

From: Zeny Gimenez <zeny528@gmail.com>
Date: Wed, Sep 29, 2010 at 10:06 PM
Subject: A Challenge
To: abaynsc@gmail.com

Dear Dr. Abay,

I am Zeny Gimenez and I have been a member of Couples for Christ for 20 years. In all that time, I saw CFC grow from being simply a couple-oriented movement to being a family renewal movement, and finally to being truly Christian -- by reaching out to those in society who need help. This reaching out was first done through the Social Ministries and later, because of our work with the youth in a depressed area, through ANCOP and still later, through Gawad Kalinga, and now again through ANCOP. Couples for Christ has transformed many hearts all over the world. You yourself admitted that you are an "avid admirer of CFC." You claim to have made many "deep and meaningful friendships" with CFC members. You say you have "utmost respect and appreciation for the organization."

So I am quite at a loss to understand why you are now trying to destroy it.

You seem to have decided that your email critical of CFC should be widely disseminated. I wonder why? I would have thought, being a doctor and presumably someone with a scientific and analytical mind, that you would have tried to find answers to your questions **first** before airing your presumptions and conjectures. You mention Joe Tale as being a "very good friend." You are obviously from UST and a doctor and therefore I assume you know Dr. Joe Yamamoto. It seems logical that your respect and admiration for CFC should have compelled you to seek out your friends (who are both in the International Council) and to directly confront them with your misgivings and questions about their actions.

I can see in your letter that you are upset that CFC has "expelled" Tony Meloto because he is a "national icon," as if being iconic has more to do with CFC membership than the Christian values of honesty, sincerity, integrity, simplicity, humility, and all the other values that CFC holds dear. We who are CFC, who are content to do our mission without fanfare, are the real face of CFC, not someone who bandies his being CFC only when it is convenient for him to do so.

Just a brief background, Dr. Abay, to acquaint you with some facts which, unfortunately, you chose not to explore before you made your sweeping condemnation of the International Council:

1. Why, in 2007, did the group of Frank Padilla leave CFC and form FFL (Foundation for Family and Life)? It was because of what Frank Padilla called the "veering away" of GK, a CFC ministry, from CFC values. In a report to the bishops, FFL chronicled "veering away" instances, including Tony Meloto's injunction for GK sites not to be identified as CFC or Catholic (since this supposedly angers the donors), not to say Catholic prayers,

such as the Rosary, in the sites, not to display Catholic icons, etc. And you say that Tony Meloto is committed and dedicated to CFC?

Back then, who assiduously defended Tony Meloto and GK from these accusations? It was the International Council, and all of us in CFC who believed in GK then. **Oh, we knew all of the accusations were largely true but before the panel of bishops convened to pass judgment on the CFC-FFL issue then, we had to close ranks in defense of what was then a CFC ministry and a CFC leader.** I can give you the entire transcript of record of the proceedings, if you wish, so you can ascertain for yourself how vigorously TM was defended and GK extolled. What was Joe Tale's answer to the bishops? "These are isolated cases but we commit to ensure that they do not happen again."

But despite the IC's commitment to address these accusations, despite their being members in the GK Board and having the authority over GK matters, their attempts were rebuffed. GK leaders refused to back down, saying that they were accountable only to GK National (meaning Tony Meloto) and CFC had no authority over them. They insisted they were in "nation-building" and supposedly immune from CFC's pastoral care. This intransigence was the direct cause of CFC letting go of GK's governance and structure in 2009. The rationale? If GK would not submit to the authority and the one-leadership concept dictated by their being a simple ministry of CFC, the best thing was to allow them to do their own thing. GK trumpeted the "letting go" as a violation of their vaunted "walang iwanan" motto. They forget that CFC has NEVER abandoned the GK sites and it is still, up to now, CFC workers who are taking care of the beneficiaries in the sites.

If you care to check, GK has always been involved only in the physical aspect of the work, that is, with the building of the homes which include fundraising and the disbursement of the funds. GK became a foundation for the simple reason that they needed to be a juridical entity to be able to solicit and accept funds. From the very start, once the homes are built, GK no longer has anything to do with the village, leaving CFC workers behind to implement programs on education, livelihood, values formation, health, etc. Only a very few GK sites, the ones that GK promotes as "flagship" sites, are directly handled and managed by GK workers.

2. We in CFC fully understand why Tony Meloto and the others were delisted from CFC. In the case of Tony Meloto, we recognize that he has long ceased to be CFC because he has blatantly violated CFC culture and tradition: he no longer attends CFC assemblies (the last one was in **May 2009** when he professed to be CFC to his dying day but we know that he only attended that because it was during that particular assembly that the issue of CFC "letting go" of GK was explained); he has chosen his own household (which is against CFC culture since you are not supposed to choose); he has consistently eschewed CFC identity in the sites, he has made very public statements against CFC (such as "GK is bigger than CFC" and "pupulutin sa kangkongan ang CFC.")

When you say he and the others were removed without due process, you are obviously misinformed or misled. Tony Meloto himself was invited to one-on-ones many times.

Prior to releasing the IC statement announcing the CFC's letting go of GK, the IC took pains to inform him about it and he himself inserted the phrase "It (GK) is poised to enter non-Christian countries (such as India, Indonesia and the Middle East) as a non-religious organization."

The reasons for removing him and the others from CFC membership may sound trivial to you, but they are enshrined in the Vatican Statutes and in CFC by-laws. His presence in a CFC-GK assembly in Cagayan de Oro puts the lie to his denial of involvement in any move to divide CFC through the formation of a third force called "CFC-GK." This mere act alone is tantamount to what the Vatican Statutes call "inimical acts."

3. IC Inquisition? Now who is being unChristian? May I suggest, Dr Abay, that you consult your CFC (not just GK) friends and ask them whether the IC went through the prescribed processes? As members of the GK Board, the IC consistently insisted on GK adhering to our community's vision and mission. They persisted in asking GK to submit the required financial and other reports. They requested, rightly so, that GK, then being a ministry of CFC, follow CFC culture and tradition.

What was the answer of the GK leaders? Pure vitriol -- in text messages, in email letters, in direct threats to the person of the IC members, particularly Joe Tale, Melo Villaroman and Joe Yamamoto and their families.

In your email, you ask hard, and may I say, unjust questions, Dr. Abay. Perhaps you should ask the even harder questions such as:

1. Why are ANCOP USA and Canada not remitting the donations to GK? You implied that it is the CFC "council of elders" who have refused to allow the remittance. You are wrong. In the first place, the IC does not directly handle nor disburse the funds. Only GK National has been doing that, upon remittance from ANCOP International and other fund sources. Here is the reason for the non-remittance in recent months: ANCOP USA and Canada are obliged by law to file reports not just on the donations remitted but on how the donations were spent; in short, there has to be a liquidation of every donation sent to GK. At this time, no further remittances are being allowed pending the submission of such liquidation.

As of this date, GK has not complied with this requirement. They have refused to sign the inter-agency agreement that would ensure the smooth flow and transparent accountability of remittances. FYI, CFC ANCOP-Tekton has signed this agreement and this is the reason why donations to CFC ANCOP are coming in.

Why don't you ask GK why they are not complying with this requirement?

FYI also, ANCOP attempted to return the unremitted donations to the donors, since GK's non-compliance makes them helpless to disburse the funds. But it appears USA and Canada law will not allow this and will render the donors liable for taxation. What some

donors did, after they had ascertained the truth of the matter, was to instruct ANCOP International to channel their donations to CFC ANCOP-Tekton instead, rather than jeopardize the work with the poor.

2. Has anyone made the correlation between the amount of funds already remitted and the number of houses actually built?

I will not attempt to answer this. GK has the answer but I doubt whether they would be releasing any statistics about this any time soon.

Dr. Abay, your email is now going around the world, effectively destroying the reputations of seven upright and honest men and the credibility of a 29-year old organization that is simply trying its best to fulfill God's mission of spreading His Word throughout the world. We do our work quietly, needing neither a coterie of media people and photographers nor kinship with people of power. We seek no acclamations or awards. Our only goal is to be simply "Families in the Holy Spirit Renewing the Face of the Earth" through our work of evangelization and mission, and yes, through our work with the poor which is part and parcel of that same mission.

Is it too much to ask that you take the time to discover what the truth is? Is it unrealistic for us to expect that you would reflect on the consequences of what you have done?

If, after you have made your research -- (you can ask your CFC friends, especially Joe Tale and Joe Yamamoto, you can come to us and we will gladly sit down with you and answer all your questions, you can request for documents) -- IF, after all these, you recognize that you had indeed been unfair in airing your views, what do you intend to do? Allow the lies to continue to spread in the internet highway? Or take steps to give back to CFC and its leaders what your email has cost them?

That is the challenge I issue to you now, Dr. Abay. Like the story of the man who spread lies and was ordered, as penance, to scatter bird feathers in the wind and then to gather them all back, can you now gather together the lies and negative impressions you have scattered and in the process, restore the reputations of people?

What we in CFC are asking is actually very simple: Play fair. Be Christian. The ball is in your court, Dr. Abay.

Zeny Gimenez

P.S: I had originally intended to make this a "for-your-eyes-only" email but given the extent of coverage of your email, I think it is only fair that I send this email out to those people you sent it to, in the interest of justice and fairness.