

## FROM THE SERVANT GENERAL

### THE WAY FORWARD IN CHRIST

November 6, 2008

My dear brethren in Christ,

The restoration started last year, and from the crisis in CFC has emerged God's remnant, true to its authentic charism. From last year, to this year, to next year, the Lord has been guiding us. One major aspect of such guidance are our themes for the different years. 2007 was the time of lamentations but also **hope** brought about by our restoration. 2008 is our time of **joy**, as we rebuild and move forward under God's renewed anointing. For 2009 we have taken the theme of **trust**, as we continue to place ourselves in the hands of the Lord who called us from 1981 and intends to use us for His purposes until He returns once again.

In addition, for next year we are looking to the Divine Mercy. Indeed, our work of evangelization is all about God's mercy. These times are increasingly evil and dark, especially in the continued vicious assaults on marriage, family and life. The enemy is intent on destroying God's work and thwarting God's plan. Many souls are being lost. But God's mercy is boundless. In the cross of Christ and in His blood shed for us is salvation. But this good news needs to be proclaimed. We have been called to stand up and defend God's plan. Thus our mission is clear—we are to evangelize, and we are to renew the family and defend life.

#### **Putting it together**

The consistency of the Lord's call, since 1981 and now in the restored CFC-FFL, is evident in a scripture passage from Sirach.

“You who fear the Lord, wait for his **mercy**, turn not away lest you fall. You who fear the Lord, **trust** him, and your reward will not be lost. You who fear the Lord, **hope** for good things, for lasting **joy** and mercy.” (Sir 2:7-9)

Did you notice all the elements of our themes through these three years? Hope. Joy. Trust. Mercy. Put another way, mercy is the start, and mercy is the end. Divine mercy, which translates to God's love, is the foundation for our work. In between, as our responses, are what we look to (hope, joy, trust) as we go about being instruments of God's divine mercy.

And what is the common denominator in this passage? It is addressed to “you who fear the Lord.” What is fear of the Lord?

## **Fear of the Lord**

First, fear of the Lord is about His awesome majesty. It is a creature being in awe of his Creator. The problem in the world today is that man has replaced God as the center of life. Indeed, man has become god. Man looks to his own strength and ability, no longer cognizant of the God who is the source of all good things. Even for some Christians who do good works, Christ has been displaced from the center. In all these, man has rejected his Maker, and has rejected the worship due to his God. Man has now worshiped himself and the work of his hands.

To be in awe of God, to fear God, is to realize who we are and who God is. We are weak and sinful, while God is perfect and all-powerful. Our lives and our well-being are all totally dependent upon Him. And so we need to give Him the worship that is His due, and we need to turn our lives over to Him.

Second, fear of the Lord is about obeying Him and living according to His ways. God has the power of life and death over us. But He gives His people the choice—life or death, the blessing or the curse (Dt 30:19). There will be bountiful blessings for obedience, but disastrous curses for disobedience (Dt 28). As Jesus says, “Be afraid of the one who after killing has the power to cast into Gehenna; yes, I tell you, be afraid of that one.” (Lk 12:5). Right now, many are endangering their souls by their disobedience and rebellion.

Fearing and obeying God is also about what we do for God, according to His calling. We are His servants, called and privileged to do His very work. But we need to respond accordingly. Otherwise there will be consequences. “That servant who knew his master’s will but did not make preparations nor act in accord with his will shall be beaten severely” (Lk 12:47).

This is especially true for us in CFC, and even more so for us now in CFC-FFL. God has blessed us. God has given us the privilege of becoming His co-workers. God has entrusted to us (and to other Christians) the task of proclaiming His salvation to the ends of the earth. God has shown us clearly our mission. And God has made Himself dependent upon us (and others that He calls) to accomplish His will with regard to family and life. We need to be awed at such a privilege! But with the privilege comes the responsibility. “Much will be required of the person entrusted with much, and still more will be demanded of the person entrusted with more.” (Lk 12:48b).

## **An awesome task ahead**

The forces of the enemy are focused on destroying marriage, the family and life. We are called to the ministry of family and life. The battle is joined. The forces have taken their positions. Are we ready? Do we know what we are in for?

Jesus warns some would-be followers. Jesus tells one that he has nowhere to rest his head (Lk 9:57-58), that one will need to leave the comforts of home and the conveniences of life. Jesus tells another to leave family behind (Lk 9:59-62), that the first priority should

be him and his mission. And of course, Jesus says to all, “If anyone wishes to come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me.” (Lk 9:23). Jesus’ mission is so important that we need to give him our all.

Another Jesus, the son of Eleazar, son of Sirach, also forewarns us.

“My son, when you come to serve the Lord, prepare yourself for trials. Be sincere of heart and steadfast, undisturbed in time of adversity. Cling to him, forsake him not; thus will your future be great. Accept whatever befalls you, in crushing misfortune be patient; for in fire gold is tested, and worthy men in the crucible of humiliation. Trust God and he will help you; make straight your ways and hope in him.” (Sir 2:1-6)

The Lord allowed us to be tested during the crisis in CFC. The Lord allowed us to suffer adversity, even in the hands of our own brethren. The Lord humbled us. We have weathered that storm, and have learned the lessons of Lamentations. We hopefully have been purified, and are more intent on our way forward in holiness. But our spiritual warfare grows more intense, and there will be more attacks, oppression, affliction, trials, crosses and pains. In all these, be not afraid. Trust God. Cling to God. Be holy.

### **A final word**

We are but a speck in the whole universe and in the whole course of salvation history. But God loves us, knows us by name, and has given us the privilege to serve Him and to make a difference in the life of others. God is good and faithful. We can put our whole trust and hope in Him.

“Study the generations long past and understand; has anyone hoped in the Lord and been disappointed? Has anyone persevered in his fear and been forsaken? Has anyone called upon him and been rebuffed? Compassionate and merciful is the Lord” (Sir 2:10-11a)

The way forward for us has been revealed. The trumpets have sounded, and the clarion call is clear. Let us move on, with hope, joy and trust, and be instruments of God’s divine mercy upon the world.

God bless you all.

Your brother in Christ,

Frank Padilla