



# The Cursillo® Movement

National Cursillo® Center • P.O. Box 799 • Jarrell, TX 76537 • 512-746-2020 • Fax 512-746-2030 • [www.natl-cursillo.org](http://www.natl-cursillo.org)

## Means to Energize Our Fourth Day

*Source: Presented by Walter Benavides at the National Cursillo Encounter held at Villanova University in Philadelphia, PA – July 25, 2015*

First of all, allow me to share with you, that for me to be standing here in front of so many people was never my goal, nor even a distant dream. For me, people who stand where I'm standing, I believed, were from a different level. Perhaps the reason I'm here today has to do with a prayer I say every morning in which among other things I say, "Oh Lord, I ask that you bless abundantly and expand my horizon . . ." I can now see He did expand my horizon a little. When I received the phone call about giving this talk, I remember clearly, I was on my way to church that afternoon and I remember looking at my surroundings to see if it was one of those hidden camera shows. I also thought it might be an invitation to give a rollo at a Cursillo de Cursillos at the Regional level, since according to my thinking, that was my level of capability, that's how I saw myself and that's where I thought I could use the talent God has given me to express myself, but here I am!

I begin with a short story, which by the way, is not mine, in fact most of the stories, phrases, and concepts I will share with you are not mine. They belong to other persons who are much wiser than me. The witnesses, those are mine. Besides that, I hope that 90% of this talk is inspired by the Holy Spirit and 10% by me. Back to the story about young people more or less my age who grew up with the Bugs Bunny cartoon, maybe some of you had the opportunity to watch this cartoon. It is about a man who lived on the streets, a homeless person, who one day finds a frog that dances and sings as if it were on one of those Broadway shows. Seeing the frog's performance, the homeless man's eyes lit up with dollar signs and thought this frog could bring him fame and fortune and all he had to do was take the frog to a producer. Well, he takes the frog and when it is in front of the producer, the only sound out of the frog is *ribbit, ribbit* . . . As I was preparing this rollo, I added an idea or phrase here and there, I thought, I need to say this and I need to explain it like this . . . well, now that I'm already here and before so many people, the only thing that may come out of me may be *ribbit, ribbit* . . .

Anyway, I have been talking for about 10 minutes now and I haven't even told you the name of the rollo I am presenting. The talk is titled **Means to Energize Our 4th Day**.

Means can also translate to ways, forms, formulas, resources, but in order not to complicate things that are meant to be simple, let's keep it as **means**. Above all, we will give much attention to a very important detail, that is, to determine who is in the midst of all the means? No one else but us, you heard right, each and every one of us are in the midst of the means. Are we in the midst of our Group Reunion, yes or no?

Are we in the midst of the Ultreya, yes or no? And those of us who are more involved, we are part of the Schools of Leaders, right? Well, I believe it would be illogical to think that what we have to energize are the means, without making a self analysis of the person who expresses each

of the means, are we energized? Can the people around us recognize there is something different about us, a new way of expressing ourselves, a new way of reacting . . . Eduardo Bonnín once said; *the Christian is not only known by his actions, but by his reactions*. A man who I will refer to later, ends his radio program with this phrase “It is not what happens to us that will make us who we are; it is our reaction to what happens to us” therefore, I ask you, do you carry Christ in a way that is cheerful, alive, ENERGIZED?

To help make my point, what if, I stood before you expressing a lazy attitude, a low tone of voice, no emotion, and slow movements, what will I be transmitting to everyone? Definitely not an energetic attitude, why? Because we have to be energized in order to energize others! Those of us who listen to the radio know how the DJ’s speak. They are people who express a lot of energy because they work in an environment where there is no visual contact with others; therefore, if they want to maintain a certain level of attention from their listening audience, they have to transmit energy. It is the same with us, we must create enough interest in others through our energetic attitude so they will wonder *what is he drinking to be like that all the time?*

And the energy, where does it come from? I am certain that it comes from living a De Colores 4th Day, from living in a constant state of joy, and an eternal awakening in the love of Christ. If every morning when I wake up I thank God for giving me another day of life and opportunities; then is when the joy begins. It is no coincidence that today is also called the present, because that is precisely what it is, a gift, a present and the leading cause of our joy! Joy, just like energy, is contagious, and when we are energized with joy, we can be recognized from a distance, and that is the best way to energize our Group Reunions, our Ultreyas and our Schools of Leaders. I did not come here to brag about my diocese or anything like that, but I do want to talk about my Group Reunion, which is for me, simply joy, a fiesta, a treat. Our guest of honor never fails, because Christ is always present in each of us. I do not call it joy because everything is about laughter, no, that has nothing to do with it. Sometimes we cry, me more that the rest. The other day we all showed up to group reunion with the same spirit and we started to share the joy of being together in friendship.

Pope Francis wrote a book encouraging us to express our energy and joy when we evangelize in order to bring others to the JOY OF THE GOSPEL. He says we cannot afford to preach a Lenten Gospel message without Easter (Resurrection). Allow me to read a few words from a man who converted to Catholicism, the famous writer Paulo Coelho . . . God is sacrifice. Many people seek the path of sacrifice claiming that we must suffer in this world to be happy in the next. However, if this world is a blessing from God, why not make the most of the joys that life has to offer? We are so accustomed to the image of Christ on the Cross and forget that his passion lasted three days. The rest of the time was spent traveling, meeting people, eating, drinking and preaching a message of tolerance. His first miracle can be viewed as politically incorrect. The wedding at Cana was lacking choice wine, therefore, his Mother asked him to turn water into wine. And he did, in my opinion, to show there is no harm in being happy, in rejoicing, in participating at a party, since God is much more present when we are gathered together in his name.

Another man who has inspired me is someone who I would like to recommend to those who speak Spanish, and for those who do not, learn Spanish so you can listen to him. That man is Dr. Cesar Lozano who does not practice medicine because he is dedicated full time to motivate people with different topics via radio. Dr. Lozano says there are people living day-to-day as if

they were politicians of a campaign, (shaking hands and kissing babies) and it is not that these people do not have problems, it's just that everything that happens to them runs off their back or they focus on the bright side of things. Now for the important detail, these people may or may not know Christ. They are naturally this way because of how they were educated or perhaps because they came from the factory programmed with a different chip. The fact is, they are different, good for them. However, don't you think we should be like that for obvious reasons, since we know something or someone that unfortunately, many people do not know. And what is it that we know? We know that God loves us, not only do we know it, we also have a mission, a responsibility, a ministry of sharing, of transmitting that message to others.

I like the word transmit, because *to transmit* does not mean going to the park and start shouting things or to stand at a street corner with a poster that says God loves you. A sincere hand shake is sufficient or a hug of support for someone who needs it, or to visit someone who is sick. With these simple acts, we transmit the good news that God loves you . . . “for I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink; I was a stranger and you welcomed me; I was naked and you gave me clothing; I was sick and you took care of me, I was in prison and you visited me.” Then they answered him, saying, “Lord, when was it that we saw you hungry and gave you food, or thirsty and gave you something to drink . . .?” (Matthew 25:35-37)

In order to close this chapter on the Joy of the Gospel, I want to share something about the word *Ultreya*. The word *Ultreya* says something to Cursillistas, right? It is the day, time, and place for the reunion of the Group Reunions; and what else does the word tell us? Onward! To go beyond ourselves, always moving forward.

As I searched for the root of the word *Ultreya*, I found that it also has another meaning not as common . . . and it is ALWAYS AHEAD! Sounds nice right? Realizing that in a word, we are encouraged to always move forward. I signed up for a *Lectio Divina* course in my parish while I was preparing this rollo. I would imagine that priests are very familiar with the way it works. It is a method to help us meditate on the scriptures in a profound manner. The first class was taught by my pastor. We were asked to read a scripture passage and pay attention to the word or words that caught our attention.

Allow me to share the words that stood out for me, and they did not speak to me, they screamed out to me:

“Wait for the Lord, take courage; be stouthearted, wait for the Lord.” (Psalm 27:14)

What do these words tell me, or how can I can summarize this verse in a word? The verse spoke to me: Courage! *Ultreya*!

The Group Reunion, as I mentioned before, is a fiesta. So, what is the *Ultreya*? It is a feast or banquet where we meet with friends we've known for years, and with friends we've come to know recently after their *Cursillo* experience. Together in one place, which could be a gym, a small conference room, etc., we are Church, the Mystical Body of Christ!

Now I would like to talk about the three enemies that make it difficult for us to energize our Fourth Day. The first and perhaps the most damaging of the three, in my opinion, is the EGO.

The word ego is something that is not commonly used in Spanish, it is easier to use the word pride, however, the meaning is similar. Call it what you will, ego or pride is something that can move us away from Cursillo and sometimes even from God. Ego changes the way we say things . . . I will no longer be in Cursillo because so and so did not ask me to serve on the 3-Day Weekend or because so and so did not like my rollo or because the Lay Director asked me to do something in an unkind manner. Pride or ego can make us enemies of everyone who disagrees with us. This attitude is everywhere and is growing thanks to technology. Here's an example, of something that happened in our Diocese. I received an email from a person who wrote this on the Cursillo Facebook page for our Diocese. This is more or less what the e-mail said: *The secretariat should send a thank you card to those who served on the Cursillo Weekend team. We do not serve so you can thank us; however, it would be good if you sent the cards anyway.* Well, what can I say about Facebook? Facebook exists to feed the person's ego. I may be getting a little off topic, but I want to share this; people who post information on Facebook, expect *likes* otherwise, they would not post anything.

I would like to ask all the parents who are here this question. If we serve a meal to our children, and after eating they do not tell us they liked it, or forget to thank us, what happens? Nothing happens, and why is it that nothing happens? Because we serve out of love and the last thing we expect is an acknowledgment or recognition. In the same way, if you are going to serve God through the 3-Day Weekend, we don't expect recognition or a reward. This is the key, the remedy for all our Cursillo activities, to serve out of love of God, love of neighbor and love of Cursillo, with love and without expecting anything in return. In English there is a phrase that speaks of doing small acts of selfless love . . . this is what matters! Mother Teresa also told us in very nice and simple way "*do small things with great love.*"

Love can change everything. Serving with love will bring satisfaction with the work that was realized; however, without love, you will experience a feeling of emptiness because you were expecting an acknowledgment or a reward. I leave you with another quote from Mother Teresa, "*a life that is not lived for serving, is not worth living.*"

The quote is a little intense so allow me to soften the concept with a phrase I heard from a priest: "*one cannot know Christ and not love him, one cannot love him and not serve Him, and one cannot serve Christ and not share him.*"

I want to give you another interesting point with respect to ego. Our ego or pride often tempts us with the desire to leave our legacy in Cursillo, a personal change, and as Eduardo Bonnín often said . . . and with good intentions. Pride is always calling us to hang another decoration on the Christmas tree, but it's not the same decoration the tree of Cursillo had since its foundation. It's a completely new decoration, a decoration according to my taste and placed the way I think it should be. I speak from experience because I was as guilty as most. In my Diocese, the leaders made the mistake of asking me to serve as Ultreya coordinator shortly after my 3-Day Weekend. Full of desire and enthusiasm to serve after the Cursillo, I wanted to change everything. My intentions were good. I decided to call the Ultreya scheduled for May, The Mother's Day Ultreya. Remember, I had good intentions and I say this because the idea was inspired by the Holy Spirit but, encouraged by my ego. As time passed, I listened more to the wisdom of experienced Cursillistas who helped me to mature and realize that our job was not about changing Cursillo, but about protecting its authenticity. It is said that when we die the only thing that remains is the love we sow in the hearts of those we touch, that's all.

But what happens when the other enemy of Cursillo arrives . . . laziness, lack of effort, disinterest, etc. Call it what you want or don't call it anything so you don't get tired, but it's there and I am not exempt from it. Perhaps it is not as bad for you as it is for me, but I will share this with you anyway. Laziness presents us with ideas such as, *if I don't go to the Ultreya nothing will happen*. But what if most of us have the same thought on the same day, what will happen to the Ultreya?

Laziness also attacks when we are preparing a rollo, so what do we do? I'll do it later, there is still plenty of time. First, I'll watch a little TV and then check to see what's new on Facebook. Something happened to me a while back which I believe was God's way of teaching me a lesson. No matter how confident you feel with your ability to share a topic or give a rollo, there is nothing better than to prepare well before standing in front of your brothers to tell them about God, his Movement and sometimes his Gospel.

We must take things seriously and above all, answer the call and try our best to see it as an opportunity, not necessarily as a commitment or responsibility, that sounds like a burden, something I have to do. Now, allow me to give you the remedy against laziness. The truth is that's part of the problem, because there is no remedy. You may ask, and what about God's Grace? God's Grace is always available and is given in abundance, but can anyone tell me if Grace is hot or cold? Is it soft or hard? Does anyone know at what time Grace was poured upon you during the 3-Day Weekend? NO!

It's possible that you may remember a special moment that touched your heart, but probably no one can tell me when you felt God's Grace poured upon you. Therefore, Grace is not a substance that is poured upon us and laziness goes away. Laziness goes away when we energize ourselves in Christ and we have a clear understanding that we are his hands and feet just like we heard during the Cursillo. And if we want things to happen we have to start today so we can make the change we want, "to be the change you wish to see in the world". (Mahatma Gandhi) Otherwise, we will be in agreement with Albert Einstein's definition of insanity: *to do the same thing and expect a different result*. The following quotes tell us more or less the same thing, but hopefully will make you think about it . . .

"All it takes for evil to triumph is for good men to do nothing."

"The world is not in danger because of bad people, but rather by those who allow it" or what is similar, "by those who do nothing". It is more comfortable doing nothing, right? It's less complicated to do nothing, we won't get into trouble if we do nothing, we won't get criticized. Aristotle once said "to avoid criticism, say nothing, do nothing and believe you are nothing."

And finally, the other enemy and a close relative of laziness, is conformity . . . Phrases like this apply to conformity, "we're fine just as we are . . . we've always done Cursillos this way." And please do not misunderstand me, I'm not saying we need to change the rollos, much less alter the essence of Cursillo. What I am referring to are the words that will encourage us to seek higher ideals, individual holiness and collectively to attract more souls to Christ; even if it's one friend at a time in the moveable square meter where God places us at this exact moment. Bishop Hervás expressed the following, "Let us be daring and set high goals of holiness. If man is not prompted

for much, he will not even give what he rightfully should give.” And there is another popular quote that says, if you aim to the stars, you will reach the moon.

The remedy for conformity is prayer, meditation, and a relationship with God. We can easily attain this, and we can have it week after week. In the Group Reunion, at the Ultreya, and where we go to learn more about our beloved movement, at the School of Leaders.

I apologize if I did not talk enough about the School Leaders, but the reason is simple, Group Reunion and Ultreya are vital to the success of the Cursillo method; the School of Leaders is optional. Although the school is open to all and all are invited, it is for those Cursillistas who feel the call and respond to their vocation. Cursillistas who called, not only respond, but they also make Cursillo their primary ministry. What is the meaning of the word ministry? SERVICE! And who should go to school? Those who are still hungry and feel restless; hungry to learn even more about the Foundational Charism of Cursillo, curious to explore more of its essence and purpose, and restless in their desire to share the gift of Cursillo.

As I come to the end of this rollo, I want to share a story of a famous character in history, English Prime Minister Winston Churchill. Perhaps this man was not a genius as the other people I have mentioned since he actually repeated eighth grade. I can relate with him because I repeated the first grade. While giving a speech at Oxford, one of the most important universities in England, Churchill said, NEVER GIVE UP, after the people gathered stopped their cheering and applause, he repeated the words, NEVER GIVE UP and then left. Maybe now you wish Churchill would have given this rollo instead of me since it would have been much shorter; but like Churchill I also say, NEVER GIVE UP in your call, your ministry to spread the Gospel.

Brothers and sisters, the Cursillo does not end at the Closing, but rather it begins there. The goal is to convert it (Cursillo) into something perennial. Once we initiate our conversion and have conviction, we can become an inexhaustible source of living water that will nourish us daily, and help us grow with more spiritual energy which in turn we can pass on to others.

In conclusion, I leave you with a quote from Eduardo Bonnín. Eduardo’s quote echoes the words of Mother Teresa after she visited Madrid. Mother Teresa shared with Eduardo, *what a shame that in such a beautiful city people die without knowing that God loves them*, to which Eduardo responded, *yes, it is a shame, but it is even worse when people LIVE without knowing that God loves them!*

Lastly, “never give up” living De Colores and always moving forward . . . Ultreya!