

## **A Layperson's Explanation of the Cursillo Leaders Prayer**

Given by Bruce Bonenberger, Evansville Diocese, at the Cursillo Spring Regional Meeting in Louisville on 4-21-12

In the Evansville Movement, the Cursillo Leaders Prayer is always prayed prior to all School of Leaders meetings, Secretariat meetings and Cursillo Team Formation gatherings. In my weekly friendship group reunion, it is prayed at the end of our grouping. In my personal life, I pray it every day and I strive to live the words. It is just one part of the rhythm of my life.

I am going to attempt to a very brief explanation of the meaning of the Cursillo Leaders Prayer. What is this Cursillo Leaders Prayer?

**I'll read from *Whom Shall I Send*, p65** "This prayer is the cornerstone of any School of Leaders and is an outline of the necessary attitudes of a Cursillo Leader". That is the reason why this talk is being given today at this School of Leaders Encounter. I have divided the prayer into 12 sections. We will pray together each section and then I'll make some comments on what we have prayed.

### **1.) Lord, Grant that we may understand the necessity for depth in our movement.**

Necessity means it is very vital. As a firm foundation is required for a building, so a firm foundation or depth is required for the Cursillo Movement. Necessity for depth in the Movement is beyond one's ability to fully understand because we are not able to see what God sees.

**Read from *Whom Shall I Send?* P 65** "The first quality listed is depth or substance. All flash and no substance will not promote commitment and perseverance. Too often we measure religious and spiritual growth by "highs" and "lows", but life is not all highs and lows. We must seek a balance and that balance only comes when we give people depth. Our calling is serious work. We owe it to people to offer them a message of substance." Depth is necessary in the Cursillo Movement if we are to be successful.

### **2.) Rather than surface glory.**

What we see on the surface of any situation will certainly not be a true indication of what lies beneath the surface. For example, look at the water surface of a lake. As we look at the surface, we are blinded by just normal daylight as that light

reflects off the water. The surface acts as a mirror as it reflects the images of the sky, the trees that line the shore line and even our own image. We can't see beneath the surface but Jesus knows what lies beneath the surface. Even if we would dive beneath the surface, we would encounter darkness and the mystery within the depth of the lake would still be hidden. So it is in Cursillo. We have no clue of how the Holy Spirit uses us to influence the people we encounter in the course of our lives because we do not know what lurks in the depths of the human heart of each individual.

Surface glory has no depth. It is superficial, earth bound and fleeting. It is an emotional high for just a brief period of time. If you seek surface glory in the Cursillo Movement, it comes from personal pride and the desire to be recognized. The depth of glory that Jesus calls for has an unfathomable depth to it and will only be revealed at the end of our earthly journey.

### **3.) Convince us of the truth that colorful programs do not constitute success.**

Did Jesus use colorful programs in His public ministry? Absolutely not. He used very simple true facts and events in everyday life. People could easily identify with these events and facts. I want to stress the word simple. Simple events, truths and facts that were familiar to the people He encountered.

I believe Jesus wants simplicity in our personal lives as well as in His Cursillo Movement. Did you catch that I said “**His Movement**”? Too many times, the devil convinces us that this is **our** Movement and **we** have to soften the hardness of people's hearts with colorful programs and that **we** are the primary agents of a person's personal conversion. When we believe that Cursillo works because we use colorful programs, we place God in a box believing that God can't operate out of that box. We believe that God needs colorful programs to change a person's heart. Blessed Mother Theresa of Calcutta said: “We can do no great things, only small things with great love.” We should serve the Movement doing small things with great love.

I like to call colorful programs “fluff”. Fluff can be considered a bribe to the Holy Spirit to change a person's heart with a human emotional high. Fluff usually rears its head during the 3-day Weekend. I'll give a few examples.

Meals should be very similar to what a person consumes in their everyday lives. Therefore, “upscale meals” that are **not** normally part of a person's diet are fluff. When I made my Cursillo, the head of the kitchen staff was a gourmet chef. The

meals were awesome and the highlight of the Weekend. Every head cook tried to outdo their predecessors. In Evansville, we now have a Cursillo cookbook. There are a variety of recipes to choose from. The meals are typical to what is normally found on local family tables.

Meal tables, chapel and altar decorations that are frequently changed to create an emotional high response are fluff. This is usually associated with women's Weekends. This problem still continues but it may not be as bad as in the past. Any altar or chapel decorations should be consistent with the Church's liturgical season. Any meal table decorations should be very simple and not changed for each meal.

Organized joke sessions and/or practical jokes can create laughter and a good time but they are fluff. After a couple of jokes, the jokes always become off-color. Practical jokes quickly escalate into unchristian acts. These types of joke sessions or not Christian, not pleasing to God and portray Cursillo in a very negative light. They had a negative impact on me, as well as others on my Cursillo. I eventually withdrew from the community during break times in order to make my own spiritual "retreat". We no longer allow organized joke sessions or practical jokes on a Weekend. We have a "zero tolerance" with them.

PowerPoint presentations are also fluff because they are colorful and designed to create a "wow" attitude in order to sell an idea or product. Not everybody is able to present that type of presentation on the Cursillo and their talks are judged by candidates as being dull and not as important. We do not allow PowerPoint presentations on a Weekend.

It's certainly possible that a candidate can leave a Cursillo Weekend thinking that their conversion was due to colorful programs and nothing else. In other words, they had a surface conversion which quickly disappeared because they did not always see the love of God present during the Weekend. They missed the many encounters with self, with God and others because they were blinded by the colorful programs. They could easily conclude that the Weekend was just a nice getaway from the normal routine of life and was not due to a personal conversion experience.

As Cursillo leaders, we should stress that Cursillo team members are to be Christian and being a conscious Christian means being converted at all times. In Evansville, we have found that colorful programs are not needed because the Holy Spirit provides naturally occurring moments of laughter, fun, good conversations and fellowship that are common among groups of friends.

**4.) My God, give us a spirit of self-sacrifice so that we might offer everything for your cause:**

**Read from *Whom Shall I Send* p. 65.** “We hear the need for self-sacrifice. If we are committed to Christ’s work, we must follow Him on His terms and live by His agenda, not ours. When Christ is the focus and our self is put aside, we will find our efforts bearing more fruit. A leader must be single-minded, determined and courageous. Doing God’s work is not easy and it is easy to be distracted. We all want to follow the Lord, but too often we want to follow Him on our terms. If we want to follow in Jesus’ footsteps, we cannot make our own path. We must allow Christ to lead us wherever He wants us to go.”

There is always the need to discern if this is God’s will or my will. Is this for my glory or is this for God’s glory? Saying no to my glory and my desires, is a self-sacrificing act of authentic palanca for the Cursillo Movement. Abandoning our will for God’s will is a true sacrifice for the Cursillo Movement.

**5.) Our time, our abilities, our health and even our lives, if necessary.**

As Cursillo leaders, we should be aware that Cursillo is our apostolate and we should be freely giving our time, talents and treasure to the Movement. Do we give a true witness as our personal witness in our talks on the 3-day Weekends? Are those witnesses appropriate for the talks we are giving? Time spent attending 4<sup>th</sup> day functions, using our talents, such as, the ability to witness to God in our life, to be loving, to be faithful to friendship group reunions, and to provide faithful leadership within the Movement. As leaders we should be willing to serve in any capacity, such as, preparing meals on a Weekend, attending Ultreryas regularly and giving a witness talk periodically, and serving as a Cursillo Team member. All these things are stewardship of our time and abilities.

As Cursillo Leaders, we should contribute financially to the Cursillo Movement, at the diocesan, regional and/or national levels. This is stewardship of our treasure. Cursillo is just as important as other good causes.

If God is first in our lives, then we must witness to these things by supporting the Movement with our time, talents and treasure. It is part of being a faithful servant and steward.

**6.) Instill in us courage in our initiatives**

What is courage? A life in Christ is courageous. Courage is a gift of the Holy Spirit. Its origins are grace and the virtues of faith and hope. We need courage to do what is morally right in our personal lives despite the ways of the world which often contradict God's ways. To say "NO" to the constant pressure and allure to accept the world's mentality that I am #1. The truth of the matter is: that God is first, family is second and I am third. To live that lifestyle takes courage. To put anything ahead of God is a form of idolatry.

Courage along with Actual Grace allows us to take action by stepping out in faith and putting into practice the fundamentals of the Cursillo Movement. Cursillo leaders must have the courage to break the chains to any obstacle that fully prevents them from serving the Cursillo Movement. In the Layperson in the Church talk on the Weekend, we hear that God has no hands but ours. If we don't take initiatives and move on opportunities presented to us, then we are not good leaders, servants or stewards. God has instilled within each person gifts and talents and when we use them we grow to become the person we were created to be, that is, "fully human". Acting with courage is the passage to something new and better, that is a new life in Christ. It makes for a tremendous adventure while achieving a fullness of life with Christ in the Kingdom of God on earth.

## **7.) Good judgment in our choice of the right means**

We have other gifts we can give to God. God gives us the gift of freedom which allows us to use our own good judgment in selecting the right choices or means available to bring others to Jesus. These gifts are our own unique personal qualities and they are: our memories, our intellect, and our freedom. Let me say a few words about each of these.

First, are our memories. Our memories are identified with our life's experiences. No one else has them. Even if someone has very similar experiences, they do not possess them in the same way that we possess them.

Second, is our intellect. Our intellect includes all the understandings we have come to in our life. It is our way of understanding particular situations. If our way of understanding is enlightened by the Spirit of Truth then we become leaders filled with wisdom. It's a wisdom that comes from God. It's not the wisdom of a secular society. Thus, we should seek the Spirit of Truth with purity, freedom of heart and an open mind. In the eyes of this secular world, our way of understanding may be

right or wrong, wise or foolish, but it is truly our way of understanding. It's our good judgment in the eyes of God.

Third, is our freedom. The gift of freedom allows us to make choices in our lives. The good and bad choices that we have made; have formed each of us into the person we are today. God can use who we are today to bring others to Him. We have the freedom to use what we consider the right means.

So, right means is nothing more than using all my gifts, talents and life's experiences enlighten by the Holy Spirit along with my own natural and supernatural qualities of a leader to serve the Cursillo Movement.

### **8.) And that determination which in spite of failures assures victory.**

Our determination or commitment comes from God and accepting the Actual Graces that are available to each of us. As leaders, do we give fully of our time, talent and treasure when we serve the Cursillo Movement? Every Cursillo Leader must constantly reflect that he or she will have to give God an account of their decisions and actions. When you work for God, you better give 100%. Anything less than 100% will not be pleasing to God. If God is first in our lives, and if Cursillo is our primary apostolate, then we remain focused on our mission even when apparent failures occur. We can't set up our human expectations as to what constitutes a victory. We should remember that only God knows His plan and the hearts and intellect of others and will use our actions to fulfill His plan within His time frame. It would not be prudent to make a decision on whether an event is classified as a victory or a failure. For instance, we can't decide if a Cursillo was a victory based on new Cursillistas witnesses at the closing. Victory comes by being faithful servants and stewards to the Cursillo methods even when we experience discouragement, criticisms, and feelings of hopelessness. Blessed Mother Teresa of Calcutta said: "we are not called to be successful; we are called to be faithful". Determination to be faithful is most pleasing to God.

### **9.) Move away from us the tiny rivalries, sensitivities, discourtesies, pride, everything which distracts from you, everything which divides or discourages.**

This is indeed a most sobering phrase. **."Read from *Whom Shall I Send?* P 66** "Satan hates anything that comes from God, so he will always find ways to frustrate the Divine plan. He will even set Cursillo Leaders against one another. Divide and conquer is the mode of Satanic operation." As Cursillo leaders we are individuals with different life experiences and different Cursillo experiences. These experiences have formed the way we think, act and believe. Some of our

convictions are deeply held and affect our attitudes and actions. Our fellow Cursillo servants do not always hold the same convictions and attitudes. If we are a prideful person and God is not first in our lives and others second, then this will invariably create rivalries, sensitivities and discourtesies which will destroy unity between leaders in the Cursillo Movement. The devil is very willing to use our personal faults to create disunity and distract us from Christ. When we are distracted from Christ, the light of Christ shining from us becomes either dim or completely goes out. Love for one another is the fuel that keeps the light of Christ burning brightly within us.

**10.) Help us to maintain at a high level a meaningful supernatural and mutual charity among ourselves so that each one will seek by preference the most humble tasks and will rejoice at the good performed by others,**

This part of the prayer sounds like an impossible vision, but it usually happens on the 3-day Weekend. We just have to live and witness that vision once the Weekend is over.

First, I'll read from *Whom Shall I Send? P65*. "No work of Christ can be accomplished without supernatural charity. It is only with the power of the Spirit that we can work together to carry out Christ's mission. That means we cannot allow our petty concerns to interfere with the task at hand. We as leaders must work together with a common purpose."

I'll talk briefly about mutual charity. Mutual charity is when Cursillo Leaders are self-giving while working and living together with a humble spirit in Christian Community to advance the Cursillo mission and agenda. The Cursillo Movement moves forward not by the good of one or just a few individuals but by the good of many individuals. If we are authentic Cursillo Leaders, who place God first, others second and ourselves third, then all will rejoice at the good performed by others. There will be no envy or jealousy among us. Quoting from the *CCC 1889*: "The path of charity is the love of God and of neighbor. Charity is the greatest social commandment. It respects others and their rights. It requires the practice of justice, and it alone makes us capable of it. Charity inspires a life of self-giving."

**11.) So that all our spirits united in a common purpose will have one single spirit, yours Jesus,**

Service is what Cursillo leaders are called to provide to unleash the power of the spirit of Jesus.

I'll read from the book *The Cursillo Movement: Study of the Charism*, (pp. 129-130) "The Cursillos in Christianity are "spirit" and they move in a spiritual plane, to produce a "hunger" for God. Things of the "spirit" move at the level of unity in service." ...."While Cursillo is "spirit" its experience in the world needs an organizational structure because the development and growth of this "spirit" in the world requires some service bodies working to preserve its essence and purpose." ...."This ultimately translates into a single function: service."

How do we receive this "spirit"? In the *CCC*, paragraph 683, "No one can say Jesus is Lord except by the Holy Spirit." (1 Cor 12:3) "God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, Abba! Father!" (Gal 4:6) God's spirit made us children of God so we have the confidence to call God Father. This knowledge of faith is possible only in the Holy Spirit: to be in touch with Christ, we must first have been touched by the Holy Spirit. He comes to meet us and kindles faith in us. By virtue of our Baptism, the first sacrament of the faith, the Holy Spirit in the Church communicates to us, intimately and personally, the life that originates in the Father and is offered to us in the Son." Jesus pours out His spirit to each of us. He does not ration or measure it out. In John 3:34 we read: "God does not ration His gift of the Spirit." This is why we as Cursillistas can say with confidence "Christ and I are an overwhelming majority." This gives us a single spirit as we are united in a common purpose with Jesus.

**12.) and that this Spirit may let us see your attractive goodness marked in all our faces, your warm accents in all our words and in our lives something superior to the world, something that proclaims your living presence among us.**

Doesn't this concluding part of the prayer describe the Kingdom of God on earth? Does the Cursillo Movement in your diocese resemble The Kingdom of God on earth? That depends on how we as Cursillo Leaders live our lives of service to the Movement while fulfilling our mission. How should we live our lives?

I'll read from Eduardo Bonnin's book, *The How and the Why* (p.12) "in a Cursillo, there is one idea: To live the life of Grace with full and reflexive consciousness, to share it and to spread it." ..... "Leaders in Cursillo must be nothing else but "the incarnation of Christian values." (p. 27) "These values are personified in Cursillo leaders as an interior spirituality shining forth. They bear witness to Christian values even in their most insignificant gestures as they live a life of divine simplicity." (Paraphrase p. 27)

To paraphrase **Lumen gentium, no. 9; p. 374 Vol.2 Lit. of Hrs.**, it was Christ who established a new covenant in His blood calling Jews and Gentiles to form a unity, not in a human fashion but in the Spirit, as a new people of God. We have as a goal the Kingdom of God which is destined to grow until it is brought to perfection by Christ at the end of time. This is the Church, the people of God, a visible sacrament of unity which brings with it eternal salvation.

When Christ spoke of the Kingdom of God He often emphasized the heavenly aspect of the kingdom, and its interior, religious character. The people of God are the Church united by the grace of Christ. Christ has united and gathered us together and He rules in the midst of His people. It is a realization on earth of God's kingdom, the final fulfillment of which is in eternity.

## **Conclusion**

In conclusion, Cursillo leaders need to pray this prayer regularly and live the words of this prayer. We need to believe the words, believe in ourselves and believe in the Cursillo vision.

We need to know and study the Cursillo literature so we can understand the Movement and apply its method properly to obtain the Cursillo vision.

And finally we must live and witness the Cursillo vision by living the Cursillo Weekend talks and make them come alive by our everyday Catholic witness. Our daily metaonia changes ourselves, others, environments and subsequently the whole of society as well. This is what this Cursillo Leaders' prayer and the Cursillo Movement is all about.