

# CURSILLOS

## in CHRISTIANITY

### National Newsletter

EDUARDO BONNÍN AGUILÓ

**100 YEARS**

**BIOGRAPHY AND MENTALITY - PART 15**



Servant of God  
**Eduardo Bonnín Aguiló**  
Founder of  
Cursillos in Christianity  
1917 – 2008

OCTOBER 2022

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## FRIENDSHIP

Friendship is the genuinely human and evangelical form of communication among people. It is the way God uses to relate with people, and it is the best way possible for a person to relate both with God and with others.

The dictionary tells us that friendship is: “a pure and disinterested affection between persons that is born from mutual esteem, appreciation and congeniality.” As always, the dictionary refers to the concept, to what the thing means, but it is life itself that tells us what the thing is.

After having experienced friendship, all a person yearns for is to delve and grow into it. Friendship enlarges our heart, especially if you have learned to live friendship from faith.

Mankind, in its steady advance and progress, has managed to discover and invent many things, but none of them has so far been able to surpass the happiness brought to a person through the joy of friendship.

I stubbornly believe that friendship is the most serious adventure one can attempt in this life. Friendship is not something romantic, overly sweet, clingy. It is flowering courage; a summit not impossible to achieve but reserved for those with a mountaineering spirit.

When speaking of friendship, it is imperative that a clarification should be made, because there are two different concepts of friendship: one is the friend who is unforgettable for many reasons, and another thing is friends, a word that, like many others, has experienced some inflation and its subsequent devaluation.

Essentially, friendship demands a mutual respect for the inner stronghold of every person, which only God and the person in question have access to. This area of mystery that exists inside every person, is incommunicable and untranslatable in words, it must always be assumed with confidence and firmly respected.

If friendship is to be a true friendship, it must be disinterested; friendship must always be nonrefundable. When an inventory is being made on the “account of friendship” it means that there is or has been a liquidation: the liquidation of friendship.

Historically, we have said in Cursillo that the friendship tree cannot be planted or grown in expectation of its fruits or its shadow (in which to shelter from the summer sun), but for the joy that more trees exist, for the joy of knowing they exist, for the pleasure of their company, because their mere presence creates closeness.

All that matters of a friend is the friend himself, not what they have or what they know or can do. “What we do not love for its own sake,” affirms St. Augustine, “we do not love.” And Teilhard de Chardin writes: “To love means placing one’s own happiness in the happiness of others”.

There is no greater love than giving up your life for your friend”, Jesus Christ has said. There is no need for this to be done dramatically and instantly. Suffice it to be minute by minute, gesture after gesture, concern after concern. The important thing is to be completely devoted to the friend.

The friend must be like blood that goes straight to the wound, without waiting to be called for. This is beautifully expressed by the Catalan poet Manuel del Palacio:

*“The true friend  
Should be like blood,  
Which always goes to the wound  
Without waiting to be called for.”*

It is obvious that we have not invented friendship; it existed many centuries before the start of Cursillo. But it is also true that the essence and purpose of Cursillo, can only be grasped, understood, and comprehended in a climate of true friendship. It is painful that many people try to learn from studying, what can only be understood through loving.

Jesus is the best friend. Here is a fascinating subject. The person who reads the Gospels unhurriedly and with delight, will feel dazzled by the warmth, loyalty, and faithfulness of Jesus to his friends. The Gospels are the textbooks about friendship.

Christ became one of us to befriend us, men, and women. He is the paradigmatic prototype of true friendship, which spares no sacrifice to make it real and effective. He shows us the highest point friendship can get to, that is, to give up one's life for the one you love.

Many things can be said about "Christ, the friend". All of them, however, prove to be not only pale, but also imprecise and not enlightening enough to explain what a person really experiences when they live in a conscious, awake, and alive contact with Him.

He who seeks a friend with no faults will end up without friends and with their own shortcomings. Are we not ourselves filled with limitations, deficiencies, and selfishness? Why, then, are we going to demand perfection of a friend?

To find a friend without faults is impossible. Rather, you should help him not to have them. You must not love him because he is perfect, but rather so that he may become so. We should neither love him because of his specific qualities or social position, but because he is somebody, a person. Love your friend as he is and help him be the way God wants him to be.

If your friend does not help you to improve, he is no longer your friend, but an accomplice. Take my advice: choose as friends those who can help you to improve, leave out those who would make you go down.

Friendship "in order to..." is not friendship. Friendship is not compatible with any other purpose than friendship itself. If friendship is capitalized on, it is denatured; it loses its essence and becomes something very different and even contrary to itself.

Friendship cannot be materialized or quoted financially, because it belongs to the category of things that are priceless and can only be grasped and understood by way of appreciation. The appreciation we have for a thing which is deeply cherished by us, is always personal and nontransferable. Much more so is the appreciation that a truly beloved person can inspire us with.

"Everything is grace," St. Therese of the Child Jesus liked to say, and Bernanos [French Novelist] repeated many times. But friendship is a source of graces. Friends are mutually grace for each other, provided they do not capitalize on their friendship, nor profane it and reduce it to a simple means to reach an end.

A shared life has a different flavor than a lonely life. Thanks to friendship it was possible for me to overcome many obstacles that blocked the path of my life. A loner, who does not integrate into a group of friends, risks getting lost and perishing. Woe to him who is alone, Scripture says. And Antonio Machado warns us:

*"Pay attention:  
a lonely heart,  
is not a heart."*

Our Movement, by the grace of God and the prayers of many, attempts to connect, communicate, and create friendship amongst Christians who strive to live their faith in spirit and in truth, and others who live a life without the living Christ who enlivens life.

They are focused on the world, because of their need to earn their living—or maybe just their survival—and have no time to take care of or worry about themselves or others.

A friend must be for their friend like rain to the thirsty field, like the calyx to the flower, like the arms of a mother for her child. Cursillo reveals to us the best news - that God loves us, transmitted through the best means - friendship, addressed to the best part of ourselves - our capacity to be a person.

Being a Christian, being a friend of Christ today, when - in spite of the fact that geographical distances have been shortened so much - persons live so far apart, it entails creating areas that allow and facilitate easy communication; first among the closest ones - whenever possible - and afterwards, or simultaneously, with the far away ones; with those who, according to the Acts of the Apostles, "they know nothing of the Holy Spirit, because nobody has spoken to them about Him".

The most profound form of sharing life is friendship. Therefore, Group Reunion is friendship taken to the realm of transcendence; friendship converted into permanent actual grace. Every Christian should somehow share their Christian life, and when they share it with other Christians, they should raise this coexistence to the realm of the supernatural.

Starting from this assumption, we must try and befriend the persons close to us. Perhaps the most updated notion of the always current "love your neighbor as yourself" could be today: befriend the persons close to you. Overall, we show ourselves very sensitive to the hunger in the world, to all the injustices committed against humanity, joblessness, drug addiction, wars and violence that occurs in distant countries... This is good. But sometimes what we can only fix from a distance with our prayers, or our financial contribution moves us away from what really needs our urgent personal intervention here and now.

Perhaps under the same roof there is someone who needs your attitude of listening, understanding, affection and tenderness (parents, children, siblings, wife, and husband). A part of our vision and our spirit must reach everybody in our environment - family, neighbors, and friends - through our friendship. Not by trying to infiltrate it into them with moral and paternal sermons, but simply letting it seep into them through our way of acting.

When a friend is sharing my sufferings with his presence, his tenderness, his silence..., we nearly reach the point of thanking our pain for giving us the chance to experience the love of our friend.

In order to prevent the approach and viewpoint discovered or rediscovered in Cursillo from eroding over time and to let it stay alive, Cursillo provides a set of well-known means, which have proven effective over the years. Namely, Group Reunion, which is life as a reality shared in friendship, and Ultreya, which enables the best of each person to reach the greatest number of people possible.

The Ultreya creates closeness. It is the feast of gathering, the reality of knowing we are united, and the joy of feeling motivated by the same "him", by the same "thing". We have lived an experience at the Cursillo weekend. And we are determined to live it out in our life and in the life of many others. But beware: to gather is not synonymous with being united, and more important than gathering is being united.

Friendship could be summarized in this double affirmation: I am glad that you exist; the world is more beautiful because you exist.

(Eduardo Bonnín Aguiló, Reflections II, pp. 79 - 85)



## Living the Rector's Guide Weekend

“I thoroughly enjoyed the weekend! In fact, I think I got more out of it than when I lived my original Cursillo.” These are just a few of the positive comments from participants of the recent Living the Rector's Guide weekend held in September at the Notre Dame Retreat House in Canandaigua, NY.

A total of 45 Cursillistas participated in Living the Rector's Guide weekend, representing 9 dioceses from Regions 1, 2, 3 and 5. Two separate Men's and Women's Cursillos were hosted at the facility. Those living the Men's Cursillo were 17 men (11 participants, 5 team members and 1 spiritual advisor). Those living the Women's Cursillo were 28 women (21 participants, 5 team members and 2 spiritual advisors). The weekend was an exercise in living the reality of the Rector's Guide as given by the Holy Spirit to Eduardo Bonnín Aguiló.

The purpose of hosting the weekend was to change the experiential base of the leaders. After many training sessions using The Rector's Guide, it was found participants were interpreting the material differently, using their own past experience as the base. The goal was to change that base to ensure the Rector's Guide would be delivered in a consistent manner on future Cursillo weekends.

“It was straight forward, devoid of all the fluff that takes so much time and effort, and detracts from the essence of the weekend.” That left participants more time for prayer, spiritual direction, visits to the Blessed Sacrament and building friendships. The simplicity and normality of the weekend was appreciated by all participants.

“Frankly, I was turned off by the games and hobby sheets in the Rector's Guide, until I saw how the games relaxed us and aided in building friendships.”

These were some comments from a conference call after the weekend where the team analyzed aspects in light of what may need further explanation for a smoother transition from the Rector's Guide to its

implementation on a weekend. It should be noted that all participants had lived a Cursillo weekend previously and perhaps this will be a confounding influence. The next step is to get feedback from the participants.

Feedback from those participating in the Living the Rector's Guide weekend included some questions. For example: why can't we use power point for presentations, or have handouts. It was explained that the rollo is the Gospel and witness of the person giving the talk, who should be in eye contact with the persons listening. And the point that what is captured in the notebooks “is what God wants.”



This person explained that we all hear the homily at Mass, yet many of us may hear different nuances...the message God intends us to hear.

The importance of the content of the Rector's Guide and Appendices was stressed for the “why” of the weekend, and how the “stories” fit into the bigger picture. This should be stressed during team formation so that everyone will be on the same page.

Participants felt there needed to be clarification of the “team leader,” “table leader,” and “table secretary/scribe” roles.

And, the process of signing the Pilgrim's Guides. There was discussion of the rollos, and clarification of the time allotted for the rollos, table discussion and poster presentations. Some fine tuning may be necessary and perhaps a “glossary of terms.”

One participant said she was glad she attended Living the Rector's Guide weekend. “We shared a sense of freedom all weekend. It freed up so much time to interact, build friendships, share God with others, and visit the Blessed Sacrament.

We got to live what a Cursillo weekend should be.”

The reality of Living the Rector's Guide weekend was acknowledged by one of the National leaders who stated, “The Cursillo weekend relies on God's grace. It was at work on the team and participants. There is a huge difference between living and just reading the Rector's Guide. Knowledge remains knowledge until it is experienced!”

*by Margi Lash, Diocese of Rochester*

## What I Realized About the Rector's Guide

The San Jose Filipino Cursillo Movement (SJFCM) spent a Rector's Guide weekend dry run last August 26-28 at the mission town of San Juan Bautista.

### *The bankruptcy stories*

After the third or fourth bankruptcy story, the tales became less boring and began to grab attention as a pattern emerged.

I realized that the bankruptcy stories address a still most concerning issue. In the days before there were rollo templates and examples in *The Cursillo Movement's Cursillo Manual* (copyright 1999, 2006) rollistas did not have a clear guidance as to what makes for a perfect witness talk example.

Some Cursillistas in their talks would enumerate a list of mass schedules, novenas, and other ministries. They don't tell the story of how they evangelize. Some witness speakers still do this at the Ultreya.

But the acts of piety, study and evangelization are not effectively shared if they are just enumerated and the stories of the how are not told.

Some Cursillistas run with the concept that "Cursillo" means little courses in Spanish. They translate it literally to transform the rollos and the School of Leaders talks into Catechism. Unfortunately, this shuts off a lot of older Cursillistas from listening to a "class" lecture.

The bankruptcy story is a great argument for more relevant witness talks (not proselytizing) in the rollos as well as the School of Leaders.

### *5 Candidates to 1 Leader Ratio*

I realized, the best argument for having a skeleton team is that the intimacy is deeper. It means the new Cursillistas can easily remember these five team members and not be overwhelmed with 20.

In the SJFCM, the 4th Day reunion is typically a month after both men's and women's Weekends – by that time, the new Cursillistas would have forgotten who's who among the 20 team members. The rapport must be rebuilt. The Weekend's purpose needs to be recalled.

### *The games and the jokes*

In any gathering and bonding, jokes will always come up. In the heat of exchanging jokes, things can do get rowdy and bawdy.

Jokes are important release valves after a busy schedule. Jokes can

also reveal the wit and character of a person if one were to analyze the joke that hits the spot. The Rector's Guide made us realize there should be a time for jokes.

The same is true for games. Some personalities need more physical outlets than others. But the prevailing situation for the SJFCM is that most candidates who join can barely kick a soccer ball.

This part of the Rector's Guide was probably intended for the youth. In Bonnín's time, he targeted the youth because of his early relationship with the Christian youth group. In our time and at our age, video games may be a better option to release stress and fatigue.

### *The schedule and corridor work*

Then there's the corridor work and the quadrant for measuring the spirituality of the candidate which all team members are required to do. This feels like an anachronism in our age of total transparency and almost paranoid privacy.

I understand why the corridor work and quadrant seem unseemly but are necessary at the Weekend.

Perhaps, a major part of the legwork on the spiritual level of the candidates should be done by the sponsors. They can brief the team on what they found out.

### *Overall*

Those of us who have been with the Cursillo long enough have stopped marveling how the methodology transforms individuals. Every Cursillista knows it works. But on a different level, veteran Cursillistas marvel at how the methodology works because it is simple.

This may be why some Cursillistas are compelled to add an obscure ritual, an old prayer, a remembered element from pre-Vatican II times to make sure the methodology feels complete.

What has not been given much air play until now is that Bonnín also employed psychology in the Cursillo Movement so that it works on humans. Bonnín intended the Cursillo for laymen, not as another clergy or meditative order.

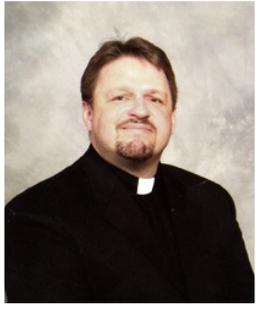
Now, I realize what they mean when they urge Cursillistas to seek and preserve the authentic charism of the Cursillo. It simply means to de-clutter the methodology until the real Cursillo comes out without the additions.

*Bro. Harvey Barkin, San Jose Filipino Cursillo Movement*



# Father Stuart Long Loved the Cursillo Movement

2022 ♦ 2023



**H**ave you seen the movie? The title of the movie is Fr. Stu which is a true story of a priest who happens to be a Cursillista! He loved the Cursillo movement and participated in their activities at every opportunity. Fr. Stu is played by Mark Wahlberg. Father Bart Tolleson, a close friend of Father Stu worked with producer and actor Mark Wahlberg and screenwriter Rosalind Ross to achieve an authenticity

to the real life of this unlikely priest. After accepting the difficult fate God had in store for him, Father Stuart Long spent his last days as a conduit of Christ's grace.

While still a seminarian he was diagnosed with a rare disease called inclusion body myositis, which mimics the symptoms of Lou Gehrig's disease. The disease threatened to derail his desire to become a priest — how would his slowly debilitating body ever be able to lift a chalice while celebrating Mass or conduct other priestly duties? Father Stuart Long was ordained a priest Dec. 14, 2007, at the Cathedral of St. Helena in Helena, Montana.

Jesus has risen from the dead. That's the truth. That's what gives us our identity as Christians. And so, no matter what suffering we have to go through, we unite that with Christ. And Stu was very keen on saying that, yes, if God wanted him to suffer, he would suffer willingly. But he was going to do it joyfully, to give people hope, because he talked about heaven. He said, 'I won't be suffering forever. Eventually, I'm going to move on. And, in this, God is doing great things.' And so, he embraced it willingly. And he always kept a good sense of humor and a joy, for the most part.

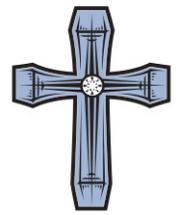
Bishop George Thomas, who ordained Father Stu to the priesthood, and Bishop Austin Vetter, the current bishop of Helena, agreed; Father Stu — raw and unfiltered, combative, and grace-filled — witnesses to the truth that no one is ever beyond the reach of redemption.

Father Stu's conversion also had a profound impact on his parents, ultimately leading both to be confirmed while Stu lay on a gurney, with tears streaming down his face at seeing God's grace at work in their lives.

Father Stu was a living embodiment of grace and strength and suffering. And you hear it from anybody whose life he touched, that he was incredibly grateful for what afflicted him and had such dignity and strength in it. His life is such a beautiful example of humility. You've got this guy who was a fighter, who fought everybody: an opponent in a ring, a guy in a bar. He fought the hand that was dealt to him in life. He fought for his father's approval, and it wasn't until he found God that he realized he could surrender a bit. And I think he learned that staying in the fight on your feet isn't always as effective as getting on your knees and admitting that you can't do it alone.

The providence of God does work in mysterious ways. The grace that led Father Stu to follow Jesus Christ, become a priest and accept whatever God had in store for him, ultimately became the greatest gift to all who knew him — a conduit through which a suffering soul could be washed over with Divine Mercy, flowing from the cross of Christ. Father Stuart Long died June 9, 2014, at the age of 50.

<https://www.ncregister.com/search?q=father+stu>



## Lumen Christi AWARD

**NCSA ANNOUNCEMENTS**  
**2023 NATIONAL ENCOUNTER** will be at Creighton University, Omaha, NE | **JULY 20-23, 2023**



PRAY  
the  
Rosary  
everyday