

## President's Letter

Before, during and after the first quarterly meeting of the National Episcopal Cursillo Committee (NECC) on January 23-27, at St. Andrew's Episcopal Church in Mt. Pleasant, South Carolina, I was repeatedly reminded of the Cursillo Action talk and the important theme of "Make a friend, be a friend, bring your friend to Christ." In the new Lay Talk Workbook, it is pointed out that the action talk is intended to encourage us to reach out to others in the name of Jesus Christ, emphasizing the statement from *The Fundamental Ideas of the Cursillo Movement*, "If action is a natural element of being human, then Christian action is a natural element of being Christian." Our action should naturally flow from our deep love for Jesus Christ.

We all know the theme and the important part it must play in our Christian lives. But frequently we focus on the third element of bringing others to Christ without realizing the importance of making a friend and being a friend. Again, the Lay Talk Workbook states that personal contact is the basis of apostolic action – that we make friends by approaching them, not waiting for them to approach us. We are called to be a friend - to let friendship grow - to be interested, joyful, understanding, accepting, loving, sincere and optimistic.

The first encounter I had with this message just before our meeting was the January 17 meditation from *Forward Day by Day*. The Bible verse was John 1:43-51, where Philip said to Nathaniel, "Come and see." The writer, a priest serving a bilingual ministry in the Southwest, then wrote:

One summer evening before ninth grade I could not find my best friend. The next day I asked him, "What did you do last night?" He replied that he had been out playing basketball. I asked, "Where?" He paused and said, "At church. And we had homemade ice cream."

I looked at him silently and he asked, "Want to come next time?" I said, "Yes," and the church has been my spiritual home since that day.

I came to church because a friend of many years invited me. He was my Philip who said, "Come and see." Philip tells his friend Nathaniel about Jesus of Nazareth. Nathaniel at first expresses the bias of the day about such villages. Ultimately, Nathaniel comes to witness the power of Jesus and is convinced that coming and seeing is a good thing.

What is good about my invitation to "come and see" is that I found a vocation in the priesthood. Over forty persons in my family are now members of this part of the body of Christ. One simple invitation to a game of ball and refreshments may lead to much more in the plan of God. I give thanks for all the

“Philips” in the history of the church whose faith leads them to “make a friend, be a friend and bring a friend to Christ.” Come and see!

The next encounters were at St. Andrew’s Church, a church that was just bustling with activity throughout our stay. We had a brief break on Friday morning – a time when mothers were bringing in their young children to be cared for while they had a morning to themselves. I was in the hall and introduced myself to a woman and her son. She asked why I was there and I told her I was part of the NECC that was meeting there that week. She said that she and her husband had made a commitment to attend Cursillo this year and that they had applications at home that they were filling out. I told her I thought that they would find the experience very meaningful and she said they were looking forward to it. The meeting was a blessing to me and, I hope, to her. That evening, before the Ultreya, I found myself in the “wrong” room. A buffet was set up and I began talking to a woman that was there. It turns out that it was a meeting for a Christian based recovery group of which she was a part. I told her that I was there for the NECC meeting. She said she was a Cursillista and talked about how she had sponsored her father for Cursillo and what a gift to both of them that had been. I told her that I had also sponsored my father and showed her the cross I was wearing that was a cross from when I was rector that I had given to my dad who was on the team. When he died, mom gave it to me. She mentioned that her dad had also passed away and that she was with him the day he died. He told her, “This is the day that the Lord has made.” He was ready to be with Jesus. The conversation only lasted about five minutes but we were both blessed by the experience. Oh, by the way, the second song at the Ultreya? “This is the Day.” Coincidence or Godincidence?

At each NECC meeting we have an Ultreya with the local community and the NECC provides the speakers. New member Missi Kern from Colorado was the primary speaker and she shared about two women, from completely different areas of her life, that God had placed in her midst. They did not know each other and neither was really a friend of Missi’s until these events happened. Each of them was going through very difficult times and each needed someone to reach out to her. Whether they realized it or not, God led them to Missi. Each just needed a friend, someone to listen, and Missi became that person. Missi considers herself an introvert and having two people in her life with such great pain and need at the same time was draining her. Just then her son sent her a chain e-mail about a young man that was being picked on while walking home from school and was helped by a bystander. They became best friends and at their high school graduation, the young man that was picked on told the story of the day he met his best friend. He told the audience that he was going to commit suicide that day and the act of kindness that was shown by his new friend kept him from doing that. Missi knew that God was speaking to her through that message, telling her that God sent these women to her and that God would give her what she needed to be a friend to these women. Missi may never know what develops with these women’s relationships with Christ. But she does know that she can be Christ to them by just being herself and being a friend when each woman needs her. Missi considers this as being a “Johnny Jesus Seed”. She scatters seeds of Christ’s love. She may never see any of them bloom, but she knows that

if she is faithful in her scattering, God will send someone else to water, and someone else to hoe, and so on. And, she said, maybe some day she will see something bloom.

On Sunday we attended church at St. Andrew's and The Rev. Steve Wood was the preacher. He talked about God's will for us to serve Him – for some through missions and vocations – but for all by doing the little things as Christians to make God's world a better world – by being a friend, being interested, being joyful, being loving. He specifically suggested that when in a restaurant we make a point of being friendly to the waiter or waitress serving us. My wife, Jeanne, had joined me Saturday evening and we began a trip after the service through South Carolina, Georgia and Florida in order to be at a 4<sup>th</sup> Day gathering in Winter Park, Florida the next Saturday. At lunch and dinner in Charleston we made a point of calling our servers by name and talking to them. What a joy it was. In Savannah we found out our waitress was a watercolor painter and had just spent five months in China working on her art. She had had a one-person show and was back in Georgia improving her skills. In St. Augustine, we were waited on by a delightful woman. She is a young single mom with a five year old son. I told her I thought single working moms are God's special people and she showed us a picture of her son that she carries with her in her notepad for orders. She shared that she was going to California – a place she had never been – to train as a wine sommelier – in order to better provide for her son.

God is right. Fr. Steve is right. The Cursillo theme of “make a friend, be a friend; bring your friend to Christ” is right. The writer of the meditation in Forward Day by Day is right. Missi is right. A simple act of kindness – taking the opportunity to make a friend and be a friend – taking the time to visit with someone you know or someone you had not known – taking the time to listen when someone is in need – even inviting someone to play basketball and have home-made ice cream – may lead to much, much more in the plan of God.

Peace,

Ted Ederer