The Role of the Conference Room Team

Our real purpose as a team is to give the candidates an experience in community living. The talks are important but they are really secondary to our main purpose -- to let the candidates know through us what it means to be loved by God. Our obligation as team members is to learn to know the candidates and show them that we love them, exactly as they are. The work begins when the first candidate arrives on Thursday night and continues throughout the weekend; not just at the tables during the talks and discussions, but constantly, at mealtimes, in the sleeping area, in the hallways, during breaks, etc.

The Cursillo is for the candidates, not the team members. The team is the core in forming Christian community during the three days.

Our work begins immediately on Thursday night; perhaps you can remember how apprehensive you were on arriving at the Cursillo on Thursday night. The role of the team member is:

* To talk to the candidates, draw them into the group
* Create a welcoming atmosphere, make them feel like this is a good place to be. This starts in small ways: helping them find their bunks, getting their coffee, and so forth—in any small way without making it obvious that you’re running anything.
* Let the candidates know that you’re excited about being there and that you’re glad they are there. If they express fear or apprehension, let them know that you understand because you probably experienced similar feelings on the Thursday night of your Cursillo. Assure them that it will be a pleasant weekend, that this is a nice group of people and just to relax.
* During the social, make sure there are not three or four team members talking to two candidates: if you find yourself in such a group, tactfully excuse yourself and seek out some other candidates. During the introductions and always during the three days, don’t sit with other team members; spread yourself out. Be sure to mention that you are on the team when you introduce yourself.
* **Candidates can sit at any table until they are divided into table families.**

During the three days the team members are always the leaders:

* Take the lead in answering the bell promptly, singing, set an example during the silent retreat
* Don’t be talking among yourselves
* During the Rollos set an example by taking notes.
* During the dialogue homilies on Saturday and Sunday, give the candidates a chance to respond first. If there is no response, one or two team members might say something and then again allow the candidates a chance to speak. The point is that if all the team members are jumping quickly, this allows little opportunity for the candidates.
* For the first Rollo on Friday, one of the team members will lead the discussion and one will be secretary; after that choose a secretary and a leader from the candidates.
* The secret of leading the table discussions is justly that – to LEAD—DO NOT DOMINATE. Your chief duty is to involve all members of the group in the discussion. You are not expected to be a teacher or an expert. You must respect each individual in the group even if you privately disagree with his views. You should refrain from forcing anyone to change his views. Ask for their opinions and respect their opinions. It isn’t necessary for the group to reach complete agreement on all questions; the purpose of the discussions is to make the candidate think. The team members should tactfully keep the discussion on the track avoiding tangents.
* Be sincere and honest in all of your contacts with the candidates. Be friendly and open, don’t be afraid to be human. Let them see your weaknesses and your strengths; share yourselves with them. Most people can’t relate to a saint but they can relate to someone who is striving to become one and trying to live a Christian life.
* Never leave a candidate standing or sitting alone. Seek out the shy person. Listen intently when a candidate is talking to you; don’t be looking across the room so that they get the feeling you would rather be with someone else. Don’t try to counsel a candidate; be a good listener. Don’t belittle or minimize their problems; it may not seem understanding or sympathetic. If there is a problem which requires advice or counseling, you might suggest they visit with a Pastor and set up a meeting, but never force. Perhaps you might suggest going to the chapel to pray together.
* If you are talking to a candidate when the bell rings—perhaps someone is pouring his heart out to you—respond to the bell but not without making plans to talk with him at some specific time; perhaps at lunch, during a break, etc. Be sure to keep the plans you make to see him.
* Team members should never discuss candidates among themselves. If someone tells you about a problem you **should** tell your table partner so that he might be more aware and sensitive of him. In some cases, for example, if someone is considering leaving, you should tell the rector or one of the Pastors so that they might be aware of what’s going on. A candidate’s problem should never be brought up for discussion at team meetings.
* If a candidate talks to you about his reaction, perhaps he is worried about his reaction or that he isn’t responding in a certain way. Reassure him just to relax and enjoy this weekend; there is no specific reaction expected from anyone.
* If a candidate asks what time it is or what is going to happen next, just say that the rector is the timekeeper and that he has the schedule. For this weekend, we can just forget about time and relax—isn’t that a nice feeling.
* Never say something like ‘just wait until you hear the next talk,’ or cause them to anticipate. This can cause disappointment and prevent the candidate from getting the point of the next talk or whatever is going to happen next. Be on guard about mentioning anything to a candidate about the serenade or the closing.
* During table chapel visits, we never want candidates to feel like they’re being forced to pray. It’s the responsibility of the team member to immediately set the tone of the visit and put the candidates at ease. Perhaps the team member who begins the prayers might say something like, ‘Lord, we come to talk to you, each in our own way; sometimes we find it difficult to say what is in our hearts but we know that that’s not important because you already know.’ Try not to arrange yourselves in a straight line or a circle because candidates might feel as they are expected to go down the line and say a prayer. Chapel visits are scheduled for a period of time, but if after five minutes, everyone seems to have said something who wants to, just leave. Just waiting there in silence for the ten minutes to end cause a candidate to really feel pressured about praying.
* Team members at the tables are responsible to see that table members are attending ultreyas and eventually become part of a permanent group. A follow-up note to your table family members urging them to attend ultreyas is also a part of your responsibility.

Probably the most important thing about being a team member is to relax and be yourself. You may be thinking about whether you are going to do a good job and how you are coming across to the people. Make a real effort to worry about others and not yourself. Don’t worry or fret about how people are going to react to you and about how you are feeling but relax, be open and natural; concentrate on being sensitive to and aware of the candidates and their needs.

The three days are for the candidates, so be yourself, be totally concerned for the candidates, and let the Spirit do the rest.

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