

FRIENDSHIP IN THE PRECURSILLO

Source: National Cursillo Center Mailing – April 2013

The method known as Cursillos in Christianity approaches the conversion of the person in three distinct phases, which we call Precursillo, Cursillo, and Postcursillo. In the Precursillo phase we try to identify, befriend, and then help the person who is *searching* for that *something* that he identifies as his happiness or his fulfillment, or his ideal, and that we know is really *somebody* – Christ! In doing so we broaden and accelerate his search and direct it towards the three essential encounters.

Cursillos in Christianity is defined as a movement, that by means of a unique *method of friendship*, seeks, from within the Church, that the realities of Christian life might be lived in the uniqueness, the originality, and the creativity of each person. The word method comes from two Greek words - *meta* (beyond) and *odos* (path), and literally means a path to go beyond. In its original meaning, this word implies that the path leads to a place. Therefore, the method, if understood and lived, is the path the person follows to go beyond from where he is to where God wants him to be.

The method of Cursillo, the path it follows to achieve its purpose, is the friendship between people. The method consists in making friends, being friends, and making those friends, friends of Christ. Cursillo seeks an effective approach to reach the person, especially men and women who believe they have no faith in Jesus Christ or who don't know if they have faith. It is an effective approach to those places where these men and women live their lives so that in their "place" they might hear the Good News that God loves them.

Precursillo corresponds to the sphere of our environment or of others. Precursillo involves a process of selection and preparation with the holy intention that the labor will produce a good and bountiful harvest. A good and abundant harvest depends, first of all, on God's plans and the freedom of the person. But the work of the sower is of crucial importance. The sower has to prepare the ground and take care of the seed. The seed will produce fruit if it falls on fertile ground.

When speaking of Precursillo, we normally think of those people who can, who should, or who should not live the experience of Cursillo. But the first point of reflection in Precursillo is directed to those who invite others to live the Cursillo experience and the group of leaders who will serve in the Cursillo. The witness of those who invite and the work of the leaders are like that of the sower. The witness of the sponsors and the preparation of the leaders who organize the Cursillo are extremely important in the Precursillo.

In the Gospel of John, we read about Philip introducing his friend Nathanael to Jesus. The apostle Philip, having been invited by Jesus to friendship and discipleship (John 1:43) and aware of his friend Nathanael's expectation of the Messiah, excitedly declared, "We have found the one Moses spoke of . . ." (John 1:45). In response to Nathanael's reaction, the undeterred Philip invites him to "Come and see" (John 1:46). Jesus'

invitation to friendship and discipleship was gaining momentum. Jesus loved them as they were, but called them, through friendship to be more! Jesus' communion with the Father was bearing fruit as he "studies his environment", his "moveable square meter" in selecting, calling, and preparing his "candidates". He then empowered them (and us) to do likewise.

In Cursillo, we understand that it is absolutely necessary to prepare the candidate, our friend, with a view toward Postcursillo. There is no better preparation and attraction for the candidates than a personal and authentic witness of our Fourth Day. One of the most effective means employed by the Church and Cursillo for sharing the Good News that God in Christ loves us is through Personal Contact and an Authentic Witness of Life.

Pope Paul VI, in his Apostolic Exhortation "On Evangelization in the Modern World", speaks about Indispensable Personal Contact, #46 – The person-to-person method for transmitting the Good News remains valid and important. He also speaks about Authentic Witness of Life, #76 – The world thirsts for authenticity. All lay people who are conscious of their evangelizing role in the service of their Church, or in the midst of society and the world are reminded that our evangelizing zeal must spring from true holiness of life.

The Cursillo is a specific and concrete form of the prophetic mission of the Church, along the lines of *kerygma*. In each of its phases, and in the Cursillo Movement as a whole, *kerygma* is the key to everything: message, method, style, witness, and commitment. An announcement that must be proclaimed by witnesses - the conviction with which the proclamation is made must be conveyed in terms of real life. The proclamation is carried out by "testimony of life," which is "the radiation of faith, hope, and charity" (Lumen Gentium, 31). Every *kerygmatic* announcement tends directly and immediately to ignite the desire for a change permeating everything - one's principles, one's behavior, one's whole life.

In order to improve the effectiveness of the Precursillo, which in turn should improve Postcursillo, sponsors must be informed about the important role they have. The School of Leaders and Secretariat must engage in personal contact with the sponsors through diocesan workshops. A workshop for sponsors is available to all dioceses by contacting your respective regional coordinator.

As a sponsor and friend, it is important to ensure that the candidate is selected and prepared through "friendship" which comes by way of personal contact. If true friendship is established in the Precursillo, it will overflow into the Postcursillo and therefore the sponsor will want to *accompany* his friend during his Fourth Day. The sponsor should see the candidate as a person, the image and likeness of God, and not just a number for the weekend. The process of *make a friend, be a friend and bring your friend to Christ* is equally important in getting to know the person. This phrase is often misunderstood as make a friend, be a friend, and bring your friend to Cursillo. As Cursillistas, we understand that we don't have to go far to evangelize; we can evangelize from where we are – in the environment where God has placed us; in our immediate movable square meter (environment) at this exact moment.

All three phases of the Cursillo Movement developed in order to promote and facilitate friendship, by means of the three encounters. A successful Precursillo implies a healthy Postcursillo. The accompaniment in friendship does not end with the three day Cursillo. Otherwise, it would constitute proof that the friendship was superficial. Using friendships in order to increase the “body count” of those whom one sponsors would undermine and devalue the quality of the friendship. Friendship is a journey, which must evolve naturally. There is no timetable for friendship – it may take years to “bear fruit”.

It is necessary to keep in mind that Palanca is equally important for Precursillo (and Postcursillo) as it is for the three day Cursillo. We are called to fast, pray, and sacrifice for the candidate and for our willingness to accompany the person in sincere Christian friendship.

The Precursillo should not be the proclamation of the Good News as a theory. The objective of the Precursillo is not to “take” someone to a Cursillo, but to bring someone to “know” Jesus Christ.

To be a person is to wish to be oneself and to be oneself is to know that life has finality, a sense, a reason to be and only Christ who is the Way, the Truth and the Life is the total answer to this reality. Wherever mankind progresses, if he does not progress in the same direction as Christ, who is the WAY, the light of TRUTH and the dynamism of his LIFE, then mankind will not evolve. To progress, it is necessary that men have the “why”, a reason, that it is credible, possible, true, human, fraternal, attractive, fascinating, enlightening . . . capable of making sense of the fact of existence, living . . . not for something but for SOMEBODY, because whatever we do, He has loved us first.

In conclusion, the most important thing to understand is that our friendship with Jesus must be visible in our friendship with others. It is this kind of friendship that has the creative power necessary to transform the world as Christian men and women acting as leaven in their environments. This is without doubt possible if we make the decision to begin with ourselves.

De Colores!