

**Mission Core Teaching Night**  
**February 20, 2007**  
**HS Gym, Xavier School, San Juan MM**

**“LOOKING TO THE FUTURE WITH HOPE AND JOY”**

**Tony Meloto**

Magandang gabi mga kapatid. Frank talks about Lamentations but I see in his face so much hope and joy. And just like Frank, tonight I feel a sense of celebration and rejoicing. This is a historic moment because for me after 25 years parang we really have come of age. Parang this is our *right of passage* to greater things. God has blessed us so much after 25 years. At lumaki tayo kahit sasabihin pa na nabawasan... kasi humigit tayo sa isang milyon at nabawasan pa. Maaaring 900,000 tayo or 800,000. Pero kung iisipin natin na nanggaling tayo sa 16 couples na lumaki ng ganun. Can you just imagine kung ano... cos we are a community in transition. When I joined this community I was 34 years old. That was 23 years ago and this community is 25 years old. Kaya mahaba na yung kasaysayan natin. Kaya kailangan we should rejoice because... for all the blessings we have received but the preparation also for the next generation the bigger things to come. At tonight for me is also renewal of vows with all of you. Because CFC is my bride. I fell in love with Couples for Christ in 1984 when I met Frank and Lachie in Baguio. Hindi ako na-inlove sa kanila. Lalung lalo na si Lachie, he was my room mate. But I saw so much faith and so much joy in Frank na iniisip ko nuon, “bakit sha maligaya”? Somebody who is intelligent, somebody who has so much influence, full time worker. Bakit sha maligaya? Sabi ko, “ano kayang raket itong Couples for Christ”? Kami naman ni Lachie natulog ng gabing iyon kahit may multo yung kwarto namin... It’s also a time to be a bit nostalgic dahil nga that was the year I fell in love with this community, I fell in love with God. Kasi prior to that I belong to another community na kung saan ako dinala ng asawa ko. Kasi ang asawa ko talagang... ewan ko ba kahit ganun ako nuon, bakit sha na-inlove sa akin at malilim ang kanyang paniniwala na talagang pwede akong baguhin ng Diyos at dinala nya ako dun sa community na kung saan talagang pinahirapan ko ang aking mga household head for about 5 years. It was only when i came to Couples for Christ that I enjoyed the joy of service. Grabe! I fell in love with everything about the community. Yung going on mission, tapos nuon sa Novaliches pa ko. Ang team leader ko nuon nag CLP ako si Lachie. Ang music ministry ko nuon si Loren Legarda pa. Ayan o hindi nyo alam yan. Marami ng pinagdaanan dito So I fell in love with the community starting with the Couples for Christ in Novaliches, nag expand sha papuntang Tandang Sora. Nakasama ko yung mga taga Tandang Sora. Sa tingin ko dun nagsimula yung North A, north B, north C... tapos later on sa province, serving also in Bacolod in 1987. I was 37 years old. Yung dating pasaway nuon sa Ligaya ng Panginoon who made all my household head holy ay tinawag dahil dito nga sa Couple for Christ even if you are still a work in progress na it is really service because it is really the call to witness, the call to love and the call to heal. Na habang pinabago natin ang ating mga ineevangelize, we ourselves are being evangelized. Kaya ito, over the years, you have been my bride. That covenant I made when I joined Couples for Christ is forever. Dito ko pinalaki ang aking mga anak. Hindi ko alam kung ilan na ang mga nakasama ko sa household dito. Yung iba dito dati itim ang buhok, tulad ni Archie Garcia, dati itim ang buhok

tapos at a certain point naging puti, ngayon itim nanaman. I raised my children kasama ng mga anak ninyo. Hindi ba? You really became our closest friends. We gave up family, we gave up old friends, our old ways and we raised our children together lalung lau na dumating yung Family Ministries, we were together. So dito I became a mission director... I fell inlove with everything in Couples for Christ except the position. I went through unit head, chapter head, cluster head and then I became Mission Director, I also became the Family Ministries Director, Social Ministries Director, special events. Lahat ata ng major services ay napagdaanan ko... started to be a country coordinator, also a provincial area head. Pero one thing that really struck me that I was always excited with whatever the Lord was going to give me and sa tingin ko yung detachment from position and also detachment from power or authority. I was more excited about discovery. I was more excited about building relationships and also just allowing the Lord to show me signs and wonders. Kaya its very liberating. Kaya tonight feeling ko final sense of liberation kasi hindi ko rin naramdaman yung burn out. Hindi ko natatandaan na nagkaroon ako ng sama ng loob dahil sa service although I had to deal with a lot of pastoral situations involving also yung mga reorganization na certain processes were not done properly and it was enough to upset a lot of people and that's understandable because we are human. Pero alam mo, araw araw kasi pag nagigising ako, parang napapasalamat ko ang Diyos on why am I so blessed? Kasi kung wala ang Couples for Christ I do not know what would have happened to my marriage. Kung wala ang Couples for Christ hindi ko alam kung saan ko palalakihin ang aking mga anak. Kasi kung isipin ko, my children grew up with the children of the members of the CFC council kasama din ng ibang mga members ng household ko over the years. And so ito ang kanilang buhay, ang pamilya nila. I can only thank God everyday, to this day, till the day I die for His great faithfulness. Itong nakikita ko rin over the years of our service, I have also been witness to so many difficulties, challenges and disagreements. Pero when you made your vow, when you made your covenant, katulad nung sa asawa ko, kahit anong mangyari walang iwanan, dito sa Couples for Christ, when I made that vow, when I decided, despite also the fact that I am a passionate person, I have my temper, I can get angry, I have so many weaknesses. But then, certain things that are unconditional, certain things that you never question, that my love for God, my love for Couples for Christ, my love for my brothers and sisters, my love for my family, at lalung lalo na ngayon that God brought Couples for Christ to really help us discover our love for this country, what a great blessing it is to be Filipino, and now the call of the Lord for us to really make this the nation of God. And what excites me is the walk everyday to become the people of God. When I sensed the Lord calling that the greater work also calls you to really continue the path of denial, detachment. Nagumpisa ang aking detachment, denial, when I started nung hindi na ako nag memedyas. Tapos hindi na nagdadala ng pera sa bulsa, wala ng checking account. Tapos nung nakilala ko yung mga Muslim sabi sa akin ng Panginoon... hindi naman nya ko tinatawagang maging Muslim, sabi nya sa akin you have to give up eating pork because out of respect of the culture and religion of your brothers na kahit iba ang kanilang relihiyon. Even politikal. Siguro kaya we also maintain a moral ascendancy because we have not shown any interest in politics. Two weeks ago I was invited by the president. I had dinner with her and she asked me twice if I was interested to run for senator to join the administration ticket. Ako, natawa ako sa sarili ko. Bakit wala man lang ako kainterest interest sa mga bagay na ito. Kasi I rejoice in just being a servant of the Lord. I rejoice in just being like all of you. Ordinary Filipinos called by God to be extraordinary in our love for God, in our love for country and our love for our people. Because Couples for Christ is the work of ordinary people who love God extraordinarily and so ito ngayon I realized that yung ating position of service, the focus should

not be on the position and should be the God that we serve. I realized na hindi tayo dapat tumitingin sa power sa authority that limits us. And so tonight, after really embracing what God is calling me to give up my position in the council. I have been a member of the council for 20 years. And at a certain point you realize that you're too busy. Often times I cannot come to the meetings. I have to be in different parts of the country, I have to do so many things. Parang somehow I was starting to be remised. Pag humihingi ng agenda para sa council wala na akong mapapasok na agenda kasi I am somehow ruled by what God is telling me to do on a day to day basis. Kung sinong ipapadala nya. I am no longer in control of schedule kasi kung ang darating ay taga Bagong Silang o ang dadating ay presidente ng bangko, pareho lang sabi sa akin ng Panginoon. Siya ang gumagawa ng schedule. Siya ang nagsasabi ng gagawin natin. So somehow I came to realize also na we are really just being called by the Lord to just continue to follow the spirit. And ang feeling ko ngayon He really wants me to spend as much time with our brothers and sisters sa mga communities nila. Kahapon I was in Paranaque nung nagbukas sila doon sa isang area nila. At nakita ko yung mga kapatid natin mga sanggano na maaga palang nagiinuman na pero sabi sa akin ng Panginoon na in less than a years time babaguhin ko lahat yan. Kasi ginagamit ko kayo powerfully na buwagin lahat ng kasamaan dito sa bansa natin. Because of your faithfulness I am going to bring all of you really renew the face of the earth. Dadating ang panahon na wala ng squatter dito, wala ng sanggano, wala ng krimenal, wala na yung mga masasama dito sa bayan natin dahil lahat tayo ay sumusunod sa Panginoon. Ngayong gabi ay parang ang pakiramdam mo ay para akong nanganak. Hindi ko naramdaman yun. Pero nakita ko yung asawa ko nanganak apat na beses eh. Yung huli lang, yung pang lima namin yung hindi mahirap.

I just feel the spirit of the Lord about to break forth. Parang I feel na we have not seen the fullness of God's magnificence and marvelous plan for this community. Kanina Frank talks about Lamentations. Pero it is when we accept our own suffering, our own doubts, our own fear and just surrender it to the Lord at alam na it is the Lord who will really be in control. Kasi what we really want is to relinquish control. It is in being powerless that we become powerful. So nakikita ko ngayon na God will be raising more and more of our brothers and sisters to really... (to lead the community) leadership in different fields. Ako naman, I am now available to help Tekton or to help Oikos or to help Youth for Christ and to accept talks in the MER. Balikan ko the things that gave us joy over the years. Sometimes you know, with our own positions we become disconnected from the body of the community simply because we become so high, so busy with so many meetings. Pero narealize ko I do not find joy in signing checks in the office. They have to be done but maybe not by me. Narealize ko at the certain point, tulad nyan ng Gawad Kalinga, a position becomes an attachment. Kaya nga very liberating when it dawned on me na I also have to give up yung position as Executive Director because there are so many capable brothers and sisters. Nakikita ko si Luis (Oquinena) ay 37 years old. I was 37 years old when I took also membership on top leadership position. There's Melo Villaroman... ang dami nila. Of course in the family ministries I see Xavy (Padilla) and Patrick (Oconer) and so many others. Sabi nga kanina ni Frank, the Davids are in place but I'm sure there are more Davids being raised because the work will just continue to expand. So from 800 to 900 thousand sa tingin ko siguro we should also project in 1, 2, 3 years time we should be 2 million o 3 million. The numbers we never achieved before because we were getting in the way. Maaring we are so overwhelmed with so many things na hindi na namin na bigyan ng tamang atensiyon at hustisya yung the big responsibility of the governance of this community.

Mga kapatid, ngayon gabi nais ko lang pasalamatan kayong lahat. For all the support, for all the prayers during the time I was serving in whatever capacity I had. Yung first times that we set up the governance teams of many provinces, you were there. Yung mga kasama ko dito sa North a, north B, north c. Kasama kong nag mission sa Batangas, kasamang nagmission sa Bacolod, sa Mindanao. Kanina nabanggit ni Frank na we should really go back to the fervor of our first love, that we should really take on a missionary spirit. Sa tingin ko ngayong gabi meron sigurong shock and awe para sa ating lahat para magising tayo. Kasi sometimes you depend so much also on the leaders. Kasi magaling si Frank o magaling si Roquel. We have tried to be faithful. But at a certain point we no longer see greatness in one another or in ourselves or in others that there is so much that we can give to the Lord and to this community.

Ako mga kapatid, God is really calling me to grow in my passion for God, in my passion for the poor, in my passion for this country. And I embrace His promise that in our own lifetime, we will bring this country out of poverty. That we are going to see the next generation of our children living a life of dignity living in a country that will be free of corruption and were God will really make us a light to the world. So mga kapatid, sa tingin ko if this is what it takes for it to happen... kasi ang mangyayari dito ay mas may oras na kaming tatlo ngayon ni Lachie manuod ng sine... kanina dapat manunuod kami ng sine... nawalan lang ng oras. At the same time pwede nyo na ring kumbidahin si Lachie ngayon magbigay ng talk ng MER o CLP sa inyong sector. Mga kapatid, gusto ko lang sabihin sa inyo na never see your leaders as people who are high up there na hindi nyo na pwedeng kumbidahin sa inyong CLP or MER. Kaya lang meron lang akong gustong ibahagi sa inyo. And this is also for me to gain a deeper understanding of what Frank talks about of the disintegration, the loss of membership. Kasi in 1995 nagkaroon tayo ng Leaders Training sa San Carlos where I was discussing with Oca Oblefias and some other leaders that we should really prepare for the long term because we are really going on a massive evangelization of the poor... and I sensed at that time that we were not ready. Kasi pag nag evangelize tayo ng mga mahihirap... darating sila. Maraming darating at excited ang ating service team. Pupunta sila dahil may merienda. Pupunta sila dahil baka may mga mauutangan. Kung anong dahilan nila. Tulad ng iba na pumupunta sa Couples for Christ dahil natatakot sa asawa o baka makabenta ng insurance or whatever it is... we never question the reason why they join the CFC. Pero ang nakikita ko noon na I started to be really concerned na pagkatapos ng CLP na hindi sila maka undergo ng basic CFC formation. Malalaki ang CLP pero hindi sila maka attend ng household dahil sila ay squatter na nakatira sa barung barong. At ano ba yung apat nating basic formation support? Household. Teaching. Service. Activities. Yung mga mahihirap hindi makapag household marami sa kanila. And at a certain point hindi rin sila maka covenant orientation kasi walang pamasaha. Yung iba sa kanila hindi maka MER dahil mahihirap sila... abono ng abono yung mga household head nila sa mga pamasaha, sa sundo, sa mga activities ng community. Pag pumupunta sila sa mga activities natin... yung mga strategic members ng community natin... at a certain point marami sa kanila also got burned out. And so we realized, katulad din sa Negros Occidental... when we entered Negros Occidental 1987, ayaw ng pari sa Couples for Christ and for 3 years we didn't have any CLP in any parish. So anong nangyari? Sa bahay ng mga mayayaman dahil binibira parati ng mga militant priest ang mga mayayaman. So when we did our CLP maraming mayaman ang pumasok sa atin for the first 3 years. But 1990 nawala si Bishop Fortich pumasok si Bishop Gregorio, welcome na tayo sa mga parishes... anong nangyari ngayon? We started to lose our strategic members. Pag pasok natin sa

mga hacienda, sabi ng haciendero ang mahihirap sa Couples for Christ, ang mga haciendero pumunta sa Bukas Loob sa Diyos at BCBP. So malaki ang trabaho sa mga household heads natin, wala silang resources to support the mission, at certain point hindi na-sustain. Kaya I was really starting to be concerned on what we call sustainable evangelization. At ngayon, the Lord also allowed us to go through a period of really discovering of what Jesus showed us... he did not only preach, he healed the sick, he fed the hungry and he built houses. And I think it is very symbolic that Jesus Christ is a carpenter's son. So ngayon we are planting Couples for Christ on the ground. At ang mga communities natin on the ground ngayon mga 100 couples in the average ay isang chapter ng CFC. So we are seeing now that in the future the people that we evangelize, we will know better than before on how to nurture them, on how to sustain them. Hindi na tayo ngayon magdedepend sa parish priest para sa mga facilities dahil may multi purpose na tayo sa mga communities nila. Hindi na mahihirapan yung household head magtawag for household dahil magkapitbahay sila. So kinacluster sila ng Panginoon. Maraming pinapakita sa atin ang Panginoon on what will happen to us in the next 25 years. So tonight brothers and sisters I just also pray that you rejoice in our decision that you also pray, give full support... lahat ng encouragement, lahat ng affirmation sa mga members ng CFC council. The kind of support we enjoyed from you all of these years. Love them, encourage them and pray for them. And I want to really thank all of you for all the support that you have given me as a member of the CFC council in the work of Gawad Kalinga. My passion for Gawad Kalinga will not wane. In the same manner that Frank will join us kasi dati pinag-usapan namin na we will be serving together in many of the Gawad Kalinga sites... kami ni Lachie. But our positions would take us in different directions. And we will continue to take whatever positions we have in the community... kung anong ibibigay ng council sa amin. So I think I will continue to be a household head sa mga members ko. And I hope also to really give a lot of my time to supporting the Youth for Christ starting with the ILC in Bicol. And gusto ko sanang tawagan lahat ng mga couple coordinator dati ng Youth for Christ na napunta na sa ibang service... kung maari punta tayo sa Naga. Magkaroon tayo ng reunion. At ang mga alumni na natin sa Youth for Christ na some of them have already moved on to Singles or to couples and also others who are not active in the community... let's invite them that we will have a grand reunion because this young generation of Youth for Christ and Singles for Christ are the future generation of our community and of our country.

So mga kapatid, Couples for Christ is God's blessing to us and to our family. And so tonight I would really want to thank my family, my wife... she is not here right now dahil kapapanganak niya lang. Nakita nyo yung batang babae kanina na may bitbit na 3 year old... yun yung asawa ko. Kasi habang tumatagal kami sa Couples for Christ bumabata siya. At ang aking apo nakita nyo. Kita nyo naman na sobrang pagmamahal ko sa pagiging Pilipino tapos ang apo ko ngayon tisay. Kasi ang aking manugang eh... merong Pilipinong puti. But they are now active members of Couples for Christ in their household. Pati yung anak kong lalaki si Jay na hirap na hirap ako dati na dalhin sa Youth for Christ ay ngayon very active sa Singles for Christ but not for long because on July 7, 2007 (777) he is getting married. Sa Panganiban sa isang GK site sa Camarines Norte at ang mapapangasawa niya ay isang volunteer ng Gawad Kalinga who became Singles for Christ, and also brought her parents to Couples for Christ. Kilala niyo naman siguro si Eena Kanapi will be my new daughter in law. Inaannounce ko ang lahat ng ito mga kapatid kasi gusto ko makita nating lahat that the spirit is at work and that the Lord is bringing the

community to the next generation. It is a gift to us, it is a gift to our children, it is a gift to our children's children.

And so tonight I want us to really rejoice and for us to really celebrate because the Lord is pointing us to the future. Yung mga iba diyan na katulad ko na puti na ang buhok, o wala ng buhok...Habang buhay ang gagawin natin and the Lord will give us renewed energy at marami kasing nagreretire na sa kanilang mga trabaho who are starting to also take a more active role in various services in the community. And so the Lord is now opening the whole world to us. The Lord now is using us powerfully to plant Couples for Christ on the ground. The Lord is now bringing this work to the next generation. Let's praise God because He is a faithful God and we thank Him for the grace also faithfulness despite our weaknesses. Maraming salamat and God bless us all.