

CURSILLO CONFERENCE, 2003

June 26 –29, 2003

Rothesay Collegiate, Rothesay, NB

Friday, June 27, 2003, 9h30 a.m.

Good Morning! **“To all..., beloved of God and called to holiness, grace and peace from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.” Romans, 1:7.** This is Saint Paul’s wish and I make it mine for you

Introduction.

Any gift from God is never understood in-depth from the first instant in a human life. It takes time, reflection and a good connection to God through the Holy Spirit as Jesus told us before leaving earth at the Last Supper. “When he comes however, being the Spirit of Truth, he will guide you to all truth. He will not speak of his own, but will speak only what he hears...” John 16:13. Let us ask the Holy Spirit to lead us into truth, His truth.

“Holy Lord, pour on us your Holy Spirit to fill our minds with You and our hearts with Your love. We believe that Cursillo is Your gift, lead us through your Spirit into the proper understanding of this valuable gift that has affected our lives and the world. Give us the extra gift of listening to your message, removing any barrier that would prevent us from reaching the truth. Amen.”

This Conference will be a success, as long as everyone accepts the invitation to join the journey. This is an invitation to study with us, to reflect with us and dialogue with us. Let the fire of better knowledge about Cursillo bring us, you and me, a renewed enthusiasm back to our diocesan Movements with the intention that what is presented at the Conference can become the basis for deeper study in our diocesan Schools. These annual Cursillo Conferences have not authoritative power to coerce, but are the sharing of some food for thought. As human persons, not to think is to condemn oneself to the state of remaining a child and not to grow. What a pity!

1. Leaders who think.

Many years ago, as a young student, I was touched deeply by a sentence from some author, I no longer remember who. It was this: “The world is in the hands of those who think.” What the world needs now are Leaders who think. What the Church needs now are Leaders who think and love. And Eduardo Bonnin, the Founder, said, “What the Cursillo needs, is Leaders who think.”

Why be a leader? Why think? Because Jesus told us: “You are the salt of the earth... You are the light of the world...” (Matt.5:13;14) Those who lead must think in order to give flavour to human life, to bring people out of their darkness.

What does it mean, “Leaders who think?” They are not only people who have ideas. They are not only people who have the ability to read and absorb ideas from books, But they are to be people who connect ideas with the meaning of life, with the meaning of their own life. They are to be people who connect with the ideas of others and with new visions of life in order to be able to cast a greater light on situations, on values. They are people who find more light in the shock of ideas and values to open new avenues and to be innovative in building a new world and the Kingdom of God. How do we know that leaders who are thinking are good leaders and whose thinking is on track?

When it can be seen that they are living what they are saying, as Jesus said: “It’s not enough to say, “Lord, Lord, to enter into heaven; one must do the will of my Father in heaven.” (Matt. 7:21), when they bear good fruit, (Matt.7:16), in the long term and in the general orientation of their lives, fruits of love, care and of help. When they are concerned about people and do all they can to build a world where each person will have their own place and be happy. Otherwise, they are not good leaders who think.

So it is more than finding ideas, playing with ideas, connecting ideas together, but because of new ideas and reflecting on them to have a better life, more enthusiasm to live and to help others so that they may live more and better. This calls for a time of silence and reflection on a regular basis for a clearer sense of purpose and determination to make a difference in this world now. Having ideas and nothing more is useless and worthless because we cannot operate at the level of the head, we must move out towards others from our hearts. Leaders who think and love are important people because they mould the world, they attract by the witness of their lives, they give joy because of their enthusiasm. That is the kind of leaders we are called to be.

The Cursillo needs more than a small elite body of thinkers in the Movement, it needs a great number of them, so that through their interaction, more light will shine, more depth will be achieved in understanding the Foundational Charism and will bring about the better world that Jesus dreamt of. Because I have acted on my own decision to think about the Foundational Charism, I have received enthusiasm, knowledge and a deep desire to share it. The quality of the Cursillo and its effectiveness is proportional to the quality of Cursillo Leaders who think. Truth goes hand in hand with humility and commitment to the truth. Last year there was a presentation with the same title as this. The Cursillo Movement is in desperate need of Leaders who think, it was true last year and it is still true this year. The lack of Leaders who think debilitates the life of Cursillo and jeopardizes its mission. The Leaders needed are those at the service of Jesus Christ and their brothers and sisters in the Cursillo, in humble dedication, away from power seeking and self-indulging domination, both of which destroy God’s gift.

One of the functions of the Officer’s Group is to study and reflect on all that is Cursillo, and since 1992, that study and reflection has been specifically to try to rediscover the origins, to find out what the Founder, Eduardo Bonnín, wanted to accomplish when he and his young friends brought life to this Movement which has now spread around the world. Cut off from its origins, Cursillo is no longer Cursillo, even though it retains the name. Separated from the origins the well runs dry and the Movement will not produce its intended fruits.

What we have discovered and shared in the years since then is known as the Foundational Charism. In sharing the fruit of our reflections, our aim is to give you, the Leaders, something to think about. It is not intended to give you the impression that all the good things that you have accomplished in your Movements over the years has not been tremendously effective in transforming your environments. We may be very effective, but we can always be better, as individuals and as Movements. We only ask that you listen, and think. In the words of Bonnin, “far better to know that you believe, than to believe that you know”.

2. What the journey has been

At past Conferences we have looked at information that we received from Mallorca after being invited there to attend the I Conversations of Cala Figuera. At this event, as many of you know, Leaders from around the world gathered to ‘Converse’ with each other, to dialogue and share together what is Cursillo. The Founder and the Mallorcan School of Leaders have come to the realization that although the Movement is spreading around the world, the Charism is in danger of being lost. As the Movement spreads, the tendency is to adapt and supposedly update it until in many places it is becoming something else. Canada has joined that journey and has continued to work closely with Mallorca since 1994. We invite you to be part of this exciting and joyful journey. It is work, but it is deeply fulfilling. What we have learned and have asked you to reflect upon were the following key aspects: person, liberty, love, friendship, conviction, sincerity, criteria, life, normality and joy. All these elements are part of the mentality of the Cursillo and each one of them has been presented as part of these annual Conferences since 1994.

3. Rediscovering the origins

What a wonderful memory it is to go back to Toronto, in January 1992, when I met Eduardo Bonnin for three days of ‘retreat’, to listen to the history of the origins and the spirit of the beginnings. It was like being part of the beginning of the Church as recounted in the Acts of the Apostles. The Holy Spirit was being made present through Eduardo’s enthusiasm and deep faith. Inside of me, a wave of joy swelled up and a great beam of light shone in my mind and suddenly I discovered a new image of Cursillo. I was like a new convert. I loved that new vision because it made complete sense to me. Before that, some parts of the puzzle were missing and I found them. Listening to Eduardo, I understood some of his comments: “Cursillo has yet to be tried”. I agreed, because the Charism is not fully grasped and lived. “What has been done is not wrong, but can always be better”. Take another look at the Why, because this is “it”. A lack of understanding of the “Why” will confuse the focus and gives no precise meaning to the how, therefore creating more confusion.

To date we (the officers) have looked back at the origins. It has never been the intention to look back with nostalgia trying to recapture something from another time but rather to understand the depth of our Movement and to find the most effective means for

all our Movements to reach their full potential. Understanding the Why of Cursillo negates the need for endless discussions about the How.

Last year, some of our leaders attended the II Conversations of Cala Figuera and in his presentation, the president of the Mallorca Movement had this to say. “The Foundational Charism being proclaimed today is not a solution which asks us to look backwards. Christ is the way, and Christians always walk ahead. However, we must remember that in order to get to a specific place, we must know where we started from and how far we have already walked.” What Canada is doing, is exactly what Mallorca and the world are doing. Examining our origins so that we might better understand where we are going and how to get there.

At last year’s conference we began the process of the next step of rediscovering the origins, we began to look at the weekend Rollos, to implement some of what we have learned and to give some kind of guidance to those Movements who are interested in finding ways to apply it. As you remember last year in Ottawa, we spent time on “Study of the Environments”, very often misunderstood. Try to study it because of its importance in the Cursillo. With this year’s theme, “Christianity in Action”, we continue to pursue the second step in our journey.

In order to do this we need Leaders who are willing to think. We are past the time when someone can stand at a podium and legislate what can and cannot be done. These Conferences are really gatherings of the national School of Leaders and what happens here this weekend is not for your ears only, you must be the messengers who can take it back to your Movements, be willing to share it and to encourage all your leaders to become those who think. The Movement will be healthy and thriving if many Leaders are those who think and who are not satisfied with what is because it has always been, but are willing to get together and work together.

4. We have looked at the mentality

The fundamental core of the Cursillo Movement is the School of Leaders and it is here that the Leaders in your dioceses will deepen not simply their understanding of Cursillo, but will in fact, deepen their understanding of the Gospel and the call on their lives as baptized Christians. The Cursillo Movement only provides a means, to help and support people to live out their vocation as Laypeople as Church in the world.

It’s method provides a way:

1. to make the conversion experienced on the 3 day weekend, ongoing and progressive, as all authentic conversion must be.
2. To support the work of changing the environments, one person at a time
3. To allow people to become the best that they can be
4. To allow them to bloom where God has placed them
5. To do it all as Laypeople in the world, being Christians in the marketplace of everyday life

5. The Founders thinking is embodied in the message of the weekend Rollos

Let me make a short remark, here we use the term “Founders” out of respect for Eduardo Bonnin but, historically, he is the Founder. His six young friends backed him up and were with him as a team. Eduardo’s humility created the term “Founders”, but the truth has also a right to be heard.

Sometimes it seems as if the message contained in the Rollos is perceived as a message only for the weekend. The message of the entire weekend is a blueprint for our lives as Christians. We are more truthfully Christians, than Cursillistas since Cursillo is a method to live the Gospel as Lay persons. The message is not specific to Cursillo. Too often the focus of the Rollos has been changed and adapted, we must ask ourselves, “does the message given in the Rollos reflect the foundational ideas?” There is a real need to study the weekend outlines used in Mallorca since the beginning and which are now available at the Cursillo Resource Centre in Montreal.

This weekend we will explore yet another of the Rollos and one which has lost its original focus to a very great extent. ‘Christianity in Action’. It is very important that we all understand that nothing is being changed, what is happening is a return to the origins, to the actual Rollos that are in use in Mallorca today where Cursillo flourishes as it has for almost 60 years. The focus we have known is very different. It will require Leaders who think to adjust to this.

There are some who have been expressing the desire for CCCC to become an authoritarian body. We are being asked to provide a manual of rules and regulations which say, This is Cursillo! This is the way it must be done. We are not an authoritative body, we do not have the answers. We have gone to the source which is the best thing we could do and now, we can only hope to be facing in the right direction. A good cook does not need a recipe book. He or she understands how the equipment works, understands how different foods work together and knows what he or she is trying to accomplish. It is the same with Cursillo Leaders. Being Leaders who think will help us all to develop a unity of criteria of: Conviction, Will, and Perseverance which will result in an authentic Cursillo Movement. Cursillo provides a method through which we learn to LIVE the Gospel in the everyday circumstances of our lives. One does not need a manual to know how to do this, one learns to live the Gospel, through Piety, Study and Action.

For those Leaders who think, all the information is already available but although it is simple, it can appear to be very deep and requires a commitment. To be a Leader who thinks, one needs a clear goal, a firm decision to know and a commitment to act in taking time to reflect. A Cursillo leader should think about what makes Cursillo and should absorb the Foundational Charism through reflecting on it. Otherwise, the authentic foundations of the Movement will be lacking. It is not enough to read a book or a document and think that we have the answers, in the same way that it is not enough to read the Gospel once and think that we know Jesus. The truths of the Charism are revealed over and over and after almost 30 years of in depth study, some of our Leaders are still learning and what we are learning is, that the Foundational Charism of the Cursillo leads us to the Gospel and doesn’t make us Cursillistas, it makes us Christians responding to the call of our baptism and the call of the Church.

All we can say to you is it is an exciting journey and we invite you to come with us.

De Colores!

Fr. Gaston Rioux, o.m.i Spiritual Advisor

June 27, 2003

For Personal Use Only