

## **FROM THE SERVANT GENERAL**

### **LENT AND LAMENTATIONS**

February 5, 2009

My dear brethren,

Once again we will be entering into the season of Lent. Ash Wednesday is on February 25, and we go all the way to Holy Week ending on Easter Sunday which is on April 12. Lent of course is when we go on repentance mode. We start on Ash Wednesday with ash put on our foreheads, reminding us of our human frailty and our returning to dust. Thereafter we continue to figuratively wear sackcloth, in our journey of reconciliation to God.

Why do we do this year after year? Well, it is simply because we are sinners. And even as we have already been washed by the blood of the Lamb, even as we have already accepted Jesus as Savior and Lord, we still sin, at times grievously. So in fact it is not only during Lent that we are especially mindful of our sinfulness, but this is something we do all year round.

Repentance is a wonderful gift from God. We can be the greatest of sinners, but if we truly repent, then we are reconciled with God. Then he remembers our sins no longer. Then we are washed clean and become as white as snow. Then we move on to greater holiness of life. Then we become more fitting and able instruments that God will use to accomplish His purposes in the world.

For us as CFC-FFL, given the task of renewing the family and defending life, we need to be truly one in heart and mind with God, and walking in the footsteps of our Lord Jesus, so that we can be empowered by His Spirit. Much has been given to us, and where much is given, much also is expected. We must repent of our sins and our infidelities, and we must carry our crosses daily, in order to truly follow Jesus.

What are our infidelities? There are many. Ironically, even as we are already restored as God's holy remnant, I see that many of our past infidelities that led to the crisis and split of 2007 are still with us. While we are back on track on our evangelization, there is a need for greater passion and singlemindedness. While we are united in heart and mind with our brethren, there are still the conflicts, even among top leaders. While we are resolved to really serve God and His people, there is still a lack of full understanding as to the meaning of servant leadership and how to live this out.

While many of these shortcomings will always be with us, given our sinful human natures and the attacks of the enemy, we must strive every year to overcome the flesh and resist the lures of the world, thereby undermining the devil's influence on us. Thus we focus especially during Lent. This is a time of grace and mercy for us.

Given our particular situation as CFC-FFL, we need to revisit the lessons of Lamentations. There is much still to be learned. And indeed, this learning will take our whole lifetimes, until we are fully secure in the embrace of our Father in heaven.

I thus encourage you to again take up the book “40 Days of Lamentations.” The readings in 2007 for Lent are the same as the readings this year, except for Sundays and a few other days. For those days when the readings are different from those in the book, I will be providing the appropriate reflection. Look too at the many lessons to be learned in Part II of the book. Discussions of these lessons can take a lifetime in your households.

I know that God has allowed everything that happened for a purpose. God allowed the crisis of 2007 to impress upon us the unacceptability of infidelity and the importance of covenant. God allowed the split to be able to raise a holy remnant, and get us back on track according to His original purpose for CFC. Now God desires that we truly become a people He can use. Our work in this third millennium, that of renewing the family and defending life, is crucial. It is a great privilege for us, as well as a great responsibility.

Let us not fail the Lord. He has provided everything we need. His grace is abundant. His divine mercy knows no bounds. It now depends on us. Let us always look to Jesus on the cross, where our sins put him. And let us lament our failings and repent of our infidelities.

As we are laid low, God Himself will raise us up. Let us humble ourselves before His glorious majesty, and resolve to be more like Jesus each day.

God bless us all.

Your brother and servant,

Frank Padilla