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WHERE SHOULD BE OUR LOYALTY?

I am a CFC member. I think, live and have set my future with this community as I grew up as a CFC missionary. CFC has thought me how to anchor my life to God – my passion to serve has always been about a journey of how the Lord has brought me into new horizons - with CFC as my community. And so I've always believe that our life as a community member should be anchored firmly in God alone. I am writing this because of some incidents that may have led to the confusion of some and the perplexity to sensitive issues that only a few has the privilege and the burden to be aware of. Today I write this letter, taking on the posture of a brother's keeper.

Since I have been talking about anchoring our faith to God, I would like to present some facts and information that have constantly tested and assessed where our community members' faith is anchored upon -- to man (men) or to God?

Amidst the confusion, the noise and commotion caused by text messages, blog entries, FB status messages, and memos, it is important to focus on God, because if we let God to be the center of everything, then He has His ways of surfacing the truth, the righteous, the apposite. Our loyalty is to God that may reflect our loyalty to CFC, but our loyalty to CFC may not necessarily reflect our loyalty to God.

Split came from the IC, not GK

In reference to the latest IC memo, I agree with the CFC IC that there is no such thing as the CFC-GK. But my take on this issue is this: I thing there are three types of CFC – there's an existing CFC-FFL who chose to focus on family and life formation, the CFC who pursues the CFC Vatican recognized statute and there's the CFC IC these are the CFCs who are loyal to the IC only. Loyalists – those who choose to obey what the IC dictates notwithstanding the consequences of these orders. For those who don't know, IC stands for the International Council a group of seven (7) people elected by the people they appointed.

In an IC memo, dated November 19, 2007, the CFC IC, in defense of CFC with GK, noted:

We would like to reiterate the truth that there is only ONE CFC COMMUNITY, the CFC that is recognized by both the Vatican and the Catholic Bishops Conference of the Philippines (CBCP). Again, we quote from the announcement issued by the national spiritual adviser of CC in the Philippines, Bishop Gabby Reyes, on behalf of the Episcopal Commission on the Lay Faithful:

“In the light of this, the original CFC, with Gawad Kalinga as one of its ministries, retains its recognition as an international private association of the faithful, which was given by the Pontifical Council for the Laity in 2005.”

“The original CFC with Gawad Kalinga under Bro. Joe Tale continues as a national and international private association of the faithful...”

Gawad Kalinga was incepted, nurtured and raised by the Spirit that is inherent in CFC; there is no question about that. This is further supported by the CFC statute which includes and Gawad Kalinga as one of its pillars. Considering GK as a fundamental element in the life of a CFC member, we therefore adhere to the CFC statute recognized by the Vatican whenever we give our time, talent and treasures for Gawad Kalinga. As the good Bishop Gabby of FFL has noted: GK is an important witnessing of CFC for Christ" (see attached file), and so to hinder CFC members to serve in GK might be an excuse not to follow the Vatican recognize statute. In the recent developments with the IC, there were reports of CFC members and leaders asked to make a choice between CFC and GK by no less than the IC and its cohorts, some of them I will be mentioning in the next few paragraphs. Proved as a supporter of GK, the IC will automatically axe you out of your service even without the proper process i.e CFC Misamis Oriental Area Council and leaders.

Again the question, where does your loyalty take you... to man or to God?

Why am I talking about loyalty? Because as the Bible says "a blind man cannot lead the blind" so as a confused leadership may coerce a confused community. And what confusion am I talking about? Well, just look at the excerpt above and reflect on the current situation: leaders and councils being deposed for unknown reason, "letting go", IC's GK Passage, CFC-GK, "CFC-managed GK sites", an Ancop website that looks like a GK website (as in!), so on and so forth. Most if not all are related to the International Council. If you are given a piece of paper that says 'memo' or Council Statement almost every week, then you should know what I'm talking about. Leadership without a vision as how I usually hear it!

Some Facts & events that leads to these confusions

1. CFC Council Statement dated November 19, 2007 (excerpt above) – a memo that elaborates and emphasizes on the following:

- a. "The original CFC" has Gawad Kalinga
- b. The CFC stature recognized by the Vatican has Gawad Kalinga as one of its pillars
- c. There is only ONE CFC Community

2. GK Passage (find attached) – A document coming from the IC that has a detailed plan on how to remove GK to the CFC structure. Who wrote this, you might ask? The best person to contact is Bro. Melo Villaroman. This paper was presented by the IC last Jan 2009 in Ateneo.

3. "Letting Go" Memo – dated April 30, 2009. The most controversial memo that led to the confusion of many. GK leaders likewise experienced the same confusion as we have always expressed the solidarity of CFC and GK towards the same mission, up until there was Ancop and the coin of „CFC Managed GK sites" which was never consulted to any of the GK workers? Where is solidarity? Isn't that back stabbing?

Also, please clear my confusion: two weeks before the GK Expo, the IC released a Memo that tells CFC members not to mobilize for the Expo. The day after the Expo, they released a memo claiming back GK. Ano ba talaga kuya?

So clearly GK did not go out but was kicked out. Question, if IC let go of GK so who is the real CFC?

4. Q&A letting go

“We would like to enjoin all CFC members presently serving in GK to continue the work as volunteers” says the IC. But how come most of the CFC leaders serving in GK were removed from their service? “We hope to see a closer collaboration with GK in the work with the poor that is now free from unnecessary constraints and conflicts” adds the IC..

5. Bishop Gabby - Bishop Gabby Reyes, Chairman of the Episcopal Commission of the Lay Faithful, reacts on the Letting Go memo (find attached). Some recognize this letter as the spark plug that triggered the idea of claiming back GK management from GKCDFI. Although Bp. Gabby thought GK went out (which he was misled to believe) He clearly states that CFC cannot be without GK. Thus the IC wanted to take it back NOT BECAUSE THEY LOVE THE POOR WHOM THEY LET GO ALREADY BUT TO USE THE POOR AS COMPLIANCE. Let us love the poor not use them.

6. October 11 memo – IC wants to take GK back because they are afraid of the consequence of their actions. With regards to the idea of CFC managed sites, can you claim a work that it is CFC simply because the one doing it is a member? So if the president of an org or club is CFC then it should be called CFC Rotary?

7. And now here comes Ancop. Now, who's advocating a split?

First of all it was Tito Tony Meloto who put up Ancop with some friends and partners. Second does this mean that CFC-IC work for the poor is Ancop then are they not the 3rd CFC group if we based it with Vatican statutes?

Preparing the ground works

1. **The IC started to confuse people.** As stated by all these information mentioned above, all these are spearheaded, taught and planned by the IC. For what reason, that I do not know. But certainly, we cannot discount the fact that since our community thrives in a culture of obedience, then we can say that that ‘culture’ is being abused and being put in a wrong context.

2. **Ensuring a seat in the election** by removing people who are voters for many years, who are part of the Elders Assembly just because they are part of Gawad Kalinga. I'm just curious about the timing of their removal. I'm sure my dear titos can attest to that! Also, creating a new region/ position that were not there before. Again, the timing and the relevance to the IC election.

3. **Removing provincial councils** behind their back without them knowing that there was even a plan. As far as I know, the culture where I grew was that you have to talk to the person, say ask for a one-on-one, should there be any concern regarding that person. Why is this culture being violated?

4. **Not following the tradition.** Did anyone bother to ask why the one who got highest vote didn't become the CFC Director? As per tradition, its supposed to be Bro. Melo who's the CFC Director. Why did the IC changed to a CFC Board? Did anyone asked how they came up with an

Executive Director position? Was the Elders Assembly consulted?

5. Preparing the ground works: **making members choose between CFC and GK** and questioning their loyalty. Many instances and this are not some baseless accusations, a lot have been asked to choose between CFC and GK. So, who is violating the CFC statute?

Conclusion: Point of reflection that you can discuss in your household meetings

I am aware that there will be many interpretations to this letter. Many would even try to discredit and accuse me of many things, as I have always been called bastos, disobedient, etc, etc. But through it all, I am always secured knowing that in everything I do, in everything I've squealed of, nobody has ever accused me of lying. Because then, I can take full responsibility of all my actions.

There is a saying that goes, "For evil to triumph is when good men are bakla... oh, sorry... when good men do nothing." I love this community and I take pride in everything that it has accomplished. I am grateful for the privilege to have served and to have journeyed with brothers and sisters in CFC. I want to honor the heroism of all the people who sacrificed a lot to bring up this community so it pains me to see that there are people in position, who don't care what happens to the community, who are insensitive to the hurts, feelings and reactions, of our community members just so they can get what they want. Their loyalty is not to God but to the IC –and the IC to themselves.

Where am I coming from is that many of our brothers and sisters who have been serving and who are giving their best for the community has been removed from their position and were even identified as anti CFC because they are loyal to the CFC statute which is the CFC with GK.

Recently, a lot of CFC Provincial Councils has been removed by the IC or their cohorts without the proper process. Let me sight some examples:

- a. Negros Occidental. Joe Yamamoto, Mon Penalosa and Mannix Occampo invited a few people to a wine and dine night last December 18 and installed a new set of Council without informing or talking to the existing Provincial Council. Is this the new culture? Whatever happens to one-to-ones, to formal conflict resolutions, to discernment processes, to transparency, to some leaders' manhood?
- b. Cagayan De Oro and Mindanao. GK had training for its Unity software, a new upgrading and transparency software, attended by brothers and sisters from all over Mindanao. On the same day, some leaders of CFC in Mindanao, starting from Tony Meloto were removed from position. Harvey Manguinot of Bukidnon, was removed from being the Provincial Area Director a week after and so as the other CFC leaders who attended the same training, including Butch Ozaraga of Butuan. And lastly, behind the back of the existing CFC Provincial Council of CDO, Regional Head Dodong Banaynal conducted meetings to some CFC leaders to convey that they (the IC and him) are changing the existing council. Again, is this the new culture? These are just two examples - otherwise you'll still be reading all accounts until December 2010 if I write it all here!

A lot of people are not aware of these situations. Many do not fully understand the letters and memos of the IC – leaders and members have varying interpretations for every letter. My goal here is, I believe part of my responsibility as a CFC member, that my brothers and sisters would be informed properly. Never in the history of CFC that we are kicking people out of CFC, not even those who committed extra marital affair and then repented -these brothers are still welcomed, but I am mad on the idea that if you serve in GK, you take the risk of being kicked out of the community. They didn't even give justice and honor the sacrifices of some CFC leaders who were instrumental in the formative years of CFC in different areas. It's as if when you do GK, then you're not credible enough to lead in CFC. Once a CFC is always a CFC – or unless our IC thinks that accountability starts and ends with them and not with God.

“Therefore, we will not separate CFC from Gawad Kalinga.”

-The CFC IC
August 10, 2007

This is all our community not just by the few. I don't believe in keeping “hayaan mo na para walang gulo” attitude otherwise if Jesus did not say anything then the Pharisees will never have conspired to crucify him by accusing him of thing He did not do, or betraying Him (sounds familiar).

Is this the prize of loving the poor, being kick out of community then I will accept it.

If loving the poor means being maligned then bring it on.

If loving the poor means being betrayed then let share in the pain of Christ.

If loving the poor means being accused of veering away then I will leave it to God to look into my heart.

If loving the poor means risk losing my friendship with others then let me hold on to one friendship that matters...that's with Jesus.

ITULOY ANGPAGMAMAHAL SA DIYOS, ANG PAGKALINGA SA BAYAN AT ANG SAMAHANG WALANG IWANAN!

JOSE MARI OQUINENA
Missionary. Nation builder.

“The spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring glad tidings to the poor” Luke 4:18