

Comments on the Separation of Gawad Kalinga from Couples for Christ

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In the statement, “Moving Forward and Letting Go,” of the CFC International Council, signed by Mr. Jose Tale, we read “Thus the CFC IC has decided to let go of the governance and corporate structure of Gawad Kalinga Community Development Foundation Inc. . . .” In another paragraph, the statement also says, “We believe that allowing GK to operate independently of the authority of the IC (CFC IC) is the right step to take for CFC, GK and the poor.”

The Statutes of the Couples for Christ, that were approved by the Pontifical Council for the Laity, states in 6.63: “The CFC International Council is the overall top governing body for the international CFC Community. It is the overall policy-making body that determines major policies for the entire body.” The Pontifical Council for the Laity, in its letter, dated May 14, 2008 to Archbishop Angel Lagdameo, the President of the Catholic Bishops’ Conference of the Philippines, says: “In fact, according to the Statutes, GK should be an apostolate fully subjected to the government of Couples for Christ International Council.”

From the foregoing facts, it is clear that GK is no more a part of CFC, is separate from CFC. If it is still a part of CFC, it should be under the authority of the CFC IC. If it is still a part of CFC but is not under the authority of the CFC IC, then the CFC IC and GK are not following the Statutes of the CFC, approved by the Pontifical Council for the Laity.

It is unfortunate that GK has separated from the Couples for Christ. CFC gave birth to GK and GK grew within the CFC. Although Tony Meloto directed GK, it could not have grown without the labor and sacrifices of CFC members. Even now most of the workers in GK are CFC members. Why should it now be separated from CFC? Most of the leaders of GK are CFC members. Why is it not good for GK to be under the authority of CFC?

Besides, GK is an important witnessing of CFC for Christ. GK, as part of CFC, proclaims to the world that Christ must be good because He has inspired his followers in the Couple for Christ to work for the poor. Through GK, CFC attracts people to Christ. Now that Gawad Kalinga is a non-religious organization, its witnessing for Christ is lost and CFC has lost an important witnessing for Christ.

GK should stay in the CFC, provided it is faithful to the vision and mission of the CFC. I find it hard to understand why the vision-mission and policies of CFC are a hindrance to “the upscaling of GK”

The reasons given for separating GK from CFC are not valid.

The main reason given by the International Council for the separation of the GK from CFC is the following: “The upscaling of GK, particularly in recent years, has highlighted some fundamental and deepening differences in approach and implementation. CFC is pursuing the fullness of the mission, as defined in our mission of Building the Church of the Home (family life renewal) and

Building the Church of the Poor (our work with the poor) in oneness with the Catholic Church. GK is focused on nation building and on poverty alleviation that will necessitate that it mainstreams and partners with all sectors of society. It is poised to enter non-Christian countries (such as India, Indonesia and the Middle East) as a non-religious organization.” This statement implies that GK will not work “in oneness with the Catholic Church.” It also implies that GK will be able to work better in nation building and poverty alleviation if it does not work “in oneness with the Church.” This is far from the truth. First of all, the Church teaches that all of us Catholics should help in nation building. But, for us Catholic the best way to work for building the nation and helping the poor is to do so “in oneness with the Church,” that is, in accordance with her social teachings. In fact, we Catholics are obliged to work “in oneness with the Catholic Church.” We may work in partnership with all sectors of society, even non-Catholics, provided we follow the Church’s rules on ecumenism and inter-religious dialogue and do not go against Church teachings. Christ, teaching us through the Church, has inspired us to work for the poor. Let us not put aside Christ and the Church in our work for the poor. It is good to remind the Catholics in GK, who comprise most, if not all, of the members of GK, that it is wrong to sacrifice your oneness with Christ and the Church in order to work for the poor.

I find it hard to understand why GK, most members of which are Catholics, decided to separate from CFC and be a non-religious organization in order to have the freedom to work not in oneness with the Church, that is, not in accordance with the teachings of the Church.

The statement of the CFC IC implies that GK is already a non-religious organization. The reason given is that GK is poised to enter non-Christian countries. There are many religious congregations of priests and nuns whose members, while remaining religious and still under the authority of their religious congregations, enter and work, incognito, in countries hostile to Christianity. GK can do the same while remaining with CFC.

To me, GK should remain with CFC, provided it follows the CFC vision/mission. If some leaders and members of GK want to help the poor in a way that goes against the CFC vision-mission, let them put up another organization. But they should not take GK out of CFC.

From the quotation above, it is clear that the CFC International Council admits that GK has veered from the vision-mission of CFC. That is why the CFC IC allows GK to separate from CFC. So, Mr. Frank Padilla was right when in 2007 he was saying that CFC was veering away from its vision-mission because of GK. Instead of allowing GK to continue veering away from the vision/mission of CFC, the response should have been to make GK conform to the CFC vision-mission.

Finally, the situation now is that GK is separate from CFC. It is already a non-religious organization. Therefore, it does not anymore enjoy the recognition given by the Vatican Pontifical Council for the Laity to Couples for Christ as an international private association of the faithful. To my mind, this is an unfortunate development. Gawad Kalinga should not have veered away from the vision/mission of the Couples for Christ and should have stayed with CFC.