

Subject: CFC-USA National Council Position

(Area Leaders and Servants /Pls distribute to ALL CFC MEMBERS in ALL Ministries in your areas.)

Our Dear Brethren in Christ,

Upon reading Ricky Cuenca's letter that boldly announced the appointment of a parallel CFC Council last night, we the duly-constituted US National Council reconfirm our Status Quo position in the US. Please read our joint letter for full understanding of the issues and the National Council's position that you may receive enlightenment and peace as only the Lord can give. The full text of our Position Letter follows:

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LETTER OF CFC-USA NATIONAL COUNCIL RECONFIRMING STATUS QUO POSITION

CFC-USA is part of a global reality experiencing serious conflict and division. But we the undersigned members of the US National Council, in prayer and discernment view the conflict with grave concern, however what is important is how God wants us to respond.

We find the Lord's voice in Holy Scriptures wherein lies the answer. Psalm 46 starting with verse 3 gives us His wisdom in times of social and political upheavals – "though the earth be shaken and mountains plunge into the depths of the sea..." the Lord gives us divine favors or solutions to our problems – verse 5 "a stream whose runlets gladden the city of God."

"Though nations are in turmoil, kingdoms totter, his voice resounds and the earth melts away (v7)...he has stopped wars...the bow He breaks, He splinters the spears (and) burns the shields with fire (v10)..."

God is in our midst, he is in control and he wants us to trust and hope in him. That is why in times of confusion such as this that confronts us today that have brought about disagreements, derision and doubt, He wants us to keep "still" (NAB St. Joseph version).

In the standard version of the New American Bible, the Lord is more explicit and graphic...He wants us to "desist". Keeping still and desistance categorically means to DEFER or POSTPONE action over a specific issue on hand.

This is the basis of moral theology embodied in basic Catholic catechism that says "practical doubt, or doubt as to the lawfulness of an action is incompatible with right action, and since to act with doubtful conscience is obviously in disregard of the moral law, it is therefore sinful. Thus the moral imperative is "doubt must be removed through docile discernment of the Lord's Will before any action can be justified."

In no uncertain terms, the violation is serious because it is sinful, and worse, the consequence is counter-productive. The well-known moral principle "lex dubia non obligat " is universally accepted, i.e., it means that a law doubtful in its application does not bind. Rather, it is null and void from the very beginning.

It is on this cornerstone that we, the 6 members of the NC, etched our earlier position not to recognize the June 22 election of the Int'l Council of Couples for Christ in the Philippines. And we do so, not in disrespect of or malice on anyone. But in order to preserve the purity of our conscience, the integrity of our action and the unity of the body especially our community in CFC-USA.

The proponents of said elections can present arguments that they held the elections in compliance with the By-Laws of the organization and in keeping with Philippine statutes, but that is not the debate. On the other hand, we hold the same as morally suspect because it has rendered more serious and perhaps irreversible damage to the organization causing the Int'l Council to lose its moral ascendancy over all its members, whether they are in the Philippines or elsewhere. This is why the majority of the duly-constituted members of the US National Council said in our letter to the members of the newly-elected IC dated July 17 th that because of our non-recognition of the elections and our

vote of "no confidence" on the IC, we also therefore do not recognize all subsequent actions by all those who were elected in the same election. This means that for CFC-USA, we also from the beginning did not recognize the IC's appointment of bro. Ricky Cuenca as US Country Coordinator. [His presence in the North Carolina conference, as well as his souvenir program welcome remarks, was in violation of a consensus agreement of all seven of the National Council members, including bro. Joe Duran, not to have involvement of any elders from the Philippines, and/or appointees of the said IC (particularly bro. Ricky as replacement of bro. Frank) from influencing or participating in the two CFC conferences.]

By doing so, we have declared a "STATUS QUO" on whatever relationship Couples for Christ in the Philippines had with CFC-USA as of June 21, 2007, the time when we still acknowledged the IC as having any moral authority over us, and no further until we can forge ahead with an exercise of our conscience under circumstances no longer under the duress and shroud of conflict, confusion and doubt.

Our position is identical to the wisdom shared by the bishops of the Philippines before the elections – i.e., that disagreeing parties come together on their own and solve their differences before proceeding with the elections.

These concerned bishops were no parties accidental to the issues. For they were comprised of the spiritual director of CFC who is also the chairman of the CBCP Episcopal Commission on Lay Apostolate to whom all ecclesial movements and communities such as CFC are accountable to; the president of the Catholic Bishops Conference of the Philippines; and a third bishop – the personal representative of the Archbishop of Manila.

The help of the bishops was sought by all the disagreeing parties prior to the elections. If their proposal was observed by the CFC Elders Assembly, Bishop Gabriel Reyes, CFC spiritual director, said "nobody's rights are violated, no damage is done to anyone...the Elders Assembly will be in communion with the bishops. By going on with the election of the seven members of the Council, the Elders Assembly did the opposite of what they were proclaiming, namely, that they wanted to have reconciliation and unity."

CFC-USA cannot grant, even for the sake of argument, that even if the Elders Assembly erred in going ahead with the elections, we ought to remain acquiescent and compliant to the action of the IC for the sake of unity. We have no choice but to do the reverse, that is, to precisely not recognize that election, as to do so would be to condone a moral infraction, and unite with them in sinfulness.

What is often overlooked by those who disagree with this position is that we in CFC-USA are legally a separate corporate entity operating within the laws of a separate country. Our existence and accountabilities are not automatically subservient to any entity in any other country, as we are incorporated under the laws of the US and thus we can take positions separate from CFC in the Philippines, most especially if those positions hinge on moral considerations. But even as we operate as a separate entity here in the US, we submit to the bishops in each of our respective areas as we have been doing.

When the Elders Assembly disregarded the bishop's proposal, it did not only breach the moral authority of the latter over them but categorically caused the formal and effective split of the organization.

As such it has also become a serious and formal crisis that was deliberated upon by the Catholic Bishop's Conference of the Philippines last July 6-8, when the bishops acting corporately decided that the CBCP Commission for the Laity dialogue with the leaders of the two conflicting CFC groups to investigate whether CFC is "veering away from the vision-mission and guiding principles of Couples for Christ and that Gawad Kalinga is overstressing social action at the expense of evangelization, catechesis and spirituality."

Bishop Reyes continued on to specify that CBCP is much "concerned about these complaints because they involve " the integrity of faith and morals." For the meantime, the bishops will meet with the IC headed by bro. Joe Tale on August 28 to inquire on the IC's position on controversial matters, among others, the issues raised in the CFC-GK3 paper. We believe that this inquiry will still be held even with the joint announcement by the newly-elected IC headed by bro. Joe Tale and the Restoration group headed by bro. Frank Padilla to go their separate ways.

So not wanting to preempt the initiatives being undertaken by the bishops in the Philippines, now more than ever, the US National Council upholds the solomonic wisdom of the status quo that we have earlier announced. By

observing our learnings in 1Kings 3, 16-28, we continue to insulate our constituencies in this country to prevent the divisive effects of the issues affecting CFC in the Philippines from metastasizing into the United States, as we have already seen symptoms of that malaise in the walk-out of our national director Joe Duran at our recently held quarterly National Council meeting in Charlotte, NC, and last night when our brother from Canada Ricky Cuenca in his IC-appointed position of US country coordinator which we do not recognize, surprisingly and without warning appointed a parallel US national council which included bro. Joe Duran who has not even given notice to the National Council about his service as CFC-USA National Director. Our action early this week to appoint bro. Nani Almanza as Acting National Director was precisely done so as not to have a vacuum in this first-among-equals position in the national council. So now this action by bro. Ricky Cuenca has not only sown much confusion among members of CFC-USA but suddenly brought the disunity problem here in the US which we in the duly-constituted National Council have been working and praying hard not to reach and divide our community.

This is why amid polemics and propaganda glutting discussions on the free internet, we choose to advise all CFC-USA members to remain unafraid, always forbearing with one another, and aspiring and working for true unity in charisma and God's grace.

As we have shown in our just concluded conferences in Anaheim and Charlotte, we can continue to work to preserve our unity despite individual differences in opinion. Let us heed St. Paul's warning in Acts 27: 31 "Unless (we) stay with the ship, (we) cannot be saved."

There are many who oversimplify the issues confronting as merely choosing between two sides of the fence. They are not mindful that there are those who are fence-sitting and many who, because of the scandal being caused by the recklessness of some of our leaders, are getting inclined to leave Couples for Christ altogether. With disunity, brothers and sisters, there are no winners; we all lose.

So we conclude here with St. Paul's exhortation to the Ephesians 4: 25, 29-32: "putting away falsehood, speak the truth, each one to his neighbor, for we are members one of another. No foul language should come out of your mouths but only such as is good for needed edification, that it may impart grace to those who hear. Do not grieve the Holy Spirit, with which you were sealed for the day of redemption. All bitterness, fury, anger, shouting, and reviling must be removed from you, along with all malice. Be kind to one another, compassionate, forgiving one another as God has forgiven you in Christ."

And finally, just as we started this position paper of the US National Council, we end it with Psalm 46: "Be still and confess that I am God! I am exalted among the nations, exalted on the earth. The Lord of hosts is with us, our stronghold is the God of Jacob." (v11-12).

Sincerely your brothers in Christ,

(Sgd.) by the CFC Acting National Director Nani Almanza
for the CFC-USA NATIONAL COUNCIL