

THE THREE ENCOUNTERS IN THE THREE-DAY CURSILLO

Source: National Cursillo Center Mailing – June 2008

To illustrate the three encounters in the Three-Day Cursillo, a personal description is used throughout this article. These experiences help to accentuate the three encounters we come upon on a Weekend, and hopefully make connections to our own experiences.

The Encounter With Our Self

We arrive at our Cursillo after a good Precursillo, for some of us, it may have been a simple invitation without a Precursillo (this is not recommended). Many of us arrived intrigued, others perhaps discontent, and some even pushed to attend... What is certain is that we all arrive at the Cursillo with many reservations.

Among other things on that first night of Cursillo, many of us arrived with an attitude of being self sufficient.

With our long faces, we are all gathered in a room where the Rector defines the Cursillo to us as: "the means for the practical solution of all our personal problems." I remember thinking, Wow! Then he added, "The solution to authentic happiness". And many of our reactions could have been:

- I am happy
- I have a good job (good profession)
- I have a good spouse
- I have wonderful children
- I have good health
- I have a house, a nice car
- I do not need anybody
- I am courteous with people
- I believe in God, and even pray to Him
- I have good moral principles, etc., etc.
- And, in three days you are going to teach me to be happy for the rest of my life?

Enthusiasm, devotion, spirit of love; we are asked to keep silence for the rest of the night until the next morning. Then we are invited to move into the Chapel. "Know yourself" said the Spiritual Director. He asked us to really look at ourselves on the inside; he asked us to make a movie of our life from childhood to this very instant of the Cursillo; where have I played the main character, the producer and the director of this movie. "Do not hide nor take anything from it," I'm asked.

We need to stop and take a step back to look at our busy lives. To notice that as our life goes on, our jobs, businesses, materialism, distractions etc., sometimes makes us prisoners of it all.

The Cursillo gives us an opportunity to stop and face ourselves. Who am I? What is the purpose of my existence? Do I feel happy all these years that I have acted like a hero in my life? How has my movie been?

Do you feel proud of the movie made of your own life? Would you dare show it to your spouse, your children or your loved ones? Personally, after a brief review of my movie, I would not dare. In my movie there are very ugly scenes where I have not been honest, where I have not been sincere, where I have not been courteous, where I have abused the confidence of others... there are many dark scenes that I would not even want to see myself.

I meditated on the words of St. Paul, "I want to do the good that is in me, but end up doing the evil that I do not want to do." I am divided, confused; there is a struggle. The material things attract me. It is imperative to break through this dividing wall. Only then will I be able to find myself. I must put aside my pride and make a way to the light to see what I must improve in me, to see what I must remove, what I must include, and what I must change...

Then comes the meditation on the Prodigal Son; I can relate to him. The merciful Father waits for me to get rid of my present movie and to help me make a new one. I continue being the protagonist, only now I have a new Director and new Producer of my movie.

Should I give myself to the Cursillo, or shouldn't I. My debate continued. After a pause and well reflected "Way of the Cross" and an examination of conscience, I go to bed examining my life-long movie as it was asked of me.

I wake up the next day, arriving at the Chapel a bit confused. "Christ looks at you in different ways," says the spiritual director; "above all with love." I submerge myself in the three characters of the Meditation: "The Three Glances of Christ." As I meditated on each one of the characters I realized, that at times my life is being like the "young rich man" –too attached to the material things; sometimes too ambitious like Judas, and many other times moody, with short temper... like Peter, although open to seek His forgiveness. This starts to give me light again.

In the first rollo, Ideals, a lay person points out that I am the greatest creature in all creation. And then I am asked where do I spend my time and where is my money spent...? The questions bring me again to my old movie; and to my bad memories. It takes me to reflect -Yes, I have much to change in my life!

In the rollo Habitual Grace, my view clears up a great deal, the view of my heart. "If you only knew the gifts of God." Grace makes us saints. The supernatural Life informs and gives the value of eternity to my life, but this poses a change on my part – a metanoia. "If any of you want to come with me, you must forget yourself, carry your cross, and follow me." (Mt 16:24) To be holy is to say no to what displeases God, to sin, to the material things, and to know to say yes to what pleases Him; metanoia –a change of mind and heart.

This "Life" of Grace is as if someone has given me super eyeglasses with power to see the dangers in my life and the means to surpass them. It is going to help me make my "new" movie.

With the Layperson in the Church rollo I could see that we are Church because we form a part of the Mystical Body of Christ, and I have a mission in accomplishing this. Now I'm beginning to see the purpose of my existence: Christ is with us in the world by means of its Church. To be Church is to live the supernatural Life to the fullest, in community.

The Actual Graces will help me in the moments of need. And the palancas -the sacrifices and prayers offered for us in the Cursillo gave us "wings" to fly above the Grace that overflowed in that rollo room.

The Piety rollo removed any doubts I had. It is possible to live a life of holiness; it is possible to live the Life of grace – of love – conscious, growing, and shared in a natural way, joyful, and alive. I see clearer now: God is my Father. Now, without any fear, I can approach and ask him forgiveness, as the Prodigal Son did. The witness of living an authentic life of piety by the rollista gave me strength to make the courageous decision of the necessity to strip myself of my old self and dress myself into the new one which is Christ – metanoia, change.

By the end of the first day I hungered to be a different person. By then, I had a much clearer idea of where I came from and where I'm going. I have discovered a true sense to life. I have been created for greater things; to spend a great deal of my time and my talents in more important things. I am now different, while continuing to be "me." I can begin to do my new movie; with the help of my new Director!

The Encounter With Christ

Having an encounter with ones' self is the vital, necessary foundation for the following two encounters of the Cursillo (the Encounter with Christ, then the Encounter with Others). An encounter with myself makes possible the second encounter: my encounter with Christ.

The Meditation of the next morning, "The person of Christ", dictates the rhythm for the day. Christ was presented to us as I never had heard. A Christ who is real, alive, personal, a friend, and a brother. The rollo that followed, "Study", guided us to know Him better. The words of St. Augustine –"That I know myself, Lord, and that I know you Oh Lord!"- was an inspiration to me to connect both encounters. One cannot love what one does not know.

I am the fruit of the love of the Father. I am His child. I am never alone and I was never alone. Now I know that, as the poem entitled *Footprints* states, "*during your time of trials and suffering, when you saw only one set of footprints, it was then that I carried you.*"

The Sacraments are the channels of the love of the Father. And to prove it to me, the spiritual director invited us to go to the Blessed Sacrament and talk, or in my case vent. When this rollo is presented properly, it is normal to see the candidates seek out the priest for a good confession. At times, many of the ones that had confessed before go and confess after having listened to the beauty of what the Sacraments are.

I found myself with my Father, with my older brother, and my friend. Father, Son, and Holy Spirit – three in one. It is not I who lives; it is Christ who lives in me.

Later, by means of the visits to the Blessed Sacrament either by group (decuria) or individually, we had the opportunity to speak with Him again. Although one is feeling good, a normal worry begins to surround us; - what about the others? As the Cursillo continues, the rollos unfold to give us the answer.

The Encounter With Others

We are told that we are militant Christians – that we are called to live the life of an Apostle. Our life as a whole should be an apostolate. Our apostolate cannot be one of something that we do from time to time, when we have the available time. In our Action we employ the best means to reach others with God's Love: friendship. We learn that before speaking to someone about God we must speak to God about the person. Our friendship with others must be sincere so they may obtain a sincere friendship with Christ. We have to carry out our mission. I remember thinking, either we save ourselves as a group, or we condemn ourselves as a group.

After a great night of sharing, walking to the Chapel in the morning on the third day, the feeling of joy was unexplainable, well, you do understand it. The Meditation again marked the course - It is good that we are here...! You did not choose me; I chose you and appointed you to go and bear much fruit. (Jn 15:16)

The joyful environment that exists in this third day sets itself up for the third encounter (An Encounter with Others). One must take advantage of it. The message of the rollos facilitates the Encounter with our brothers and sisters. This day promotes not so much upon the summary of the rollos (this does not imply to take away from the importance of the rollos of this day) but more so in the sharing among the Cursillistas from the other decurias (groups). Therefore, time is provided to sign each others Pilgrims Guide.

The Encounter with Others increases at the Closing, and then in their respective Ultreyas, and each within their respective environments through their fourth day.

The method of perseverance that is presented on this final day of the Weekend perpetuates the treasure of the Grace. The strategy used during the three days has been oriented to the life of Grace; therefore the School of Leaders must accentuate the importance of the third day. These three encounters should be intensified in the Postcursillo.

“The Cursillo Movement is not something, but someone. It is not a thing; rather, it is an organized reality, alive and active, a human reality constituted by the gathering together of men and women who, after having made the Cursillo weekend, adopt the mentality and fundamental principles of the Cursillo Movement. Following its method, they unite themselves to help one another live in a more authentic way the Christian life. In a new way they establish their relationships with God, with themselves, with other people, and with the world; and they make every effort to leaven their environments with the Gospel, so as to enable other people also to respond to the call of God.” (Fundamental Ideas #88)

It is important, to indicate, that these three encounters (Self, Christ, Others) are not only facilitated by means of the message of the rollos but, more by the personal contact and by means of the dialogue in the decurias (groups); there you find the pulse and the affirmation of these encounters.