



**Triple encounter with myself,  
with Christ and with others**

**By  
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**Be still and know that I am God**  
Psalm 46:11

One of the most important documents of Council Vatican II – Gaudium et Spes – The Joys and the Hopes of the humankind – affirms, almost at the beginning of the document:

«Mankind is stricken with wonder at its own discoveries and its power, but often raises anxious questions about the world, about the place and role of man in the universe, about the meaning of its individual and collective strivings, about themselves.

Since the beginning of time,  
men and women have been asking themselves  
a lot of questions, like:  
Who am I? Where did I come from?  
What am I doing here on earth?  
And many others, similar.

In these questions they are trying to know WHO THEY ARE. To know themselves.

«Know yourself» is the fundamental principle of wisdom, established long ago by many Greek philosophers.

Socrates affirmed that  
when a man searches for truth, any truth, he must know himself first.

For centuries not only philosophers but also great Christian teachers have said that in order to know God you have to really know yourself first.

John Calvin,  
a Protestant wrote: «Without knowledge of self,  
there is no knowledge of God.  
The more you know yourself the more you  
become aware of your need for God's grace.»

Saint Augustine used to pray:  
«That I may I know myself, Lord;  
and that I may know you, Oh Lord!»  
I think we can understand now why the Three  
day Cursillo weekend has to start with the  
meditation KNOW YOURSELF.

Eduardo Bonín, our founder, wrote:  
«A Cursillo in Christianity must begin with an encounter with oneself.  
This is an absolute necessity. A man is only a man when he comes to the realization of who he really is really. In order to become fully a man, he needs to go on discovering himself as a person; in other words, with a capacity for convergence of conviction, decision, and perseverance.»

The man, the human person, is the center of creation and of history.

What happens is that, at times, he doesn't act as if he were a person because he does not know himself as such.

To create and maintain a relationship with another person – or with God for that matter – we must know and discover ourselves; we must know who we are. I'm sure that all of you remember the first night of your Cursillo weekend. I still remember mine, although it was more than 30 years ago.

After the welcoming and introduction rollo, the Rector zipped out our mouths shut and then sent us to chapel. There, the Spiritual director started the first Meditation with this theme: KNOW YOURSELVES.

I am sure that – maybe with some nuances and different images – the subject of this meditation was the same for all. We were all invited to make a stop in our busy lives: to stop, to listen and to look. Make a stop in our lives just as we stop at a railroad crossing, to see if there is danger of any incoming train, and then continue on after that.

«You have been invited to make a stop on your day-to-day life and really look inside yourselves. God invites you to come and rest a bit; to reflect. Then he continued: «Take a look at your past, without restrictions, without fear. Don't be afraid, he said. «The worst blind is the one who does not want to see».

Try to look into your life, since your childhood years, the teenage years, the young adult years until now. Focus on everything, on every aspect of your life: Your family, your parents, your wife, your children; your friends, your colleagues, your work, your coworkers. Do not hide anything, because you cannot hide from God.

Be honest with yourself. Discover yourself as you are. The good and the bad. Your successes, your failures, and your possibilities. Be humble. God likes to reveal himself to humble people. Be strong. Sometimes the truth is hard to accept; sometimes even hurts. Try to make a movie of everything you see. You are the director, the producer, and the main actor of that movie.

I am convinced that all of us made that movie and that we found scenes not so innocent, some of them that we might even consider X rated.

As you are watching along with your wife and kids, you want to delete these scenes and stop the movie.

You are realizing that there were a lot of mistakes in your life.

After that meditation we are invited to follow Jesus on his way to Calvary, meditating on the Stations of the Cross.

There was a pause times for dinner. After dinner we went back to chapel again. One more time the Spiritual Director comes and starts to talk about the parable of The Prodigal Son, or The Merciful Father.

He tells us how God is a father full of compassion.  
 A father who – no matter what we've done in the past,  
 no matter how much we messed up -  
 even to the point of rejecting Him –  
 no matter how much we have sinned,  
 no matter how far we ran away from him –  
 he is there eagerly waiting, with open arms,  
 for our return.

Prepared to make a big party for us when we return,  
 if we want and decide to return.

A father who forgets and forgives all the mistakes, all the abuses,  
 all offenses that his young son made.

A father who, when his son returns,  
 goes out and embraces him and tell his servants  
 to prepare a banquet, with music and dance.

He orders his servants to bring the ring and gives it to him to tell him that he is again part of the family. Who puts new sandals on his feet and a tunic in his back to tell him that,

«Yes! There is a new purpose in life; that you will take your place back in the community that you abandoned».

«Maybe some in the community won't receive you back! But you are my son. I will wipe away all your sins, all your faults.» «Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow». (Isaiah 1, 18).

Reflecting on the older son's attitude,  
 what is your attitude towards the brothers  
 or sisters who leave the community?

Do we go out of our way to search for them?

Do we try to get in touch with them?

Do we call them? Do we find out why? And when they return, do we welcome them back? Do we celebrate them and with them? Are we happy that they returned, or do we reproach them instead?

So many times, I hear stories of older brothers  
 and sisters who act the same way the older son did ...

Many times, we are self-righteous,  
and we don't look at the log in our eye:  
«Why do you look at the speck of sawdust in your brother's eye  
and pay no attention to the log in your own eye?»

In my opinion, this meditation about  
the Prodigal Son –  
and I hope the purists of the Cursillo  
give me some leniency and indulgence –  
is the hinge on which we start  
to move from the first phase  
of the Cursillo - the retreat part of  
knowing ourselves - into the next phase  
of knowing God, our encounter with Christ.

The portrait of the merciful father was reinforced Friday morning by the  
meditation, THE THREE GLANCES OF CHRIST.

Personally, I do not agree with this title: Christ does not look at one person  
differently from another; he doesn't look at me differently from you; he doesn't  
look at René differently from Milagro; or to Wilbert differently from Kim).

He always looks at us, all of us,  
the same way: with love,  
with compassion, with tenderness.  
With merciful eyes. What changes is the way  
we reciprocate that look, our reaction to that look.  
That is what really makes the difference.

I don't know if you remember the movie  
«The Passion of Christ» from Mel Gibson.  
I recall that when I first saw it,  
there is a scene where Jesus looks at Judas,  
not with a look of accusation but a look of forgiveness; Judas, however, avoids  
Jesus look because of his pride. He reacts with despair, and immediately he runs  
away to hang himself. He did not want to recognize the mercy and compassion in  
the eyes of Jesus.

A few scenes later we see again Jesus, and at this time he looks at Peter who had  
denied him in Pilate's courtyard. I have no idea if Mel Gibson did it on purpose or if  
just by coincidence: Peter tries to hide himself from the Lord but, at this very  
moment, their eyes meet. Peter recognizes the same look of mercy, compassion,  
and forgiveness in Jesus eyes, The same glance he had given to Judas. At that  
moment, it says the Gospel, «Peter went out and wept bitterly.» (Luke 22:62-64).  
My question is: What is our reaction when  
we sin and notice the look of Jesus?  
Do we ignore it?

Do we think that He is reproaching us?  
 That He is condemning us?  
 Do we turn our look away from Him?  
 Do we look at him with humility and repentance?  
 Do we want to know why he looks at me with that tender look of forgiveness?  
 Do we realize that his look is one of compassion?

And the questions continue:

Does he care for me? Why does he care for me?

The answer to all these questions came during the celebration of the Eucharist, in the gospel.

The reading is the story of the calming of the storm when Jesus was in the boat sleeping while his disciples were in trouble. (Mark 4:35-41)

After Jesus order the wind and the sea to be quiet, he turns to his disciples: «Why are you terrified? Do you not yet have faith?»

This episode should be present all the time in our lives. These words inspire faith and confidence in a God who gives me reason not to be afraid.

A God who professes that we are precious to him (Isaiah 43, 1-3).

A God who respects our freedom and lets us arrive to the answers by ourselves, without pressuring us, without crushing us, without any imposition on his part.

Remember the episode of Jesus with the young man who refused Jesus' invitation to go, sell everything, give it to the poor and then come and follow him. (Luke 12:13-21).

(That is also part of the meditation about the three looks of Christ).

Sometimes it seems that God is sleeping. We would like for him to intervene immediately, as soon as we feel tired, as soon as we give signs of fear, as soon as pain afflicts us.

On that evening, the Apostles,  
 petrified with the storm, they cry to Jesus:

«You don't care that we die?

You don't care about the life or death of your friends?»

Jesus answered, not with words  
 but with the strength of his deeds:

I do care for you. Your life is very important to me.

All the lilies of the field, all the birds of the sky,

I do care for them.

But I do care much more for you. To the point that

«even the very hairs of your head are all numbered». (Luke 12, 7)

You – Juan, Dana, Milagro, Rene, Carmen, Damáris, Nadia, all of you – are very important to me. I gave my life for you. I died on a cross for you. I remained in the Eucharist for you. I gave you a role in the building of my Body, the Church. And the only thing I ask from you now is to trust me; have faith on me. I am at your side; I journey with you. Don't be afraid. I am here; I am present to you. Maybe not the way you want, but as I want.

God is always present; he does not substitute me, but he walks with me, together with me; sometimes picking me up to carry me.

[FOOT PRINTS ON THE SAND]

He does not take the storm away from me, but he saves me and gives me strength inside the storm. He does not take the cross away from me, but he saves me on the cross.

It is true that sometimes we have doubts.

It seems that things do not go the way we would like.

We make plans and these plans do not work the way we projected.

Do you think it is time to rethink your plans?

Or you just decide that since your plan did not work it is time to quit?

Maybe then it is time to go to the Tabernacle and have a talk with the Lord; right there in his presence, face to face, talk to him the same way friends talk to each other.

When was the last time that you did that? Or when was the last time that you went to the Tabernacle, spoke with Christ and thanked Him for all the help he has given you? When was the last time that you just sat there listening to Him? Really listening to him! And how do you show your love for Him?

This brings me to another point that I want to make.

As Christian, moreover, as Cursillista, how well do I know this Jesus who loves me, who walks with me, who gives me strength?

In other words, who is Jesus for me?

I am sure we all remember the episode when Jesus asked one of His most profound questions while He and His disciples were walking through Caesarea Philippi. Jesus asked, "Who do people say that I am?" (Matt. 16:13).

That's easy to answer:

"Well, Lord, they think you're a nice guy,

a loving leader, a marvelous teacher,

a good model for us,

a great religious figure who ranks up there with Abraham, Moses,

Muhammad, Confucius, Buddha;

some think you're a revolutionary, a healer,

a reformer, a positive thinker, a giver."

Jesus smiles...and then comes that most important question of all.  
 «Fine: That's who they think I am. But who do you say I am?» YOU! YOU!

In the answer  
 you give to that question hangs everything –  
 the direction of our life, our attitude to life,  
 how we act, what we say,  
 what we hope for, the salvation of our souls –  
 «Who do you say I am?»

Perhaps we may say,  
 «Lord, I've never really thought about it.» Which is very sad, tragic, hypocritical  
 really, since we check the box «Christian» or «Catholic» when asked to designate  
 our religion, and we are at His supper on the first day of the week....  
 We can answer, «Lord, I have different opinions about you and haven't made up  
 my mind yet.  
 I don't want to be closed-minded about this.»

Sad, tragic, an insult, since He has, as a matter of fact, already revealed to  
 us the answer to that pivotal question and since we belong to a Church that  
 has cherished the reply for two millennia  
 as a supreme act of faith.

Or we can give the correct answer, the one given by Saint Peter: «You are the  
 Christ, the Son of the living God; you are my Lord and Savior; you are my beginning  
 and my end; you are the way, the truth, and the life. You are the most important  
 person in my life; Jesus, who lives in me, who accompanies me always, who knows  
 me better than I know myself, who loves me so much that you died for me, who  
 rose from the dead and wants me to spend eternity with you. You are the answer  
 to the questions posed by every human life. That's who you are, Jesus, my Lord,  
 my God, my all.”

That is the right answer! There's the act of faith! There's the reply of Peter and of  
 the Church founded on the rock of his faith.

Now get ready, because the answer to that question has towering implications in  
 our lives--how we live, what we say, what we choose, how we treat ourselves,  
 how we treat others.

The decision you reach about who Jesus is will be the most profound decision of  
 your life, and it has extreme ramifications and consequences.  
 It is an answer that must come not from your head but from your heart.  
 Your answer must show in the way  
 you live your everyday life; in other words, in the witness you give.  
 As Cursillista,  
 in the way you live your POST CURSILLO.

## **26- Let me tell you a story**

### **THE GOLD MINE**

It is said that once upon a time five neighbors from a small town in Biscay arrived in America. Like all those who arrived in those lands, those five friends were looking for gold. They spent several years scratching the earth, searching the waters of the river in search of a precious golden nugget, going hungry, suffering the cold, remembering their land of Vizcaya.

They had left their village, covered with oak trees, with the dream of finding gold in distant lands. At that time, some famous iron mines had begun to be exploited in Vizcaya.

But those five friends, despising the iron that they extracted in the mountains of their land, had gone to America in search of gold. But that precious metal was nowhere to be found.

One morning, one of the five saw an almost round stone shining near the river. He stopped, suspiciously, and looked at the fist-sized stone. He dared not pick it up.

He called to his friends and pointed to the piece of stone that glittered in the sun's rays. The other four approached and, indeed, it was gold. Very pure gold.

With fever in their hands, they began to dig out the damp earth from that place and realized at once that the stone came from a rock, all gold, which was just a few feet underground. They had found the dream of so many years. They had found a gold mine.

In the evening, after dinner, they had an after-dinner chat. And they agreed unanimously that they would not tell anyone that secret.

One by one they gave their word of honor that they would not reveal the find to anyone. And because they knew each other well, they went to sleep with the assurance that the secret would not leave the circle of the five of them.

The next morning was Sunday. And, as they did every week, those five Biscayan men went down to the village to mingle with the other emigrants who had arrived there, like them, in search of gold. They put on clean pants and a white shirt, and went down the mountain on their way to the village.

They attended Mass, ate in the canteen, drank with the neighbors, danced with the girls and slept peacefully like millionaires swimming in rivers of gold.

In the morning the five of them returned to the mountain. After a short time they realized, with surprise, that several men, in groups of four, were following them.

They were so surprised that all five looked at each other, searching for the traitor's face.

One of them had loosened his tongue.

- Was it you?
- Not me.
- Me neither.
- Me neither.

None of them had blabbed.

The men following them were undoubtedly behind them. They did not wander off; they did not wander off in other directions. Undoubtedly, it was them whom all those men were following with determined steps.

There was no longer anything to hide.

One of the five turned to the men who were following them and asked them decisively:

Why are you following us?

- Because we know that you have found gold.
- And who told you that?
- Nobody
- Well, how do you know?

And it was then that they were told the most dazzling phrase they had ever heard in their lives.

How do we know? We could see it in your eyes!

I remember very well the moment in which my heart finally opened to the grace of God. It took time but it did happen. At that very moment I realized the fact that I was loved by God. I was crying profusely but my tears were tears of joy. I could hardly contain my heart inside. I am sure that if someone looked at my eyes, these were reflecting what was going inside of me, the same way these five friends' eyes were reflecting the joy they were feeling because, finally, after hard work, they had found the gold mine.

We too, after (re) discovering the Grace of God, we have found the most beautiful treasure, more than gold.

What happened to me in that moment, I am sure that also it happened to you; because when a person in all his or her individual uniqueness, creativity, and freedom experiences God's love as the most fundamental truth of his or her life, that person is transformed...

One can live one's life fully only when one finds the meaning of one's life.

That's what Cursillo did to me;  
that's what Cursillo did to you;  
that's what Cursillo did and continues to do  
to thousands of men and women all over the world.

We are invited, more than that, we are challenged to live our Fourth Day by continuing to evolve on what those three days were for each of us: friendship with ourselves, friendship with God – and all His works (The creation) – and with friendship with our companions on the road.

We need to continue to know ourselves, every day. Do I make my examen of conscience at the end of the day? Do I ask forgiveness from whatever sins I committed during the day?

We need to continue to learn who God is,  
 who Jesus is. Do I take time  
 to read the Sacred Scripture?  
 Do I look at the Creation around me  
 and see God in it? Do I study?  
 Do I look at the signs of the times? Do I pray?

We need to grow our friendship with others.  
 We need to bring others to Christ through our friendship. What have I done recently to grow friendship around me? What kind of witness do I give to others around me? Have I been living my faith in consonance with what I have learned in Cursillo?

Have I been going to Ultreya? What about my Friendship Group?  
 What kind of Apostolic work have I done recently? Am I a participating Christian in my community?

These and many other questions can be made.  
 Each one of us must answer  
 honestly and sincerely.

I am not here to preach or to give you  
 great lessons on how to live your life as Cursillista.

I am here to learn with you, to journey with you. We are all on a pilgrimage to the Father's House. We might trip, we might stumble, we might even fall. But remember, we are all together and Jesus is journeying with us; and, if necessary, He will pick us up and He will carry us.

Before I finish, let me present you with two prayers – Morning Prayer and Night prayer – that I have been praying for a few years now, along with the liturgical prayers I do from the breviary.

I found these prayers in a little book called ENCONTRO – MANUAL DE ORAÇÃO (ENCOUNTER – A PRAYER MANUAL) from a capuchin priest, Ignacio Larrañaga, who was born in Spain.

Eventually he went to live in Santiago, Chile and later moved to Guadalajara in Mexico, where he died.

He wrote several books, beside this one. I love these two prayers for two reasons: The morning prayer is like a blueprint, like a plan for the day. Take a good look at it and reflect on it.

The Night prayer is also a blueprint for our examen of conscience, for the movie of the day that you should do every night before going to bed.

These two prayers keep my feet on the ground.  
I hope they will help you as well on the journey of the Fourth Day.

### **MORNING PRAYER**

*Lord, in the silence of this dawning day, I come to you asking for peace, wisdom and strength. Today I want to look at the world with my eyes full of love:*

*36- I want to be patient, understanding, humble, serene and good. To look at Your children behind the appearances, as you yourself see them, so I can contemplate the goodness of each one.*

*Close my ears to all murmuring, keep my tongue from all slander. May only thoughts of kindness remain in me. I want to be so straight and well-meaning, that everyone who comes close to me might feel your presence.*

*Clothe me in Your goodness, Lord, and may I reveal you during this day. Amen.*

### **NIGHT PRAYER**

(Before going to bed)

*My Father,  
now that all voices and noises have subsided my soul rises to You to say:  
I believe in You, I hope in You, I love You with all my heart. Glory to You, Lord.  
I place in Your hands the fatigue and the struggles, the joys, and disappointments of this day.  
If my nerves betrayed me, if selfish impulses dominated me,  
if I gave way to rancor or sadness, pardon, Lord! Have pity on me.  
If I have been unfaithful,  
if I have spoken empty words,  
if I have let myself carried away by impatience,  
if I have been a thorn to someone, forgive me Lord.*

*I don't want to fall asleep tonight without feeling in me the security of Your mercy, of Your sweet mercy, entirely free, Lord.*

*I give you thanks, Father, because you were the cool shadow who sheltered me during this day.*

*I give you thanks because, invisible, lovingly, enveloping, you took care of me like a mother, throughout these hours.*

*Lord, around me, everything is silence and calm.*

*Send the angel of Peace to this house. Relax my nerves, calm my spirit, release my tensions, flood my being with silence and serenity.*

*Watch over me, dear Father, as I surrender confidently to sleep, like a child who sleeps happy in your arms.*

*In Your name,*

*Lord, I will rest in peace.*

*Amen.*

