

Homily of Cardinal Justin Rigali  
Cursillo Diocesan Encounter  
Saint Thomas the Apostle Parish, Lenoir City, Tennessee  
December 1, 2012

It is a joy to join all of you here at Saint Thomas the Apostle Parish on the occasion of the Cursillo Diocesan Encounter.

At the very center of our encounter with Jesus and in him with one another is the holy Sacrifice of the Mass. It is in the holy Sacrifice of the Mass that there is verified the beautiful theme of this encounter: "I have the strength for everything through him who empowers me" (Phil 4:13).

The Second Vatican Council has made it clear: the Eucharistic Sacrifice is the source and summit of all Christian life.

This is what the Cursillo has always been about: Christian life, authentic Christian life, joyful Christian life, inspired and made possible by the Eucharist. The necessary empowerment for this Christian life is in Jesus, who alone can empower us and who indeed does empower us through the Eucharistic Sacrifice, which we are so privileged to celebrate together.

Our gathering today in the community of the Church evokes beautiful memories that find their place in the history of the salvation that God has given to his people.

We recall the origins in faith of the Cursillo Encounter—the first Cursillo held 68 years ago, in 1944. We praise God for using Eduardo Bonnín in a given moment of history to found the Cursillo, which would survive and expand in bringing many people to an encounter with the living Jesus Christ.

We give thanks that the Cursillo in time took root in the United States, and then fifteen years ago became an instrument of God's grace in this Diocese of Knoxville. And it remains strong today with the encouragement and blessing of Bishop Stika.

We offer this morning the holy Sacrifice of the Mass in thanksgiving for all of this, asking God to empower us further to put on Jesus Christ and to communicate him effectively to those whom we encounter.

Our prayer today of praise and thanksgiving, along with petition and reparation for our sins we present to the Father through his Son Jesus Christ and in the Holy Spirit.

And we are very happy that our celebration on this very last day of the liturgical year of grace takes place with a votive Mass of our Blessed Mother. Our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, the Incarnate Word of God, the Son of the Eternal Father came to us through Mary and we go to him through Mary. We rejoice in her presence. We are encouraged by her intercession. We feel

secure knowing that her maternal care is never lacking to us. She is so much a part of our Christian lives because she is so much a part of Jesus' life and mission.

Through her own loving intercession Mary helps us to understand, to realize the love of her Son Jesus that envelops us. A realization of being loved by Jesus is such an important element in being able to profit from the Cursillo encounter. One of the greatest revelations in the New Testament is precisely the fact that we are loved by Jesus. Let us listen to what he tells us: "As the Father loves me, so I also love you. Remain in my love. If you keep my commandments, you will remain in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and remain in his love" (Jn 15:9-10).

These words of Jesus introduce us to a great challenge. It is the challenge of our response to the love of Jesus for us. It is the challenge for all of us to recognize our individual vocation, our individual gifts, the power we have to share our encounter with Jesus with those with whom we come into contact. Our encounter with Jesus must be extended. We remember the words that the Greeks spoke to the Apostle Philip: "...we would like to see Jesus." This means we all have a mission, or rather a share in the Church's mission: to show Jesus to others, to help them encounter his love and his mercy.

The words that Jesus addresses to us this morning in our Gospel are very important. He says: "Be vigilant at all times and pray that you have the strength to escape the tribulations that are imminent and to stand before the Son of Man." We have all experienced trials and difficulties. We know that Jesus expects us to fulfill his commandments according to our role in life. We must not grow tired of doing good.

It is so important for cursillistas who are lay men and women to recognize their role as laity, and the importance of their contribution.

Here I would like to emphasize the importance of collaborating with Christ in the work of salvation. This collaboration takes place in the Church and the aims of the Cursillo are part of the great mission of the Church. To apply the work of salvation, Christ has willed to use us. He wants us to know that, according to his plan, he needs us the members of his Church.

What do we mean when we say that *Christ needs us*? Pope Pius XII explained this in these words: "As Jesus hung on the Cross he not only fulfilled the justice of the eternal Father...but he also won for us, his brothers and sisters, an unending flow of graces. It was possible for him personally, immediately, to impart these graces; but he willed to do so only through a visible Church that would be formed by the union of people, and thus, through the Church, every individual would perform a work of collaboration with him in dispensing the graces of redemption. The Word of God willed to make use of our nature, when in excruciating agony, he would redeem mankind; in much the same way, throughout the centuries, he makes use of the Church so that the work begun might endure."

The Pope went on to clarify this very important principle saying: "Because Christ the Head holds such an eminent position, one must not think that he does not need the Body's help. What Paul said of the human organism is to be applied likewise to the Mystical Body: 'The

Head cannot say to the feet: "I have no need of you!" It is manifestly clear that the faithful need the help of the Divine Redeemer for He has said: 'without me you can do nothing.' And in the teaching of the Apostle, every advance of this Body toward its perfection derives from Christ, the Head. Yet, this too must be held, marvelous though it appear: Christ needs his members."

This truth—that Christ needs His members—is magnificent! It was spoken some years before the Second Vatican Council, and incidentally this encyclical was one of the rich sources of the documentation of that Council. How impressive is this truth: *Christ needs His members!*

Pope Pius XII then further explained: "Jesus Christ wills to be helped by the members of his Body. This is not because he is indigent and weak, but rather because he has so willed it for the greater glory of his unspotted Spouse. Dying on the Cross, Christ left to his Church the immense treasury of the redemption. Toward this she contributed nothing. But, when those graces come to be distributed, not only does Christ share this task of sanctification with his Church, but he wants it, in a way, to be due to her action."

This leads us to understand the value of our collaboration in the Church. Pope Pius XII helped us to do this by saying: "Deep mystery this, and subject of inexhaustible meditation: that the salvation of many people depends on the prayers and the voluntary penance which the members of the Mystical Body of Jesus Christ offer for this intention, and on the assistance of pastors of souls, and of the faithful, especially of fathers and mothers of families which they must offer to our Divine Savior as his associates" (*Mystici Corporis*, 16, 54-55). In all of this the main point is that we are all *valued associates in the work of Christ*, assisting him in the application of his work of redemption.

This, dear friends, is what the Cursillo endeavors to do—as one beautiful expression of the life of the Church. But this collaboration with the work of Jesus requires generosity, zeal and holiness on our part. And all of this is made possible by Jesus Christ and his Eucharist.

And when we have Jesus Christ and his Eucharist, with the other sacraments, and dedicate ourselves to prayer, we can truly say with Saint Paul: "I have the strength for everything through him who empowers me."

Dear friends: to know Jesus Christ, to experience his love, to share this love with others and to trust him totally is what the Church wants us to do. Through the Cursillo you have a particular and beautiful means to live the mission of the Church, to collaborate with Jesus himself in bringing his love and grace and strength to so many of your brothers and sisters.

Rejoice, dear friends, with our Blessed Mother Mary, and be grateful and confident. Jesus repeats to you: "As the Father loves me, so I also love you. Remain in my love." Amen.