

FAQ RE CFC SITUATION

Many inquiries/concerns about the recent separation from Couples for Christ of the group of Bro. Frank Padilla have surfaced, either through the internet or during the meetings that sector heads and area heads have been holding with their members. The following are the most common questions. They are being answered here in the hope that members will understand not just the chronology of events but why and how these events happened.

ON THE BISHOPS

Why did the bishops become involved in the conflict among the Council members?

We honestly do not know who gave the bishops the information that there was internal conflict among the Council members. Although Bishop Gabby Reyes is the spiritual director of Couples for Christ, we felt that the issue among the brothers (the points raised against GK) was something that could be handled internally and in the spirit of brotherhood and love. The first inkling the Council had that the bishops knew what was happening was when the Council was informed that Bishop Soc Villegas desired to meet with the entire Council on May 1. At that meeting, because the bishop deemed the issues between CFC and GK as irreconcilable, he proposed that GK be separated from CFC. The matter of the split was referred to the Sector Heads of Metro Manila who unanimously voiced their objections to it.

Much later, when the election and nomination issues surfaced, Bishop Gabby Reyes wrote a letter addressed to the Elders Assembly with a strong recommendation to postpone the June 22 elections until the leaders had resolved their relationship problems.

Bro. Frank also wrote to the remaining 4 members of the Council, reminding them that the Elders Assembly was the higher authority when it comes to the matter of the elections and enjoining them not to interfere with the Elders Assembly.

What measures did the Council take to accede to the bishop's recommendation that both sides try to resolve the conflict?

A series of dialogues was held between the Council and the group of Bro. Frank. Finally, a 13-man committee was formed, upon the mutual consent of both parties, for the specific purpose of hammering out a compromise to the election impasse.

From June 13-16, the committee met in marathon sessions. The final result of their meetings – a proposal to allow the remaining 4 brothers in the Council to simply retain their positions with elections to be held as scheduled, but voting only for 3 men. The resulting 7-man Council would be holding office only until January 31, 2008.

As agreed by the committee, the proposal would be brought to the bishops AND to the Elders Assembly for their approval.

Is it true that the Council disobeyed the bishops when they pushed through with the elections?

Although Bro. Frank has consistently stated that the Council disobeyed the bishops when the elections pushed through, it was in effect the Elders Assembly, at a referendum held on the night of the elections, that voted not to accept the proposal of electing only 3 members, adopting instead the traditional custom of voting for 7 men for a fixed term of two years or, in this case, until June 30, 2009.

There was no deliberate intent to disobey but the Elders Assembly took note of the fact that the 4-3 proposal was still subject to their approval, as per the terms of the proposal hammered out by the 13-man committee, and that the bishops had made only a strong recommendation, not a direct order.

What is the Council doing now to address the hurt the bishops suffered when their recommendation was not followed?

The Council, individually and as a group, has met with Bishop Reyes and with some other bishops to ask forgiveness for not following their recommendation. They have also enjoined all the sectors to seek out their respective bishops and assure them of the community's love and respect for them. They have reiterated that the mission of CFC is closely interlinked with the Church and have asked the members to continue to seek out the bishops and consult them on how the mission can be furthered.

Executive Director Joe Tale, for his part, has taken the humble stance of personally offering his apology to the bishops. He has also reiterated to Bishop Reyes that CFC submits to his authority on matters of faith and morals.

ON THE GK ISSUES

Is there truth to the 18-point concerns raised by Bro. Frank Padilla in his CFC-GK 3 paper?

The Council acknowledges that GK, as implemented on the ground, has spawned a number of problems, and hence, the concerns. However, the basic policies and guidelines that govern the setting up of GK sites, the selection of beneficiaries, the implementation of values formation programs, (especially the Christian Life Program) and the various education and livelihood programs, have not changed. The spiritual still takes precedence over the temporal.

What has raised concerns has been the manner in which some project directors have been implementing the GK policies in a few sites. It is unfortunate that Bro. Frank Padilla has chosen to focus on the very few deviations and has neglected to acknowledge the many instances when genuine transformation of the heart happened because of GK.

It is also important to remember that Bro. Frank was CFC Executive Director for many, many years, and since the inception of GK, was head of the GK Board as well. Many of the concerns he pointed out in his paper surfaced during his term. It is also important to note that CFC-GK 3 came hot on the heels of CFC-GK 1 and CFC-GK 2, both of which are in defense of precisely the same 18 points that Bro. Frank mentioned in the third paper.

What is the Council doing now to address these concerns?

Gawad Kalinga remains to be one of the pillars of our community. As such, it will be pursued with as much clarity and vigor as before. What is wrong or lacking in implementation will be addressed.

The Council has scheduled a Pastoral Congress in October, with a preparatory congress to be held on August 24, 2007 among CFC elders in order to discuss the issues and topics at the Congress. It is expected that the Congress will discuss extensively all the aspects of our community life, but specifically the spiritual concerns raised about GK.

What is the definitive stance of CFC regarding GK?

CFC and GK are interlinked. GK is the child of CFC and as such, should be nurtured, guided and brought to full fruition, according to the wisdom and will of the Father. It is still true that CFC is GK and GK is CFC. This is meant in the positive way, not in the way some people choose to interpret it – that GK is “only” a pillar and hence should not be given the same importance. What “CFC is GK” means is that CFC is being used by God to fully live out our mission – that of bringing glad tidings to the poor. What it means is without GK, CFC would only be a mere shell, practicing faithfulness but without the action that is needed to live out that faith. Without CFC, GK would indeed not have the warm bodies but it is not just the warm bodies that GK needs, it is the grounding in spiritual values that only CFC members can impart. CFC and GK are co-workers in God’s vineyard and both share the responsibility of providing a dignified life for all.

GK is included in the major structural reforms that the Council is committed to implement. If it needs pruning and re-direction, then this will be done. In all these, the Council will exercise the empowerment of the Spirit and will listen to the Word of God in order to hew closely to what He wants for His people.

ON THE ELECTIONS AND NOMINATIONS ISSUES

What does the Council by-laws say about the elections?

Elections for the 7-man International Council are held every two years. Nominations for the Council are pegged at 15 to 17 names coming from the following groups: 8 to 12 names from the members of the Council themselves and 5 names from the Board of Elders. Thus the list of names nominated for the Council may be long but this is pruned, after much discernment and prayer, to only the number dictated by the by-laws. The final nominations for the Council are usually released a month before the election date and distributed to the Elders Assembly (composed of all the MM sector heads, all the International Coordinators for the Family Ministries, provincial area heads, regional area heads and regional coordinators for the international missions).

Nominations and voting for the Board of Elders (15 members) are usually made during the elections itself, after the election for the International Council is over and the final results have been announced.

This is the practice that CFC has followed ever since elections were mandated.

Why did the group of Bro. Frank want the elections postponed?

The group of Bro. Frank called for the postponement of the elections (and this call was echoed almost instantly by the three bishops) for the simple reason that he felt that the nomination process was not followed. He felt that more people from his group should have been nominated. But prior to his complaint, not one of those in the nominating groups (both the Council and the Board of Elders) questioned the process, since this was in compliance with the process that has been followed for almost as many years as CFC has been in existence.

The bishops had an additional reason – they said the elections should be postponed because the leaders were still in conflict and they should first be reconciled before any elections are held. But when the issue of postponement was put before the Elders Assembly, they argued that reconciliation is a continuing process and has always been part of CFC culture. What they meant was that even if the elections continued, reconciliation is still the priority. They also believed that with a complete 7-man Council, reconciliation can be better pursued.

OTHER ISSUES

Are there other underlying issues? The issues mentioned above appear to be about policies that only needed deliberations and clearer understanding and should not have been the cause of separation.

There are indeed other issues but these have to do with operations at the Home Office that still require deeper investigation. What is clear is that this HO issue triggered all the other issues mentioned above. This issue will be explained in later communications, but only when the results of the studies/research/dialogue have been released.