by the author – the biographer writer, Suarez – He explains how St. Paul wanted to move outside of the religion of Judaism to reach others outside of Judasim. And St. Peter did not want to do this, but everyone was so intrigued by St. Paul's enthusiasm and conviction that, well we all know - the rest is history, as the author states.

I find it interesting that the author **compares Eduardo Bonín to St. Paul**. Is this similar to Eduardo's consistent emphasis on the "faraway" ...?? Those outside of Religion, on the fringes? And more importantly, it seems the author Suarez is also aware of Cursillo being the modern day "**crisitianismo**". Crisitianismo is the term that is used in referring to the Early Christians, the early Church.

This is a new word to our translations. We have **NOT** seen it in the English community – until now. There is no English word or translation to concisely convey the meaning, so this is another word that must remain Spanish.

For years, CRISTIANISMO was translated in English as "Christianity", but it is not the same thing in that it has a different meaning. CRISTIANISMO refers to the life of the Early Christians and the Early Church which Eduardo and many of the young men were studying in the 1940's.

CRISTIANISMO is a **form** of Christianity.  
It is the living content of what is Christian. It is Christian life.

Cristianismo is about an encounter. It is about a decision. The Acts of the Apostles is the first record of **Cristianismo**.

It is defined by Karl Adam, in *The How and the Why* as: “*The Cristianismo, past and future, is essentially an outpouring of the **Spirit; it is essentially the miracle of Pentecost.***”

And Eduardo says of the first five Cursillos in the *How and the Why*:

“... as was **already intended** - the luminous content of the “**Cristianismo**” era was captured in all its breadth and intensity by those who lived on the margins who were inflamed and filled with Christ in **a few days!**”

Cristianismo - This is what was intended !!

In the *Apprentice Christian* book, the word **Cristianismo** is used 14 times, however it was translated as Christianity.

Since we are discovering the significance of this word in the origins of the Cursillo Movement, I made a handout of where these 14 places are located where “cristianismo” was used in the book. I will show the handout at the end so you can write the word “cristianismo” right into your book.

I also want to add that you will see this word “**Cristianismo**” in the new **Lay Rollos** that are going to be printed. It appears multiple times (90 times!!!) So, you now have a “heads up”. **EXCITING!!**

[new Lay Rollos have September 30, 2021 printed on the bottom of each page.]

Moving on, in the *Apprentice Christian*, the author Suarez (who wants to know about the history of the Cursillos), brings up in his questions to Eduardo the name of Fr. Cesáreo Gil, a priest from Venezuela. It starts on page 71 and goes through p.75. Suarez references a particular Encyclopedia that contains 30 pages of the history of Cursillo all of which was written by Fr. Cesáreo Gil, then he questions some of the facts stated by Fr. Cesáreo.

Eduardo responds to one of the questions, “*Venezuela published more material about Cursillo than any other country, but their publications are disorienting because they have **nothing to do with the laity**. They have this thing about **changing** the foundational charism.” [P. 75]*

The author Suarez brings up a **letter**, which is going to lead to the next book. Suarez reads from a **letter dated May 3, 1997**, in which Fr. Cesáreo has written to Eduardo and is retelling the history of Cursillo as Fr. Cesáreo knows it. And Suarez wants to get Eduardo’s reaction to this history. This is significant because Fr. Cesáreo is the key person representing the World Cursillo Movement to the Vatican.

Eduardo’s response, “*I obviously do not want to argue, but sometimes I have thought that what would be most transparent, and true to the facts, would be to make public some of the correspondence that we exchanged during those years, regarding this topic.*”

So, what happens next? Eduardo followed through on this thought to make the history more transparent and decided to publish the letters –

And that is how we got this next book: History of a Charism

## HISTORY OF A CHARISM

This book is the publication of the letters between Eduardo Bonnín and Fr. Cesáreo Gil. Its purpose is to show with transparency the history of the Cursillos in Christianity.

I believe it is a cornerstone of the history of the movement and the foundational charism.

To summarize its importance, I would like to read from page 21. I think this gives us an idea of what we are going to discover about the history of the movement, its origins, and its struggles.

This is in Eduardo's own words,

### **READ FROM BOOK, p. 21**

*“Once again, the founders have to fight, as they have always done, to save the LAY focus of the movement. I am saying again that this means saving its foundational charism. The essential component is that it is LAY, and that its target is the faraway... this means making things easier for them, and simplifying it every way we can, it means knowing how to live in the world, in the place where God wants them to grow and develop, with their normal disposition, but one that is Christian. This intention is demanded by the foundational charism. What we propose is to defend, as we have always done, the irreducible core that has been **falsified from the beginning**. ... to always keep the cursillos with strict fidelity to its foundational charism, that for so long has been **kidnapped** and often **ignored**.”*

Surely these are strong words – falsified, kidnapped, ignored...

In this book, *History of a Charism*, we have Eduardo's own words on what is the foundational charism, how the Movement came to be. But through the letters it is apparent how he was treated by the Bishop and the clergy. And I say this not as an attack on clergy, this is the fact as it was in the 1940's and 50's. Other books on the history written by other authors show how **Eduardo was silenced, how he was ordered by the Bishop not to travel, not to meet in groups and other demands**. But Eduardo is a humble man, always obedient to his Bishop and the priests. From all I have read his attitude seems to be – the movement belongs to the Holy Spirit and the Holy Spirit will take care of it. But with all these questions on the history, he knew he had to leave us the truth before he passed away. The letters exchanged between himself and Fr. Cesáreo show transparency of the history.

Reading the book from front to back is difficult. There are several components to the book that are intertwined in the book. Eduardo was certain in how he wanted this book arranged. His focus was transparency and truth. So he mixed the letter exchanges among the various articles he was asked to write for the Magazine, Testimonio. Most likely to him, this was more discreet. So when I was working on this book, I had to abide by the order of the book as Mallorca printed it so that it would be according to Eduardo's wishes. However, I think there is a better way to order the reading of this book that will help our understanding.

First, let me further identify Fr. Cesáreo who was a friend of Eduardo and with whom the letters are exchanged. Fr. Cesáreo Gil was a priest in Venezuela who was influential in the Cursillo Movement in Latin America and was a key figure in bringing the history of the movement to the Vatican. He coordinated a widely distributed Spanish magazine called “Testimonio”, which contained many articles from leaders of Cursillo.

I would like to identify five separate components of the book:

1. Eduardo's own writing on the Foundational charism, the History of our Charism,
2. Letters between Eduardo Bonnín and Fr. Cesáreo Gil, each describing their view of Cursillo history and the charism of Cursillo. [unjustified margins]
3. Articles he wrote for Testimonio magazine, in Venezuela [justified margins]
4. Three Letters Eduardo notes on p. 17 written to the World Leaders of Cursillo from the Mallorcan Secretariat and Eduardo: Two regarding the Charism, the method and history, and one regarding the Update to the Fundamental Ideas.
5. Lastly, two letters from cursillistas that serve as the opposing views of what the charism of cursillo is – One who has not understood the message and the other who explains exactly what the Cursillo intends. This is Eduardo's way of comparing the Fundamental Ideas and the foundational charism through the life of cursillistas.

So, in having explained all this, I do have a recommendation on how to approach this book – what to read first, in what order. One of my friends, Margi Lash, from Rochester, told me she was having such a hard time reading this book. So I decided to write out a recommended approach to this book and I made a handout to share with you.

**SEE Handout or file:** [History of a Charism: Recommended Reading Handout](#)

### **Conclusion**

This is my sharing and reflection of these two books. I hope you will continue to study together about our founder, our history, and our charism. I truly believe that we need to share with each other to uncover the beauty of our charism. I do not think that one person will have all the answers. I believe the discovery comes through - our friendship and sharing - for that is the Cursillo way to live life.

I am grateful for your invitation to share with you today.

God bless you and De Colores!  
Gail Terrana

Now to the Hand-outs....

**History of a Charism Recommended Reading Handout**  
**Apprentice Christian Handout Cristianismo**