



To: All USA Cursillistas  
From: National Secretariat & National Staff  
Re: December 2012 Newsletter

## National Spiritual Advisor's Reflection of Cursillo in the USA



**Fr. Peter M. Jaramillo S.S.A.**

**Year of Faith** - With the celebration of Thanksgiving Day already behind us Americans have returned home after enjoying rich foods, great stories and renewing family ties and friendships. However, in the midst of the greetings and goodbyes and the cacophony of this wonderful holiday I pray that many gave thanks to God for their blessings. The final days are now here and the clock ticks away the liturgical year of 2012 as the Church initiates the new liturgical year, a Year of Faith beginning with the holy season of Advent. Pope Benedict has declared this Year of Faith a call to holiness that challenges Catholics to know, love, and live their faith in order to counter the attacks of an aggressive secular society. On October 11, 2012, on the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Second Vatican Council, and on the 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Catechism of the Church he declared this Year of Faith, and opened the doors for Catholics to enter into the “Porta Fidei”, (The Door of Faith) which he says “faith grows when lived, because Catholics cannot grow lazy in faith”, rather they must enter the narrow gate that leads to eternal life and seeks the kingdom of God with the power of the Gospel.

**Advent** - Advent promises new awakenings. It looks forward with hope to the *Parousia*, the second coming of our Lord when he will come in glory. The prophet Isaiah, foretells the voice of another prophet St. John the Baptist as one crying out “Prepare the Way of the Lord; make straight a highway for our God”. Similarly, Advent calls us to remember the days when Mary carried the Christ child in her womb and longed to see her child be born, as *Emmanuel* who brings peace to men of good will. The figure of the Blessed Virgin Mary will be a predominant figure of hope under the titles of the Immaculate Conception and Our Lady of Guadalupe, she will see us through the end of this year and as we begin the first day of the New Year dedicated to her under the title *Theotokos*, “The Mother of God”.

Advent is a time for listening and being still. St. Augustine says one should listen with the inner ear of the heart. Listening to the “voice crying out in the desert” or in the market place, the inner city, in the kitchen, while driving, or during holy liturgy at Mass to “Prepare the Way of the Lord”. How are we preparing? How am I listening? In the midst of the black Fridays or the cyber Mondays shopping, we need to find time to be still, to prepare our mind and heart for Jesus to come into our lives. Not to worry about the end of the world but to be more concerned about his coming in my life right now. And when he comes, how prepared will I be? The kingdom of God will come whether I am ready or not . . . perhaps, I will die before he comes because we know neither the day nor the hour, so how can I be prepared? The Scriptures say, when he comes “stand erect with your head held high” Do not be afraid to face your judgment.

I think when he comes we will know in an instant, in a twinkling of an eye, whether we are in his kingdom or not. Now is the time to repent and seek first his kingdom, and to ask God for the courage to live my life to the fullest, so that when I die, I die with the hope of knowing the Kingdom of God is already within me.

Yearning for the Lord is a way to express the hope of salvation as a people who longs for the freedom from sin in order to live a life of Grace in this Year of Faith. What are you yearning for these days? Yearn for the truth; yearn for holiness, to be pure of heart, to be merciful and to hunger for peace and justice. The desire of my restless heart can only be satisfied with the truth, nothing else will satisfy my longing. Trite though it be, “Jesus is the reason for the season” only his friendship will grant me the fullness of joy. I must do all I can to live my life to the fullest, and make every day count.

**The New Evangelization** - What is this new evangelization? It is the unchanging Gospel of Jesus Christ that saves. It is ever new, yet the same Gospel preached by Paul and the Apostles and proclaimed by the Popes throughout the ages. It is the message of salvation witnessed by Pope Paul VI, in his encyclicals and apostolic exhortations, *Humanae Vitae* (Human Life), and *Evangelii Nuntiandi* (On Evangelization in the Modern World), and Apostolic Decrees of the Second Vatican Council: *Gaudium et Spes* (Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World), and *Sacrosanctum Concilium* (Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy), and *Lumen Gentium* (Dogmatic Constitution on the Church), and the same message of salvation given by Pope John Paul II in his encyclicals *Redemptor Hominis* (On Redemption and the Dignity of the Human Race), *Evangelium Vitae* (The Gospel of Life), and the same message of salvation presented by Holy Father, his holiness, Benedict XVI in his encyclicals, *Caritas in Veritate* (Charity in Truth) *Deus Caritas* (God is Love), and *Spe Salvi* (On Christian Hope). It is the renewed proclamation of the Good News that Pope Benedict says will satisfy the “empty heart” and the “inner sadness” of man in this lonely world. It is the only joy of being loved that the Pope says can satisfy the insatiable hunger of the human heart. It is a reawakening of the soul not to lose the burning desire and passion for the love of Jesus Christ to witness anew in our time that needs God so much in the world. This new evangelization is particularly meant for us as Cursillistas. It is at the heart of our foundational charism in which we as Cursillistas are called more than anything else to witness in our Church and to our society what we have experienced in our encounter with self, Christ, and others on the Cursillo weekend. Namely, that God loves us and we desire to share that love with all whom we encounter every day of our lives.

**Grace of Spiritual Advisors Manual (SAM) and Workshop** - As I am now at the end of my three year term as the National Spiritual Advisor for the Cursillo Movement in the USA, I am apt to reflect on the blessings of Cursillo in my life. In these days I hope to capitalize on these blessings and with the recent extension granted to me for at least six months, to prepare passing the torch to the next National Spiritual Advisor who will follow in my position. In 2009, I came to this position as the Year of the Priest was coming to an end; I remember reading from the article written by Fr. Einer Ochoa, previous National Spiritual Advisor, about the blessings of priesthood written for the Year of the Priest. I made it my primary focus to establish a Committee of priests and deacons to compile the new Spiritual Advisor’s Manual as it was necessary for Spiritual Advisors to have all the spiritual resources needed for a successful Cursillo weekend. Secondly, it is necessary for the Spiritual Advisor to clearly know their role in all phases of the Cursillo Movement; thirdly, for Spiritual Advisors to understand the

Cursillo methodology and to equip them with outlines for their rollos and meditations. Finally, the emphasis for a “kerygmatic” witness of the Gospel message, that means calling Spiritual Advisors to teach by witnessing how in their priestly lives to encounter friendship with Jesus on the Cursillo weekend.

With the help of a wonderful SAM Ad Hoc Committee which consisted of Fr. Einer Ochoa, Fr. Jesus Olivarez, Fr. Tom Galvin, Fr. John Meyers, Deacon Joseph De Leon, Victor Lugo, and Cef Aguillón, we accomplished that mission. The Spiritual Advisor’s Manual is now available for purchase on the National Cursillo Website in English and will soon be translated and available in Spanish and eventually in Vietnamese.

Likewise, I also made recommendations to establish a ministry description to standardize operational procedures for the National Spiritual Advisor position. I am committed to creating a template that will provide the resources for establishing ongoing Spiritual Advisors Workshops for the good of the Cursillo Movement. I hope this will offer Spiritual Advisors more spiritual resources for the studying of the theology of grace in the Cursillo weekend and to study the charism of Cursillo. As we establish a team of Spiritual Advisors who will “train the trainers” they will be available to offer workshops on a National and Regional basis beginning in this Year of Faith 2013 to renew the Spiritual Advisor’s desire to continue their great ministry in the Movement.

**Nearly 60 Years of Grace in Cursillo in the USA** - Over the past 60 years God has poured out tremendous grace and blessings upon the Cursillo Movement in the USA just as he has done for Cursillo throughout the world in five different languages and 6 language/cultural groups. It is this powerful living grace that sustains the Movement at every phase, the Precursillo, Cursillo Weekend, and Postcursillo. I am grateful for the blessings of the National Cursillo Movement in the USA. I believe we have committed Cursillistas who will remain faithful to the authentic charism of Cursillo and will renew the spirituality of this Movement in our country. Cursillo has touched hundreds of thousands and even millions of Catholics to live in friendship with Jesus and to encounter the power of his love. The Cursillo encounter is on three levels, first with oneself, then with the Lord, and finally with others. Cursillo calls Catholics to live a life of grace and to renew their Catholic spirituality based on the formidable pillars of piety, study, and apostolic action and to share their faith as they group and participate in Ultreya and the School of Leaders.

Despite so many wonderful ecclesial movements in the US Church of today, we are blessed with a Cursillo Movement that for over 60 years has been faithful to its charism and holds to its structure, purpose, and methodology filled with good leadership manifested in the Ultreyas, the Secretariats, School of Leaders, at every level, Diocesan, Regional and most especially with the National Secretariat. We are blessed with our National Language leaders, (English, Spanish, Vietnamese, Korean, and Portuguese) and I believe our Movement will be blessed to find a new National Cursillo Service Administrator to take the position of Mr. Victor Lugo who held the position for nine years. I am grateful for the service of Mr. Victor Lugo and his wife Ronnie in sharing their gifts and dedication for Cursillo and, I am grateful for Mr. Jorge Barceló’s gift of service. I am grateful for all our leadership of the National Secretariat, the Executive and Personnel Committees, the Regional and Diocesan service team members who have sacrificed much for the good of this Cursillo Movement in the United States of America. The Cursillo Movement has 261 groups actively applying the charism of Cursillo in their respective diocese

and in their native language; Chinese, English, Filipino, Korean, Portuguese, Spanish, and Vietnamese. There are perhaps a million strong Cursillistas in the USA and many who are living their 4<sup>th</sup> day witnessing Jesus Christ in their lives.

I see many opportunities for spiritual renewal of Cursillo leadership in this Year of Faith, for example there is the National Cursillo Training Initiative that is being developed by Cef Aguillón, Juan Ruiz, and Joachim Le, our National Language leaders which is intended for use by Cursillistas in the USA. Video, MP3 audio, and Power Point presentations with audio will be made available on different topics of Cursillo, not necessarily to be used as training, but as an added resource and/or information for Cursillistas who want to learn about Cursillo and/or for Schools to use for review and study.

**High Points of My Three Years of Service** - As I look back, the most memorable moment for me over these last three years was the opportunity in attending the 3<sup>rd</sup> Conversations of Cala Figuera, in Mallorca, Spain and participating in these *Conversations*. It was inspirational to sit across the table and speak to some of the original Cursillistas who were with Eduardo Bonnin Aguiló and had lived the first Cursillos with him and knew him as their closest friend. It was a tremendous experience to have gone and enrich my knowledge of Cursillo and deepen my appreciation for its charism. The International and Worldwide Cursillo Movement (NACG, OMCC) are clearly concerned with capturing and conserving its unique foundational charism, therefore, the reason for the 3<sup>rd</sup> Conversations to be held in Mallorca. The leadership has continued to draw from its history and its resources and teachers and speakers to engage in such subjects such as: The Meaning of Life, Attitude, Creativity, Communication, Confidence, and Transcendence. Last July at the 22<sup>nd</sup> National Encounter in Cincinnati, the great concern of many Cursillistas was to reflect on the foundational charism of Cursillo, as we cast our nets to deeper waters to discover more about the *person* and learning about these core values and qualities within the *person* that longs to know more about the interior of the soul. If you recall the keynote address was that of Dr. John Cuddeback who spoke on *Being Present with Those We Love: The Joy and the Challenge*.

**North America Caribbean Group (NACG)** - Another high point for me this past year was attending the NACG Conference, the first International Encounter in Niagara Falls, Canada in August 2012. I am grateful for the organizational planning of Gail Terrana and her committee for bringing together 37 international Cursillo leaders from Canada, USA and the Islands of St. Lucia, Barbados, Grenada, Jamaica Tobago, and from Cuba, which was the first time representatives were able to attend. All who attended believed it was a milestone for the NACG and a blessing for all who came not only to reflect but to experience the charism of Cursillo in North America at this Cursillo encounter in Niagara Falls.

**National Cursillo Apostolic Plan** - A decision was made at the National Secretariat meeting in November in Jarrell, Texas to change the title of the Pastoral Plan of Cursillo to a new title, *National Cursillo Apostolic Plan*. The change was made to avoid the confusion that exists in some dioceses regarding their own pastoral planning process. Any given diocese has already developed a plan regarding their overall planning strategy which may or may not include the essentials of the Cursillo Movement in their plan, since Bishops use the same word to mean different realities in their pastoral planning. For the Cursillo movement, the Apostolic Plan is a template, road map, or a guide, for Cursillistas “to strategize planning the essential elements of the three phases in Cursillo. The Apostolic Plan says in its Vision Statement, “To enable the

person to be fully Christian who, in turn, transforms their environments to be more Christian as a living tripod of piety, study, and action.” The key areas of the Cursillo Apostolic Plan are: Precursillo, Cursillo Weekend, Postcursillo, School of Leaders, Spirituality, Literature and Materials. We encourage Diocesan and Regional Secretariats leaders to review the National Cursillo Apostolic Plan and to use this template as they review their annual planning for Cursillo. Looking forward with hope for Cursillo in the United States of America, and in addition to the many anniversaries of Cursillo in local Dioceses, I would like to bring to mind some significant dates to remember as we plan for Encounters, Grand Ultreyas, Spiritual Retreats, and Pilgrimages.

### **Anniversary Milestones to Remember**

VII World Encounter in Australia, November 20-24, 2013

70<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Cursillo, Cala Figuera, August 2014

60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Cursillo in USA 2017

75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Cursillo, Cala Figuera, August 2019

10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Eduardo Bonnín’s Death, February 6, 2018

Without a doubt, there are many blessings of the Cursillo in the USA as so much is happening in the Cursillo Movement that we should continue to give thanks to almighty God for these many graces bestowed upon our Movement. Let us be refreshed during the wonderful season of Advent, and take a moment to slow down to find time for stillness, go before the Eucharistic presence of the Lord and hasten your desire to yearn for the love of God and when needed to be reconciled with the Father. This Year of Faith, I urge all Cursillistas who love the Lord to increase the longing of your soul, “for our hearts are restless until they rest in Thee”. Sing a new song unto the Lord and sing the hope and sing with joy with the prophets Isaiah, Jeremiah, and John the Baptist and with the Blessed Virgin Mary: “O Come! O Come! Emmanuel and ransom captive Israel . . . Rejoice, Rejoice, O Israel to thee shall come Emmanuel!

De Colores!

Fr. Peter M. Jaramillo, S.S.A.

National Spiritual Advisor

### **Being Present with Those We Love: The Joy and the Challenge**

These are Dr. John Cuddeback's notes for the lecture he gave during the National Encounter at Xavier University in Cincinnati, OH on July 19, 2012.

Open with story of my son, who said, upon hearing about heaven:

“All I know is, if you and Mama are there, I’ll be happy.”

Principle: The notion of presence is at the heart of friendship, and of encounter. In order truly to encounter self, others, and God, we need to think in terms of Presence of Persons.

Aristotle’s treatment of friendship can be of assistance to us here.

We begin with presence.

My basic example of Presence for the sake of illustration:

A father is present in his home. He is present by his vision, and by his love. He knows the persons, and what they do. He is concerned about their every move. He puts order into the home: arranges the rooms, the furniture, the schedule. Anywhere in the house you can feel his presence: watching, checking, concerned, hopeful, forgiving. Even when he is not there, he is there.

Sum on presence.

Bottom line: I am present where my vision and heart are. Those things are present to me that I see and love. I am especially present when and where I am performing actions for the good of others.

My Plan: Consider the meaning and role of Presence, first as regards being 'present' to self, then as regards being present to others, especially our friends.

**I. Issue One: Presence of self.**

**A. What is Presence of Self; Encounter with Self**

A person needs to be present in himself (or his self be present to him). This means that he must see and love himself.

Now everyone does this to a certain extent: we all see, and love, ourselves in some way. But I want especially to focus on the issue of how we see ourselves. Who do we understand ourselves to be?

At one point St. Thomas Aquinas makes a great point: some men see and love themselves TRULY; in other words they see themselves as they should: as persons created in love to live according to God's Holy Law.

THIS is essential to what I will call having a true presence of self. It seems to me that this fits well with the notion of an encounter with self. Have we truly seen ourselves? Now there is more than one meaning to this; or, there is more than one way that we need to see ourselves. The *first* thing we need to see about ourselves is something that we all have in common; thus it is something that we all need to see and something that we can all help one another in seeing. We need to see that we are PERSONS who are LOVED into existence, and called to happiness in a relationship with our Creator. Ladies and Gentlemen, if we do not see this about ourselves, then in the most fundamental way, we do not know WHO we are.

[Comment: Consider the drama: do many of us do not realize who we are, and indeed, often we do not even realize that we do not realize.]

Again, if we do not see ourselves as lovable and loved, and made for love and happiness, then we do not know who we are; we have not yet fully encountered our own selves. The fundamental encounter with self is this joyful encounter; for it is to see (or to begin to see) how we are made for love, and out of love.

[Just think what a joy it is that often we can help others that we love, first of all encounter themselves...]

The second aspect of the encounter with self is to see one's particular characteristics (as opposed to what we share with all other human persons). We see many good things; these include our natural gifts and strengths, as well as, the ways that we have freely acted out our human and

Christian vocation. But here we also see the ways in which we have fallen short of what we could and should be. This can be very painful, as we realize how we have failed ourselves, and God and others.

This encounter with self is a necessary complement to the first. I need to see where I as an individual stand, in light of the wonderful vocation to relationship with God and others. This enables me to see in what ways I must grow and improve in order to be more fully my true self.

Again, this can be very painful, BUT at root this encounter with self should always be one of *HOPE*. Wherever we discover ourselves to be in our particular journey, the fundamental reality remains this: love creates us, redeems us, and is ever ready to forgive and sanctify us.

These two encounters with self, or discoveries of self, are what enable us to have a TRUE presence of (or to) self; we see and love ourselves for we are, and what we are called to be.

### **B. How to enhance the encounter with self?**

How can we try to enhance this encounter with self? There are of course many ways.

I want to focus on what I have called Self-Presence. Again, my main theme this evening is PRESENCE OF PERSONS. [We need to put presence of persons first.]

This is our first issue: How to be more present in my very self. The principles that we see here will also apply to our presence with other persons. As Aristotle and St. Thomas Aquinas saw, how we see and love ourselves is a fundamental determinant of how we see and love others.

Our Goal: to see and love ourselves truly (or well).

Let us consider: what goes into our being able to see ourselves for who we are?

Means: I will mention Three things (ISL: interior life, silence, listening)

--we need to put the interior life first

--this is the life of the soul, of the mind, the will, the heart

Our interior life most of all constitutes who we are. We must cultivate it.

--we need Silence: the space within which to hear and see, calmly and clearly

--absence of exterior noise

--absence of disordered passions

Note: the unchaste person can never clearly see himself or others.

--we need to listen

Many voices are speaking to us, telling us what to think about ourselves, and who we are (You're too fat, you don't belong—you're too old fashioned, you should have a nicer car, you should have a better career or you can't be happy; you should look younger; you're wasting your time with your children; you're a failure; or maybe: you're so wonderfully rich, you're a success; you're the envy of the neighborhood; you're so beautiful.)

Where are the voices that speak to us the truth, the truth about ourselves, about who we are and where we stand? We need to find these voices, and give them a place, lend them our ears.

To begin: Spiritual reading and meditation are a way of listening to others. Reading and meditation grow in silence. In them we feed our mind and soul with words of truth.

The most foundational is reading and meditating upon Sacred Scripture, the Word of God.

Most of all we need to lend our ear to Christ. He is speaking to us: through Scripture, through the Church, and in our hearts in prayer: both liturgical and private. He is telling us who we are; and He knows.

Now through each of the above means we grow in the ability to see and love ourselves for who we truly are, and are called to be.

[Let us note how there is an important distinction here: true knowledge and love concerns both the person as he is now, and as he can and should become. As we grow in self-knowledge, and in this encounter with self in being present to self, we know (and love) ourselves, both for we are now, and for who we are called to be.

Both are necessary. Indeed we cannot fully understand (and love) who we are now, unless we simultaneously have our eyes on that of which we are capable—that perfected image of Christ.]

[This is one reason that Vatican II says, and Bl. John Paul II loved to quote it:

“Christ, the new Adam, in the very revelation of the mystery of the Father and of his love, fully reveals man to himself and brings to light his most high calling.”

In other words, when we see Christ, we see that which we can and should be.]

In a special way, we need to have true friends to whom we listen. Thus we now turn our attention to the topic of...

## **II. Friends and Presence**

### **A. Basic Points on Friendship**

#### **1. Let's begin with the three acts of friendship.**

According to Aristotle and St. Thomas Aquinas there are three ways of acting that belong especially to true friendship:

--benevolence; beneficence; concord,

Or: good willing, good deeds, living with one heart.

Let us begin with a couple of notes about the first two (good willing and good deeds) and then we will focus on the third (concord).

Benevolence literally means good will. The notion of good will here is rich. Friends have a deep-seeded desire or wish that the other person flourish or do well. What they want most of all for each other is that each becomes the person he or she is called to be: truly to fulfill the Christian vocation. And this good will is fruitful; it leads to action. It leads to benefaction, which literally means doing-well for the other. This can take many forms. Examples include offering material support and giving moral counsel. In whatever form it takes, these actions spring from good will, and thus are done out of love for the friend.

We turn to concord. Oneness of heart, in acting together.

Here we are truly at the beating heart of friendship.

Consider the following words from St. Thomas Aquinas (explaining the position of Aristotle):

“Friendship consists in some kind of sharing together. But people share themselves with one another especially by living together. Hence living together seems to be most proper and pleasing to friendship.” (St. Thomas Aquinas’s commentary, 1946)



I love this point. What do we want more than anything else? –to be-with those we love.  
[again, think of our children]

But we must be more specific: there are different ways of ‘being together.’ People can simply ‘be together’ in the same room, without really being together in mind, heart, or action. This is why Aristotle and St. Thomas speak of ‘living together’—which is richer than simply being together in the same place. But people can also ‘live together’ wrongly. They can share together in inappropriate or evil actions. *True human living together must consist in doing truly good actions together.* And here it is: this is happiness lived-out: living a good, holy human life *together.*

Now there are different kinds of good actions that friends share together. Aristotle puts a kind of primacy on one kind (though not to the exclusion others), and that is: conversation. Aristotle explains that in the desire of friends to live-together, they especially seek to be profoundly conscious of, or we can say present to, each other.

St. Thomas Aquinas explains: “This takes place through constant association and the exchange of thoughts and reflection. In this way men are said to dwell with one another in an appropriate manner, not as cattle feeding together, but as human beings living a life that is proper to them.” (1910)

How then do persons most of all live together?: in the communion of rational presence. Good conversation allows the exchange of thoughts that leads to a profound, mutual knowledge. This is not just a knowing of the other himself (or herself), but then even further and more significantly, it is a sharing in a common vision of higher things. Friends look at each other; AND they look outward and upward together.

True friends are thereby *together* in the most profoundly human of ways: they are with-one-another in *rational presence*. In sounds so simple, so obvious, but we must cultivate our ability to be rationally present with our friends.

Picture the conversation of true friends: no fear, complete peace; no worry whether I will say the wrong thing; total trust

Conversation of friends normally is about one of the following:  
Communication of what is going on in our lives  
Counsel about what is going on in our lives  
Shared insights into the highest of realities.

SUM: We have now considered the fundamental acts of friendship, with an emphasis on Concord, or living together in one heart. And this last is most of all lived in the conversations of friends.

**2. Let us NOW ASK: How do our Friends change our lives:**

- a. They show us ourselves
- b. They make us better

a. It is in true friendship that we most of all learn to see ourselves, and to love ourselves.

It is perhaps obvious that we need others in order to see ourselves.

But more specifically, we need friends. Friends, more than anyone else can see us for who we are.

St. Thomas says: Ubi amor, Ibi oculus; Where there is love, there is vision.

We must always remember: only the lover truly sees. If we are failing to love, then we are also failing to see.

The true lover, the true friend, most of all sees us for who we are, and who we can be.

He would never be overly critical or harsh; but at the same time, he will always have his eye on how we can be better.

The loving eye of our friend gives us the confidence to see our own goodness, and to be more and more aware of how we fall short in our lives.

b. It is in true friendship that we most of all can grow into the persons we should be.

Why?

BECAUSE true friends help one another grow in virtue.

Truly loving and knowing us, present to us in a unique way, friends are THERE to support us in our journey.

Friends are present: acting with us, counseling us, inspiring us.

We should be convinced: without the sustained help of true friends, we will not become the persons we can and should become.

It is no surprise that St. Thomas Aquinas wrote: "Friends become better by working together and loving each other." 1951

[Sidepoint: these points apply also to marriage, a special instance of friendship, as well as to other friendships. Married people need both kinds.]

In view of these truths, let us turn to our FINAL consideration, a very practical one:

**B.** →How do we cultivate presence with other persons, especially friends.

1. the Challenge

Presence.

May I open with a rather chilling assertion?

We are losing the ability to BE TOGETHER; to be-with people; even those that we love most: family and friends. We are handicapped.

One main reason is because we do not know how to be present to ourselves.

Allow me to paint a picture:

We live almost constantly in the exterior forum.

Perhaps the bulk of our day is taken up with WORK, work of various kinds that, in any case given how we perform it, practically precludes our being present either to ourselves or others.

Then outside this work we turn to a host of pressing practical concerns that are not addressed while we are 'working;' but this too is work.

Outside of all this work we seek rest and distraction by entertainment: often it is mindless; sometimes it is morally inappropriate. Our entertainment is usually computerized or motorized, and usually tends to be private and isolating, even if done 'together' with others (such as looking at the same movie screen).

Less and less do we have natural contexts for significant contact with other human persons. Even the dinner table—that bastion of personal contact and of civilization itself—is more and more abandoned. How often are we reduced simply to ‘grabbing lunch’ together. We are connected via the internet to many people. Many of them we call ‘friends,’ though we have very little in common with them, and do not really share a life with them.

“Communication” is common; but sustained, quality conversations are rare. We are seldom truly present to people—self or others.

I think we need to recognize that here we are speaking of dominant and pervasive trends in our society. Given these trends, and these habits of interaction (and non-interaction), IF we are to have true presence of self and with friends then we must make an intentional and concerted effort – to put true, personal, rational, presence first.

#### ACTION STEPS:

How to think:

We are designed for presence, for presence to and with other persons.

We have a face to engage, arms to embrace, fingers to point.

Let us make it thematic in our minds and hearts.

Put persons, and presence with them, first.

We can remind ourselves: in a sense, what else matters?

I should have an explicit plan to cultivate my ability to be present with those I love.

How to act:

#### **Negative:**

Remove noise, distraction.

Technology. In this age of ours we must tackle this issue directly. I begin by noting two things that I take as given:

1) many recent technologies (such as internet and cell phones) can be truly useful. And further, given the current state of things, using them is functionally necessary.

But at the same time:

2) these same technologies present real challenges to the practice of presence of persons.

Consider: these technologies take my attention away from those I am bodily with.

E.g.: in our homes (how often are parents not present to their children, or vice versa; or in the café, bus... how many lost encounters, possibilities for evangelization?)

Here is my main assertion:

We **MUST** be intentionally, consciously restrict/limit our use of these technologies; otherwise our *presence* with those we love will be compromised.

For example: consider something like: I will only check my email twice a day.

Note: I am not saying that we cannot use technology for evangelization. We can. But evangelization will always be primarily with bodily presence. And real friendships are made in bodily presence.

Story of friend in France on the train, praying. The person said: I want to be able to do whatever it was that you were doing.

De-clutter our lives; do fewer and more meaningful things.

We are too busy. It is our responsibility to do something about it, and not just remark on it.

In de-cluttering we can use as a principle: which of the things I do are more conducive to being *present* to persons.

**Positive:**

1. Cultivate presence of self, as discussed above [note how this includes a real aspect of an interior conversation with self]

2. Provide the opportunities for real presence with friends.

Because the most natural opportunities for presence between persons arise in the home. I want to make something of a digression to consider briefly presence in the home...

We must begin in our homes: real time together should be a top priority.

It sounds simple. But doing it is another story.

Cooking together, eating together, reading together, singing together; and of course, praying together. These are all ways that we live a commitment to presence, to being together with those we love.

Let us consider the following words of Pope Benedict XVI, given in response to a little girl who said to him, I would really like to know something about your family and when you were little like me...:

Holy Father responds: Thank you, dear, and your parents. I thank you from my heart. Well, you asked about what my memories of my family are like: there would be a lot! I wanted to say only a few things. Sunday was always the important time for our family, but Sunday already began Saturday evening. Father read the readings to us from a book that was very popular in Germany at that time. The book also included an explanation of the readings. That is how Sunday began: we were already entering into the liturgy, in a joyful atmosphere. The next day we went to Mass. My home is very close to Salzburg, so we had a lot of music – Mozart, Schubert, Haydn – and when the Kyrie began it was as if heaven had opened up. And at home the big lunch together was naturally important. And we also sang a lot: my brother is a great musician, he composed music for all of us already as a young man, and the whole family sang. Dad played the zither and sang; they are unforgettable moments. Then, of course, we took trips together, walking; we were near a forest and so walking in the forests was very nice: adventures, games, etc. In a word, we were one heart and one soul, with many shared experiences, even in very hard times, because it was wartime – first there was the dictatorship, then poverty. But this love that we had for each other, this joy even in simple things was strong and so we were able to overcome and endure even these things. I think that it was very important that even little things gave us joy because the other person's heart expressed itself in this way. And in this way we grew up in the certainty that it was good to be a human being, because we saw that God's goodness was reflected in our parents and in us children. And, to tell the truth, if I try to imagine a little how paradise will be, I think always of the time of my youth, of my childhood. In this context of confidence, of joy and love we were happy and I think that paradise must be something like how it was in my youth. In this sense I hope to go "home," going to the "other side of the world."

What a beautiful example of what loving presence in a family can do.

Consider the examples here of actions that encourage mutual presence: reading out loud, games, singing, adventures, hikes, and work.

In a sense it sounds so simple. But today we find this very difficult. Due to various factors in our times we must now make an explicit effort to have these kinds of activities, these times that are

naturally conducive to presence of persons. This is the flipside of the ‘negative element’ we spoke of moments ago. At the same time that we are trimming distractions and activities that are not conducive to presence, we look especially to engage regularly in activities like those mentioned by the Pope.

We should begin in the home; but it must not end there. Regular quality time with a few good friends is essential.

3. Explicitly cultivate conversation about more serious matters.

Where our hearts are, there our conversations will be; and where our conversations are, there our hearts will be.

We can simultaneously work on ‘reforming’ our hearts and conversations at the same time.

The conversations of friends naturally range over the entire spectrum of life. And they should.

But we need to develop a habit of deeper, richer conversations. This, it seems to me, is to be counter-cultural. It is a bold step.

There are two kinds of more serious conversations: those where we discuss important practical issues (such as how to grow in virtue, how to educate our children, how to renew the social order), and those more fundamentally about sharing insights into beautiful things, things we simply gaze upon together.

E.g. of each:

- 1) conversation about how to deepen our prayer life, or to grow in chastity
- 2) conversation sharing what we’ve seen in meditation or prayer

My main purpose here is to encourage our putting a premium on such conversations.

As regards the first kind: let us think especially in terms of seeking counsel with our friends. Friends are in a unique position both to hold one another accountable, and to thus provide counsel/advice as regards the most pressing of issues.

As regards the second, let us think especially in terms of sharing what we have discovered (about the wonders of creation, of God...)—whether through experience, reading, meditation, or prayer. What a foretaste this is of heaven, where we enjoy the vision of God together.

Consider this as an instance of real presence...

I would like to conclude with a brief meditation on the Real Presence...

Our Lord told the apostles: it is good for you that I go.

But how can this be?

Fathers of the Church say: it was good for Him to go because we need to develop faith; and faith requires a kind of absence—a kind of lack of vision.

So He considered, how can I, while being absent in such a way as to enable and cultivate their faith, also be profoundly present with those I love.

Our Lord had a dilemma: His joy was to dwell among men. But how can He both dwell with us, AND elicit our faith.

Solution: To dwell with us under the appearance of bread. At once and the same time, this calls forth our faith (for all we see is bread), but He is also fully present.

The Eucharist is the Real Presence of a Friend.

Let us bring that Presence to others.

### **2013 National Encounter**

The National Encounter Committee is working with a university to work out the details of the contract for the 2013 National Encounter. The Committee will make an announcement regarding the date, location, registration fee, etc. of the National Encounter once a contract has been signed. Stay tuned!

### **National Cursillo Service Administrator Job Posting Update**

The Executive Committee Chairperson has received several applications from Cursillistas interested in the National Cursillo Service Administrator job opening. The job posting will remain open until January 31, 2013. For further details about the job opening, visit the National Cursillo website at <http://www.natl-cursillo.org/>.

### **National Cursillo Center**

The National Cursillo Center will be closed on December 24, 25, 31, 2012 and January 1, 2013. Please plan your book orders accordingly.

### **Palanca Intentions**

Mondays – National, Regional, and Diocesan Secretariats

Tuesdays – Schools of Leaders

Wednesdays – Cursillistas in the United States

Thursdays – National Cursillo Movement's Apostolic Actions

Fridays – Cursillo Weekends and Cursillo Workshops

Saturdays – OMCC and NACG Executive Committee

On behalf of Most Rev. Eusebio Elizondo, National Episcopal Advisor, Fr. Peter Jaramillo, National Spiritual Advisor, National Secretariat and National Staff, we want to thank you for all your support and contributions to the Cursillo Movement and also wish you and your loved ones a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year!

Ceferino Aguillón, Jr. – National English Language Coordinator

Juan Ruiz – National Spanish Language Coordinator

Moon Kim – National Korean Language Coordinator

Joachim Le – National Vietnamese Language Coordinator