

## **CHALLENGES AND FUTURE OF THE CURSILLO MOVEMENT**

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#### **INTRODUCTION**

First of all, I want to welcome and thank you for being here, especially those who have come so far. I am very happy to share with all of you the Foundational Charism of the Cursillo.

It is an honour and a pleasure for me, as president of the Diocesan Secretariat of Cursillos of Mallorca, as a Cursillista and as a friend, to contribute through this encounter and to share a deep sense of this charismatic, mysterious, and at the same time, very simple Truth that Cursillo enjoys.

Today Mallorca is a community where dozens of women and men have lived the experience of Cursillo and have put into practice the liberating, evangelical message. These people have contributed greatly to ensure that the value of Mallorca is recognized in the history of the Movement, as a place where the Cursillos first started and where the Foundational Charism has become a reality. Mallorca is also an alive community, thanks to all those people who invested their youth and their maturity for the success of the Movement. A Movement that has brought contemporary people to spend three days close to Christ, three days close to friendship with Christ.

Although it is also true that we sometimes wondered why we make the effort, and maybe sometimes do not really know why are we dedicating our time to talking about Jesus when at the same time we have our own busy lives (I mean our work, family, friends and our personal spiritual development). But in spite of this we have continued to meet each other by going to the Ultreya, singing happily, sharing group dinners, and working in the Secretariat to see how our dreams that we spent so much time sowing in our hearts have come true. Today my approach to study has changed from just talking about it, to really working at it, in order to build up a piece of the world. Those we consider our friends are not demanding anything of us because now they trust in us. Cursillo helps us to see God become incarnated in people and Love for me now has a name: Luisa.<sup>1</sup>

I made my Cursillos when I was 15 (28 April 1987) and even then I realised that I was starting on a long, enduring journey. Today I am 30 and I realize that I have spent half my life on this journey and that my joy has matured. My joy during the I CONVERSACIONES<sup>2</sup> was the hope for the future. Cursillo had been able to help people, from all over the world, enabling them to feel loved by God, living with the presence of Jesus Christ in their lives, guiding as teachers and acting as witnesses so that they could find a meaning for their lives. We finally find what we are looking for through our behaviour. Because the meaning of our lives depends on how we manage our lives, bearing in mind that it was God who put us in this world and who waits for us at the end of our days.

Last night I woke up to go and search in my very full bookcases, for a book that would help me to find the best words to use to speak about God. After searching without finding anything that satisfied me, in order to be able to satisfy you, I realized that this was exactly who God is. I mean, the very fact of searching for something about God is God Himself. Because in the will to look for Him, God exists, and we look for Him because He is in us.. The great discovery is knowing that He is inside us and it is God who gives meaning to our lives.

But God is bigger than man, and He cannot be contained in man. To understand what I mean consider the following story:

A boy was on a beach digging a hole in the sand, and at the same time he was pouring water into the hole. Saint Agustín appeared and said to the boy: "What are you doing?" The boy replied: "I am putting the Mediterranean sea inside this hole." Saint Agustín said, "but can you not see that the sea does not fit in this hole?" And the boy answered: "and can you not see that the Holy Trinity does not fit in my head?"

<sup>1</sup> Luisa, at the time of the II Conversations was Jesus' fiancée, they were married five months later, in September, 2002.

<sup>2</sup> The I Conversations of Cala Figuera, often mentioned in articles in Fully Alive, took place in Mallorca in August of 1994

The Mediterranean sea would not fit in the hole, in the same way as God cannot fit in my head. But what is true is that a part of the Mediterranean sea, did fit in the hole, in the same way as we are a part of God.

#### THE CHALLENGES

The Challenges facing the Cursillo, if it is to achieve its objectives, are to help people find a sense for their lives and to show these people how they can find their answers and their happiness in the Gospel. We could say that if everybody would trust in God, the world would be so different.

God says: THOSE WHO TRUST IN ME, WILL LIVE FOREVER

But Trust is not anything that may be obtained by means of fear or by force.

I TRUST IN THE ONE I KNOW, AND WHO LOVES ME.

When we have religion without a personal encounter, an encounter which gives us self esteem, without encountering others which opens our eyes to reality, and without an encounter with God which improves our awareness, there may be two consequences:

- An atheism as an intelligent answer to a badly formulated religion for those who cannot live their faith in contradiction with their freedom of thought.
- The appearance of a religious neurosis or ecclesiasticism which is the result of the complex arrangement after so many years of blind obedience which has been the direction of our religious life. Our Church cannot be exclusively based on a union with the civil authorities anymore.

It is not the time for judging, nor for discrediting the role of the Church, which nevertheless continues giving recognition to some saints who arise from her. Now the main question is for us to become what we can be, but to reach that fullness, man must transcend his belief in his own superiority, to enter the dimension of his conscience, and his heart, to admit that his health, his salvation and his fulfillment are not something natural or spontaneous, which can be left to his instinct, for it requires acceptance on his part and provision of some measure of coexistence. It is easier for man to pray, to obey, to implore, than for him to enter within his own heart and encounter himself. Essentially, he is an unfinished being, the psychologist and the philosopher have said that man is the maker of himself. We hold within ourselves, the blueprint of our own development and potential.. I must know that I am the creator of myself. The Church cannot help me if I cannot help myself, and if I don't survive, in part, the Church also loses. So, Christianity doesn't add anything to man, but rather it teaches him to be himself. God is not the execution of religious obligations or moral teachings, but a search for life. To make this clear, think about the difference between; "Give mommy a kiss", or "I want to kiss mommy". I appreciate what I can choose in Freedom. What is appreciated and has worth is what is born of freedom. I will be a true Christian when it is my freedom which meets God.

The challenges of Cursillo in order for everybody to know and love Jesus are:

AT AN EXTERNAL LEVEL:

1. Contemporary people have lost their values due to revelations now known to modern man such as:
  - The philosophy of Descartes, that says that any truth that presents any doubt cannot be borne by the mind.
  - The Earth is not the centre of the Universe, as Copernicus and Galileo revealed to the world.
  - Darwin's theory about the human evolution.
  - Freud's theory that says that the person is the result of his or her unconscious instincts and his or her physiological reactions.

All these theories and revelations have provoked an intellectual atheism in most people.

Moral, social and religious values are essential elements to obtaining a well balanced personality.

That is why most people, especially young people, have many problems: Their parents have not passed these values on to them.

2. As a consequence of this fact, the second challenge of Cursillo is to face the ignorance and the indifference which our society shows towards God.

We live in a world where:

- Good men are no longer appreciated or well thought of.
- Rich people may succeed through the misfortune of others.
- The moon and the stars belong to the USA and hearts to the surgeons instead of to poets.
- Half the world justifies killing the other half, which is already dead because of resentment.
- Money destroys families.
- Most people live far away from God and consider death as a failure, because they have lost faith.
- This world promotes frivolous events in order to make people enjoy their lives, while they forget the way to their own happiness.

AND SO! THE ABSENCE OF GOD HAS LEFT THE WORLD WITHOUT LIGHT.

This dose of reality has to make us think because it is to this that we have to bring the message of God. People cannot live like this, with all this negativity. People need to construct a new world. Not from the militancy of an ecclesiastical structure, but by a change in our internal attitude and trusting again in the eternal values, for they are the solution to all problems.

Love is the best tool that man has to change the world. Not by preaching Christian ideology but by learning to love everything and everybody just as Jesus did. In my opinion, this is Cursillo, if it is not this, it is not Cursillo.

3. The third external challenge that we have is to find the way to improve the connection between the world and the Church. Contemporary people ask questions to which the Church does not respond, and the Church has answers that nobody is interested in, surely because they think they already have the answers. For many years the Church has educated us in obedience rather than in reflection. That is why many people suffer from a religion neurosis. Fanaticism is the usual answer to a Church of obedience. Obedience or reflection, we have to solve this in order to bring people back to the Church.

#### INTERNAL CHALLENGES

This level of challenge directly affects the leaders in the Cursillo. The Cursillo is what its leaders are.

1. The most dangerous although necessary challenge at an internal level is the adaptation of the Foundational Charism of the Cursillo. The Foundational Charism, theologically defined as a gift from God given to someone, not for their own benefit but to build up the community and recognised by the Church is not Eduardo Bonnín's caprice nor his desire to be a protagonist. Eduardo, is the secular leader, mentor of the foundational group, author of the first literature and of the majority of Rollos. He delighted the priests and bishops with his Cursillo project but without whom nevertheless, it would have ended up as his personal project.

The Foundational Charism is not an abstract reality to appeal only to Mallorca, the place where Cursillo was originated. The Foundational Charism has the essence, the finality and the style of the Method. The point of reference has to be not the holy misdeeds of those enthusiastic youths, but their spiritual strength and their approach to their contemporaries, always evangelical and for their good. Its objectives were, and still are, to bring people close to God through the Gospel, especially those who lived outside the structures of Catholic Action and religion. That is why the message was so well accepted.

The Cursillistas were not looking to make faith comfortable, they were apostles who wanted to bring people close to God, to take the Good News to those who were far from Him.

A man asked for reconciliation in confession and his life changed. He felt himself loved by God and through his behaviour he showed others the secret. This chemistry between God and man is the best evangelical tool. This reality, together with a new ideology, was the origin of Cursillo. It discarded all proselytism and imperialism, and the word conquer. In the same way that a man and woman are drawn together, God doesn't conquer people through actions, he draws them to Him through their hearts.

This way the Foundational Charism will be forever the light of Truth over the Cursillos in Christianity. In other words, those who may look for the Truth of Cursillo will finally find the Foundational Charism.

After travelling with Eduardo to many countries, seeing the wonderful things that God has brought about through Cursillo, I can understand the differences between the Latin-American Church and the European or Asiatic Church because each of them has a different reality. And I understand that Cursillo needs to be adapted in a different way in each country in order to address its special needs.

But we cannot forget that Cursillos started in Mallorca and from there they were extended to the rest of the world because of their evangelical essence, and because they used a universal language (the language of the heart). Cursillo intended to put a smile on the face of the people from all over the world when they prayed.

Cursillo, in its origins, intended to bring joy and enthusiasm to people without any hidden pretension, through freedom and from the pride of being a Christian.

2. It is because of that, that the second internal challenge is to bring about world wide unity of criteria in order to consolidate the Cursillos in Christianity.

The point is not to have the same thinking, but the fact of having the same criteria, in order to consolidate the strengths of Cursillo.

To achieve this we first need to unite our hearts so that then we will be able to unite our ideas and therefore our legacy.

We want Cursillo to be the voice of Christ to the world.

3. Lastly it is the challenge of creating new generations of "Leaders" and the challenge of attracting more young people to Cursillo in order to guarantee the heterogeneous nature of the Movement and this way guarantee the future of Cursillo.

We do not want to train people to be teachers, but to look for teachers who will be witnesses.

## THE FUTURE

All those ideas which I consider to be the current challenges facing the Cursillo Movement, lead me to the theory of TOYNBEE<sup>3</sup> regarding challenges. Toynbee says that challenges stimulate the strengths that help cultures to grow. So challenges are necessary to allow this growth, and all challenges that appear must be overcome or the cultures will die or disappear.

On the other hand, overcoming these challenges helps us to realize the strengths we have. The cultural and social climate in which we are living is a challenge to the development of Christianity. The lack of new generations of leaders, the absence of young people, the lack of unity in the Cursillo criteria, and the omission of the Foundational Charism could result in the disappearance of Cursillo or in it emerging with revised personal, intellectual or spiritual strengths.

From my own point of view I think that, because man is bigger than his thoughts and bigger than his situation, the leaders of Cursillo will find within themselves, new strengths in order to face these challenges.

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<sup>3</sup> A Study of History, Arnold Toynbee (1934-1961)

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.

Christ is not merely a direction to move towards, He is a constant presence in our lives, because He was resurrected. This makes our current reality important and determines our behaviour.

The future of Cursillo must not evolve in order to achieve a victory but is a revolution of our own conscience. Christ is not a revolutionary of the structures or organisations but a revolutionary of consciences.

The future is not something that we must wait for, but something that we must build. And the future can only be built by what takes place within people. Nobody can save anybody else. The future is built when man is aware of himself. When I become aware of the mysterious Nature of God, which always reminds us of the birth of a child, making an effort to try to understand God, I enable God to come close to me and I realise that things do not happen by coincidence.

Then it makes sense that God is love, because love is a gift given as a consequence of our right to freedom. What a gesture from God, to give me the freedom to choose! Because it is only then when I understand the sense of fidelity, it is only then that I receive wisdom, only then when I connect with the mystery and when I live, thanks to the confidence instilled in me by God.

But to achieve and feel this happiness I have had to discover God, who was hidden in all the basic things of my life, in all those seemingly unimportant things. But when I awaken and become aware again of the origin of everything I discover that life has meaning and I accept the partnership with the eternal. Thanks be to God!

While the disciples on the road to "Emmaus" were talking about the apparent failure brought about by Christ's death, He appeared to them although nobody recognised Him. He explained to them what they should believe, and when He finished talking, He tried to leave them, as a gesture of His entire devotion and their freedom, but all the disciples asked Him to remain and finally He was recognised when He shared bread with them at the evening meal. But before that, God had already respected the freedom He had given us as humans.

My good news is that Christ has risen and I feel compelled to share with you the Truth that God is a silent voice inside us. A voice that sustains the meaning of our life and the secret of our happiness. A voice that suffers when we show our indifference.

From my experience in Cursillo I feel a kind of wonder inside me, because I know that this life was not given to me only to destroy me, and because it always puts my expectations behind what I am looking for. This is the trust that comes from my faith, as Joan Baez said in her song: "Thanks for this life that has given me so much."

The glory of God and the fullness of the Cursillo lie in the words: DO NOT BE AFRAID, BECAUSE I WILL BE WITH YOU EVERYDAY UNTIL THE END OF TIME...Come Holy Spirit...

We have lived through bad times, but now is the moment we have to recover for Cursillo the general ideas of the Gospel, to let one who is lost recover the smile he has towards the Love that brought him into this world.

If your motivation is friendship in Christ  
Who is risen and lives inside you  
and because of that you try to understand the persons close to you  
that will be for all time A CURSILLO IN CHRISTIANITY.

Thank you Eduardo for showing me all these things. Thank you for giving me your loyal friendship. Thank you for being a model of humility and perseverance that has sustained me in all this.

Thanks to so many friends, who by your presence, support, and warmth, I have come to a realisation of what we are doing in Mallorca, and which you, in contrast to the rest of the world, have taken and made known everywhere. God does not just exist, God is and has the name of all of us.

Thank you to my Lui for having sacrificed part of the time needed to prepare our wedding, to these II CONVERSATIONS, but which will serve to enrich our life together.

Thank you all of you

I wish you all happiness

De Colores to all of you

Jesus Valls

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