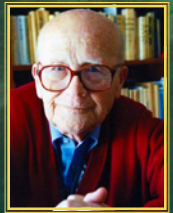




# CURSILLOS in CHRISTIANITY National Newsletter

## Signs of HOPE

**An Interview with Eduardo Bonnín** conducted by Bishop Paul Josef Cordes, Part 2



Servant of God

**Eduardo Bonnín Aguiló**

Founder of  
Cursillos in Christianity  
1917 – 2008

**August 2023**

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National Cursillo Center  
P.O. Box 799  
Jarrell, Texas 76537  
512-746-2020  
512-746-2030 (Fax)

In early 1997, Eduardo Bonnín received a visit from Bishop Paul Josef Cordes of the Vatican (Cardinal and President Emeritus of the Pontifical Council “Cor Unum”). Bishop Cordes was called to interview seven founders from prominent ecclesial Movements in preparation for the First World Congress of Ecclesial Movements, which would be held in 1998 in Rome.

**6. Bishop Cordes: There are many important texts, but there must have been something more than these books that influenced your thinking.**

**Eduardo Bonnín:** All this, and mostly my contacts with people, made me realize in direct contact with reality, that when the message of the Gospel is accepted with personalized faith, and it reaches the specific singularity, the originality and creativity of each person, it reinforces the human qualities of the person. These qualities, as soon as the life of Grace starts to grow and becomes conscious, bring each human being – in the Christological process, through the logic that Christ uses, to grow in his or her desire to live in thanksgiving for the gift of life and to experience the joy that results from transmitting it to the broadest number possible.

The Movement of Cursillo, by the Grace of God and the prayers of many people, was born of an intense preoccupation with real people in the ordinariness of daily life, ordinary people whose main preoccupation is with simply living, rarely have time to ask themselves why, and even less to find time to be preoccupied with the meaning of their own existence.

What we wanted at the beginning, and have always desired, is for the freedom of man to encounter the Spirit of God.

Around that central idea, convinced that efficiency consisted mainly of finding the point of convergence that would facilitate that happy encounter, we ourselves have proposed – myself first and, after that, some others – to study what would be the place and the most adequate method to achieve that result rapidly, simply and in an attractive manner.

At that time, the superior council for young men of the Catholic Action was urged by its national president, Manuel Aparici – who later became a priest and chaplain of the same council – to gather 100,000 young men living in Grace at St. James of Compostela. This was an answer to what Pius XI had stressed in 1937 in his encyclical, “Burning Desire,” regarding the situation of the Church in the German Reich: meaning that the world should be able to count on a Christianity founded on solid Christian virtues which would become an example and a guide.

A commission of youth from Catholic Action went to Rome to promise the Holy Father that they would try to meet this need in the world, a reality in Spain.

From that, and using the holidays of Christmas and Easter, they went to many dioceses to present courses on Christian life. These Cursillos lasted a full week. They gave themselves the name of Pilgrim Leaders, for those working at the diocesan level, and Pilgrim Guides, for those working at the parochial level. The intended goal was to motivate young people to go on a pilgrimage to [the Shrine of] St. James in Compostela. The following slogans became very famous at the time: ‘Saints for Santiago,’ ‘to make the pilgrimage is nothing, to make a pilgrimage with faith is to clear a way.’

When the first of these Cursillos took place in Mallorca, I didn’t want to go, despite the invitation I received. In fact, I did not belong to Catholic Action, and the way they acted did not motivate me to become one of them.

When the second course of this type was given the year after, the president insisted that I go, which I did. I then saw in these young men a joyful and relaxed lifestyle that convinced me.

Sometime after, when another course like the previous ones was again given in Mallorca, I was asked to be a part of it, using the outline of the talk on the “Study of the Environment” and some other facts that it was evident had a different perspective to the rest of the talks.

I couldn’t free myself from a question that preoccupied my mind, “What will happen after the great pilgrimage?” With some friends, we asked ourselves the following question: “After Santiago, what will happen?”

Out of this model, we got the idea of how to give the message at the depth that we wanted, to convey, to communicate our ideas – (different to those that were given to us, as I already said, because they were situated at a different level and had a very specific goal) – it wasn’t the talks and explanations that would motivate them, but to live the message with them, to infect them. To live with them, bringing them to an isolated place and forming groups to facilitate the dialogue between people. In these Cursillos, we also retained some of the topics of discussion; because we couldn’t only create new things, we had to adapt to the rhythm of the people while at the same time reflecting on the ways in which to animate them.

**7. Bishop Cordes: Therefore, you gave worth to the concept of the Cursillos, already organized by Catholic Action. But with the new things you added, it is evident that you were pursuing something new.**

**Eduardo Bonnín:** What appeared clear to us was that the Cursillos, organized by Catholic Action, lasted too long, which was detrimental to the number of people who could receive the message. We thought that a period of three days would be ideal, and if these three days included Saturday and Sunday, it would be simple to take one day off work, Friday. Since the Cursillo begins on Thursday night, gathering a group for a weekend became easy. This was a way to simplify the road to have the message reach more people. But what was most interesting was to study what was at the heart of the message in question to communicate it effectively, with integrity, brevity, and depth in a manner that was both attractive and yet revealed its possibilities to the greatest number of people.

Reflecting, praying, studying, and praying again was how the Cursillos in Christianity were conceived and developed. At first, they were called simply Cursillos, but afterward, to distinguish them from all the [Catholic Action] courses existing at the time – courses for professors, for policemen, etc. – others, not us, gave them the name “Cursillos of Conquest.” This was absolutely displeasing to those of us who started them. The prayer that we said at the beginning of reunions or when the tension in the debates required it gives an idea of the climate that emanated from these reunions. At this time, I already belonged to Catholic Action, but I didn’t like the apathetic routine and pious rhythm that we had to give to all activities so that we would be unobtrusive.

We were moving with a different rhythm in a different direction, always concerned with the needs of those who are far away from the Church. To avoid any tensions with Catholic Action

– instead of opposing them – we kept ourselves on the fringes but with a desire to bring about renewal. We realized that we had to maintain a good distance to observe things from another perspective. To reach this goal, we gathered to study more faithfully and deeply the doctrine we wanted to communicate. To give the message the most personalized way, we studied the environments in which the people we wanted to reach lived.

First, in our group, we began the study of the environment.

I brought to the group everything that I had been reflecting on for a long time; we wanted to know how people are and to give more precision to that study. We tried to group people in our imaginations according to what they were living. This included atheists all the way to those who were living and acting as authentic Christians and Catholics. From this, we made some personal files, still in our imaginations, formulated from the reality of life. For example, in the file of the young soldier, it was noted: “the young soldier who obeys his superiors, when he is in front of them because he cannot help it but who mumbles behind their back because he has had enough.”

No priests assisted at these meetings, not from a deliberate will to exclude them but because their multiple tasks rendered their presence difficult.

Besides that, we understood that the innovations of our ideas, especially before they were well structured and balanced, would be shocking to their mentality, which was rooted in their tradition and ministerial practice.

Some anecdotes from this time would clarify what we were looking for by positioning ourselves in this way.

We are saying that Cursillo must be heterogeneous. All kinds of people had to join in the adventure. People that are near and those that are far away, the intelligent and the ignorant, the workers and the high and mighty, students and manual workers, etc., but we were told that what is interesting for a student can never interest a dock man [longshoreman].

The comprehensive attitude that we were forced to have was that the recently converted person had an enthusiastic spirit, which was an affront to the petrified rigidity of the ordinary people, and this showed the difficulty of our position. When these people came at an unacceptable hour – the only one possible for them after their work – to ask a priest to say the apostolic hour in the church, the answer was very clear: “We can’t open the church at this hour.” From their point of view, they were completely right, but we had to use precious time, running against the clock, because we were always trying to get the parish priests to understand the mentality of these young, recent converts and to make sure that what was happening wouldn’t give a reason to develop instinctual prejudices against the parish priests.

The spirit of Cursillo, which is the substance of the Gospel adapted to the diversity of individual situations, sometimes erupts in a person with a powerful drive that was not always easy to contain. The bursting force of an overflowing generosity that was shocking then and shocks still today, when not choked by rules or bureaucratic procedures.

We must thank God for the complementary role of the priest and the laypeople in the three-day Cursillo weekend. There, if things are done the way they should be, the priest will feel more like a



priest and content in knowing it. He lives that good expression of St. Augustine: “With you, I am a Christian, for you, I am your bishop.”

On the other side, at the level of the laypeople, Cursillo brings the discovery that if their human values are consecrated to live a more Christian life instead of being used to resolve the internal problems of the Church, it contributes to increasing the prestige of the Church and bringing it closer to the world.

We must thank the priests who had confidence in us, letting us explore freely to find new ways, wishing to find the most adequate way to communicate the good news that in some way would break through old ideas and would overcome boring habits with the eternal strength of the Gospel.

Needless to say, new ideas always cause problems. We went through very hard times; some of those experiences lived in the Movement are still painful today and hurt my sense of justice.

## NEWLY ELECTED OMCC and NACG



The IX World Encounter of Cursillos in Christianity Movement was held in Monterrey, Mexico, on June 1-4, 2023. There were 31 National Secretariats present and eligible to vote. The election held gave an absolute majority of votes – 19 – to the nomination of Spain, with 12 votes to the candidacy of Italy.

In the same IX World Encounter, and always in accordance with the provisions of the 2022 OMCC Statutes, the nine-member OMCC newly elected members consist of a President, Vice President, Secretary, Treasurer, and Spiritual Advisor, and, in an intercontinental spirit, a delegate from each of the four International Groups worldwide as their representative on the OMCC.

The nine-member OMCC (World Organism of Cursillos in Christianity) will assume its tasks as equal Servant Leaders for four years, starting on July 1, 2023, as follows:

- ◆ **President:** Álvaro Martínez Moreno from Spain
- ◆ **Vice-President:** Adair José Batista from Brazil
- ◆ **Spiritual Advisor:** Msgr. José Ángel Saiz Meneses from Spain
- ◆ **Treasurer:** Thomas Patrick Creen from Ukraine
- ◆ **Secretary:** Françoise Delaunoy Horta from Chile;

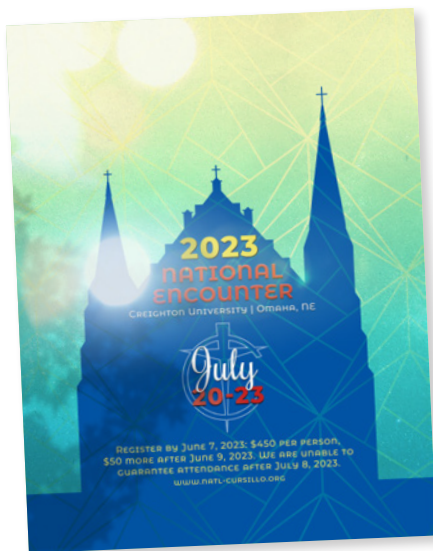
Delegates from the International Groups (IG) worldwide are:

- ◆ **APG (Asia Pacific Group) Delegate:** Alfred Bongi from Australia
- ◆ **GECC (European Group) Delegate:** Kresimir Percela from Croatia
- ◆ **GLCC (Latin American Group) Delegate:** Alberto Stang from Argentina
- ◆ **NACG (North America and Caribbean Group) Delegate:** Jackie DeMesme-Gray from the United States.

The United States National Cursillo Secretariat thanks the outgoing NACG Executive Committee consisting of President Hugo Valverde, Vice-President Marisela Garcia, Secretary Jackie DeMesme-Gray, and Treasurer Jim Santos for the service, leadership, and friendship while serving in their respective positions.

Congratulations to Canada, now serving as the new Coordinating Country for the first time in an international structure and the NACG Executive Committee. Their members consist of: President Steve Krause from the United States, Vice-President Linda Pitkanen from Canada, Spiritual Advisor Fr. Andrew Barnard from Grenada, Treasurer Arlene vanDiepen from Canada, and Secretary Estellita Rene from St. Lucia.

## 33<sup>rd</sup> Cursillo National Encounter Highlights



Approximately 500 Cursillistas from different parts of the United States, and Mallorca, Spain, gathered at Creighton University, in Omaha, NE, to celebrate the 33<sup>rd</sup> National Cursillo Encounter during July 20-23, 2023.

Several volunteers throughout the Regions helped make the encounter a success. This was the first National Encounter in Omaha, Nebraska. The Master of Ceremony, Conchita

Mayorga, welcomed the Cursillistas on Thursday night. The Marian procession was diverse. Several cursillistas processed different images of Mother Mary. Represented Marian images included: Mary, Mother Thrice Admirable, Queen, and Victress of Schoenstatt (Germany), Our Lady of LaVang (Vietnam), Our Lady of the Immaculate Conception (United States), Our Lady of Monserrat (Spain), Our Lady of Fatima (Portugal), Our Lady of the Most Holy Rosary of Manaoag (Philippines), Our Lady of Korea (Korea), and Our Lady of Guadalupe (Mexico), The Marian procession concluded with a ceremonial dance by Aztec dancers symbolizing the connection between man and God, of body and soul, a form of prayer and communication, symbolic to honoring Our Lady of Guadalupe.

The Marian procession was followed by the Apostolic Hour, the Sacrament of Reconciliation, and the Rite of Eucharistic Benediction, led by Fr. Mark Seiker and Fr. Alex Waraksa.

On Friday, the Spiritual Advisor from the Dioceses of Wichita, Kansas, Father Jacob Carlin, talked about “To Live Cursillo is to Live the Gospel Taught by the Catholic Church.” Fr Jacob shared his passion for this topic because he has witnessed how the Cursillo Movement has had an incredibly positive impact on his life and many people in the Diocese of Wichita by helping them live the Gospel message taught by the Catholic Church. He went on to illustrate that living the Cursillo Movement is, in fact, living the Gospel.

Father Alex Waraksa, former NACG Spiritual Advisor and current Spiritual Advisor for the dioceses of Knoxville, Tennessee, shared in his homily at Mass, How we Deal with Conflict, with the help of Jesus and a Christian attitude. It is part of our conversion experience to become more Christ-like. Living a life of mercy and love helps us to overcome the struggles that life can present to us, sometimes daily. Jesus embodies the mercy of God. We, as Christians, must look at those who struggle with eyes of mercy and understanding, not with eyes of judgment or condemnation.

Laity keynote speakers Margarita Rado, Loren Marian, and Christina Gutierrez from Mallorca, Spain, talked about the Charism of the Cursillo Movement, the Beatification Cause of Eduardo Bonnín Aguiló, and the Eduardo Bonnín Aguiló Foundation.

Before talking about the Charism of Cursillo, Margarita Rado reminded us that the Catechism of the Catholic Church, number 799, defines charisms as: “charisms are graces of the Holy Spirit, which directly or indirectly benefit the Church, ordered as they are to her building up, to the good of mankind and to the needs of the world.”

We all know that the Cursillos in Christianity is more than an organization; it is more than a structure, it is more than an association; Cursillo is life, a life. And the best way to know it is by contagion, the contagion of friendship.

The Foundational Charism is an identity and the Church is recognizing the charisms, which are the different ways of living and bringing the Gospel to life and, therefore, it identifies them. Pope Francis, in a gathering a few years ago in Rome, asked us cursillistas to deepen in what we are, in our Charism, in our identity; this is a constant in the Church in recent years, the request to each movement, congregation, etc., to deepen in their respective charisms to be faithful to what the Holy Spirit inspired.

Loren Marian shared an update on the Beatification Cause of Eduardo Bonnín. Is the cause moving forward? Yes. Is the cause going slowly? Yes, for two reasons. The first is because it is very voluminous due to the number of writings and the very activity-filled life of the Servant of God Eduardo Bonnín (trips, conferences, meetings, everything to promote and make known the charism of the movement, etc.).

The second reason why the cause is slow is due to the serious lack of resources available to the Eduardo Bonnín Foundation, which is responsible for all this work. What can we do at this particular moment of the Cause?

Four things: Get volunteers to work in the Foundation. Obtain funds to work for the cause. Collect donations because, as the Postulator of the cause himself said, “If a cause does not get people to contribute money, it is because there is no fame of sanctity, and it should not prosper because when there is devotion, there is a monetary contribution.” Collect testimonies of the fame of miracles. Christina Gonzalez shared her contributions as secretary of the Eduardo Bonnín Aguiló Foundation,

NACG President, Steve Krause spoke about The Operational Structure of the Cursillo Movement. Former NACG Vice President, Marisela Rodriguez-Garcia presented the same Rollo in Spanish, and the Region 8 Vietnamese Regional Coordinator Joseph Phuc Nguyen, Region 8, Vietnamese Regional Coordinator gave it in Vietnamese.

At the Ultreya, Bob Schilmoeller gave the witness talk. The echo responses came from the Spanish, Filipino, and Vietnamese communities, followed by the spiritual summation. This year we added a language breakout session on Friday night, each National Language Coordinator coordinated group activities for their respective language groups, and the Vietnamese had a great time laughing and competing in the Cursillo memory game and a trivia naming that saint. English and Spanish language groups participated in plenary sessions, Deacon Gary, and his wife, Gail Terrana, provided an update on the Rector’s Guide and Spiritual Advisors Guide, and Margarita Rado, Loren Marian, and Christina Gonzalez were the panelists for the Spanish Language breakout session.

On Saturday, Region 4 Regional Coordinator, Bernadette Charleston talked about A Journey through the Cursillo Rectors Guide Rollos, Region 8 Spanish Regional Coordinator, Carmen Golias delivered the talk in Spanish, and Minh Huong Tran in Vietnamese. National Cursillo Service Administrator, Nadia Lopez, delivered the talk on Gifts and Responsibilities of the Cursillo Christian Leader. The same talk was given in Spanish by the National Cursillo Hispanic Coordinator, Juan Ruiz, and Region 7 Regional Coordinator Toan Tran in Vietnamese.

In preparation for Holy Mass on Saturday Evening, we prayed a Multilingual Rosary. Father Jacob Carlin from the Dioceses of Wichita, Kansas, was the main celebrant, and Father Mark Seiker shared the Homily. In the Homily, Father Mark shared that God instilled in our souls the three Theological Virtues of Faith, Hope, and Love at Baptism. Peter Kreeft observes that we can best understand these three Theological Virtues by looking at a plant. Let us think of the seed that the sower planted in the ground. Faith is the root, the necessary beginning. Hope is the stem, the energy that makes the plant grow. Love is the fruit, the flower, the visible product, the final result. God instills in us the gift of Faith, which

comes from God. When Faith is lived in our lives or when we “practice our Faith,” then it bears the fruit of love.

We created an interactive group on WhatsApp and Google Photos where many shared pictures and experiences during the encounter. Some continue to interact and share in the joy of friendship through photos taken during the encounter and on their daily walk.

The winner of the framed canvas of Eduardo Bonnin was John Golias. We also raffled two National Encounter Vouchers for next year’s registration. Nelly De la Cruz from Region 2 and Sonia Gonzalez from Region 7 won the vouchers. Several participated during the fiesta with traditional-cultural dances, and a magic show. Others recited poems or sang a song. It was a great encounter, we lived and shared the Cursillo charism of Christ, Person, and Friendship, and we ended the night with everyone dancing at the Fiesta! A special thank you to our clergy, the Archdiocese of Omaha for their unconditional support, and to all who attended. See you in 2024!

*Nadia Valladolid*  
NCSA

## RE-ESTABLISHING THE ENGLISH CURSILLO in the Diocese of Little Rock, Arkansas

**T**he English Cursillo Movement had been active in the Diocese of Little Rock for many years, dating back to the 1960s. The infrastructure for this once vibrant diocesan movement had stagnated in the years before Covid-19 and became completely inactive after 2016. In response to the Diocesan listening sessions during the Synod on Synodality, a clear desire for an increase in Adult Retreat experiences and adult leadership formation was expressed. Bishop Anthony Taylor, himself a Cursillista, felt that a reactivated Cursillo Movement could play a major role in meeting those needs. In October 2022, he appointed a longtime Cursillista and newly ordained Permanent Deacon in the diocese to lead the effort to restore the English Cursillo.

Diocesan Cursillo records and outreach through The Arkansas Catholic, the diocesan newspaper, along with personal contacts around the state disclosed a desire on the part of many in the diocese to begin anew to re-establish the Cursillo leadership structure and Postcursillo support network. The diocese reached out to the National Movement for guidance and assistance, and after much prayer and planning, a National and Regional team of leaders presented a Cursillo de Cursillos workshop to 25 diocesan Cursillistas in Little Rock in April 2023 to help reaffirm the Essence, Purpose, and Mentality of the Movement. Through a series of rollos over the weekend retreat, we rediscovered the Cursillo strategy and the key roles of the School of Leaders and the Secretariat in assuring a vibrant Precursillo and Postcursillo so that the Cursillo weekends would bear more fruit in the lives of Cursillistas and provide them with the sustainability to assure ongoing conversion.

In the immediate aftermath of the Workshop, the diocese formed a Secretariat and agreed upon each member’s leadership role, which was approved by Bishop Taylor in June. In an all-day retreat, the



new Secretariat created a Diocesan Cursillo Apostolic Plan to guide its future work and approved a new set of by-laws largely drawn from the sample document in the US Catholic Cursillo Movement’s Leader’s Manual. Those documents are pending Bishop Taylor’s approval (which will likely be received before this article’s publication), after which the plan will be activated to reform the School of Leaders, the Precursillo, and Postcursillo by year-end 2023 in preparation for offering Men’s and Women’s Cursillo weekends in the late winter of 2023 or spring of 2024.

The thoroughness of the systematic process we’ve pursued, with the help of the National and Regional team and its resources and with the strong support of Bishop Taylor, has reinvigorated longtime Cursillistas, and we are well on our way to the next chapter in a long and proud history of Cursillo in the Little Rock Diocese!

*-Cursillo Leadership, Diocese of Little Rock*



# 33<sup>rd</sup> Cursillo National Encounter Festive Moments...











*Go  
Set the World  
on Fire*

St. Ignatius of Loyola



For more fun moments, please scan QR code above or touch here  
<https://photos.app.goo.gl/DmzBUqKofaRDn3Gn6>



## *Impressions about the 2023 National Encounter*

Like the past events, our brothers and sisters eagerly awaited the National Encounter annual events. The plane landed at Omaha airport. As soon as we arrived, we came to the designated place to be picked up. We noted some Vietnamese loving faces from Austin, Texas. We recognized each other with joy, laughed, and chatted as the bus was taking us to Creighton University.

The campus has many trees, adorned with colorful flowers, which offer this place a very poetic scene. We noted the piece of art "Fire" by the Harper Center with round-the-clock fire, which attracted the attention and admiration of many. We took turns taking pictures for many commemorative photos.

On Thursday evening, the first day of the National Encounter was preceded by a procession of Our Lady from different nations. Then there was a Mexican Indigenous dance.

Father Jacob's talk on Friday morning touched a lot of people. He understands the movement thoroughly and continues to live the spirit of Group Reunion. He is a young priest with a warm heart, who loves God, and genuinely wants to follow the direction of the movement. This is admirable. He told us that despite his busy schedule, he doesn't mind driving two hours to group with his friends, which is not easy to do. He showed people that the movement thrives because of the active group reunions by the Cursillistas. It is where the Cursillistas can share and motivate each other to live God's word through their own conversion and help each other make amends so that they can spread the good news of God's love in their own lives. If the Church had more priests like him, that would probably advance the movement, to bring more people closer to God.

Three Cursillistas came from Mallorca to talk about the effort to obtain the canonization of Eduardo Bonnín by FEBA (Foundation Eduardo Bonnín Aguilo). They believe that efforts for this canonization process are not just by Mallorca, but must be the contribution of many others, for the work to be achieved. His canonization would be a gift from God to make God's name shine through his faithful servant Eduardo Bonnín.

Each language group then met separately to hear a presentation on "Operational Structures of the Cursillo Movement," which outlines roles and responsibilities in all positions in the movement. After dinner, an Ultreya took place as usual, confirming that we are living a life of witness for Christ. The Ultreya always ignites hope that moves us forward.

On Saturday, we had separate sessions for each language. Our brothers and sisters listened to a talk about the connection between the Rollos during the 3-day weekend. Although the talk summarizes all the rollos succinctly, we feel the main meaning of each rollo and understand the position of each one, as well as the importance of the order of the talks. The more I listened, the more I appreciated my vocation of a Cursillista.

Next was a rollo on the "Gifts and responsibilities of the Cursillo Christian Leader." The Cursillista are called to serve God's people in their environments. They see clearly what God wants from them. They are willing to reciprocate and go further by assuming the responsibility to serve their brothers and sisters through various leadership positions in the movement. They must be people who understand Eduardo Bonnín's way of thinking, to cherish and preserve the movement in the way of the Holy Spirit. Leaders are not to command, but only to serve humbly because they know that they are only instruments forever.

The Mass for the Cursillistas attending the Encounter was solemnly celebrated in the love of all for one another.

Fiesta was a very fun-filled evening event, with the help of our brothers and sisters everywhere, which concluded this year's National Encounter.

Every year the National Encounter leaves us with many memorable memories. Every time I come here; I really feel like I receive a lot of support from a lot of people everywhere. It is these places that continue to urge me to always follow in the footsteps of Jesus. In the solidarity of all the Cursillistas, through the enthusiasm of the Regional Coordinators, we hope they lead the movement for the better.

Looking forward to seeing everyone again in 2024.

De Colores,

*Huong Minh Tran  
Charlotte, NC*