

KEYNOTE ADDRESS FOR THE WORLD IV Ultreya of “Cursillos in Christianity”

SIGNS OF HOPE

We are going facing times of global crisis, fraught with uncertainties and threats on the lives of individuals, families, nations and international harmony. Secularized messianisms and utopias have collapsed, while the idolatry of power, money, technological knowledge and pleasure clearly show that they only serve to build the common home on sand and straw, not rock. Even the nave of the church is facing storms and trials. These are dramatic times that require of Christians a unique testimony of hope. Notwithstanding all the failures in the personal and collective hardship, not withstanding all human limitations and, above all, death itself that seems to wipe out all projects, we put hope in the indestructible power of Love, whose face is revealed in He that loved us all to the end: God is the foundation of the great hope that sustains all life (cf. Eph. 2, 12). "In hope we were saved" (Rom. 8, 24).

May this Ultreya be a great sign of hope of which the Church gives public witness and to which personas and peoples are called!

Indeed, among the many signs of hope for the good of the Church and humanity, H.H. John Paul II recognized the emergence of "a new era of associations of the lay faithful", which, "alongside the traditional associations, and sometimes from their very roots, movements and associations have sprouted with new physiognomy and with specific purposes", showing "The richness and versatility of resources that the Spirit nourishes in the ecclesial fabric" and "the capacity for initiative and generosity in our lay people" (Christifidelis Laici n. 29). He did so at the Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation, which celebrated its twentieth anniversary of publication, Magna Carta for the laity of our time, that on the Synod roadway—path of communion for all the Church - has been a further development and recapitulation of the teachings of Vatican II on the vocation and mission of the laity in the Church and the world. This was also noted when Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger in 1985, wrote that "what is giving hope at the level of the Universal Church - and this happens precisely at the heart of the crisis of the Church in the Western world - is the rise of new movements that no one planned, but rather have emerged spontaneously from the inner vitality of the faith "(Report on the Faith, 1985). In them, the Cardinal expressed appreciation for the faith that "was reborn in young men and women, with no 'buts', without subterfuge or loopholes, a living faith in its integrity as a gift, as a precious gift for life" (The placement of theological Movements, 1997).

The Cursillos in Christianity have been prophetic anticipators of that living stream of new movements and ecclesial communities that have enriched the communion and mission of the church since before the second half of the twentieth century and up until our time.

PROVIDENTIAL REALITY

What are the fruits of movements if not the action of the Holy Spirit that “not only sanctifies

and leads the people of God through the sacraments and the ministries”, but that “also distributes special gifts amongst the faithful of whatever state or condition and distributes its gifts to each as He wishes”(Lumen Gentium, n. 12)? As Hans Urs von Balthasar and Joseph Ratzinger have pointed out how many different extraordinary charisms appear to focus in timely fashion, as if in a cluster, on the crossroads of history, change of **era** and deep cultural transition, which subject the Christian tradition to the test in the face of new and emerging challenges affecting the various dimensions of people's lives and societies. These charismatic breakthroughs are what renew bring forth the Christian tradition from its very source, and reviving and re-proposing the entire original force of the Christian event and its fascinating evidence, giving rise to living currents of sanctification of ordinary people, of Church reform in its mystery of communion, and of the new evangelization of pop culture.

"It is significant in this respect - said John Paul II on November 18, 1984 – how the Spirit in order to continue the dialogue begun by God in Christ and continued throughout Christian history, has given rise to many ecclesial movements in the contemporary Church. " And on another occasion, on September 29, 1985, he stated even more explicitly: "The Church, born of the passion and resurrection of Christ and the outpouring of the Spirit, and propagated throughout the world and at all times on the foundation of the apostles, has been enriched for centuries by the grace of gifts that are ever new. These have enabled it, at various times, be present in new and appropriate ways to the thirst for beauty and justice that Christ was arousing in the hearts of men, and of which he himself is the only full and satisfactory response ".

In **the crucial** context of our time, the movements are “a providential response” because “ they represent one of the most significant fruits of the spring time of the Church announced by the Second Vatican Council, but they are, unfortunately, often hampered by the growing process of secularization "(Pope John Paul II at May 27, 1998).

The Cursillo movement of Christianity is certainly the work of the Spirit of God, a providential reality, a path of rediscovery of the vocation and mission of the laity, an occurrence of new life that spreads in every environment of coexistence and, in such a way that it is the renewal of the Christian tradition that anticipated and prepared for the Vatican Council II and which cooperated in its most faithful and living actions.

ON THE ORIGINS OF THE MOVEMENT

If the generic category of "movements" can certainly not be exhausted or fixed by the wealth of manners generated by the life-giving creativity of the Spirit" it does serve, however,"to indicate a concrete ecclesial reality of predominantly lay participation, a journey of faith and Christian witness which bases its own pedagogical method on a precise charism given to the individual founder in certain circumstances and ways". It is characteristic of all of them - continued John Paul II in his message of May 27, 1998 - "the common conscience of the novelty that the baptismal grace brings to life (...), the singular desire to deepen the mystery of communion with Christ and the brethren (...), the strong loyalty to the heritage of faith transmitted by the living stream of tradition (...), all giving "rise to a renewed missionary thrust which results in a finding itself with the men and women of our time, in the situations where they find themselves in, and to contemplate with eyes brimming with love, the dignity, needs and

destiny of each one”.

At its origin, then, the movements are the work of the Spirit that, by using the method of the Incarnation, distributes and gives its charisms to certain individuals so that they will give rise to a new journey of faith that is for the conversion and sanctification of individuals, for the "common use" of building up the Body of Christ in the midst of human fellowship. It has been the Spirit of God that illuminated the definition of Cursillos of Christianity, in its essence and purpose, through the Christian and ecclesial experience lived by Eduardo Bonnín with his young friends, during the 1940s in Mallorca as a living stream of the role of laity beyond the limits **too clerical of** the Church, in harmony with respect to what was being reflected upon with regard to the “theology of the laity”, and with the urgings of H.H. Pius XII so that the laity might be fully recognized in the communion and mission of the Church and soon thereafter would be taught and propelled by that great event of the Spirit which was the Second Vatican Council. It was this same Spirit that assisted priests like Sebastian Gayá, Guillermo Payeras, Juan Capo and many others collaborated as educators in the faith, in the genesis and development of Cursillos. And it is the same Spirit that guided the pastoral discernment and doctrinal support of Bishop Juan Hervás first and there after all the numerous bishops and Popes who have recognized and encouraged the Cursillos in Christianity, in its integrity and uniqueness as a work of God for the good of the Church and humanity. They were not, therefore, the work of chance or wonderful improvisation but rather the powerful seed planted by God in the good earth of the Church, in the heart and intelligence of Bonnín and his friends in the company of the pastors, which became a thriving, fruitful tree in the vineyard of the Lord. This is why H.H. Paul VI was able to say during the first Ultreya held in Rome on May 28, 1966, that Cursillos of Christianity, as confirmed by their results and good fruit, "have the right of citizenship throughout the world." The Pope himself blessed and encouraged in his message to the second Ultreya gathered in Mexico City on May 23, 1970, and H.H. John Paul II offered his appreciation on the occasion of the third Ultreya celebrated on July 28, 2000, in St. Peter's Square during the Holy Year, "for all that the Church, through the Cursillos of Christianity, has done and continues to achieve."

Pope Benedict XVI teaches on the subject, in his message of May 22, 2006, how "over the centuries, Christianity has been communicated and disseminated through the newness of life of individuals and communities able to provide an effective witness of love, unity and joy, "the force that has set into ‘movement’ so many people for generations. Has it not been the beauty that the faith has generated in the faces of the saints which has prompted many men and women to follow in their footsteps? In the end - concluded the pope - this applies to you: through the founders and initiators of your movements and communities you have glimpsed the face of Christ with a singular brightness and you started on your way ".

The "new phase" of "ecclesial maturity" that Pope John Paul required of the movements, in his speech on May 30, 1998, is today translated to being faithful to the charism that has generated and always encouraged and renewed in all its original passion, freshness and spiritual power. **It means also to be faithful to the method of** Christian rediscovery that the same charism began. **It means also to be faithful to** friendship, companionship and community fellowship that experience has shaped and is at once its sign and its support, its food and propulsion. **Finally, it means also to be faithful to the** ardor, enthusiastic momentum, radiant and urging zeal to communicate in all environments the beauty of the experience, overcoming at

the same time, all bureaucratic withdrawal and fatigue, all the difficulties and trials, all the divisions in which the work of the devil is insinuated.

BEGIN ANEW FROM JESUS CHRIST

What are the charisms if not a gift (*gratia gratis data*) that the Holy Spirit infuses gives rise to ever renewed paths for encountering and following the Lord in the lives of individuals and communities? The Cursillos in Christianity aimed, from their origins, on what they called "what is fundamental to being Christian". In its beginning there was a conversion experience that, beyond the tinsel traditional of Christianity, its appearance of power and worldly success, aroused a love for Christ and the brethren, an evangelical radicalism, an apostolic urgency, void of all tranquil mediocrity and conformity among Christians and determined to not be drawn in to the "humm-drumm" of the church "machine". That experience of Eduardo Bonnin and his friends, along with the shepherds who accompanied them, all centered on "what is fundamental to being Christian", could well be expressed with what Pope John Paul II wrote as a program in the Apostolic Letter *Novo Millennio Ineunte* (nn . 16 et seq.) "Begin anew from Christ," setting our gaze on his face, aware of the depth of his mystery, and therefore beggars confident in his grace, to rediscover the human stature in which we have been created, re-generated by baptism and destined for growth, and converted as his disciples, and therefore his witnesses and missionaries.

The Charism is a form of obedience to which God's mercy, by the grace of his Spirit, has destined for us, whereby the presence of Christ and the mystery of the Church - his body in history - become evident and poignant , **fascinating** and reasonable, in people's lives. The Cursillos are primarily that shared invitation to "open the doors to Christ," the doors of the heart and intelligence of the person and of all living environments of human interaction. Indeed, these are real charisms of the one Spirit (cf. I Cor. 12, 4-11) who confess Christ as Lord are true (cf. I Cor. 12, 3), contribute to building up the Body of Christ in human interaction (cf. 1 Cor. 12, 7, 12, 22-27) and give, above all, the primacy of charity (cf. I Cor. 13 2Cor. 6, 6, Gal. 5 2). Benedict XVI clearly affirms this at the beginning of his encyclical *Deus caritas est*: " Being Christian is not the result of an ethical choice or a lofty idea, but the encounter with an event, a person, which gives life a new horizon and a decisive direction.. "

¡Yesterday as well as today, we are contemporaries of this Presence! Today, "in our world, often dominated by a secularized culture which encourages and promotes models of life without God", the faith of many is sorely tested and is frequently stifled and dies "(cf. John Paul II , May 30, 1998), we are all called to a renewed encounter with Christ, with the same reality, novelty and relevance, with the same power of persuasion and affection with the same fascinating attraction of the experience lived 2000 years ago by the first disciples on the banks of the Jordan and a few decades ago by those young friends of Majorca and pilgrims to Santiago. Such is the grace that we must implore. Christianity is not, ultimately, a religious worldview, a doctrine about the truth or a set of rituals for "initiated" minorities, but rather the occurrence of the Word made flesh, that through the **sacrament** of the Christian community, comes to meet us at every time and place, and requires of our freedom only the simple "fiat" like Mary's, so that our flesh will become His and our blood, His blood. This is the consciousness of the "new creature" we become through baptism, the most profound and sublime dignity of the person created in God's

image, made participants of the death and resurrection of the Lord, redeemed as a child of God, new protagonists in the world scene. Therefore, the real charisms lead to communion of the Church, assiduousness to the and sacramental Eucharistic encounter with the Lord, in dialogue with him in prayer, in listening to His Word and the faithful intelligence to his teachings in the living awareness of his Presence in the communion of the brethren in the faith, the perception of his face in the "neighbors" of all environments of life and especially in those who bear the cross of poverty, suffering, and the loss of "meaning" to life. The realization of self is most fully obtained in the encounter with Jesus Christ. Therefore, no other words were more primary nor repeated more in the teaching of H.H. John Paul II than that of Gaudium et Spes (n. 22): "In reality, the mystery of man is clarified only in the mystery of the Incarnate Word."

METHOD, PATH, SCHOOL

It is clear that every extraordinary charism generates a method of education to the faith and in the faith, or, in other words, a path of rediscovery of Christ's presence in the lives of people through their membership in the communion and co-responsible participation in the mission of the Church. Method means the path toward a goal, a route discovery, a teaching and training. Thus, Benedict XVI called the movements "schools of life", "schools of freedom, schools of communion" (Homily of June 3, 2006). And Pope John Paul II exclaimed, years prior: "There is so much need for mature Christian personalities, conscious of their baptismal identity, of their vocation and mission in the Church and the world! (...) And here are the movements and new ecclesial communities": they are the "providential response" (speech of May 30, 1998).

There no longer exists a social and cultural environment conducive to the transmission of Christianity; on the contrary, there is dissemination, through the powerful and capillary networks of media, a dominant culture of relativist trends and even conformist nihilism, increasingly remote and hostile to the Christian tradition. The Witness of many baptized Christians is sustained by remaining traces of that tradition, reduced to small residual fragments and episodes, impoverished and confused in its existential and intellectual content, and ultimately quite superfluous. Pope Benedict XVI has signaled various times to the current "educational emergency", or arduous difficulty in communicating reasons, sound and strong ideals, that give meaning and a path for achieving a truly human way of life. This educational emergency finds a critical focal point in the difficulty of transmitting the faith, which seems to have placed a "chokehold" on communication. No matter the generic rhetoric on values, or the pious speeches, or even the simple mention of the Christian message. There is no interest or attraction to a Christian appeal that is not a life-bearing new experience in which a real radiance and a promise of happiness for life itself cannot be seen. Therefore, the movements are "providential" because they attract and communicate thanks to the testimony of a new life that returns to the event which makes it possible, they give reasons for the hope that inspires the radiating love of this experience proclaiming the kerygma of faith and suggest a learning path for people accompanying them to Christian maturity. They are, as Benedict XVI wrote on May 22, 2005, "companies on the path in which to learn to live in the truth and love that Christ revealed to us and communicated by the witness of the apostles, in the great family of his disciples. "

The force of the charism and educational method lead to overcoming any dualism between faith and life, to give shape to life under the impact of the Christian event, to continue

experiencing union with Christ as the fully, satisfactory, overabundant response, to the desire for freedom, truth, happiness and justice rooted in the heart of the person, to the point of exclaiming, like the Apostle Paul: "It is not I who lives, but Christ who lives in me" (...). "Life is Christ" (Gal. 2, 20).

Benedict XVI expressed this strongly in the homily at the inaugural Mass of his pontificate (April 24, 2005): "Whoever lets Christ enter (in their life) loses nothing, nothing, absolutely nothing of what makes life free, beautiful and great (...). Only in this friendship does the great potential of the human condition really open (...). Do not be afraid of Christ! He takes nothing away, and he gives you everything. The person who gives themselves to Him, receives 100 to 1. Yes, open wide the doors to Christ and you will find true life. "

It fact, if the encounter with Christ is true, life-changes, all of life, all the points of interest in life, despite all the distractions and inconsistencies, all worldly undertakings, all the betrayals and denials that come from sin. There is no longer a divorce between the confession of faith and the fabric of everyday life; they are no longer separated into compartments. Nothing can be outside this metanoia, this conversion and transformation of all existence. If it is a true encounter, it changes a person's life and leaves a mark on married and family life, friendships, work, recreation, use of leisure time and money, how to look at reality. Everything becomes more human, more real, more splendidly beautiful and happier. Everything is embraced by the power of a love of transfiguration, unity, life, sign and flow of this "revolution of love" that is Christianity. And this new life is not the result of a mere moral effort, always fragile, in the person, but the result, above all, of the grace, or rather an encounter that becomes friendship, familiarity, communion, confidence in the merciful love of God, strength in our weakness. "The vital synthesis between the Gospel and the duties of everyday life that the faithful will know how to shape – wrote John Paul II *Christifidelis Laici* (n. 34) - will be the most splendid and convincing evidence that, not fear but the search and adherence to Christ are the decisive factor for man to live and grow, and to configure new ways of living more in conformity with human dignity. "

Moreover, thanks to the charisms and their educational radicalism of the Gospel, the objective content of faith and the flow of its living tradition they communicate persuasively and are received as personal experience. Movements raise and nurture, accompany and lead to an understanding of faith that is rooted in the teachings of the Church as communicated by the Magisterium of its Pastors - condensed in the Catechism of the Catholic Church - and this becomes intelligence of all reality. Not by chance does the tradition of *Cursillos* have the illustrative phrase that all reality seems to be "de colores" to believers, no longer in the dark life of confusion, without meaning, or the superficiality of a gray existence in which Christianity for many is becoming paltry. Quintessential to *Cursillos* is to stir the heart, enlighten the intelligence and direct the will to the path of conversion and formation of a new Christian personality.

COMPANY, FRIENDSHIP, COMMUNION

The "spiritual affinity" that is created between those who share the same charism gives rise to strong and deep friendships, communal living arrangements, forms of unique fraternity, which are company and support for the Christian life of individuals who "make the interior of a smaller

reality, the great and vital reality of the Church”, wrote Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger in the book *Salt of the Earth*, 1997- concrete, experiential and practical.” The movements are manifestations of the "free forms" in which the one Church is achieved, by means of which they educate in the sense of belonging to the mystery of communion and sharing in its mission. Thus, Benedict XVI calls the movements "luminous signs of the beauty of Christ and the Church, his wife" (Message of May 2, 2006), radiant reflections of this mystery of communion in which we recognize ourselves as "members of one body, made "one in Christ" (cf. Gal. 3, 28, Col. 11), which has its source and summit in the Eucharist, "a sign of unity" and "bond of charity" (cf. Lumen Gentium , 11). The Church, expressed Benedict XVI, before his trip to Cologne to attend the World Youth Day, is the “**support** of a great love for our lives. " St. Augustine said it in these words: "In human interaction, so full of mistakes and suffering, what gives us consolation but a secure faith and love of true and good friends? Can we not say the same thing from the experience of the movements?

"What great need there is for christian communities, " John Paul II also exclaimed, and this sense also, marks the paradigmatic and providential character of the movements (speech on May 30, 1998). Indeed, how is faith to be kept alive in the person as living moment, how is the "new being" to grow in the newness of life and how can the freedom of the children of God be preserved in the midst of worldly life that is ever more assimilating? How can this be done without strong roots in a specific Christian community, alive, which is home to the person who embraces their entire life, sustaining and nourishing the memory of Christ and fidelity to tradition in every dimension of their existence? When the bonds to the Church are weak and sporadic, there is only a consumption of "religious" services. It is not enough, either, to have an abstract idea of the Church, subject to our preconceptions and measures. The over-confidence that often has been placed in planning and "bureaucracies" makes the Church appear, in the end, for many a company of religious services and moral exhortations shaped by "projects" of their stakeholders. In addition, we are still the heirs of that contradiction, which made H.H. Paul VI suffer so much as he held admiration for the most beautiful, profound and renewed ecclesial consciousness that, as the fruit of the Spirit, is expressed in the **Vatican Council** teachings and, in turn, warned of the phenomena of mass crisis, disaffection, argumentation, and alienation of its authentic communion. No wonder, then, that we are invited to re-read this extraordinary council document, the Constitution on the Church, "Lumen Gentium" and to re-educate the "sensus ecclesiae." We must always rediscover the Church as sacrament rooted in the Trinitarian life, which “means" for the whole world the mystery of salvific design, reveals the pilgrim nature of God's people, present in history as the epiphany of the inexhaustible novelty and contemporaneity of the Body of Christ. It is embraced above all as a gift, in all the density and beauty of its mystery, in all its constituent factors. It is not "ours", it is God's.

If the Church does not give rise to this in-corporation into living Christian communities- in its most profound theological and existential meaning—then it remains just one more addition to life and not the "tremendous mystery", more radical and decisive than any family, ethnic, social, political and cultural ties. The present circumstances only serve to emphasize this requirement. Indeed, we are made for communion, but everything tends to obscure our origin, the desire of our hearts, and our destination. Today there is a rapid process of disintegration of social fabric everywhere, in societies that are increasingly fragmented into a multiplicity of interests, cultures and individual conflict, which is growing in indifference and hostility of people towards each

other. Freedom conceived as individualistic independence breaks the bonds of belonging and leaves the "I" in isolation, in terms of vulnerability, helplessness and dependency under the influences of power, in a growing mass depersonalization. "Virtual" communication is **obviously** not enough. In the "global village" of communications what are truly needed are more real encounters, accompaniment and friendship, a real exercise of communion. Thus the apostolic exhortation *Christifidelis Laici* (n. 34) stated that "to remake the Christian fabric of human society"-starting from the family and its "intermediate groups" - we must "remake the Christian fabric of the ecclesial community itself". The Church has to become more "forma mundi"—germination, sign and flow of the new society within the world-as a visible community of very diverse people -poor sinners trusting in the mercy and grace of their Lord--who live real relationships, more humanly, more characterized by "being" than "having" or "being able to", of a surprising fraternity, miraculous gift of unity that men can not win with their solitary and disorderly forces; always exposed to the sins of its members, always in an "examination of conscience", always begging for forgiveness and with an attitude of conversion and renewed fidelity.

Therefore, it is essential and urgent, now more than ever that there be " *formation of mature ecclesial communities*, in which the faith might radiate and fulfill the basic meaning of adherence to the person of Christ and his Gospel, of an encounter and sacramental communion with him, and of an existence lived in charity and in service. "(*Christifidelis laici*, 34). Every Christian community--families as "domestic churches", parishes, associations, religious communities, ecclesial communities, movements ...- is called to live and bear witness to this mystery of communion, in unity with the bishop and the Pope, as abode and fertile ground for education of the individual, adherence to Christianity as a live event, the growth of freedom from the conformist pressures of the environment and passionate responsibility for its own destiny and the destiny of others. This does not depend on a plethora of initiatives and a facade of renovations. It is the work of the sacramental and charismatic gifts, which are coessential in the Church, founding it and constantly renewing it. Church history shows us that the movements of renewal that raises the spirit brings forth to revive the faith and the mission return to the source and updating that archetype of the primitive community in many ways, in which all the brothers and sisters were "of one soul and one mind ", assiduously attending to the teaching of the apostles, gathered in the breaking of bread and prayers, putting **life, gifts** and property in common.

This pattern of communion is strongly present from the origins of *Cursillos* of Christianity, which could also be said were the result of a friendship that, in Christ, grew in the embrace of people of various ages, social condition, cultures and nations. Therefore, the phrase that has been so common among you--"make a friend, be a friend and make them friends of Christ," is the fabric of friendship which links the circular dynamics of pre-cursillo, cursillo and postcursillo. It is a friendship that becomes communion, that lives, feeds and supports the great communion of the Church. **It is communion guaranteed by a prompt and obedient adherence to the bishops in union with the Successor of Peter, ministers and witnesses of that communion in the truth and love. It is communion that** shares this charism and works in the life of local churches for the edification of the one Body of Christ. **It is** communion, not in and of itself, but for the mission.

¡AD GENTES!

"Anyone who has found something true, beautiful and good in his life - the real treasure, the pearl of great price - is to share it everywhere, at home and at work in all areas of their lives." This was acknowledged by Benedict XVI in his homily on June 3, 2006. So a few days earlier, in his message of May 22 of that year, he urged the movements to bring "Christ's light to all the social and cultural milieus in which you live" noting that, "Missionary zeal is proof of a radical experience of ever renewed fidelity to one's charism that surpasses any kind of weary or selfish withdrawal."

That missionary zeal exists in the very origins of Cursillos in Christianity. Not in vain, Eduardo Bonnín has emphasized the importance that lay, from the very definition of these cursillos, on the study of the environment. "This study of the environment presupposed and meant, that on the one hand, to depart from the "sacristies," to give an end to the enclosure of the church, in order to go beyond a church that rested upon christian routines whose social weight covered situations and trends of crisis waiting to happen. On the other hand, it meant remaining attentive to the circumstances of actual, concrete and ordinary conditions of the life and interactions of every person and coexistence. It is a zeal for expanding the power of Christian friendship in all environments; a lively awareness of the universal destination of the gospel of Christ that does not have preferences for people nor discriminates according to the labels or preventive censorship, with an open heart and with disposition toward the encounters as if each were eventful and promising, with passion for life and the fate they face.

"The Church does not proselytize - said Benedict XVI in Aparecida (May 13, 2007). It grows much more by attraction: as Christ 'draws all to himself'." Cursillos also offer that attractive witness, that is "leavening" because it is capable of moving the hearts of people, to later lead their intelligence and then spur their will on a path of reconciliation with oneself, with God and brethren. It was very important to Bonnín and those with him to refer to the stories of Christ's encounters with several people in the seemingly mundane circumstances of life (with those who would be his apostles, with the Magdalene and the Samaritan woman, with Zacchaeus, the rich young man ...), since these same events are still occurring through his witnesses in all environments of interaction, in all times and places. It is always the same method of discipleship that begins with "Come and see, come and follow me," and that will then become familiarity, announcement, teaching, newness of shared life, and apostolate. It is the dynamics of the attractive invitation ("follow me"), of the formation ("make them my disciples") and sending ("go throughout the world").

The invitation to Cursillos is for everyone of all ages; men and women of various social conditions and cultural contexts, without moral or religious pre-requisites, because the Gospel is for everyone!! And a "Catholic" charism always proves capable of embracing and moving all. It is directed both to those who have the gift of baptism buried in oblivion or indifference or to the "far away" of every belief. The exhortation *Christifidelis Laici* (n. 34) does not leave room today for easy optimism: "Whole countries and nations where religion and the Christian life were formerly flourishing (...) are now put to a hard test, and in some cases, are even undergoing a radical transformation", as a result of a constant spreading of an indifference to religion, of

secularism and atheism so that large masses of men live as if God does not exist. And "the number of those who still do not know Christ and do not belong to the Church - is said in the encyclical *Redemptoris Missio* (n. 3) - (...) since the end of the Council it has almost doubled." However, it does no good to only complain, lament and denounce the evils of the times. Two reasons sustain our hope and missionary zeal. The first is that the Holy Spirit always precedes us as the great protagonist of evangelization in the life of people in their environments of life, in all nations, and in all creation. And the second is the belief that everyone, in their reason and **affection**, is made for the truth, for justice, for happiness, for love, yearning without confines that are anxious for full realization. **Therefore, these undeniable and irrepressible yearnings of their humanity are restless until it rests in God, finding a complete answer only in Christ, that is completely satisfactory.**

I interpret this "vertebration of environments" - vertebration of Christianity! - which is peculiar to the experience and the jargon of cursillos, as that amazing transformation that yeast produces in the dough, making the community of people aware and respectful of the common dignity, passionate for justice and peace, in solidarity before the needs, and builders of the common good. Much more still: they are signs of the Kingdom of God that mysteriously grows in the midst of human society, the "revolution of love" that only Christianity is, transmits and spreads in the history of humanity, the Lordship of Christ, only "corner stone" for the every truly human project.

Today all cursillistas are called, in keeping with their charism, to renew their missionary zeal and presence at all "areopagus" that announce the good news of salvation. You must take and propose the experience of cursillos everywhere, in all environments, to all corners of the world, and "even to the moon" as the founders used to say. Then you will be clearly responding to the invitation which the Holy Father Benedict XVI made to you on June 3, 2006: "Dear friends, I ask that you be, still more, much more so, partners in the universal ministry of the Pope, opening the doors to Christ. This is the best service to give to the Church and mankind ... "

This missionary apostolic passion will help, and it is no small thing to avoid the temptation of concentrating and wasting energy on interpretive debates, forming opposing sides, vindictive bids for power, on tensions, suspicions and divisions that cloud the testimony of friendship and inhibit the most enthusiastic promotion of Cursillos and the leavening and vertebrating presence to which all are called upon to perform in all environments.

¡Ultreya, friends! ¡Ultreya! It seems that this greeting and exclamation mean "beyond." The grace of the Lord takes us beyond our limits, enlightens our intelligence with the "beyond" of faith and leads us beyond our own programs and plans, inviting us to be witnesses and missionaries, always beyond all confines and awaits us beyond history, in its eternal abode.
¡Ultreya, cursillista friends!

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