



COUPLES FOR CHRIST

Families in the Holy Spirit Renewing the Face of the Earth

DEFENDING CFC LIFE AND MISSION, AND MOVING FORWARD!

July 19, 2007

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

The peace of our Lord be with us all!

We in the CFC Council write this letter for the following very important purposes:

- (1) to exhort each and every member of our beloved Community to take a stand in defending the life and mission of Couples for Christ, from forces acting to divide or destroy these today;
- (2) to encourage each one of us to defend God's culture and tradition in our Community by living out what we have learned from our community teachings the past 26 years;
- (3) to update you with information pointing to the motivation and agenda of the group that calls itself the Easter Group (Easter/Playboy Bunnies);
- (4) to enjoin you to move forward with the beautiful and sacred Vision and Mission God has set for our community of Couples for Christ; and,
- (5) to update you on our Community's continuing efforts to improve our relationship with the Bishops.

TAKING A STAND IN DEFENSE OF GOD'S WORK

God has used Couples for Christ powerfully in these past 26 years as His instruments to fulfill His vision and mission. The work of God will continue even without us. Yet He loves us so much, that He has anointed us to be part of the joy and victory of His work through CFC. Our lives have been truly blessed because we are part of this Community.

We believe that God's anointed purposes for Couples for Christ ("Families in the Holy Spirit renewing the face of the earth" and "bringing glad tidings to the poor") are sacred, unchanging, and continuing, whether the community is in a state of great blessing or great trial. We have had trials along the past 26 years but these have not shaken us (1 Peter 4:12), for we trust that God can enter into the storm-center of any disturbance and calm any storm, as long as we allow His uniting and healing power to start in our own hearts. In the middle of a storm, we keep our eyes fixed on Jesus (Hebrews 3:1) and His mission, and keep moving forward with His work. We will always have issues and problems to fix, for we do God's work in an imperfect world, and with co-servants who, like us, also "fall short of God's glory." But we resolve our problems within the culture and structure of our Community, guided by the heart and by the tradition of our formation and teachings.

Today, as ever, the CFC Council and each and every member of Couples for Christ are compelled to defend the very life and mission of our Community from forces that knowingly or unknowingly are being used by the evil one to sow grave disunity in CFC and destroy God's mission. The enemy is not our brother or sister, but the evil one seeking to divide us. The real enemy is dividing us into factions, and if we succumb to being loyal to a faction or a person rather than to God's principles, then the real

big casualty will be God's vision and mission for the Community. The evil one does not want us to be united. The evil one wants us to slow down, leave the community, or even destroy God's work from within. God wants us to defend His vision and mission with our lives. And though wounded, God wants us to press on with His work, so that we can have a Godly community and a Godly way of life that we can pass on to our children, and the future generations of this world.

OUR COMMITMENT TO THE VISION AND MISSION

The newly-elected CFC Council commits to fight for and defend CFC's vision ("Families in the Holy Spirit Renewing the Face of the Earth") and mission ("Bringing Glad Tidings to the Poor") with you. We believe that the 7 pillars are a blessing and a calling from God so that He can use us to bring His vision and mission to life. Each and every pillar is a gift from God, and is an essential part of the fullness of His mission for CFC. We believe that we need to help our Community raise more leaders and servants who have the moral and spiritual capability to deliver the totality of God's work. We believe that each and every member should be a believer and advocate of each pillar, even if he or she will only have the strength and time to focus on and get heavily involved in one or two pillars. We believe that while God allowed the 7 pillars to evolve and develop at different paces, God wants servants across the different pillars to appreciate each other, to actively seek ways to help each other deliver, to share resources, and to integrate areas of common mission.

We believe that each member, regardless of the pillar they are called to serve in, should take on evangelization as one's primary mission. For example, a Gawad Kalinga servant, as would a Pro-Life servant, should look at each and every site (or audience) as an evangelization opportunity for God, and should work with the CFC sector to conduct the CLP at the earliest possible time. The Gawad Kalinga community work, as would a Pro-Life program, is a strong part of evangelization, because it demonstrates authentic Christian Life through action.

We believe that God's vision and mission for CFC are sacred, unchanging, and deepening, and that we should involve leaders and members in discerning and planning how we can improve the way we organize ourselves as an army, build our mission capabilities, and strengthen/build our relationships as we deliver God's work through the pillars. Towards this end, the CFC Council will be conducting a Pastoral Congress with CFC leaders sometime in the last quarter of 2007, to focus on the top areas of Community life that the Lord would like us to improve as we move forward to the next 25 years.

OUR RELATIONSHIP WITH THE CHURCH

We would like to assure you, brothers and sisters, that we continue to be a Catholic community, submitted to the Church. Our different sectors and areas operate under the guidance of the bishops and priests in their respective dioceses and parishes.

In our relationship with our bishops and priests, we are guided by our CFC Statutes as approved by the Vatican. These statutes provide, among others:

“9.32 Couples for Christ looks to having a Spiritual Adviser appointed by the bishop for the CFC group within his diocese. Such Spiritual Adviser may be the bishop himself, or at his option, a priest or religious appointed by him.

“9.321 The Spiritual Adviser's competence is in doctrinal and liturgical

matters, and will not involve organizational matters.

“9.34 Couples for Christ is to ask the bishops, in their role as shepherds, to provide spiritual formation for its members.

- Retreats and recollections for leaders and members.
- Instruction on Catholic and theological doctrines.
- Updates on the Church stand on various important issues.
- Consultation on moral and theological issues that come up.

Immediately after the elections, the CFC Council and their wives paid a visit to Bishop Gabby Reyes as a major step towards building our relationship with the clergy. We sought his understanding for our Community’s decision (through our Elders Assembly) to push through with the elections, which seemed contrary to the Bishop’s recommendation as well as to the proposal to elect only three. We also explained that the decision to proceed with the elections was the discernment of the overwhelming majority of the Elders Assembly that the Community is not veering away from the vision and mission and guiding Catholic principles of CFC and therefore, there was no basis for postponement of the elections. Everyone wanted to move forward in doing God’s mission, supported by a unified, stable leadership, rather than a temporary one. We assured him of our Community’s love and respect and our plan to regularly update him of Community developments, to listen to his counsel as we move forward, and to seek his blessings and prayers. We will continue doing the same as we build on the mission relationship and partnership we have with our dear Bishops in the different dioceses.

UNDERLYING REASONS FOR SEEKING POSTPONEMENT

Frank established a “faith and morals” link to the holding of our elections, which is clearly an organizational matter by itself, by citing issues and concerns in GK. While we do recognize these concerns, we believe that the resolution of the issues involved cannot be a precondition to the holding of our elections. In fact, these concerns have been there for some time, even when Frank was in the Council and our Director. The fact that these concerns were not resolved during his term shows that the solutions are not simple and will take time to solve. It is simply most unfair to require their resolution before we can even hold our elections.

Frank told the bishops that his group wanted to stop the elections because the nominees were unfairly chosen. However, the nominees were chosen in the same manner as they have always been in the past - by the Council and the Board of Elders. The nominees are longtime leaders of CFC and have faithfully served in major capacities. Some of them were nominees when Frank was still serving in the Council. The position espoused by Frank raises the following question: Should this be the new culture of CFC -- that CFC postpone elections every time someone or a small group does not like the nominees?

Notwithstanding the unreasonableness of Frank’s position, in the interest of peace and reconciliation, we entertained his proposal to add more nominees coming from him. But at the last moment, he did not pursue this option. Clearly, the issue of the nominees was not the reason he and his group wanted to postpone elections.

What then was the real reason they wanted to postpone the elections? The answer lies in a clever strategy hatched by their group, which they call the Easter/ Playboy Bunnies. In the minutes of one of

their meetings, one plan that was discussed was that if they succeeded in postponing the elections, they will ask the Bishops to appoint an interim Council which would reinstate Frank, Lachie and Tony to the Council. So, it is clear that, after all, the real objective was the desire of Frank's group to return Frank and Lachie to position and authority. On the other hand, Tony has made it clear that when he resigned, he really resigned and has no intention of getting his position back.

CORRECTING SERIOUS ACTS OF DIVISIVENESS AND DISUNITY

The CFC Council's statement dated July 2 stated that "We sincerely believe that CFC is much more united as one body in Christ." It ended with: "Let us fight for our God by loving and encouraging each other and further the work of evangelization. Let us move as one body in Christ! Let us fight the good fight of faith!"

It is very unfortunate that some brothers disagreed with the CFC Council's view as well as the mandate of the Elders Assembly. The group of Frank immediately sent their contrary views through emails.

There is nothing wrong with disagreement. In fact, disagreements can be aired and discussed in the spirit of meekness and love with each other. Our Lord has provided us the right way to handle conflicts through our teachings. Specifically, we are quoting directly some pointers from Talk 5 of Living as a People of God titled "Unity and Disagreements:"

B. Conflict and meekness.

1. We have a choice whenever we discuss or disagree: a spirit of conflict or a spirit of meekness.

a) If conflict prevails, disunity results. If meekness prevails, unity grows and love thrives.

2. Spirit of conflict

a) What? An attempt to influence direction by applying pressure.

b) How? Manifestations:

- *Hostile speech, abuse, even physical violence*
- *Or less directly: being argumentative, critical, having a desire to debate.*
- *High value placed on protest, confrontation, intimidation, public attack or criticism.*
- *Factions, campaigns*

C. Dealing with issues/handling discussions:

2. In matters of major direction or teaching or culture in CFC (e.g. family life, evangelistic thrust, etc.):

a) All can have a role in the direction of the community

- *You can have your own opinion.*
- *The Lord may have a word for the community through you.*

b) But the Elders are the ones primarily responsible.

- *They have responsibility for major decisions in CFC*

- *They listen to others and consult as needed, but they then make the decisions and expect others to accept and support these.*

c) *If you seriously disagree:*

- *Ask for a reconsideration. Or also a wider consultation.*
- *Do not publicly oppose or organize opposition*
- *If you still can't personally accept the decision, you can request a judgment from the CFC Council, but should be willing to accept its decision.*

In this context let us look again at the July 2 CFC Council statement: "In this light, we reiterate our request for all to stop using broadcast emails for debate and argument. We believe this is causing disunity among the CFC family. We welcome suggestions or comments, but kindly send these through your leaders or even directly to us and not irresponsibly send the same to everyone."

The group of Frank who call themselves Easter/Playboy Bunnies have been:

1. Continuously sending e-mails to the community, openly criticizing the CFC Council and emphasizing their view that there is deep division in CFC.
2. Organizing a "restoration movement" propagating their contrary view that CFC is veering away from spirituality.
3. Meeting and planning against the CFC Council
4. Misrepresenting the real situation in CFC to our beloved Bishops.

The CFC Council is compelled to share with you, brothers and sisters, all of our knowledge about the group of Frank, and the actions we have to immediately take to address serious wrongdoing, as it is our responsibility to God and to our community to defend the life and mission of Couples for Christ. We have been holding back in the past in sharing these with you publicly, in our hope that we could still take the path of dialogue and reconciliation with the few members of the group of Frank. (*EPHESIANS 4:3 "Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace." ROMANS 14:19 "Let's agree to use all our energy in getting along with each other. Help others with encouraging words; don't drag them down by finding fault."*).

However, the group of Frank's latest e-mail calling for CFC countries to withdraw support from the CFC International Council, coupled with Frank's e-mail calling each and every CFC Council member to resign, puts the life of our community in great peril. This manner of handling disagreements goes beyond our CFC culture and is clearly in the spirit of conflict.

We have all been taught to obey and submit to our elders, trusting that God's hand has anointed them, and that God will use them to lead us in doing His work. **Blatant disobedience to our elders, and a rebellious call for CFC countries not to support Community leadership, is very serious wrongdoing that threatens the very life of our community, and implies that the group of Frank does not trust that God will use our Council to lead the Community.**

SAVING OUR COMMUNITY SO THAT WE CAN MOVE FORWARD IN UNITY

The Council exhorts each and every member to pray for God's strength, and to commit support to the life and mission of our Community.

We call for the group of Frank to apologize to the community for their divisive acts. We request the group of Frank to categorically state if they still recognize the CFC Council. We request the group of Frank to respect and be submitted to the CFC Council and stop actions that cause division and undermine the mandate of the CFC Council.

We are a people of hope. And so we reach out to everyone in the spirit of love, in the hope that we can truly move forward – united once again in mind, purpose and vision.

In the service of God,

The CFC Council

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