



The Cursillo[®] Movement

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CURSILLISTAS AS AGENTS OF THE NEW EVANGELIZATION

Source: Keynote address by Most Rev. Peter A. Rosazza, D.D., Auxiliary Bishop Emeritus, Archdiocese of Hartford, CT, at the National Cursillo Encounter held at Hofstra University in Hempstead, New York - July 25, 2013.

1. De Colores! This Encuentro is an opportunity for us to remember our story, to remember who we are as Cursillistas and what we are called to do in the Church today. The Popes, John Paul II and Benedict XVI along with Pope Francis are calling the Church to a New Evangelization, new in its ardor, methods and expression. It is new principally because we face a world from which the presence of God is withdrawing in the minds of so many of our contemporaries. We shall address secularism later as well as reactions, both negative and positive, to this disturbing trend.
 - a. At the same time we must keep our eyes fixed on Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, today and forever. It is he who called the Apostles and other early missionaries to make him known. Jesus equips us by the Holy Spirit, the principal agent of evangelization who was poured out on the Church to create it at Pentecost. That same Holy Spirit is present in our hearts and in those of all human beings, even if they do not acknowledge this important fact.
 - b. Jesus is the focus for us every day and in particular during the Year of Faith and for those called to implement the New Evangelization. This is not hard for us Cursillistas since Jesus was the focal point of our three days and it is he who always leads us to his Father.
 - c. Jesus also has put in the heart of every person a yearning for God. We must take to heart and remember these most important words of Saint Augustine: “You have made us for yourself, O Lord, and our heart (singular) will never rest until they rest in you.” Even if people say that they are content and don’t need God, we can say (if we know them well), “No, you do.”
 - d. Also, to reject or be indifferent to the presence of Jesus and the power of the Gospel, and to live as though God does not exist, implies that people turn in on themselves and the human being becomes the focal point. From this comes the belief that we can save ourselves from the troubles that afflict us. This denies original sin and its effects, such as greed. Greed, one of the seven capital sins, was at the center of the economic crisis of 2008 from which we and the rest of the world are trying to extricate ourselves. Greed is responsible for the collapse of the factory in Bangladesh that killed hundreds of poor, innocent and hard-working people. One can ask here if we are aware of the fact that poor workers such as these make many of our clothes which we buy at reasonable prices but which these same workers cannot afford on the salaries they make.
 - e. The example of Marxism and Pope Benedict XVI’s words proving that we cannot make a more just society on our own. Such thinking caused the deaths and suffering of millions of people under the Communist yoke.

- f. The Popes have said as they are read the signs of the times, that the New Evangelization has to confront secularism. It is most evident in the countries in the “north,” that is, the United States, Canada and Western Europe though it is gaining footholds in Latin America as well. The word comes from the Latin world “saeculum” meaning “world.” It is “a strong and increasing separation of church and state along with a general weakening of traditional religious faith, affiliation and practice,” according to Richard Allen in his fine book, *The Future Church*. This trend has stalwart support among journalists, academics, artists and policy makers.
 - g. We see an effort on the part of many to tell us that we have no place in the public sphere. We are to stay in our churches and other places of worship but not get involved in “political matters.”
 - Distinction between Church and state and church and society.
 - The secularists appreciate our voice in matters that they espouse, such as abolishing capital punishment. The reason: since this life is the only one, then it is wrong to cut it short. We of course oppose capital punishment because of the consistent ethic of life.
 - My experience at the state capitol. “If everyone were like you, we would lose!”
 - The problem our church is having with the Health and Human Services Mandate (to provide contraception and sterilization in our insurance plans) is a manifestation of secularism. At this point the federal government says that churches do not have to comply but our institutions such as colleges and universities and hospitals do. We of course see these institutions as an extension of who we are and what Jesus calls us to do, to feed the hungry and instruct the ignorant and care for the sick and frail elderly.
 - Thus, according to Richard Allen, that, “across the world/ Catholicism has gone from being a culture-shaping majority to perceiving itself as an embattled cultural minority...”
 - How to respond to secularism? A futile one is to see ourselves as “embattled minorities and adopting a politics of **identity** based on reaffirming traditional beliefs and practices, sharpening the borders between itself and the surrounding culture.”
 - h. Reaction: to close in on ourselves and go back to what are perceived as authentically Catholic practices. These include the Extraordinary Form of the Mass (the Rite of Saint Pius V) by some young priests, wearing vestments from that era (fiddle-back chasubles), and by some the rejection of the Second Vatican Council.
 - i. Those who do so are ignorant of theology – this Council was approved by two popes (John XXIII and Paul VI) and an immense majority of the Council Fathers = the bishops present from the whole CATHOLIC world.
 - j. “Hiding away in our churches might bring some consolation but to do so would render Pentecost vain.” (Archbishop Rino Fisichella, *The New Evangelization: Responding to the Challenge of Indifference*, p. 61)
2. For Cursillistas in the New Evangelization, we heed the popes who remind us that the Church is called to be a light to the Nations and involved in the world, as difficult as that might be.
 - a. “The joy and the hope, the grief and the anguish of the people of our time, especially those who are poor or afflicted in any way, are the joy and hope, the grief and anguish

of the followers of Christ as well.” (Gaudium et Spes, or the Church in the Modern World, paragraph 1)

3. Pope Francis before being elected to the Cardinals as they met among themselves before the Conclave that elected him. He wrote out his notes after Cardinal Jaime Ortega Alamino asked him to do so and the new pope gave him permission to use them. Here are the four points the future pope made, in which he shows how he is going to move the Church, a Church that does not close in on herself but rather moves out to tell the good news through word and acts of kindness to those in need.
 - The first is evangelization since the church was formed by Jesus precisely to bring the good news to the world. “It is Jesus who impels us from within. To evangelize implies a desire in the Church to come out of herself and go wherever the Gospel hasn’t been heard as well as into the areas of sin, pain, injustice, ignorance and even those who reject religion outright.”
 - Following from this, when the Church does not come out of herself to evangelize, she becomes self-referent and then she gets sick. Actually the evils that over the course of time afflict church institutions have their roots in what he calls “ecclesiastical narcissism.” In the Book of Revelation, the last of the New Testament, Jesus says that he is at the door and knocks. Evidently the text refers to his knocking from the outside in order to enter but he also knocks from within so that we will let him come out. The self-referent Church keeps Jesus Christ within herself and does not let him come out.
 - Unfortunately, when the Church is self-referent/ without realizing it, she believes that she has her own light. So she ceases to be the mystery of light and this gives way to that very great evil which is spiritual worldliness, the worst that can come upon the Church, the worldly Church that lives within herself, of herself, for herself.
 - Finally, thinking of the next pope (Francis said this before being elected), he must be a man who, from his contemplation and adoration of Jesus Christ, helps the church to come out to the world and be the fruitful mother who lives from the comforting joy of evangelizing.
 - As an aside, no wonder so many of the cardinals were taken by this man and elected him Pope. Amen. (692)
- a. Even while Archbishop of Buenos Aires, Jorge Bergoglio taught this way. The following points come from a letter he wrote to Cursillistas in his archdiocese in 2011:
 - b. “As a Church, all of us need unity in Christ so that only He reigns in our hearts... Now, more than ever, we need your presence in your various environments to be light and joy for so many brothers and sisters who ignore God as a Father who loves them with great tenderness.”
 - c. The gift of the Kerygma (the apostolic proclamation of religious truths) received during your Cursillo is missionary, just like the tripod points out (piety, study, and action).
 - d. As a Church all of us need unity in Christ, so that HE, only HE reigns in our hearts and only then we will be able to recognize HIM as the disciples did in Emmaus.
 - e. As I thank you for your pilgrimage as Cursillistas, I ask you to never cease to renew in Jesus' Eucharist your apostolic fervor and that of your brothers and sisters in your group reunions. (reuniones de grupo)

- f. Now, more than ever we need your closeness in the environment to be light and joy for so many brothers and sisters who ignore God as a Father that loves them with tenderness.
 - g. Today, more than ever we need your presence so that many families can find the transcendent love of Christ - a newer and larger dimension of human love.
 - h. Today, more than ever we need your presence and your witness in the Ultreyas, to keep moving forward in the proclamation and living out the Kerygma.
 - i. I ask you to pray for me. May God and the Virgin, Mother of the Divine Grace, be with you and take care of you.
4. The importance of the laity in the New Evangelization.
- a. Newman's quip re: the laity
 - b. From 'Christifideles Laici' = *The Vocation and Mission of the Lay Faithful in the Church and in the World*. (Dec. 30, 1988) Pope JP II quotes the words of Jesus in the Gospel of Luke: "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to set the oppressed free and to proclaim a year of the Lord's favor."
 - He adds: "Thus with the outpouring of the HS in Baptism and Confirmation, you share in the same mission of Jesus as the Christ, (anointed one), the Savior-Messiah." p. 28
 - As the Father has sent me, so I send you – applies to yourselves as Cursillistas.
 - c. Pope Paul VI in EN, #70: "Lay people, whose particular vocation places you in the midst of the world and in charge of the most varied temporal tasks, must, for this reason, exercise a very special form of evangelization." He then specifies areas in which you exercise influence (ENVIRONMENTS). *Evangelium Nuntiandi* (Evangelization of the Contemporary World, Dec. 8, 1975) "The laity's OWN field of evangelizing activity is the vast and complicated world of politics, society and economics, as well as the world of culture, of the sciences and the arts, of international life, of the mass media. It also includes other realities which are open to evangelization such as human love, the family, the education of children and adolescents, professional work and suffering. **The more Gospel-inspired lay people there are engaged in these realities, clearly involved in them and conscious that they must exercise to the full their Christian powers which are often repressed and buried**, the more these realities will be at the service of the Kingdom of God and therefore at the service of salvation in Jesus Christ, without in any way losing or sacrificing their human content/ but rather pointing to a transcendent dimension which is often disregarded." (Also quoted by Pope John Paul II in his encyclical, "Christifideles Laici" = "The Vocation and Mission of the Laity in the Church and in the World," December 8, 1988, pps. 62-3).
 - d. To permeate these environments with Gospel values like perfume that fills a room (after-shave?)
 - e. The doctor who said, "My altar is my operating table." Brings together faith and life.
 - f. Pat Quinn and "All in the Family"
 - g. Examples of Joe Lopes, Joe Cravanzola as evangelizers, making present the Gospel and its values in the modern world.

5. The importance of commitment to Jesus Christ and to his Gospel as proclaimed in and through the Church:
 - a. Pope Paul VI: “Our contemporaries listen more willingly to witnesses than to teachers and if they do listen to teachers, it’s because they are witnesses.” (EN #41)
 - b. Concerning the young: “They thirst for authenticity. (For example, Pope John Paul attracted so many young people because of this and because he believed in them. Millions flocked to Rome when he died.) They have a horror of the artificial or false and they are searching above all for truth and honesty.”
 - c. The harm done to our church and others because of the sexual abuse of minors and the way some bishops handled them, putting the well-being of priests ahead of that of children and youth.
 - d. Young people and SBNR (spiritual but not religious) – some young people can be shown the importance of the church through their retreats, where they have an experience of church as we did when we lived our Cursillo.
 - Also, an institution is necessary to render service to the needy, for example.

6. The Lord does not abandon us. He has given us means to help us in our task as Evangelizers.
 - a. Holy Mass and El Santísimo Sacramento (Prayer before the Most Blessed Sacrament) – “Having received in ourselves his body and his blood, we are changed into being bearers of Christ.” (Saint Cyril of Jerusalem) Like Our Blessed Mother!
 - b. Reuniones de Grupo – Group Reunions – (1) To support one another (2) To be accountable as to how you are living piety, study and action, the tripod (el trípode) (3) To benefit the larger church and the world as well.
 - c. The saints – our church has produced so many who can be role models to all of us.

CONCLUSION

I close with words from Pope Paul VI’s encyclical, EN, #76. “The world, despite innumerable signs of the denial of God, is nevertheless searching for God in unexpected ways and painfully experiencing the need for God. The world is calling for evangelizers to speak to it of a God whom the evangelists themselves should know and be familiar with as if they could see the invisible. The world calls for and expects from us: simplicity of life, the spirit of prayer, charity towards all, especially towards the lowly and the poor, obedience and humility, detachment and self-sacrifice. Without this mark of holiness, our word will have difficulty in touching the heart of our contemporaries. It risks being vain and sterile.” May Jesus inspire his Church to be a light to all those who thirst for God and yourselves as Cursillistas in the Church to help make that happen. Amen.