

WHAT IS FUNDAMENTAL FOR BEING CHRISTIAN?

Source: National Cursillo Center Mailing – December 2011

By Eduardo Bonnín and Francisco Forteza

1. THE DIFFICULTY IN DEFINING IT

WHAT IS FUNDAMENTAL FOR BEING CHRISTIAN?

Because of its radical simplicity it is very difficult, if not impossible, to define and describe it, but perhaps it is much more difficult to update it because since Christ became a man, He demonstrated it explicitly with His life, He asserted it with His death and he endorsed it with His resurrection, and thus He made the message of God the Father quite clear to men – to all persons of all time - that He (the Father) loves us all in Christ. This is the reality that underlies all other realities.

2. IT IS MADE KNOWN THROUGH WITNESSING

Compared to what this reality means when it is believed and lived out by man, all other realities fade and become relative. And, if this reality becomes a power in our daily life, and is allowed to govern it, and becomes its guiding principle, all other realities will not merely pale in comparison, but will be prioritized in the order of their actual value.

Then, the values that man values, valued from an always new perspective – the Evangelical perspective – will become meaningful, and thus we will gradually acquire a consistently fresh view of life and of things, which gives life an enthusiasm, vigor and elation, that will make us see things as we may suppose God sees them.

This means that we learn to calculate and assess the successes and failures we find in our life, using a scale that never fluctuates; the scale that will be used on Judgment Day.

3. LIFE MUST BE LIVED

Life must be lived, one cannot stand still, you must either move towards or flee from it. Life flows and its flow takes place in a changing world. Everything changes, things, ideas, events, structures, men/women. Only **WHAT IS FUNDAMENTAL FOR BEING CHRISTIAN** always has the full compelling force of what is simple. It is the good and fruitful seed that when it falls on good soil - the heart of man - and is accepted by him, the Kingdom of God, which Christ in the Gospel said is in each of us, is born within our hearts.

All the slips and mistakes of Christians from every age have always been caused by the stubborn determination of wanting to have the Kingdom of God somewhere other than within us where it really is, - a stubborn determination that is often even mandated.

When this has been the case, when we have tried in vain to locate it and look for it elsewhere, the one who lost out has always been the man, for whom Christian things do not include the essential platform of **being human**. This often leads to fanaticism, moralism, ritualism, exclusive spirituality or aggressive proselytism. All these empty searches for the Kingdom, besides causing confusion, **tend to disconnect the plain and**

ordinary person from his or her environment. **WHAT IS FUNDAMENTAL FOR BEING CHRISTIAN** can only be incarnated, manifested, made visible, expressed, transmitted and expanded through the human being.

4. THE HUMAN PERSON IS THE VEHICLE THROUGH WHICH, WHAT IS FUNDAMENTAL FOR BEING CHRISTIAN IS EXPRESSED

It is quite apparent that what God wants of man is a personal response to His love, because He knows very well that the best way to reach men/women is through other men/women.

When the man or woman who, conscious of their dignity as redeemed persons, chooses to place the Gospel at the heart of his/her life, trying to live it out with conviction, determination and perseverance, it can truly be said that they are witnessing to **WHAT IS FUNDAMENTAL FOR BEING CHRISTIAN**, and thus they become a vehicle of its expression.

WHAT IS FUNDAMENTAL FOR BEING CHRISTIAN is more than a theory to study, analyze and thereby complicate one's life and that of others; it's a wonderful adventure to involve the whole of life and which – putting in the appropriate means- will give to life the light and necessary momentum, being accurate and consistent to live life in its fullness.

WHAT IS FUNDAMENTAL FOR BEING CHRISTIAN as has already been said - cannot be defined or described from the outside. If it is not lived, it cannot be experienced and it can only be experienced and made known by witnessing to it. And yet, in this world we are not going to be able to grasp or comprehend it, and much less to perform it in its entirety; this is not possible for now. However, it is possible to begin to comprehend some aspects of it as one ventures into the adventure of truly living it.

5. IT IS THE DRIVING FORCE BY WHICH WE ATTAIN LIFE'S GOALS

WHAT IS FUNDAMENTAL FOR BEING CHRISTIAN is not to be diluted only in peripheral, prefabricated behavior that is controlled by outside influences, but to support and promote life's goals from within oneself, with a firm conviction rooted in faith, but without losing the sense of what is real and true.

When **WHAT IS FUNDAMENTAL FOR BEING CHRISTIAN** is lived without reservations, which is to say, as the vocation to which every Christian can aspire, by the grace of God, this vocation, despite the difficulties, is always rewarding, attractive and pleasant as a longed for vocation.

WHAT IS FUNDAMENTAL FOR BEING CHRISTIAN is the constant centre and the permanent foundation of what is genuinely Christian; of Christ.

It is wonderful that Christ has redeemed us, but perhaps the formidable event of redemption may eclipse a reality so intense that, at times, it seems we are not able to

perceive it with the required intensity needed to wonder at it and to, at least, appreciate and be thankful for it.

Christ, by being incarnated in our lives, has provided us with the motivation, orientation, and goal to be able to live and make the most out of life.

By any measure, or in any situation, conflictive or not, Christ is always the Way, the Truth and the Life. Christ not only resolves any situation that may occur, but also ensures that no matter how involved a situation may be, or how complicated as it may appear, something good and positive will invariably be the outcome.

At anytime, anywhere, the living Christ - in the person who lives in Him by grace-, as the Way provides direction, as the Truth renders clarification, and as Life is the source of dynamism, energy, vitality, and strength to not give up until the fullest, most satisfactory and effective solution is reached, because what is Christian is always and in any situation, the culmination of what is possible. This criterion requires and is indicative of the specific, accurate, and honest attitude we are to take when we ask God for the impossible; because only God can make all things possible.

6. THE VOCATION OF EVERY CHRISTIAN

When WHAT IS FUNDAMENTAL FOR BEING CHRISTIAN is lived as a lively, conscious, and active life-style, it enhances the best qualities of the person, and assists in helping that person to make the one personal decision which marks that person as a Christian; i.e., to respond positively to the invitation of Christ when He asks: "Take up your cross and follow me." For anyone who wants to follow Christ, this means that one has to unflinchingly move towards all of the crucifying circumstances that one has or will have in his/her life. This means that irrespective of the circumstances, one has to be, first and foremost, a Christian.

When WHAT IS FUNDAMENTAL FOR BEING CHRISTIAN is comprehended by generous people, they often feel called to make WHAT IS FUNDAMENTAL FOR BEING CHRISTIAN known, and it drives them to carry the cross for others, many of them believing that this act constitutes in itself. WHAT IS FUNDAMENTAL FOR BEING CHRISTIAN This decision is undoubtedly good, provided one doesn't have the intention of leaving behind one's own cross. That would be dangerous, because sometimes one is taking more interest in "doing good", rather than trying to be good in spirit and in truth. This form of behavior can even go so far, - our frailty can reach such extremes -, to do good in an attempt to exempt us from being good.

7. CARRYING THE CROSS OF OTHERS

Carrying the cross of others is a fact that requires that we do so with the absolute conviction that this is not repayable, that we should never expect to receive payment or reward for what we do.

Whenever someone expects to receive even an atom of gratitude for their efforts on behalf of others, their attitude has been distorted, and if what you expect is praise, and

especially you already count upon it, you will sooner or later come to disappointment and bitterness., thereby increasing the number of those undergoing the fatigue of doing good, assuming they have saved themselves from falling into a painful and annoying resentment.

8. THE UNAVOIDABLE ENCOUNTER WITH ONESELF

This is the reason why the most important of all, when trying to live the Christian adventure is the encounter with oneself, with the aim of accepting oneself as he/she is, understanding that we can get better, and to have the good taste of making our journey in the company of others.

Without this disposition, we run the risk that our contact with Christ may lead to an immaterial mysticism, where our behavior counts more than our convictions. We also run the risk that our contact with our brothers/sisters, especially with the neediest, will turn us into a self-reliant activist – one who does not need anything except himself – and who sets out to fix the world, the Church, the sacraments, priests, etc., etc.

9. THREE ESSENTIAL LINES OF ACTION

The Cursillo Movement because it was designed precisely to live out and spread WHAT IS FUNDAMENTAL FOR BEING CHRISTIAN, is committed to also making known three main lines of action which, rather than interfering with the creativity and originality of those who have lived the experience of a Cursillo, work to bring about a sense of conformity wherever God has placed them and to acquire the knowledge to decide what is best for them to live a Christian life with joy and happiness, even when they are confronted with the offers coming to them from the well-stocked apostolic market.

10. TO BEGIN WITH ONESELF

These Essential Lines of Action include: To accept oneself as one is, to understand that one can be better, and to make the journey in the company of others.

TO ACCEPT ONESELF AS ONE IS, as well as accepting the time and place that God has willed for you to be born and live, thanking God for your qualities; which when taken into account, will help you to accept your limitations.

TO UNDERSTAND THAT YOU CAN BE BETTER. This doesn't mean that you have to strive and fight however you can and to be stubborn to the bitter end to be the best. It means instead that you should always strive to improve yourself in all aspects of your possibilities and to trust fully that God can truly make possible what may appear to us to be impossible. Such an attitude is crucial, especially if we plan to go on the road to meet others, because we are cautioned by Scripture to "take first the beam out of your own eye"...

TO JOURNEY IN THE COMPANY OF OTHERS. The Good News, when it is the motive and goal of one's life, is ever-new and ever- good, with a kindness and a novelty which tends to expand and be transmitted. But this expansion and transmission has to start with oneself and from within and must be grounded in the full conviction and belief in WHAT IS FUNDAMENTAL FOR BEING CHRISTIAN. If your actions are not the

fruit of your conviction, how are others going to believe that you believe that God loves you? This means that one must always and above all, orient one's efforts to being a true friend to those closest to us. Indeed, we should consider that the axiom, "love your neighbor as yourself", should now be more precisely interpreted for us as: "be a friend to the ones close to you".

To worry about those in distant lands who suffer from all kinds of hardships, to pray for them, and even to send them our economic help, does not exempt you, nor anyone, of the joy that you can provide to those that are close to you, with your attitude of listening and understanding, and even with affection and tenderness if it's your wife or your husband or your children... friends, neighbors, everyone – Your new vision and spirit must somehow touch all of them.

Not through moral and paternalistic sermons, but simply by letting it filter naturally through your actions.

Being a Christian today; at a time when distances have been shortened so much, and yet people live so apart from each other, means facilitating environments that enable communication, first and whenever possible, with the ones closest to us, but later or maybe simultaneously, with those "Far-Away", those who do not know the Holy Spirit, because nobody has spoken to them about Him, and who have been misinformed about Christ and his Church and who lack information about what moves, encourages and concerns us.

We need to bring WHAT IS FUNDAMENTAL FOR BEING CHRISTIAN to the "Far-Away" because it may be, that when these individuals grasp the meaning of it, they may grasp the message with much more interest and enthusiasm than us, so that those who are today an objective, may tomorrow be our example and our incentive.

The life of the Christian is by essence communitarian and the community is the union of people. Someone once said, no doubt correctly, that the Church is God's idea for people to live in community without losing their personality.

God wants to be firmly set in the conscience of all persons, to enlighten them with the light and drive that are given by living out, namely the desire to live out, or the sense of sorrow for not living, WHAT IS FUNDAMENTAL FOR BEING CHRISTIAN.

What matters is to gradually make what is possible, possible, first within the existing framework within which your life is located, and then where you can and want to get to; counting on the wealth that contact with Christ and with your brothers and sisters, will be providing for you.