

AN OPEN LETTER TO THE CFC GLOBAL FAMILY

July 30, 2007

My dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

May this letter find you in the peace, hope and joy of our Lord.

Last June 10 I wrote you an open letter regarding the deep crisis and internal conflict in our beloved community. Since that time, and in the intervening period, the crisis has deepened.

Last June 17, I wrote you saying that the *ad hoc* group working to resolve the conflict had come to an agreement which I looked to as leading to healing and reconciliation. The bishops were happy with that. We all were. Alas, our joy was short-lived. The agreement was not adhered to and was not implemented.

Since that time, you have once again received letters/emails/texts from different sides of the conflict, resulting in confusion and dismay. You are wondering what really is the truth. You certainly must be apprehensive about where our community is going. Some have even reached the point of deciding to leave our community.

One of our beloved bishops has poignantly articulated what many of us feel: "I grieve. It feels like the CFC I have known for the past 22 years of my priesthood died."

CFC is in deep crisis, because CFC has lost its way and is in danger of straying away from its very mission, and even away from the Church of which it is a part.

What is the problem?

Here is how I see it.

- (1) The former Council (of 4) did not heed the bishops' strong recommendations about not holding regular elections in the midst of intense conflict, and their action has now endangered our status and official recognition within the Church.
- (2) There is intensifying tension regarding the place of GK in the life and mission of CFC, and the continuing shift in GK focus to the social away from the spiritual.
- (3) The former Council of 4, who are now part of the newly-elected Council, remains at the center of the deep conflicts and divisions among leaders, and have conducted themselves in ways that intensify such conflict and division, rather than being catalysts for healing, reconciliation, peace and unity.

We are now seeing our top leaders acting in heretofore unheard of ways.

- (1) Resorting to legalism rather than the law of love.
- (2) Failing to live out our pastoral processes and ways, such as dialogue, loyalty, brotherhood, avoiding slander, not maligning others, not telling untruths.
- (3) Turning their backs on the wisdom and guidance of the pastors of the Church, thus in effect going against God.

(4) Some no longer having the proclamation of Jesus as the Number One priority in their work.

Have we begun with the Spirit only to end with the flesh? Have we allowed the enemy to blind us so that many are now the enemy within?

What needs to happen?

The purity and original intent of God for the life and mission of CFC is being lost. And what needs to happen is simple: we must be led back to God, restored to the fullness of our covenant, and given back the pure and original CFC (Lam 5:21).

When we separated from our mother community, Ang Ligaya ng Panginoon, in April 1993, we adopted our thrust: **global, wholistic, Catholic**. This meant:

- (1) We would do rapid, massive and global evangelization, and would be a ministry not just for Filipinos but for the universal Church.
- (2) We would have a womb-to-tomb family life renewal ministry, providing a support environment for every member of the family.
- (3) We would be a fully Catholic community, submitted to Mother Church, though open to having Christians of other confessions.

But what are we seeing now? How has our thrust been subtly shifting?

- (1) The focus more and more is shifting to GK, and in this, to the whole aspect of nation building. The focus is on the Philippines and on Filipinos abroad who can help fund GK. As such, there is much less emphasis on aggressive global evangelization, the status of our missionaries is under threat, and our non-Filipino leaders/brethren are marginalized.
- (2) The CFC membership is looked on by GK as just basically a resource base to provide warm bodies, to give money, to act as caretakers, to lend its name and integrity. There is no deliberate focus on evangelization by the top GK leadership (though CFC caretakers do still evangelize). Indeed, there is a very disturbing shift from the spiritual to the social. There is an insistence on heroism but not on holiness. The life and work of CFC, represented by the other pillars, is being marginalized in favor of a total focus of time, energy and resources on GK.
- (3) The present top leadership has shown great disrespect to the Church hierarchy, and this has resulted in disfavor. The very status of CFC and its recognition are threatened. If the bishops withdraw support, our evangelization work can quickly disintegrate. The disfavor of the Philippine bishops can adversely affect our status in other countries, and our Vatican recognition.

So what now?

We need to return to God's original intent for raising CFC. We need to be true "Families in the Holy Spirit renewing the face of the earth." This means a primary focus (1) on evangelization and mission, (2) on family and life, and (3) on being intimately connected with the Church through her pastors (bishops), whom the Spirit uses to guide and unify us. We will still do work with the poor, but will not be totally absorbed by it to the detriment of our other pillars.

But the present CFC leadership, basically led by the former Council of 4, and the leadership of GK, are bringing us on another path, as has been seen clearly through their words and deeds. Further, they have been the primary cause of the hurts and disunity among us, and have not shown any decisive move to work at healing and reconciliation. In fact, they have continued to malign those who have issues with them, and have been unjustly firing these people from their services in CFC.

What then needs to happen? Last July 13, concerned CFC members launched a movement to bring CFC back to God's plan. It was a movement from within CFC for being led back to God and being restored to God's original intent for us (Lam 5:21a). But the CFC Council responded negatively to this movement and intensified its attacks on those participating in it. Today, given no more options, we bring the restoration movement to a new dimension.

Given that there is no let-up in the deep crisis, and our brethren are already crying out in great pain and hopelessness, given that there seems to be no more hope of reconciliation due to the adversarial actions of the CFC Council, given that the enemy is succeeding in destroying God's work in CFC, we must take decisive action. We must have a clear choice. Everyone must be given the opportunity to follow his/her heart and follow where the Spirit is leading

What does that mean?

We need to know that there are 2 realities of CFC. One is the real and true CFC, which is a spiritual body doing pastoral work, and the other is the corporate CFC, which is our legal personality according to the laws of the state. The former is governed by our statutes, as approved by the Church (Holy See), and the latter is governed by our by-laws according to government (SEC) rules. The latter is subordinate to the former.

The CFC Council has repeatedly insisted on the legal, organizational and the secular, and has lost focus on the spiritual and the pastoral. It has looked to the SEC approved by-laws, but marginalized the Church-approved statutes.

But the true CFC is not that legal CFC. The true CFC has been founded by God and has been given its life and mission, and is fully a part of the Catholic Church, submitted to its bishops. This is what we intend to restore. The true CFC is described, as has been said, by 3 key words: **Global, wholistic, Catholic**.

CFC is an evangelistic and missionary community, serving the universal Church.

CFC is a family life renewal movement, with womb-to-tomb support environments.

CFC is an integral part of the life and mission of the Roman Catholic Church.

The true CFC will continue God's work according to His original intent. We will focus on evangelization, on proclaiming Christ. We will continue to strengthen marriages and families, and fight for the culture of life. We will work for total human liberation and development.

We also look to the Church, through our bishops. In times of intense crisis such as we are undergoing now, when the very top leaders are those causing conflict and division, and even as all sides claim to pray and look to God, our protection is the Church through her hierarchy. The true CFC fully submits itself to the authority of the Church. Even this current move has been cleared with Archbp Lagdameo, Bp Reyes and Bp Villegas.

How does this work out practically?

Is this a separation/split in CFC?

It indeed is a delineation of the spiritual/pastoral from the legal/organizational/secular. Since we see that the present CFC Council (dominated by the former Council of 4) has chosen the latter path, and we are choosing the former path, **then we clearly are going separate ways**. For now, that is how it is. For the future, we can only pray that God will unite us once again.

In the true CFC, I am taking momentary responsibility for how it is established. We will consult with elders and others who join us in how to set up its governance. I do not intend to hold power or position and will leave governance to qualified brethren, of which there are many. Indeed, servanthood for me has never been about power or position. I ask that you trust me. I have served God, the Church, CFC and you my brethren faithfully for 26 years with utmost integrity. By the mercy and grace of God, and with the help of the many like-minded brethren with us, I will not fail you.

Please pray about your situation in CFC now, and the deep crisis we are all in. We believe **this is the only option left to us, in order to stop the enemy from totally destroying CFC**. I encourage you to get in touch with me if you have any questions or inputs. We are all in this together. If you believe in our cause, then join us in this true CFC.

*"Lead us back to you, O Lord, that we may be restored:
give us anew such days as we had of old."
(Lam 5:21)*

We will be in touch with you with further information.

Please continue to pray for me and for all those who will choose the true CFC, as well as for our brethren with whom we are in conflict.

God bless you all.

Your brother and servant in Christ,

Frank Padilla

"For to me life is Christ, and death is gain." (Phil 1:21)