

**FROM THE SERVANT GENERAL**  
**THE SPIRITUALITY OF DIVISION**

July 31, 2008

My dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

Grace and peace from our Lord Jesus Christ!

The split in CFC has been very painful for all of us, and we simply presume that it is something negative, especially as it had to do with our work for God. We were all serving God, so why did this happen? God's ways are of course not our ways, and we can never presume to fully understand God's mind. In fact, Jesus said that he came to bring not peace but the sword, to cause division, even among relatives and household members (Mt 10:34-36). This is because there are those who will accept him and those who will reject him or his message.

But even for those who accept Jesus and work for Him, there can be division. And so it was that we had that famous division as recorded in the book of Acts (Acts 15:36-41). It was between Paul and Barnabas, two missionary stalwarts. What did they disagree or fight about? Was it some deep theological argument? Was it about the strategy for world evangelization? No, not at all. It was just whether they would bring John Mark with them on mission or not. And "so sharp was their disagreement that they separated" (Acts 15:39). It must have been painful. But it resulted in good. It resulted in two missions instead of one. And God blessed both missions.

And so through the years of Christian life and work, there have been very many separations among Christian groups, congregations and movements. Mother Teresa left her congregation and founded the Missionaries of Charity. Various religious congregations like the Franciscans, the Carmelites and many others have many groups bearing the same name with something appended to it, are independent of each other, are approved and recognized by the Church, and are doing well in their respective callings. They have all helped in expanding the work of the kingdom of heaven.

Jesus did break the loaves and ended up multiplying the bread. This is the spirituality of division. In God's hands, division can lead to multiplication!

For CFC, the crisis was about the veering away from our authentic charism of evangelization and family life renewal, in favor of the social dimension of the gospel. But we do not question the heart of those among our brethren who desire to help the poor. Remember that this was our common work and calling at the turn of the third millennium. Now with the split, we in CFC-FFL are focused on evangelization and family life, while those of our brethren in CFC-GK are focused more on building communities among the poor. Now both can pursue what they believe to be their

particular calling wholeheartedly, without tension caused by the different emphasis of the other.

Now just like the religious congregations (Franciscans, Carmelites), we look to creative unity despite the split. Thus we have proposed one big CFC family but with two distinct and separate branches. This way we pursue our respective charisms, while still being connected in some way. We can celebrate anniversaries together, we can serve the diocese in pro-life together, we can exchange resources, and so on.

Whether this proposal is accepted or rejected, our posture in CFC-FFL is not to burn our bridges, not to malign or attack our separated brethren, not to retaliate for wrongs done against us, and to pray for our detractors. We will seek not to deepen the rift, even as we speak the truth and long for peace with justice.

Let us show all what it means to love, even one's "enemies." Do not speak ill of anyone, do not malign, do not judge, do not focus on personal rights, do not criticize anonymously, avoid scandal, do not promote hatred. Rejoice even in oppression and persecution if done for the sake of righteousness or because of our standing up for what is right in Christ. God allows crosses into our lives for our purification, and this is part of our way to holiness.

And let us focus on our mission. Let us simply move on. The harvest is great, and God calls us to proclaim Him to the world.

God bless you all.

In the service of Christ,

Frank Padilla