

CFC State of the Mission

NEWS RELEASE

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CFC Director Joe Tale delivered his State of the Mission address last night, January 15, 2008 to the Mission Core members of Metro Manila, some members from Saudi Arabia, Australia and other countries, provincial leaders and ministries coordinators. The Xavier School Gym was filled to overflowing, rapt in attention as Joe detailed the community's experiences in the year that was and outlined the community's goals and targets for the year that has begun.

Also in the audience was His Excellency Bishop David Kamau of the Diocese of Nairobi, Kenya, who is here upon the invitation of the International Council. Bishop Kamau arrived last Saturday, January 12, just in time to witness the annual leaders conference at the Araneta Coliseum.

The following are excerpts from Joe Tale's address:

We are off to a good start in 2008, judging from the very positive indicators manifested in the first gatherings of the year, and even including the highly successful And A Time to Dance celebration last December 2, 2007. We saw unity and vibrancy in the overflow crowd at the first Mission Core Gathering at the Ateneo last January 6 where the traditional first fruits offering was held; the January 12 Leaders Conference which was truly spirit-filled, reflecting a new refreshing spirit and a new springtime in CFC, attended by 18,000 leaders from all over the world; the January 13 meeting of the Metro Manila sector governance teams and provincial area councils at the Mary the Queen parish hall; and the January 14 gathering of the MM sector heads, regional heads, provincial area heads and provincial area directors at the Innotech Seameo. In all these gatherings, what was very evident was the vibrant atmosphere and the willingness to truly move forward in our work of evangelization, pastoral formation, family renewal and total Christian liberation.

2007: THE YEAR THAT WAS

Ecclesiastes affirms that for God, everything has a season and a purpose. 2007 was our time to mourn. 2008, however, is our time to dance and to indeed hope in the Lord, leaving behind the lamentations, the pains and the hurts of the past year. But this season of rejoicing should not be reason to forget the lessons of the past year. I would like to cite five lessons that we would do well to remember:

1. The CFC community is not ours, but God's. It is not our will that should prevail but what God wills for our community.
2. The past year taught us, to an amazing extent, that we are indeed totally dependent on the Lord.
3. We should embrace the cross, accepting fully the experience of pain, not running away from it but standing firm in the face of it. There are no shortcuts to the Promised Land and God is guiding us through the wilderness.
4. A very important lesson of the past year was our community's obedience to God's call for

us to "be still." Even in the face of adversity and deep hurts, the lesson of being still taught us that we should continue using our faith values as Christians.

5. The most important lesson of all is for all of us to let our light shine. When we allow the Lord's light to shine through us, we dwell not on the weaknesses of others but we build on our strengths.

With all of these lessons truly taken to heart, I am confident that we will reach the Promised Land, stronger and ready for something greater that the Lord has in store for us.

Indeed 2007 was a blessed year. The Lord allowed the events and the storms of the year so that we as a community may experience many new things. As early as when there were only four of us in the International Council, we already began to exercise collective leadership; the Council became a collegial body, moving as one. Another new thing was the use of consultative governance -- the Council recognized that the Lord speaks to all of us. The Pastoral Congress was a step that allowed the Council and other elders to hear the viewpoints of others. The Council, as a result of the events of 2007, also saw the need for greater transparency and this has led to the regular release of financial reports. This has also made the Council, and everyone else in the community, realize that we have to exercise individual and collective proper stewardship of our funds. The One Time, Big Time Campaign was an offshoot of this realization -- the target of a Debt-Free CFC is not simply a desire to pay off our debts, but a step towards managing our community's resources better. And lastly, beginning also from the time when there were only four Council members, we already recognized the need to have spiritual direction from our shepherds, the clergy. At these turbulent times, the prayers and guidance of the clergy sustained us and allowed us to be strong in facing the challenges that confronted us.

2008: A NEW BEGINNING: ON TO OUR JOURNEY FROM SILVER TO GOLD

1. The Call to Mission

As we start our work in 2008, I am very pleased to announce that CFC is on solid footing both in the Philippines and internationally. The events of 2007 caused only a very minimal dent in our membership. As I earlier mentioned during the A Time to Dance event, "nabulabog man tayo" (we may have been shaken up a bit), but CFC remained one, CFC remained strong. On the global front, while some countries declared independence or allegiance to the splinter group, latest reports show that CFC is strong in the continents of Africa, Asia, North America, Europe and the Middle East.

In spite of the difficulties of 2007, what was amazing was that the Philippine Mission and the Metro Manila Mission went about its evangelization and pastoral formation work.

2. The Pastoral Congress

The Pastoral Congress was launched on August 25, 2007 and consultations were made in September on the international structure and on clergy relations. A total of 66 provinces and 11 MM sectors have already submitted their final reports on the congresses held in their area. The Philippine Congress report has been submitted to the International Council which has approved the global vision and mission statement. Other recommendations in the report, such as structural changes, are under review and will be presented to the Elders Assembly sometime in April, for implementation in June.

Congresses were also held in some foreign countries in Europe, the Middle East and Africa,

with other congresses scheduled in the United States and Canada in March.

3. Clergy Relations

Relations with the Philippine clergy have been strengthened and indeed, our relations with the clergy have never been better than at this time. The Council has had regular meetings with Bishop Gabriel Reyes, our spiritual director. We note the close relationship of Bishop Angel Lagdameo with CFC in his diocese in Iloilo. The IC has had an audience with Bishop Soc Villegas and we are pleased that the bishop has warm relations with CFC Bataan. We have also had audiences with Cardinal Rosales and we had him as our guest at the MC teaching night. We are grateful for the support of other bishops in CFC gatherings such as the Leaders Conference where Bishop Honesto Ongtioco extolled the good works of CFC.

We are particularly grateful that CFC was invited to conduct the recollection for priests in Cebu by Ricardo Cardinal Vidal. He sent a video-recorded message during the Leaders Conference at Araneta but unfortunately it did not reach us in time. We shall show it now.

4. Governance, Stewardship and Accountability

At the Home Office, the emphasis is on service. The new look of the Center reflects this philosophy, with the Ugnayan Hall now open for meetings of up to 60 people and the personnel ready not only with their smiles but with assistance. Our vision for the Home Office is this: That the Home Office is sacred ground (because God reigns there); that it is a real home (because love reigns); and a model of service (because the people at the HO are both efficient and effective.)

The One Time Big Time campaign, as of January 15, has netted P10.56 million which will be used to pay off our bank loans. This is more than half of our total indebtedness. If we as a community were able to generate this much in less than a month, then it is a certainty that if we continue with this effort, that we will be debt-free by the time we celebrate our 27th anniversary in June.

Three times over the past months, I have heard one particular prophecy repeated-- that we will have our very own Center from where we can more fully expand our work. Please pray for this to happen.

The events of 2007 also revealed to us one need -- to make use of communications and technology in reaching out to more people. I would like to announce that we have created at the Home Office the Ugnayan Multimedia Center, which will take care of the communications requirements of the IC and CFC. We would like to put out a call for writers to help us in our communications work.

CFC is now in 160 countries. This is a vast number. And so we also recently created the International Missions Office, headed by Clarke and Cynthia Nebrao, which will fill a long-felt need to monitor and address the concerns of our foreign missionaries as well as to expand our mission work to more areas.

5. Gawad Kalinga

We now have a more proactive GK Board, one that is more involved in the Management Committee and Executive Committee of GK. There is now stronger coordination between CFC and GK. This is deliberate because we would like everyone in CFC to fully embrace GK and to follow the call of the Lord for us to build the Church of the Poor.

WHAT LIES AHEAD

I would like to stress that CFC is a global community but the center lies here, with us, the Metro Manila Mission Core. Any change, any improvement that we would like to see must start with us.

What are our basic directions for 2008?

1. Deepening our Spirituality

We would like to see a deepening of spirituality in all of us. To this end, we envision the creation of Bible study groups among our members. The Council has just gone through an Ignatian retreat - it would be good if the members can experience this too. In the midst of our difficulties, the Council went into contemplative prayer. The community would benefit from practicing this.

2. Strengthening our Relationships

Our theme for 2008 is "Love one another." This theme must not be something that we pay mere lip service to. "Love one another" must be in our hearts. Thus, we shall conduct teachings on this theme of loving. We intend also to continue the MER (Marriage Enrichment Retreat) series, and to revive the FER (Family Enrichment Retreat). We see the strengthening of MC household with the quarterly gathering of all MC household heads.

3. Resurgence of Evangelization

When I say evangelization, I would also like to include the wider meaning of it -- evangelization through the witness of our lives. Even if the people we witness to do not move on to the Christian Life Program, the example of our lives would enrich them and that constitutes evangelization as well. The Christian Life Program will be given a boost by the renewed and concerted effort of all of us to bring God's invitation to more people.

GK has a wonderful potential for evangelization. We would like everyone to embrace the potential of GK and the Social Ministries in the work of evangelization and nation building.

4. Communications Technology

We intend to focus on the use of the tools of technology to further the work of the kingdom. Among these tools are the use of emails to spread information and SMS technology.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, I would like everyone to see on screen CFC's vision and mission as refined and deliberated by the Pastoral Congress. We should memorize these and internalize them so that we do not just mouth them but live them.

Our vision remains the same: we are to be **FAMILIES IN THE HOLY SPIRIT RENEWING THE FACE OF THE EARTH**. But we have expanded it to express the elements that form part of it, so that everyone will know and understand what is meant by this vision.

VISION:

"Moved by the Holy Spirit

One with the Catholic Church
Blessed to Witness Christ's Love and Service
Couples for Christ is a United Global Community
Of Family Evangelizers
That Sets the World on Fire
With the Fullness of God's Transforming Love."

Our vision expresses who we are and what we should be as a community. In order to achieve the vision, we are called to DO something. Our mission statement has been restated as follows:

MISSION:

'Building the Church of the Home, Building the Church of the Poor.'

We are called by the Lord for family renewal and for social renewal through total Christian liberation. This is the expression of what "the fullness of God's transforming love" means for us.

Again, I would like to reiterate that all these start with us! Let us be the change we want for CFC. Let us be the CFC we want the community to be! May God be praised.

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CFC

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COUPLES FOR CHRIST Global Missions Foundation Inc.