

Dangers in Cursillo

Introduction

Let us begin by reviewing the essence and purpose of Cursillo that were introduced this weekend. The *essence* is Christ, the person and friendship. The *purpose* is to communicate the Good News of God's love to the person and to facilitate the living of what is fundamental to being Christian. The *mentality* consists of a living proclamation of the best news of the best reality that God in Christ loves us communicated through the best means, which is friendship. This is what we are striving to accomplish. Are we there yet?

The Cursillo Movement in the world has been truly blessed. As we know it has at times been a struggle to keep the experience of Cursillo effective and authentic. Have any of us really experienced a Cursillo in its true form? What would it be like? Can we move toward this vision and eliminate the Dangers in Cursillo or do we want to maintain status quo?

Each of us have had our own experience of Cursillo and we can, in good faith, say it has enhanced our spiritual life and brought us closer to Christ. It is time for us to move forward and with a deep commitment and enthusiasm continue to study the Movement's Charism and the roots of Cursillo.

Cursillo is centered on its Charism. A Charism is an extraordinary gift of the Holy Spirit given to a believer for the good of the entire Church. Cursillos in Christianity is a gift from the Holy Spirit to the person of Eduardo Bonnín. Eduardo, being a faithful and trustworthy steward of this gift, passed it on to us, the Church.

In our study of the Charism, we have come to discover that the person is the most important aspect of our movement. During the Three-Day Cursillo there needs to be a personal encounter between each person and Christ. In this encounter with Christ and His grace, the person discovers that life has meaning. We have discovered that as a person, we are able to love and be loved, to live life to the fullest, to seek friendship, to make interesting discoveries, and to know the purpose of our life.

The Three-Day Cursillo is a place for the person to know themselves, a place where he can listen to another person, get to know each other, understand each other, value and respect and learn to love one another. The Cursillo accomplishes this in a normal manner and it offers methods so that this encounter between persons might transform itself into friendship. Friendship with self, friendship with God, and friendship with others.

We must be careful of what can happen when we lose sight of Cursillos' intended purpose. In the face of our troubled world, Cursillo is one very effective way that we can

bring the joy of the Gospel into people's lives and help them to know that God loves them. In Cursillo, we have come to realize the importance of safeguarding the simplicity, integrity, and Charism of the Movement. This responsibility is shared by all Cursillo Leaders at the Diocesan, Regional, National and World level.

History has proven that everything in life is susceptible to change. When something is modified or altered, the result will be a variation of the original image or intent. The Cursillo Movement is no exception. The purpose and method of Cursillo can be altered and become distorted if we allow it.

Over the years some people have used Cursillo for their own purposes or agendas. Some changed it to benefit their own ministries or apostolates. Some people have used Cursillo to build up their existing organization, parish work or ministry. Many had different attitudes, opinions and approaches to what the Cursillo should be, and some added frills to make it more attractive or more impressive.

Therefore, it is important to talk about some of the dangers and obstacles we've encountered as we live and serve in the Cursillo Movement. This Rollo will provide an overview of some dangers that can complicate things and cause us to move away from the true purpose and method of Cursillo.

1st Danger is Inflation – This can occur when the number of Three-Day Cursillos held in a diocese is not in proportion to the number of Cursillistas who can be absorbed into the Postcursillo.

Sometimes we focus on building up the movement and forget about the person. All our focus is on the Three-Day Cursillo. The weekend is exciting, joyful, and life-changing, but with no follow-up it becomes a one-time event with nothing to sustain, encourage, and support the Cursillista in the days to come. We can have many new Cursillistas, but if there is no Group Reunion or Ultreya for them, it will be impossible for these Cursillistas to find their own way, and they will not feel at ease. Then when they find it hard to live in ordinary life what they have experienced in Cursillo, they will lose interest and feel they were deceived.

It has frequently happened in Cursillo that we give more attention to what triggers the Three-Day Cursillo than to the ongoing friendship with Christ and the daily normality of life in the Postcursillo. In other words, we tend to prefer a "spectacular Christianity" rather than focusing on what is fundamental to being Christian.

As a result of the weakness of the structure, we end up not fully understanding the Movement for lack of leadership or we end up applying the Movement in such a way that Cursillo is not attractive to the person. The initial encounter with Christ is given much importance but the progressive friendship with Him and the importance of following Christ is not stressed.

There are three points that need to be emphasized concerning this danger:

1. The diocesan leadership should not schedule Three-Day Cursillos if an active Christianity in Action, a Postcursillo, capable of integrating new Cursillistas is not available.
2. The diocesan leadership must ensure the new Cursillistas from the previous Cursillos have been integrated into Group Reunions.
3. The diocesan leadership should realize that the role of the team members, to follow-up and accompany the new Cursillistas, has just begun at the Closing.

2nd Danger is Specialization – This can occur when Three-Day Cursillos are held for specific people or groups.

Another temptation into which it is very easy to fall is that of specialization. When Three-Day Cursillos are planned for the youth, medical personnel, military personnel, the media, law enforcement, etc. This is far removed from the very thing Cursillo is trying to accomplish. Cursillo does not target a certain type of person or environment to evangelize because it is contrary to its Charism.

The awareness and experience of baptism enables a consistent and growing Christianity in the person. The important thing is not that only the good people grow in their faith or Christian living, but that the Good News of God's love be inserted in the environment.

There are two points that need to be emphasized concerning this danger:

1. Avoid focusing on areas that normally belong to other groups, organizations, etc.
2. Avoid offering specialized Three-Day Cursillos.
3. Focus on diversity.

3rd Danger is Organization – Cursillos in Christianity is a Movement, not an organization.

Another dangerous mistake is to think of Cursillo as an organization; therefore, arranging everything as though it is an organization. Cursillo Secretariats and Schools of Leaders have only a minimum of structure so that they do not become an organization, but yet, assures and facilitates the permanency and continuity of what has been experienced in the Three-Day Cursillo.

An attitude that comes forward from time to time is the criticism that the Cursillo has been around for a long time and needs to be modernized. Perhaps that perspective has not taken into consideration the fact that the Cursillo Movement is grounded in the Foundational Charism, which is a gift from the Holy Spirit.

Here are some ideas to consider concerning Organization:

- Because Cursillo is not an organization, the Secretariat cannot give orders to Cursillistas, nor should anyone else give orders.

- Because Cursillo is not an organization, the Secretariat has no authority over Cursillistas.
- Because Cursillo is not an organization, the Secretariat can decide where the Ultreya will be held but cannot force anyone to attend.
- Because Cursillo is not an organization, Group Reunions can exist with those who want to be a part of them, but no one should be forced to be in any of them.
- Groups, Ultreyas, and the School of Leaders cannot appear to be like an organization to impose commitments.
- Too much organization will choke the spirit of Cursillo.

4th Danger is Cursillism – This can occur when we are overvaluing the Cursillo.

Some think that Cursillo is the “be all and end all” of Christian life. This strong, but misguided affection and attraction makes people overestimate the method, sometimes to the exclusion of everything else. Cursillo is one of many Movements in the Church.

While Cursillos’ purpose and method are unique, it is not the only movement in the Church that evangelizes. We have to remember, value and befriend other ecclesial movements, ministries, and associations.

1. Cursillism is placing more emphasis on the technique, method, and style of Cursillo rather than on the evangelical, theological and psychological content.
2. Cursillism is believing that the only means for discovering and living what is fundamental to being Christian is Cursillo as if we had an exclusive patent for salvation or as if Cursillo were the depository of the Truth.
3. Cursillism is an undervaluation of other diverse realities of the Church such as parish ministries, associations, organizations, etc. and the lack of collaboration, dialogue, and friendship with these groups.
4. Cursillism is wanting to live Christianity my way and forgetting about the ecclesial community.
5. Cursillism is attempting to remove Cursillo of its indispensable union with the hierarchy.
6. Cursillism is placing all the focus on the Three-Day Cursillo and forgetting the perennial Fourth Day of the Postcursillo.

5th Danger is Parochialism – This can occur when we believe Cursillo is a parish-based Movement rather than a diocesan-based Movement.

Cursillos are not meant to make people go to their own parish to work. Sometimes Cursillistas come off the weekend looking for outlets for their service and may decide to work in a parish ministry. There is nothing wrong in that; however, we need to be mindful that we need to go out into the world, to the places where the clergy cannot go

due to their parish responsibilities.

Cursillistas will serve Christ and His Church in the place where He has called them – the idea of *bloom where you are planted*. Cursillo tries to Christianize the world by keeping all the relationships already established with other people in their environments in order to give them a Christian meaning. These relationships are not always in their own parish. The apostolate is essential and necessary in our own environment where we are at this exact moment!

The following quote is from *Cursillos' Contribution in the Renewal of the Parish* by Eduardo Bonnín. “With respect to the recruitment of Cursillistas, especially those who have recently lived their Cursillo, by certain pastors, in order to incorporate them into various tasks or areas of specific parochial apostolates, such as catechism, social work, care for the sick and other ministries, I consider that requirements such as these in and of themselves will not constitute in progress, for the Cursillista in question, in being Christian, above all when such an incardination in new ecclesial service will take time from their basic Christian action within their daily lives that gives witness to Christ in the place where God has planted them”.

6th Danger is Clericalism – This can occur when the clergy interfere with the role of the laity.

The Cursillo Movement is a Lay Movement, although it is important that the clergy and laity work side-by-side, each with their distinct role to allow the tree of Cursillo to bear much fruit for the Lord. It also keeps the Movement solid and strong in a relationship with the Church, its hierarchy, and its mission. Difficulties can arise when the clergy interfere with the role of laity. Make sure your Spiritual Advisor has the current edition of the Spiritual Advisor's Manual.

Difficulties also arise when the laity refuses to take responsibility for their role and expect the clergy to make all the decisions. These are indicators of not respecting each other's roles. The difficulty now becomes roles vs. relationships. The best solution for avoiding clericalism is to keep the roles distinct but complementary. Friendship, love, humility, and charity in these relationships can be extremely important when it comes to respecting each other's role.

7th Danger is Secularism – This can occur when the laity do not want to work with the clergy.

Secularism happens:

1. when an attempt is made to do without the role of the clergy.
2. when a dialogue or friendship with the clergy is intentionally not established.
3. when the laity assumes the role of the Spiritual Advisor.
4. when it is believed that Cursillo is only the work of the laity.

In other words, the role of the clergy is avoided or undervalued. In some cases, the laity may try to assume the functions of the clergy. Or, there may be an overemphasis placed on Cursillo as a purely Lay Movement, ignoring the vital relationship Cursillo has with the hierarchy of the Church.

8th Danger is Angelism – The temptation of pride.

Angelism happens when we focus all our attention on our own spiritual life and needs without believing in the power of God and not taking the Good News and the love of God to our family, neighborhood, workplace, and other areas of our life. It means not to believe in the power of the promises of Christ for mankind. Angelism can inflate the ego and can result in self-centeredness rather than being Christ-centered.

We need to remember the love and power of God goes into action when man believes and has faith. A living faith is a transforming energy directed toward the world. We need to be open to the truth of the Gospel and become strengthened within, then we become able to influence others and form Christian life in our environments.

9th Danger is Temporalism – This can occur when we want to do things our way.

In this view, we do things our way. We plan our evangelizing actions according to our personal views, preferences, and criteria.

Temporalism happens when regardless of our circumstances in life, contact and friendship with Christ, we believe the salvation of the world is in our hands. It is when we decide that our actions and doings are self-sufficient and therefore, keep doing things without being Christian. This is merely like a display of fireworks, bright and colorful, but with nothing to hold on to at the end of the show but ash. Being Christian is to live Christ.

Living in the state of Grace, loving God and our neighbor, is the root and the source of living what is fundamental to being Christian. Moving away from this basic truth or refusing to live according to this fact, makes everything worthless and inconsistent. When there is no love for God and for our neighbor, nothing is done as a Christian, regardless of how many prayers are being recited or how much action we are doing. It is senseless doing without being.

10th Danger is Stagnation – This can occur when there is a lack of stimulation and study by the leadership.

When we reach a point that we feel we know it all, we are in trouble. In many places we have been doing things over and over in the same way, except the Cursillo way. The mindset is, *if it isn't broke, don't fix it*. The Movement, therefore, becomes stagnant and inflexible.

We need to take the initiative to study the Movement. Today there are more Cursillo

books available in English thanks to the work and service by volunteers who are assisting F.E.B.A. (Eduardo Bonnín Foundation) in Mallorca to translate the Founder's books and writings to English. The newest books are *The Study of the Charism*, *Eduardo Bonnín*, *An Apprentice Christian*, and *Cursillo History and Memories*. Every School of Leaders should be studying these books. Our leaders need to read and study the Cursillo literature.

It is only when Cursillistas live the Charism, that we can truly serve Christ and His Church more effectively. The Pontifical Council for the Laity has called us to know our Charism, to know our Founder, and to know the history of our Movement. This can only happen through personal study and through the School of Leaders.

Saint Pope John Paul II stated: "The founder is the pivot of the life of every movement, because he is the bearer of the original charism from which it is born and through which it lives."

There is also a spiritual stagnation in our Movement. Beside studying the literature, there is also a need for spiritual retreats. Ask your Spiritual Advisor to establish an annual retreat for all Cursillistas in the diocese. The retreat will provide an opportunity to make friends, renew friendships, and deepen the three fundamental encounters with self, with Christ, and with others.

In Conclusion

All that has life should grow and progress, and in order to make it effective it needs a creative critique. As leaders we need to do this. We need to be aware of the dangers in Cursillo and to see the value of correcting them.

These dangers complicate the simplicity of Cursillo. What happens is that everything that should be directed to the essential, is directed to other things, which can be good, but not fundamental. We need to focus on the purpose of Cursillo and study the Charism and build strength in our Movement through friendship in Group Reunions and Ultreyas. We need to live and share what is essentially Christian through faith, hope and love as we journey through Christ to the Father under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, with the help of Mary and all the Saints as we encourage our brothers and sisters to journey along with us.

De Colores!