



The Holy See

**ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS POPE FRANCIS
TO PARTICIPANTS IN THE COURSE OF FORMATION
OF THE CURSILLOS DE CRISTIANDAD MOVEMENT**

*Paul VI Audience Hall
Thursday, 30 April 2015*

[Multimedia]

Dear Brothers and Sisters, Good afternoon!

First of all I must apologize, because this meeting was scheduled for tomorrow, and I believe that you had to make many changes and also with difficulties, in transportation, in means of transport.... I sincerely apologize!

There was some confusion. You know that the Pope is infallible when he makes dogmatic definitions, something which he does, but rarely.... But the Pope also has his flaws and infallibility has nothing to do with his flaws! This Pope is not very orderly and is even undisciplined. And this confusion was the result of this. I beg your pardon for this. Thank you!

I was aware of the questions, I wrote a speech to respond, but at times I will come back to a few questions, because there are things I would like to highlight.

As the President said, you have come to Rome for your *Ultreya*, a name that recalls the age-old greeting of the pilgrims from Santiago de Compostela, who encouraged each other to go “further away”, “always a step further”. For you this is a true reunion among friends, a fraternal meeting of prayer, of celebration, of sharing your experience of Christian life. I thank your representatives who presented your Movement’s proposals, problems and perspectives to me. For my part, I would like to offer you some helpful suggestions for your spiritual growth and your mission in the Church and in the world.

You are called — you did not choose first, no, you were chosen — to *make the most of the*

charism that the Lord entrusted to you and which is at the origin of Cursillos de Cristiandad, from whose group of founders Eduardo Bonnín Aguiló and then Bishop of Mallorca, Juan Hervas y Benet — he was brave! — stand out. They knew how to accompany the growth of the Movement with paternal solicitude. In the 1940s, together with other young lay people, they realized the need to reach their peers, seeing the desire for truth and love present in their hearts. These pioneers of your Movement were authentic missionaries: they did not hesitate to take the initiative and courageously approach people, engaging them in the journey of faith with respect and love. This is important: geniality, fellowship.... One thing I would like to say to your Movement: you have not proselytized! This is a virtue. “The Church does not grow through proselytism, but through witness” — Pope Benedict said this to us. And it is so! You have not done proselytism. It is a grace of God. By following their example, today you too want to proclaim the Good News of God’s love, by being close to friends, acquaintances, classmates and coworkers so that they too can live a personal experience of the infinite love of Christ who liberates and transforms life. How it is necessary to go out, to go ever further, never tiring, to meet those who are said to be distant!

In order to help others to grow in faith, following a path toward the Lord, it is important to *experience in the first person the goodness and tenderness of God*. This experience is the beginning of the journey that you are taking. When you see and comprehend that in your life God has been so good, so tender, so merciful, He wants to go out, wants to reach others. The Lord wants to meet us, the Lord wants to dwell with us, be a friend and brother, our teacher who reveals to us the path to take in order to achieve happiness. He asks nothing of us in return, only that He be welcomed, because God’s love is freely given, a pure gift. This is important! To bear witness it is necessary to recognize that all that we have is purely given, is a gift, is free, is grace. And this is not bought, it is not sold! It is a journey freely undertaken, it is a journey that cannot be explained: “Why me, Lord? What must I do?”; “Tell it to others!”. Communicate what the Lord has done for me, with so much tenderness, with so much goodness, with so much mercy. This is the testimony. This amicable testimony of dialogue among friends. The encounter with Christ, and with the mercy of the Father who gives Him to us, is possible first in the Sacraments, especially in the Eucharist and in Reconciliation. In the Holy Mass we celebrate the memory of his sacrifice: still today He truly gives his Body for us and sheds his Blood to redeem mankind. In Penance Jesus accepts us with all our limitations and sins, to give us a new heart capable of loving like He does, who loved his own to the end (cf. Jn 13:1). Each time we return to ask forgiveness, He forgives, for He knows that we are weak, that we are sinners. We have a degree in sinning! Everyone. And He knows this. And He always receives us, with love. Another way is meditating on the Word of God, especially the *lectio divina*, reading the Word of God, reading the Bible. Many times I have counseled, and I also do so now: always carry a small Gospel in a pocket or in a purse. On journeys, while waiting at the dentist’s or to do something, read a passage of the Gospel and calmly think about it. This familiarity with the Word of God brings us close to the Lord. And in this way we are able to hear the Lord who points out the path to take and encourages us in the face of the uncertainties and difficulties that life presents. Eventually, we encounter the love of Christ in the Church which, through various activities, testifies to the charity of God. The love of Jesus in

works of mercy. I will ask you a question: are all of you able to recite the seven corporal works of mercy and the seven spiritual works of mercy? Let's be brave.... Those who cannot, raise your hand! [many hands are raised] But look.... I work for you, bishops! I work for you! It is important to read what the corporal works of mercy are. Some of you — surely — remember them, but there are seven.... And there are seven spiritual. An assignment to do at home: find and study the works of mercy. Why? To put them into practice. Everything in the ecclesial community has the objective of enabling people to touch by hand the infinite divine mercy. Some think: "No, God is far away. I will go to hell.... I have done so much". But if you have done many things, many bad things, He will be very glad and will celebrate that you have drawn near to ask forgiveness. And this is the work of persuasion that you must do with friends and in Cursillos. Because it's true, God celebrates! God celebrates. And someone may also feel somewhat jealous about this: think about the elder son of that merciful father (cf. Lk 15:11-32) who gave a feast because the other one, who had taken all his money, who had spent it on the "good life", returned with nothing.... And he celebrates. It is a peculiarity of our God! To give a feast when a serious sinner comes. This is good!

The Cursillos' mode of evangelization was born precisely from this burning desire for *friendship with God*, from which *friendship with brothers* springs. It has been understood from the very start that only from relationships of authentic friendships is it possible to prepare and accompany people on their journey, a journey which begins with conversion, passes through the discovery of the beauty of a life lived in the grace of God, until it reaches the joy of becoming apostles in everyday life. And thus, since then, thousands of people in all the world have been helped to grow in the life of faith. In the present context of anonymity and isolation typical of our cities, the welcoming, familiar people-oriented dimension, which you offer in group encounters is so important. Friendships are made. There will be problems, here or there.... There will be, there are always problems. But friendship must be fostered. "But Father, when we foster friendship, certain arguments, jealousy, envy also grow...". What did the Lord say? When the devil sows weeds, let them grow. You grow good grain, friendship. And at harvest time the weeds will be burned and the good grain will bear its fruit. I ask you to always maintain a climate of friendship and fraternity in which to pray and to share on a weekly basis experiences, apostolic successes and failures.

A memory comes to mind of a woman, born in a family of atheists, and she too was an atheist; not agnostic, but atheist. But she was a good woman, a professional, a woman who did her job, was married, with children, but without religion. One of her daughters encountered Jesus Christ, better yet, was found by Jesus Christ. She converted and lived a Christian life. And the mother respected this: "It's your choice, daughter. Go ahead! I don't believe, but you go on". Years passed, the daughter was a committed Catholic, we could also say a militant Catholic — I don't like the word but let's say it to make it clearly understood. Then the elderly mother, at over 80 years old, fell ill. She was nearing death, but was lucid. The day before she died, while the daughter was near her, taking care of her, she asked: "Tell me", — she had never asked this question, because she had respect —, "what do you feel when you pray?". And the daughter, respecting her mother, said that

she spoke to God, to the Lord.... This is how a conversation on this subject began, lightly, peacefully. Then another subject came up, and this one returned.... At the end the mother said: "Are you happy with what you've found in religion?"; "Yes, Mom, because I believe in Jesus, I believe that Jesus loves us!"; "How I wish I could feel the same!". And the daughter encouraged her and said: "Tell me, Mom, do you want this?"; "Yes! But it's too late..."; "Never, Mom. Do you want me to baptize you?"; and the mother said: "Yes!". The daughter couldn't call a priest, because the mother would have been frightened. The daughter baptized the mother and two hours later the mother fell into a coma and died, at midnight. These are the miracles of God through closeness, through service. Not proselytism! That daughter never proselytized. I knew her pretty well, to the point that she came to me to tell me what she had done and was afraid to have done wrong. "No, you did well! You enabled you mother to enter Heaven!". But it takes patience. It takes patience. Proselytism is not patient! "Read this, do this, come here, go there"; they knock at your door.... No, no. Friendship. And there, sowing, in friendship. And this sowing in friendship is true penance.

In these small group meetings it is important to place alongside them moments that promote a *greater social and ecclesial dimension*, also involving those who come in contact with your charism but do not regularly participate in the group. A greater social and ecclesial dimension, which also involves those who do not have contact with your charism, who do not regularly participate in the group. The Church, indeed, is a "mother with an open heart" who invites us at times to "slow down", to "stop rushing from one thing to another and to remain with someone who has faltered along the way" (Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium*, n. 46). It is beautiful to help everyone, even those who struggle to live their own faith; to help and to always stay in contact with this Mother Church, always close to the great welcoming family which is the Mother Church, our Holy Mother Church. In recent years, in Argentina, there have been some problems with Cursillos: external problems. Because once, they worked until a certain point, then there was Saturday, Sunday, perhaps Monday, maybe.... They could do it. Today they work on Saturday, even Sunday. And they weren't finding the time for those long, three-day prayer meetings. They were losing their pay, losing their bonuses, and even risked losing their jobs. And they were trying to bring their charism up to date with this situation. What must be done in this situation? Consider what Christians did at the time of Nazism, communism: they tried to do catechesis in another way, at other times, the Mass somewhat in hiding.... I do not know. Look for ways that allow you to carry on with your charism. This is very important! Do not let external conditions block it!

I encourage you to "keep pressing forward", faithful to your charism! To keep alive the zeal, the flame of the Spirit who always urges the disciples of Christ to *reach those who are distant*, without proselytizing, to "go forth from our own comfort zone in order to reach all the 'peripheries' in need of the light of the Gospel" (*ibid.*, 20). You have heard this, I have said it to you several times: in large cities, Christian cities, even in Christian families, there are children who do not know how to make the sign of the cross. And this paganization of society challenges us: do something to evangelize. The Spirit urges us to go forth from our own comfort zone. How beautiful it is to

proclaim to all the love of God who saves and gives meaning to our life! Helping today's men and women to discover the beauty of the faith and the life of grace that is possible to live in the Church, our mother! There are Christian and Catholic communities — there are! — where they do not speak of the life of grace, they do not speak of the beauty of having the Trinity within us, the presence of the Living God within us. Your task is to go and bear this Good News: God abides in us, God is in us. This is grace! Help today's men and women discover the beauty of faith and of a life of grace. And you will do so if you are docile, in an attitude of humility and trust, under the guidance of this holy mother, the Church, which always seeks the good of all her children; if you are in harmony with your Pastors and united with them in the mission of bringing the joy of the Gospel to all.

May the Virgin Mary, Mother of Divine Grace, assist in your apostolic journey.

Before giving the blessing, I want to look at the questions, whether there is something I have not said....

“How do we trust in the Holy Spirit, to the point of daring to proclaim the Mercy of God, where He is not sought?”. If you do not trust in the Holy Spirit, go home! Go and look for another more agnostic, more ideological religion. Jesus said to us: “I will not leave you alone. I will send you the Spirit”. And what does the Spirit do? Two things. He reminds us what Jesus taught us and He teaches us what we have to do. And then this trusting in the Spirit is surprising! To know when it is the Spirit who is pushing you. I like thinking of Philip, when the Spirit says to him: “Go on that road”, the road to Gaza (cf. Acts 8:26-40). And he goes. At a certain point he sees a chariot, a travelling carriage, and seated in it is a minister of the treasury of Ethiopia, of Candace the queen, reading Isaiah.... A dialogue commences: “Explain this to me...”. And then when they find water, this minister of the treasury asks for Baptism.... The Spirit guides you. It is actually the Spirit! Trust in the Spirit. Think about Philip, think of the many, so many who trust in the Spirit. It is beautiful to read the Book of the Acts of the Apostles: after Pentecost, the things that the Spirit has done!... Great things! And have trust.

“In every movement one strongly feels a twofold need: faithfulness to the original charism and the need for change and novelty in order to respond to and transform situations”. The question was: “How to maintain harmony between these two tensions? How to discern the novelty that the Holy Spirit suggests from the novelty that instead moves away from the charism? How to understand whether a certain faithfulness to the original charism is more rigidity than true loyalty to the Holy Spirit?”. This is important. To understand and know souls: “Do not trust, beloved ones, in every Spirit”, the Apostle says to us. Know when an inspiration is in harmony with the original charism and when it is not. This going forth leads you to find different situations, different cultures, and the original charism must be interpreted for that culture. Not betrayed! Interpreted. It must be the charism, but interpreted! “I don't want problems, I follow the original charism...”. This way you will become a beautiful display, a museum. You will make of your Movement a museum of things that

are not useful today. Each charism is called to grow! Why? Because it carries the Holy Spirit inside, and the Holy Spirit makes it grow! Each charism must confront different cultures, with different ways of thinking, with different values. What does this do? It leaves the door open to the Holy Spirit. Here I have to do this, here I must do this.... And how do I do this? Pray, ask! Prayer: without prayer no movement can go forward. No one!

I thank you once again for this meeting. I thank you for all that you do in the Church, which is so beautiful: helping people to encounter Jesus, helping them to understand that it is beautiful to live in God's grace. It is beautiful! I thank you so much and I ask you, please, to pray for me. Pray for me because even the Pope must be faithful to the Holy Spirit.

And now I shall give you the blessing, but let us pray together to Our Lady, our Mother. Hail Mary....

[Blessing]

Do not forget to learn the seven corporal works of mercy and the seven spiritual works of mercy.