



THE TRUE NATURE OF PALANCA/AGAPE

When I do an AKT training, I frequently make a comparison between Kairos and a Christmas tree. In my home we prefer a blue spruce for Christmas. We get excited about shopping for our tree, purchasing it, taking it home and putting it into our stand. We do the same with Christmas presents.

Probably in Kairos we feel the same way. We anticipate team meetings, seeing old friends, sharing food, grouping with them and hearing the latest news.

We enjoy putting ornaments on our Christmas tree. We string popcorn or cranberries and use bright colorful lights and icicles. Sometimes we use so many presents and decorations we can hardly see the tree. Even now at my age it's a wonderful event, especially when my wife and children participate – I love to hear them be excited and laugh as they open presents. It brings such joy and pleasure.

In Kairos we often get similar pleasure decorating the room and offering our presents of food, cakes and candy. We see the participants and guests enjoying them, too, and these experiences bring joyful feelings. It is appropriate that we do some of this, but we must be thoughtful about how we do things.

In Kairos we frequently see the unchurched or those who have negative emotional issues with the church, clergy or with God. Many of these participants and guests feel detached from people - they function in a kind of emotional isolation.

It is not surprising that participants and guests react positively to the love and presents offered during a Kairos Weekend. Sometimes what we offer is completely overwhelming for them; and using the comparison of the Christmas tree, it can become difficult for them to separate the ornaments from the tree (God).

Here is the tricky part: because we are faith-based, we want each participant to leave with a new sense of relationship with God. As in AA or NA, that sense of the greater power (GOD), and understanding who Christ is in relation to me is frequently a process requiring time, patience, piety, study and action.

Our job is always to encourage their spiritual journey. We should never obscure or vaccinate them against the difficulties they will experience on that journey. In Kairos, we do not give presents to bring pleasure – we sacrifice to serve God. When we get confused about what agape really means, we put their journey at risk.

We must understand that true palanca/agape is sacrificial. It refers to the prayer and sacrifice which is offered to God to obtain favor for the candidates. The Spanish word palanca means lever. Used in this context palanca/agape allows a person to move things beyond one's strength just as prayer and sacrifice allow one to accomplish more than they could by themselves.. Palanca is used because there is no word in English to describe prayer and sacrifice undertaken specifically to gain God's favor. We must understand in Kairos that "hanging up" computerized pieces of paper is "nice", but that is not what's intended by palanca in the Cursillo method.

Prayer chains and prayer wheels that actually involve prayer and sacrifice, sacrificial Christian actions, extra attendance at church services (mass), repentance, meditation - these are examples of genuine palanca/agape.

In Christ,

john