

In October, 1976, the first ecumenical Cursillo was held at the Union Correctional Institute in Raiford, Florida. This letter, translated from German, was received as palanca for that weekend. Imagine how this letter was received by those pilgrims who were prisoners. The words remind us all of the impact our weekends have in the lives of our guests – whether in prison or not.

Palanca from Prison

My dear friends in Florida!

First, the best greetings from me.

I hope you feel as free in your heart and mind as I do. I am very sorry that I cannot give you my greetings in a personal way because the bars and the high, strong guarded walls of my prison do not allow it.

You won't believe it when I say that I don't feel despair in spite of my nineteen years of prison punishment. You will surely ask, "How can a man be happy whose freedom has been deprived?" It's not possible for him, you would think.

Some months ago, friends, I also thought that this cannot be possible! But since I attended the 8th prisoner Cursillo, I feel myself much more free than any other man who enjoys his full freedom.

How many people think that they are free?

In reality, they are prisoners of themselves, of their passions, their cares, and so on. What is unfortunately missing for most people? It is the inner freedom, the belief in the good – the belief in God!

I am sure you will consider the life in another way after your Cursillo. If you open your hearts and take up the words of Jesus Christ and those of your friends, you can only be happy and glad!

Now I am 27 years old and I had 10 previous convictions. I got to know all the badness of life. I never wanted to know anything about God. I thought God is only for old women! I felt very well without Jesus Christ and I did not need Him!

You see what happened to me, without any aim, without any thoughts about the future. What a "rough lad" I was – a tough nature. My friends admired me and said, "He shows it to them. He won't knuckle under to the bulls." I am now able to say to you, "What a fool I was."

In 1971, I overpowered two bulls and my two pals kidnapped a lawyer and his secretary as hostages.

With the bulls' pistols and the hostages, we forced our release from the biggest and most secure prison in Austria. During our escape, we kidnapped more than 14 hostages. It was madness, friends, and I thank God that nobody was seriously hurt. I could already imagine myself in South America, surrounded by the most beautiful girls. The disillusionment was very, very bitter.

But I'll affirm you, friends, I'm going to fight! For Jesus Christ and my friends. I'll go to the field at the top.

My brothers in Christ, I would be happy to know that you are on my side! Jesus Christ and we are always the majority!!

Cheer up, Brothers!

With all my heart I wish you much courage and energy.

Your friend and brother,

Walter Schubirsch