

FRIENDSHIP, AN ESSENTIAL ELEMENT OF CURSILLO®

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This article on friendship is an introduction for the next three articles that will appear in the April, June, and August newsletters. April will focus on *Friendship in the Precursillo*, June will focus on *Friendship in the Cursillo Weekend*, and August will focus on *Friendship in the Postcursillo*.

Perhaps you have read or heard that Blessed John Henry Newman had an outstanding quality, his capacity for friendship. He understood that a friend offers his life for his friends and, in so doing, becomes a better self. The love of benevolence (friendship) can develop into the highest form of love, the self-giving love called agape, rooted in the virtue of charity. Marcus Cicero, a Roman philosopher once wrote, *a friend is, as it were, a second self*. This is possible when a person gives himself to another, first out of common mutual interests, but eventually in a selfless manner, for the good of the other. Jesus Christ radicalized that idea by teaching that a friend is one who would lay down his life for another.

The Cursillos in Christianity Movement is based on friendship. Cursillo is a witness of Christ offering His friendship. Everything that we are called *to be* in Cursillo is based on friendship. The *Cursillo leader* makes use of friendship in order to make his friends, friends with Christ. The linkage of Christian friends who help each other to maximize their potential by living together the life of grace is made possible through *Group Reunion* and *Ultreya*. The *Secretariat* is a group of friends that live the Cursillo method in order to remain true to the Charism of Cursillo and the *School of Leaders* is the gathering or reunion of leaders, that illuminates, encourages and relieves our restlessness with the best means possible: friendship. This friendship must translate into service towards others, basing it on the mentality, essence and purpose of the Cursillo method.

In Cursillo, all of us are familiar with the phrase “make a friend, be a friend, and bring your friend to Christ.”

If the goal of making a friend is true friendship then making a friend requires that we have matured ourselves into having the capacity to actually be a true Christian friend. It is within the friendship of Christ that we may begin to form friendships with others. A Christian is a joy and friendship magnifies our joy.

When we use the phrase *make a friend, be a friend, and bring your friend to Christ* we can conclude that some kind of action is required from us. And in Cursillo, this apostolic action translates into exercising the power of love towards the other, unconditionally.

The word ‘friend’ may also need some defining. In today’s world, society has defined friend in many different ways, especially by some social networks of today. This is somewhat confusing and is distorted from the true meaning of friendship.

In Sirach 6:14-17, we read that “A faithful friend is a sturdy shelter; he who finds one finds a treasure. A faithful friend is beyond price, no sum can balance his worth. A faithful friend is a life-saving remedy, such as he who fears God finds; for he who fears God behaves accordingly, and his friend will be like himself.”

What is the nature of a relationship that makes it true friendship? According to Aristotle, a Greek philosopher, - friendship is a mutually recognized relationship of affection that occurs between human persons who have the maturity to bear some kind of good will for one another.

Since there are different levels of maturity; different degrees of bearing some kind of good will for another therefore, there are different kinds of friendship. This is not to say that one is better than another. All types of friendships are natural and normal and have their place in everyone’s life.

But, how do we make a friend with the goal of Christian friendship in mind? Well, we cannot make a friend if we can’t be a friend. To the extent that a person is virtuous, and only to that extent, can he have a share in true friendship. To look at it the other way, To the extent that one fails in virtue, one fails in the ability to have full friendship. This is because the virtuous person is one who really has the ability to desire and pursue good of another person. The theological virtues include faith, hope, and charity. The Cardinal virtues include prudence, justice, fortitude, and temperance. A virtuous person is other-centered and able to give of themselves because they are able to love and be loved. Developing virtue in oneself is a work of grace, and takes time and effort. It is said that a person can give without loving, but cannot love without giving.

Friendship in the Precursillo

Precursillo is about the person, Jesus Christ, and friendship! It is about developing a relationship that will grow into friendship with time. It is by way of personal contact that *we make a friend, be a friend, and bring our friend to Christ* – not necessarily to Cursillo! Friendship is not about seeing the individual as a number or another application but rather, as a person with dignity and respect – as the image and likeness of God. If friendship exists in the Precursillo, it will carry over to the Postcursillo and the Sponsor will know how his friend thinks, what he wants, and how he acts which correspond to his mind, his heart, and his will. It is in and through friendship that we are called *to know my friend, to place my friend, to enlighten my friend, and to accompany my friend*. This is true friendship!

Friendship in the Cursillo - 3 Days, 3 Friendships

Friendship/Encounter with Self

The Cursillo Weekend is about the person, Jesus Christ, and friendship! On Thursday evening, the meditation, Know Yourself, helps us come face to face with who we are at that exact moment. And, with the Father’s unconditional love that we hear about in The Prodigal Son, the rollos on Friday, and through God’s grace we begin to put everything into perspective and we begin to see ourselves as God sees us. It is here that we come to

know ourselves as we are, with potential and with limitations, and we are able to befriend ourselves as we learn to accept ourselves as friends of Jesus Christ.

Friendship/Encounter with Christ

Cursillo seeks to facilitate the encounter of the freedom of each person with the Spirit of God and this helps each person discover that God in Christ loves them unconditionally! The Cursillo Weekend, above all, brings about a strong reaction that melts the layer of ice that covers the heart. It removes the scales from the eyes and opens both ears. It shows the person their condition as rational beings and the importance of their being children of God. Light streams in. Grace enters the soul. Love massages and causes the heart to swell. That is when the friendship/encounter with Christ begins! A new world opens up before the eyes. The presence and friendship of Christ gives a different significance and a new value to all things. (1st Conversations at Cala Figuera)

Friendship/Encounter with Others

The third friendship/encounter happens quite easily between the team and candidates. However, in order for this friendship to take place the team has to allow the candidates to come into their lives and we do so by sharing ourselves with them. At times this requires crossing the bridge to the other side. What we yearn for and reach for is understanding and acceptance – to love and be loved. When we speak of friendship being the means by which we reach out to people, it simply means to be willing to journey, even if only for a short while, with the person God has placed in our moveable square meter in order to give them a glimpse of God's love. Some of Jesus' encounters with people were brief, the woman at the well, the paralytic, and the blind man. However, for that moment in time, they knew His friendship and their lives would never be the same again.

Friendship in the Postcursillo

Postcursillo is about the person, Jesus Christ, and friendship! The world can become more human and therefore, more divine, by the linkage of Christian friends who help each other to maximize their potential by living together the life of grace. This linkage is achieved through Friendship Group Reunion and Ultreya.

Friendship Group Reunion

The Group Reunion is a continuation of one's living and sharing the love of God and love of neighbor through friendship. The Group Reunion facilitates and simplifies the continuation of the three encounters (friendships) that the Cursillo has initiated and brought about: friendship with ourselves, with Christ and with others. It is important to emphasize that, of the three encounters, the one with oneself is the most important since it constitutes the indispensable structure that enables the other two encounters to occur.

Ultreya

The pilgrims on the way to Santiago de Compostela encouraged each other with the word Ultreya, which we understand to mean *onward*. If we keep the reality of a pilgrimage in mind, and how the pilgrims shared the experience of the day's journey with each other as they stopped to rest each evening, the whole concept of the Ultreya and its purpose becomes clearer. It is where each one shares what one has lived and it is where the work

of building the community takes place, where friendships are developed and nurtured, where each one comes for the pure joy of being with friends.

In conclusion, Cursillo provides a framework in which an encounter with self, Christ, and others can occur and be sustained. It is a lived encounter that can affect and profoundly alter people's viewpoints, attitudes, and perspectives, and ultimately impact the way they act and interact with others. At the heart of the Method and Movement is the simple truth that every person is a child of God, called, enabled, and inspired by Him to live fully, authentically, and with conviction as the unique persons that they are created to be. Their lives are to be sincere witnesses to the transforming power of friendship with self, with Christ, and with others. Their lives will reflect the principles of faith lived in a normal, joyful, and authentic manner.

De Colores!