

Servant of God

Eduardo Bonnín Aguiló

Founder of
Cursillos in Christianity
1917 – 2008

June 2023

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Signs of HOPE

An Interview with Eduardo Bonnín conducted by Bishop Paul Josef Cordes, Part 1

In early 1997, Eduardo Bonnín received a visit from Bishop Paul Josef Cordes of the Vatican (Cardinal and President Emeritus of the Pontifical Council “Cor Unum”). Bishop Cordes was called to interview seven founders from prominent ecclesial Movements in preparation for the First World Congress of Ecclesial Movements, which would be held in 1998 in Rome.

1. Bishop Cordes: Can you tell us briefly about yourself and your spiritual growth? What kind of environment did you grow up in, and what type of formation did you receive?

Eduardo Bonnín: I sincerely believe that the Lord, using many circumstances, has manifested his will, little by little, throughout my life. Although my confidence in Providence is radical, I have never realized the ideal that I had chosen for my life in my youth. Leading me by other paths, the Lord has proven in many circumstances, I should say in all circumstances, that he has better taste than I do.

The environment in which I was born and grew up has certainly been one of the most precious gifts that God has given me. There were ten children in our family, three boys, and seven girls. One of my brothers is a diocesan priest, and one sister, now deceased, was a Carmelite nun.

Because of my age during the Spanish Civil War and World War 2, my military service lasted nine years. Before that, my schooling took place at La Salle College and at the Augustinian Father’s College. Without a doubt, the primary determining factor in my life is my passion for reading, and this is still a factor. Already when I was very young, I had the habit of saying that I would rather go a whole day without eating than a whole day without reading. I have always spent all the money that was at my disposal on books.

2. Bishop Cordes: When you were a young man, what importance did faith have in your life?

Eduardo Bonnín: It was very important. In my humble opinion, faith, when it is Christian, is evangelical because it is centered on Christ. Such Christ-centered faith sheds light, clarifies, and gives direction to all the circumstances of ordinary life, even the unpleasant and complicated ones we encounter on our way to God and His Church.

3. Bishop Cordes: How did you perceive the question of God?

Eduardo Bonnín: Never has it occurred to me that God could be a question, but rather an answer. He is not just an answer but THE answer. I have experienced that when a person has faith, when he believes, he trusts and has confidence in the most amazing reality and in the most challenging thing to understand. God in Christ, loves us, loves me. Everything else flows abundantly and as an unexpected gift from that.

I sincerely believe that sometimes, with the best of intentions, we make a mistake in believing that God came into the world to save it. I humbly confess that I do not believe this. I believe that He was incarnated and came into the world to save man, not the world, so that man can be happy because of the faith that he has in God.

In my life, I have seen people who are very happy although they have nothing and others who are not happy, dying of boredom even though they own much.

All of this helps me to better understand why God says that His kingdom is not of this world and why He puts His Kingdom where He is present, where He wants to be present, and where it pleases Him

to stay. It is in the interior of each person, in his intelligence and in his heart. In the union of God with man by grace, his ego can be conquered, together with his pride and ambition, and each day his conviction, determination, and perseverance can be more conformed to the Christian message. Even with all that, I am convinced that even though God's kingdom is not of this world, he can give sense to the kingdoms of this world.

4. Bishop Cordes: Since your youth, have you experienced a strong intervention from God in your life, which is significant for the present time?

Eduardo Bonnín: In my mind, I have always found my thinking is summarized in the prayer of petition that, from the very beginning, we addressed to God in the "Apostolic Hour." "Lord, make sure that we don't need miracles to believe and act but that our faith be such that we deserve that miracles happen."

I've always been more impressed by the silence of God and his patience than by the miracles and apparitions. The truth usually comes to us through people who appear, and without doubt, only appear to be, people who are far away from the purity of our Father and the eternal freshness of the Beatitudes.

5. Bishop Cordes: The Charism of the Cursillo is tied to the history of its Founder. The Movement was born at a precise historical moment that was presenting particular needs to which you have responded. In light of your personal history, what were the first steps that contributed to the birth of the Movement?

Eduardo Bonnín: I have read this quotation from Ellermeier. "A historical phenomenon can only be properly understood when a light is shone on its origins."

What we could name as "the beginning" of everything was when I left for my military service in 1938, I realized that the world was very different from the image that I had. In that environment, the values being lived were completely opposed to those that I had lived in my family. This is what started me to question myself. "Are these people the way they are because they find the law wearisome, or are they just ignorant of the doctrine?" In observing the details of the lives of these men, gradually, I was convinced that it was not the law that was tiresome, but that ignorance of the doctrine weighed heavily on their lives.

From that moment on, my principal occupation consisted of finding out what was in reality, the fundamental core essential to the doctrine and to the Christian message, and what was being said by the Christian authors that, in my opinion, were explaining it the best. I read St. Augustine, St. Theresa, and St. John of the Cross.

I was also interested in learning about the person toward whom the message is directed. Amongst many authors, I read Dante, Cervantes, Baltasar, Gracian, etc.

Although the hours during my service in which I had nothing to do were numerous, the available time obliged me to give priority to certain books. Amongst my preferences were those that I could read that would be most effective: Hugo and Karl Rahner, Romano Guardini, Father Plus, Cardinal Mercier, Cardinal Suenens, Tristan Amoroso Lima, and the psychologists: Carl Rogers and Maslow.

For my part, I believe today, as I believed then, that it is the Gospel that synthesizes and summarizes best the Christian doctrine. Jesus' message is first and foremost news for man from which is born a preoccupation and arouses a desire to know Him. This Christ who, through His Grace, offers the surprising possibility of becoming His friend, awakens and reinforces inside of each person the best of who he is.

To go forth in the knowledge of Christ and in the knowledge of himself as a person, with his capacity for conviction, determination, and perseverance, is what interested me the most.

To progress in my knowledge of Christ, the following books helped me a lot: *Life Abundant*, Arami, *Soul of the Apostolate*, Chautard, *The Glories of Divine Grace*, and M. J. Scheeben.

To reach a better understanding of men, I read these different books *Les puissances de je*, Louis Lavelle, [In Spanish: *Las potencias del Yo*], *We Have Been Friends Together*, Jacques and Raïssa Maritain, and later, '*En tierra extrana*', [In a Foreign Land] by Lili Alvarez, etc.

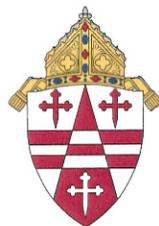


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May 4, 2023

Mr. Juan Adolfo Moguel Ortiz, President of OMCC
Most Rev. Faustino Armendáriz Jiménez, Episcopal Advisor of OMCC

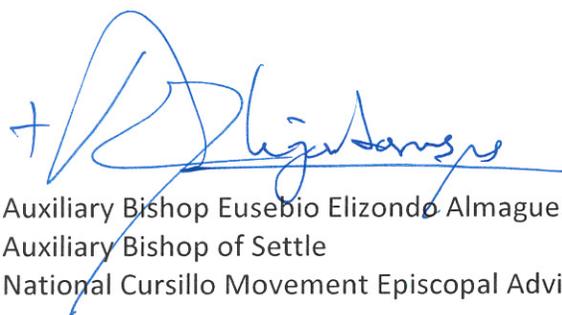
I pray that this letter finds you well, please accept my greetings and prayers for you and all the faithful in your diocese and cursillistas. Besides greeting you, I understand you are asking for a letter recognizing Cursillo in the United States. Please receive this letter fulfilling that request.

I, the Most Reverend Eusebio Elizondo Almaguer, M.S.p. S., Auxiliary Bishop of the Archdiocese of Seattle, WA, member of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB), with a current position as Chairman, Subcommittee on Pastoral Care of Migrants, Refugees, and Travelers (PCMRT), and Episcopal advisor to the National Secretariat of the United States Cursillo in Christianity Movement. I duly certify, that while respecting the authority of every Ordinary of each Archdiocese/ Diocese, the National Cursillo Movement of the USA enjoys the approval to develop and carry out functions as an Ecclesial Movement in our ecclesial territory for said Episcopal Conference of the United States.

I appreciate your attention to this letter, please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions.

Know of my prayers and please keep me in yours.

United in Christ and Our Lady of Guadalupe



Auxiliary Bishop Eusebio Elizondo Almaguer, M. Sp. S.
Auxiliary Bishop of Seattle
National Cursillo Movement Episcopal Advisor



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