

Living the Fourth Day in Total Security

Presented by Amy Dang, National Vietnamese Coordinator, during the Region XI “Virtual” Encounter on June 11, 2022.

Prayer to the Holy Spirit

Come, Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your faithful. And kindle in them the fire of your love. Send forth your Spirit and they shall be created. And you shall renew the face of the earth.

Let us pray: O God, who instructed the hearts of the faithful by the light of the Holy Spirit, grant by the same Holy Spirit we may be truly wise and always rejoice in His consolation. Through Christ our Lord. Amen

Introduction

I would like to share with you today, how one could live the Fourth Day in total security. The Postcursillo is the 3rd phase of the movement where we live the Fourth Day which focuses on the Group Reunion and Ultreya. Both fulfill the need we have to share ourselves with others.

Eduardo Bonnin is quoted as saying: *“We have the Cursillo Weekend so that there will be Group Reunions.”* This statement clearly indicates that the Group Reunion is one of the important elements of the movement.

Eduardo’s primary focus was on *Christ, the Person, and the Method of friendship*; therefore, it is not surprising that we find all three within the Group Reunion. We have the persons, we have friendship, and we have Christ who assured us: *“for where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.”* (Mathew 18:20)

The Cursillo is not only a method that is applied during the three days of Cursillo to communicate the Good News of God’s love, but also to live a life in Christ in the place where He has placed us.

The best way of living a life that is stable, dynamic, sanctifying, and free is to live in friendship. Jesus Christ offers the world the relationship of friendship . . . how amazing is that! And He invites us to relate to one another as persons . . . in friendship . . . in imitation of Him.

Total Security

During the three days of Cursillo, we are reminded of the Lord’s promises to remain in His grace and testimonies are given to show us that it is possible to do so. In the last idea or rollo of the Cursillo, a Total Security of friendship is offered. This message guarantees the opportunity of living in Grace in the world during the Fourth Day because a life in grace is attractive and infectious; because people are important and because life is worth living. The content of this Total Security is presented by means of friendship within two essential elements: the personal dimension and the social dimension that people have. The Group Reunion focuses on the personal dimension while Ultreya centers on the social dimension.

The First Element of Total Security: The Group Reunion

The Method of Cursillo is based on this relationship of friendship to bring to life the essence and purpose of its Charism. This method is to foster a friendship so pure that it reaches great depths and acquires its most crucial dimension in the Group Reunion.

The Group Reunion, for this purpose and this motivation, becomes the nerve, the axis of the Postcursillo. It might even be called the “cornerstone” of the Cursillo Movement.

The Group Reunion, *with whom we want*, is the reunion of people through friendship.

Those who form the group usually:

- accept themselves as they are,
- understand that they can be more and be better, and
- they wish to journey in the company of friends.

The distance to travel in this journey, is between where I am now and where God wants me to be.

The Group Reunion is about accompanying and being accompanied. It is to journey through life considering the past, appreciating the present, and hopeful of the future. The group is the actual experience of the Communion of Saints.

It is where one can think out loud. There is no fear of being misunderstood or being judged because we know our friends will not betray our friendship.

The Group Reunion is friendship taken to the realm of the transcendent which produces grace, enabling the experience and sharing of what is fundamental to being a Christian.

The Group Reunion is sharing what each person lives in the normality of their life. The Reunion is for sharing what is lived from the love of God and the love of neighbor. (Mathew 22:37-39, The Great Commandment)

The Group Reunion is about sharing who I am, what I’ve done, and what I will do to be more Christian, more human. The world will improve when I improve and through personal contact, others will improve and create a world of friends who respond to the commandment: *Love one another!*

Saint Pope John Paul II reminds us, “*The most important task for a Christian is not so much to improve the world but to improve oneself*”. The Group Reunion is to place in common, every week, what each person lives separately in their environment, so that the others will truly listen, and take this into their life, because everything good, when shared, multiplies.

It is so simple and clear that this method has given good results in so many Cursillistas, that it should not be distorted with the good intentions of adapting and bringing it up to-date, nor should anything unnecessary be added.

The Group Reunion is for sharing what is lived from the love of God and the love of neighbor. Reunions are a method to be Church in the world. Being Church and being Christian is not a choice, a luxury, or an option, but a call to live our Baptismal promises through the conversion of one's heart and to bring the Good News of God's love to the person so that the purpose of Cursillo and the essential mission of the Church will be accomplished.

I would like to share with you my challenging journey with previous Group Reunions. My first Group Reunion was picked for me when I lived my Cursillo Weekend in 2008. I called this a "Club Group." We gathered once a month to do certain things. We read the bible and shared random things that came to mind. At least by the end of the meeting, we could proudly say we did it. We met the requirements of doing a group reunion. We had no purpose or direction; therefore, everyone slowly went their own separate ways. What happened to our friendship? I wondered!

The second time the group was formed, I called this group a "Social Group." We did better this time around, at least we shared common interests and lifestyles. We chose each other because our lifestyle aligned with each other's nicely. We were at a point in our lives where everyone was looking for something meaningful to do. We wanted to do something good, but our focus was still on ourselves and not what God wanted of us. We focused on doing Christian things but not on being a Christian. I chose them to be my friends because of our common interests and lifestyles but I did not live in such a way that would prompt them to choose me as their friend as well. I forgot my responsibility to help them move from where they were to where God wanted them to be. Slowly the group lost interest and again, we drifted away. There goes our friendship again, down the drain!

I continued to struggle and pray for an authentic Group Reunion. By the grace of God, I was granted a group of friends that shared the same spiritual ideal. I call this group a "Spiritual Group." We nurture our spiritual life by sharing in the 3 areas: piety, study, and action. We strive for a life of continuous conversion and sharing the gifts of our Christian faith. Through Christ, we accept each other with no judgement. I truly understand agape love, the love that is pure, genuine, sacrificial, and has no condition. Our call is to complement each other. We accept each other's differences and support each other in times of difficulty. When I do something wrong, they do not abandon me. When I do something right, they celebrate with me. My group reunion friends are individuals that I can trust. Somedays I don't feel like picking up my cross, but my group reunion motivates me to go forward. They share my turbulence and help me overcome my spiritual battles. We help each other journey in Christ and I grow spiritually each day because of my group reunion. We develop a true friendship that is centered around Christ. What a blessing!

The Second Element of Total Security: The Ultreya

From the time of the first Cursillo Weekend in Cala Figuera in 1944 to the time of the first numbered Cursillo in 1949 in San Honorato, Cursillistas were quite naturally able to meet and share because numbers were not yet large. The Group Reunion was formalized in 1949 when many more Cursillos were held to ensure *union with Christ and with the brothers*.

It was observed that the small group, while essential to the method, did not allow for the coming together of the larger community of Cursillistas. There was a need to keep in touch. A plan was devised to establish some weekly collective reunions open to all Cursillistas. The purpose was

simply to encourage one another and to journey together in a joyous atmosphere, knowing they had shared the same weekend experience. At this time the *reunion of the groups, the Ultreya*, was introduced as a vital part of the Cursillo method.

Ultreya was the greeting which pilgrims used to encourage each another on the way to St. James of Compostela. It was used as a term of encouragement and a promise to meet again.

In Cursillista terms, the Ultreya offers an invitation to go beyond oneself to meet others and build community. It is a call to keep going with our heads held high which is a sign of dignity and a full life. It is a call to not give up on the road of our lives no matter what the difficulties and to spread the joy of Christ to others.

Come on! Ultreya! March forward! These were the words of Saint Pope John Paul II to the Cursillistas at the World Ultreya in Rome in 2000.

Ultreya! Come on, it's not far now! This is the message we share when we meet at our Ultreyas:

- To encourage each other in faith,
- To share our lives in friendship,
- To live out Christianity within a community through a reunion,
- To support each other in following the normality of everyday life.

The format of the Ultreya flows from the overall purpose of the Cursillo Movement. This was the vision and mission of the Cursillo from the beginning – to find the best possible method of bringing about the conversion – to move the person from where they are to where they could be; from human to fully human; from alive to fully alive in recognition, acknowledgement, and acceptance of their identity and dignity as beloved children of God.

Cursillo accomplishes this:

- by supporting the progressive conversion of the person,
- by making possible the living and sharing of what is fundamental to being Christian, and
- by making possible the Christian structuring of society by sharing the Good News of God's love with others.

The purpose of the Ultreya lies in promoting what Eduardo Bonnín calls the social focus of Cursillo. We must try to know as many people as well as we can. It supports the Cursillo pillars of the person and friendship. The Ultreya is the gathering of the Group Reunions. The groups and their members' stream into the Ultreya for the same reason they go to the Group Reunions – to share what everyone and every group lives.

At Ultreya, each person must be valued. We must give each person the value he has and to do that we must know them better. When we go to the Ultreya as real people to encounter real people – that's when the journey with others begins. We simply want Christ in the other to shine – that's all. We should be open to listen about another's apostolic success or lack of success.

The Ultreya must be filled with trust and understanding. We go to Ultreya with this on our minds: What good things can I get from others and what can I give to others? What is my very best?

The climate of the Ultreya is the quality of contact or sharing among the groups. The Ultreya should be planned and supported by a School of Leaders. The leaders contribute to the climate because they have embraced the Cursillo method of joy and friendship. Eduardo Bonnín has referred to the leaders at an Ultreya as the spokes inside an umbrella – they are there but cannot be seen. The climate mirrors the degree of our conviction – that what we are living is true and that what we discovered in Cursillo is the truth. At the Ultreya one lives and shares the same climate as found on the Cursillo Weekend.

Friendship – “It is in the *witnessing environment* of the Ultreya, however, where those who have started their conversion process can meet and develop true friendships with other like-minded people on the journey” (Evangelization through Conversion – Eduardo Bonnín).

The authentic climate and sharing within the Ultreya, supports the focus of the Ultreya which is to motivate the pilgrim’s mentality of conversion through the sharing of experiences.

The Ultreya is to make Christianity the backbone of society – to be as the heart is to the person. The person is never separated from the circumstances of his life. Therefore, when Cursillo speaks of the ‘environment’ it wants to change, it does not mean the structures, or organizations, the climate or culture of any circumstance of life, but the person or persons within it.

“By cultivating and nurturing true interpersonal relationships, and the warmest of them is FRIENDSHIP, within all of life’s circumstances or environments, we create the vertebrae and the leavening, that is needed to move the Postcursillo of today to the Postcursillo of tomorrow when all things shall be restored to Christ and the Kingdom of God that is already with us will be revealed through friendship and love in all of its glory.” (Eduardo Bonnín – Evangelization through Conversion)

Have you ever been in an Ultreya where you feel like you don’t belong? As if, you might be judged? I have many times in my life. Since we do not have that many opportunities to frequently see each other, it is very important that the leaders create an environment to foster friendship before, during, and after the Ultreya. This is a foundation that we must lay down to create community bonding with each other so that we are able to listen with an open heart. Now, I have an opportunity to attend an authentic Ultreya that has this foundation where everyone shares the friendship within Christ. I feel very welcome. I see the love, support, and friendship from everyone. I feel appreciated by others. I can live true under my own skin because I feel accepted. I come to listen to their witness and echo with an open heart. I learn so much from their success and feel their pains. I apply what I learn from their witness to improve my own life in how I deal with my husband, my children, or anyone that God places in my path differently. I am consciously aware of other people’s suffering, and I seek to put other’s interests above my own.

In Closing

Living in Total Security through Group Reunion and Ultreya has helped me deepen my life of piety, study, and action. My relationship with Christ has grown. Knowledge of myself, Christ, and others in my life has grown through study, and my love for others is always part of my apostolic action.

Cursillos in Christianity involves the decision to follow Christ. It involves the conviction that if we follow Him, we will find true happiness. However, if this decision and conviction are not accompanied by perseverance, our enthusiasm may diminish.

The Group Reunion and Ultreya are two important supports to maintain our ongoing conversion and growth in the Fourth Day.

“The Group Reunion is the second moment in the Cursillos in Christianity. In it, the Cursillo becomes lasting, and Christianity becomes constant. Everything that is lived as a Christian should be lived together. The Group Reunion is only a means for living together the Christianity that each one lives or wants to live. The deepest form of living together is friendship. Therefore, the Group Reunion is friendship raised to the sphere of the Transcendental: friendship converted into permanent actual Grace”. (Eduardo Bonnín)

“The Ultreya is the place where the supernatural is lived out with absolute normality. That is where one goes to be and feel more Christian. It is the place where we learn consciously, simply, joyfully, pleasantly, and contagiously from others how to live in a Christian way, because it enables communication and the possibility to encounter Christ in our brothers and sisters. We can appreciate what Christ values in each one of us and we are able to learn that everyone has a place where God is glad to be present to give meaning, hope, joy, and encouragement to the act of living.” (Eduardo Bonnín)

Thank you for listening. May God bless you all. De Colores!!