



# SOUND *the* TRUMPETS



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JANUARY 2009

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**The Mangyan People Praise and**  
**Worship His Name**  
**Joyride - A Spiritual Experience Like**  
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# SOUND THE TRUMPETS

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## insights

### CFCFI/CFCFFL: Crossing Its Rubicon

### In Year 2008

On January 11, 49 BC, Julius Caesar made a crucial decision: to cross the river Rubicon with his army, thereby effectively declaring civil war against Pompey, who held sway and power in Rome. With the words *alea iacta est* (the die is cast), Caesar resolved to return with his legions to the city. But once he crossed the Rubicon and ventured to the Roman heartland, he knew there was no turning back. Either he or his soldiers would take the city or Pompey would destroy them.

Almost a half century later, a carpenter from Nazareth at the prime of his youth also made a decision that changed the course of history. In so doing, he became a central figure both in the history of mankind and our own salvation. Upon unrolling the scroll of Isaiah and announcing His mission of salvation, on receiving His Baptism at the river Jordan, on traversing the whole breadth, length and depth of His mission area and being an itinerant Preacher that challenged the beliefs and practices of the established order, Jesus not only had one but several Rubicons. He never turned His back on the will of the Father. The defining moments of His Rubicons came at the Garden of Olives where he completely yielded to the wish of the Father, turned off His divinity to experience the full anguish and pain of human suffering and death on the Cross and thus won for us our own epiphany.

Fast forward to 2007, 30th of July. After trying to restore the lost spiritual anchors of the community from within, being witness to failed agreements on the way to restoration and finally, receiving the final blow of being terminated from service to the community we also had to cross our own Rubicon. From that time on, the will to serve anew became an unalterable course, with the force of our total beings and wills behind the need to restore the authentic charisms. The year 2008 became the turning point where it became clear that God's unseen hand and anointing were upon CFCFI/CFCFFL. We grew in numbers, rationalized our structure, consolidated our ministries and charted out the vision, mission and the values of a rekindled and reenergized faith community intent on not repeating the mistakes of the past. The decisive step from motivation to will power involved a decisive shift to total and absolute commitment among the initial community of CFCFI/CFCFFL believers and followers.

We had the choice of turning back at times when the persecutions became personal and vicious, attacks turned overt involving and dragging even eminent persons of the clergy and culminating in a legal suit filed because we chose to claim our birthright to the same name allowed and encouraged by an all inclusive faith.

But the movement of the Spirit could not be stopped. Accelerated by our consecration to Mary Mediatrix of All-Grace, we moved on from glory to glory, from signs to concrete wonders as we celebrated our Joy Weekend, saw the full flowering of the family ministries, reinforced our links with the parishes, reestablished our work with the poor as we saw entire communities turning over their care and administration to us, maximizing our linkages with similarly-minded communities and providing the support of the Church in such advocacies as opposing the reproductive health bill, the extension of CARP and the continuation of the wonderful work in education, the prisons and lately, the OFWs.

This issue of Sound the Trumpets chronicles the journey we took from crossing the Rubicon, from transforming desire and motivation to purposeful action, from cultivating a core group of action takers to unleashing the collective force of our united energies and spirits to achieve the results the Spirit has told

us to pursue. All told, our journey is a story of not only doing it but getting it done ---all because the good Lord allowed it to happen.

*The cover page, the features and the pictures tell the story of a community united in prayer and action, vibrant in moving on, steadfast and single-minded in renewing family and defending life. There are still many Rubicons to cross in our community life and with the Lord; the Rubicons shall be transformed into river Jordans where there will be more conversions and into Emmauses where there will be more enlightenment.*



**NONONG CONTRERAS**  
*Editor in Chief*





By  
**FRANK  
PADILLA**

## OUR THEME FOR 2009

**E**very year, the Lord gifts us with a theme, which becomes a major guide to where the Lord wants to bring us in our continuing journey with him. For 2009, here is our theme:

### **“TRUST IN JESUS”**

#### **A historical perspective**

At the start of the third millennium, as we entered into the fullness of the gospel with its spiritual and social dimensions, the enemy shifted to higher gear in attacking us. What resulted was a veering away that rapidly developed through the years. There was increasing infidelity to our covenant—to no longer living out a lifestyle of evangelization, to unfaithfulness to our life together, to many conflicts among elders, to marginalizing Christ in our work with the poor. The results were disastrous—poor harvest of souls, many lying low, loss of vibrancy in community life.

God still used us to serve Him, but the anointing was diminished. God still allowed us to celebrate our 25th year in 2006 with great rejoicing, but the seeds for destruction of our life and work were already starting to sprout.

#### **2007**

In 2007 our theme was “Hope.” In God’s desire to preserve His authentic work, He brought us to the book of Lamentations. It was intended by God to be a journey of hope and joy, a journey back to His original call and intent for us. God was warning us, in a very profound but graphic way, as to what would happen if we persisted in our infidelities. Lamentations was all about what happened to His people Israel, and how they lost it all.

If we only heeded and learned and lived out the lessons of Lamentations, then God would have forgiven us, brought us back on track,

and used us even more powerfully for the next quarter century of our mission. But it was not to be. The veering away persisted. And this was compounded by the actions of those who were left in top leadership, who began to malign and attack those who wanted to be fully restored to God’s authentic call.

Some of us moved into restoration mode, to restore CFC from within. But the attacks only intensified. The crisis deepened. Options were severely constrained. The enemy was coming close to his goal of completely destroying CFC. The split became inevitable.

God then raised His remnant, in line with our prayer in Lamentations 5:21. CFC-FFL became the restored CFC.

#### **2008**

Last year our theme was “Joy in Christ.” It was time for great rejoicing for God had brought us back to His original intent for CFC.

But in accordance with His plan, so that the veering away would not happen again, God knew He needed to raise a holy remnant. And for us to be holy, we needed to be purified. And a major part of that purification would be undergoing continuing attacks and oppression, unfortunately from our own brethren on the other side. The attacks intensified. Even the Church hierarchy was not spared. Bishops were maligned, if they in any way spoke the truth about our being in the right.

What God was doing was humbling us and teaching us proper Christian conduct in the face of adversity. We were

not to retaliate or to malign in turn. We were to just absorb the blows and rejoice in the privilege of suffering for the sake of righteousness. This year we learned about how suffering and pain are part and parcel of the authentic Christian call. We learned the value of the cross. Paul rejoiced greatly in his sufferings. We were being formed in the same way.

The theme of joy, at the start of the first full year of the life and mission of CFC-FFL, was meant to plant in us the proper virtue, and to plant it so deeply that we would now be well equipped to face years of labor in the vineyard, and never be fazed again by adversities and crosses.

#### **2009**

Now we look forward to a new year. And the theme the Lord has given us is “Trust in Jesus.”

God is continuing to form us, to be a holy remnant, and ultimately to become the families He intended us to become, that He could use to renew the face of the earth. The call to holiness means constant purification, and a determination to go the way of the cross of Jesus Christ. There will be great challenges and





trials, there will be human disappointments and frustrations, but we are to trust in Him totally.

### A closer look

Let us look at our theme verse more closely.

“God indeed is my savior;  
I am confident and unafraid.  
My strength and my courage is the Lord,  
and he has been my savior.”  
(Isaiah 12:2, NAB)

### The beginning and the end

Our theme verse begins and ends with God as “Savior.” Indeed Jesus the Savior is “the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end.” (Rev 22:13). Jesus is the be-all and end-all of our life and mission. That is why we are Couples for Christ. Everything we are and everything we do is centered on Christ.

Jesus and what he accomplished for us on

only from the Lord, but is the Lord. God does not only give us strength and courage in order to fulfill our calling, but Jesus himself is the one, acting through us in his Spirit, who accomplishes the task. The strength and power are not inanimate things that are given to us, but are incarnate in a Person.

Jesus is Emmanuel, the God who is with us (Mt 1:23b). Jesus is not a detached Savior, now in heaven, just looking down on his subjects doing his work; rather, Jesus is hands-on, he leads his troops, he directly engages the enemy in battle.

We know that nothing is impossible with God, because He is God. But we are mere human flesh.

How can we do the divine work of God? Well, it is because it is Jesus himself acting in and through us. Thus, if we have faith that this is indeed true, then it will be as Jesus himself assures us, “Nothing will be impossible for you.” (Mt 17:20b). Now that is strength, and in that we can take courage.

### Our proper posture

Since we are mere instruments, since it is Jesus himself acting in and through us, since we can

look to empowerment by the Holy Spirit, then we must be confident and unafraid.

First, we must be unafraid. The future is in God’s hands, not ours. The power comes from God, not from our puny selves. Whatever happens, God is there for us. The Father already offered His very own Son on the cross for us, assuring us of His great love. “What then shall we say to this? If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare his own Son but handed him over for us all, how will he not also give us everything else along with him?” (Rom 8:31-32). With God on our side, we need never be afraid.

Second, we must be confident. We must trust. Even in the face of great evil in the world, even while undergoing severe trials, even in seeming defeats, we know that victory has already been won by Jesus. The fullness of victory and salvation will come at the final judgment. Till

that time, we endure and persevere. We suffer hardships and oppression, allowing these to



purify us and push us closer to God. We simply do our work.

Because of who God is and what He has already done for us, we face a future full of hope. Nothing can “separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.” (Rom 8:39b). We have got it made! So we simply trust in Jesus.

### Let us move on

The world is in darkness, with attacks on the family and against life at the core of the enemy’s assault. God raised CFC in 1981 precisely to defend and strengthen His work. This call has not changed. Now, with CFC-FFL, we are in the thick of the fight.

God has been merciful to us, and we want to become His instruments such that His mercy and love might be experienced by the whole world. We need to be prepared, by becoming holy men and women. And we need to do our mission with a passion, giving unselfishly of ourselves, just as Jesus has given of himself for our sakes.

No matter what we face, no matter how intense the attacks of the enemy are against us, be not afraid. Simply trust in Jesus.



the cross are the central focus of our lives and our mission. The cross is the very symbol of God’s love for us. God went to great lengths to redeem us, even sending His very own Son to an excruciating death on the cross. The cross is all about God’s mercy. God sent His Son even when we were sinners, even as we were the ones who caused him to be crucified, even as we continued to reject him. God will do whatever He can in order to bring us back to Himself.

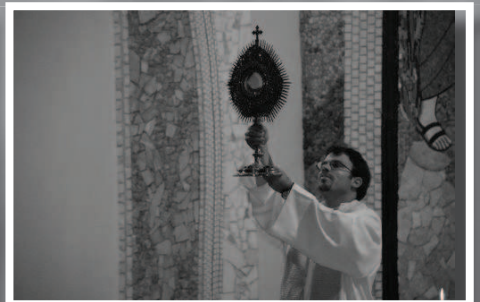
And of course, our work is all about proclaiming this Savior. God uses us as instruments in order to bring His salvation to the whole world. This is a great privilege. It is hope for the world, and joy for His evangelizers.

### Strength and courage is the Lord

The third line in the verse is quite striking. In living for the Lord and in proclaiming his salvation, our strength and our courage is not

*\* Being under the fig tree is a symbol of messianic peace. “(Nations) shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; one nation shall not raise the sword against another, nor shall they train for war again. Every man shall sit under his own vine or under his own fig tree, undisturbed” (Micah 4:3b-4). Our ultimate goal is to bring the peace of Christ into the world to all.*







# Centered on Christ

*In everything that we are and do, we look to Jesus, who is our Savior and Lord. Jesus is our model in our obedience to the Father, in our faithfulness to His call, and to total submission to His divine will. And as He who called us is holy, we ourselves will strive for holiness of life (1 Pt 1:15-16), and look to exhibiting the fruit of the Spirit in our day-to-day lives (Gal 5:22-23).*



**F**or one who is enjoying an intimate bond with the Lord, trials and challenges are not meant to dampen his soul, but they all the more lead him to perfect God's love in him. This perfect love allows this soul to transform tribulation to joy, affirmation and empowerment!

Such was concretized when CFCFFL, a community deeply in love with Christ, celebrated its anniversary last year. The community had its share of trials and challenges which made it yearn to have a grand celebration at the Marikina Sports Complex. The brethren waited in anticipation for what surprises were coming. There were so many good surprises for the community weeks before the anniversary, thus the anticipation for the Anniversary day was further heightened! The community braced for what was in store that very special day... while TRUSTING in God for things to come!

#### TRIBULATION

Typhoon Frank devastated Luzon days prior to the weekend. The typhoon pursued, wrapping up the dinner-dance held on the Friday prior to the anniversary. The day after, a mass was celebrated to commemorate the death



anniversary of Cardinal Sin. It was also a day which saw the gathering of CFCFFL leaders and social ministries held at the Starmall Conference Hall. Though the rains stopped that Saturday evening, the rains started pouring heavily again on the eventful Sunday of the anniversary.

#### TEMPTATION

There was no official statement about a possible postponement of the Anniversary celebration. Still in my pajamas, I half-expected the whole event to be cancelled while waiting for the official advice to come. With the heavy downpour, I got myself to think that the event will most likely be cancelled. I got guilty. There were Mission



*Contributed by  
F. Xavier X. S. Padilla  
Missionary*

Workers at the venue who have been there since the night before, and were still there, also waiting for official advice. The difference was, they had the posture of pushing through until further notice, while there I was, expecting a cancellation. Upon realizing this and after reciting the rosary as a family, I stood up, took a shower and left for Marikina.

#### FAITH

On the way to Marikina, I still had my doubts. Rain was so hard, tree branches were scattered all around, streets were inundated, on the way to the venue. When I got there, I was surprised to see that there were people who came all the way from the Visayas, Aurora Province, and Nueva Ecija, since early in the morning. My faith was tested when I saw people planning the alternatives already. Moving the barrio fiesta



activity to the badminton area, the mass to the gym, etc. More and more people were still coming, and my faith got stronger - no man is an island, and when one is weak, there are others who are strong. The alternative venues became beautiful areas and the rain started to thin out. Faith can move mountains! It only takes a mustard seed sized faith.

#### OBEDIENCE

The rain became a drizzle, the venues were fixed, and people were continuously coming. The official text came and was sent out (albeit with a minor adjustment saying for people to come right away to eat Lechon Batangas and Cebu).

And this is where I experienced the obedience of CFCFFL. They came, at first tentatively, and soon after, by the jeepload. Through heavy rains, inundated streets, fallen trees, they still came. They all came wanting to celebrate 27 years of God's goodness and faithfulness! And then, even the good Bishop Gabriel Reyes came. And the Papal Nuncio, Archbishop Adams arrived. God's shepherds had faith and courage.

#### JOY

The Mass was such a joyful celebration! People said that it was a very vibrant and lively group that was present. I agree! The faces of the people there were filled with smiles and were glowing with a joy that only comes from loving God and being loved by Him. The 27th Anniversary was indeed a CELEBRATION of God's faithfulness and anointing amidst trials and tribulations!

#### AFFIRMATION

Archbishop Adams and Bishop Gabby affirmed us. Twenty-seven years of CFC and still being called to be a light in and to the world. It was worth going through everything just to hear their words. But a bigger affirmation was the feeling you got from just being with brothers and sisters who have gone through the same things you have, have found their conviction, and are fighting for the Lord's place in the world! It is a community that we are all proud to be part of.

#### EMPOWERMENT

Leaving the Complex with a feeling of contentment was something no one would have imagined just a few hours before. God tested us by fire during the year, and He tested us by water last Sunday. After fellowship with brothers and sisters, after affirmation by the Papal Nuncio and Bishop Gabby, after the feeling of love that everyone felt over the whole weekend - I believe that God is happy with what He saw in us. Let us continue to be empowered servants of the Church and never forget that the reason for everything we do and everything that we are is Jesus. HAPPY 27TH ANNIVERSARY CFC!



*These things I have spoken to you, that My joy may remain in you, and that your joy may be full.” – John 15:11*



# A GRAND FEAST

Contributed by Jett Reyes  
Vicariate of St. Joseph  
CFCFFL District of Parañaque



**W**e continue to draw joy and inspiration from the wondrous works of our Lord. Despite the struggles we face every now and then, His amazing love and care never fail to take hold of our lives. Such was the case that came to pass at Las Piñas City, Metro Manila last June – on the occasion of the 27th CFC Anniversary.

The whole CFCFFL community was excited, but our exhilaration was dampened by



strong winds, rain and flood waters brought by typhoon Frank. We had to cancel the 6:15 a.m. convoy of three aircon buses and several private cars for safety considerations. We surrendered the rest of the day to God, and prayed for the safety of everyone affected by the typhoon. Little did we know that He was preparing something marvelous that will enable us to celebrate the CFC anniversary!

By late morning, the strong winds ceased and rain turned to drizzle, yet the flood waters remained. In response to the invitation of Rene Evidente (Head, District of Parañaque) to proceed to Marikina (though he emphasized safety and health considerations) to attend

the Eucharistic celebration scheduled in the afternoon, we in Las Piñas called for brethren who were physically able to join us on what turned out to be a faith journey.

At about 1:45 p.m., we learned that the two buses we re-commissioned will no longer be able to reach us, due to the high flood waters they were stuck in. That left us stranded at the gas station, without any transportation to go to began to unfold a string of events that led us to what He had in store for us that afternoon.

When the two groups re-united, the consensus arrived at by the brothers was affirmed by God's message to the sisters. "Go worship!" said the Lord. Immediately, we sought out possible venues for an impromptu assembly to worship God and celebrate His goodness. Consideration was given to location and distance, since there



were not enough vehicles to transport the entire delegation.

Lo and behold! God was truly in control. Beside the Shell gas station was a Kentucky Fried Chicken (KFC) outlet. A birthday party scheduled to be held there that very same afternoon was cancelled late that morning due to the typhoon. Again, the Lord was affirming His will for us to assemble and worship. The entire 2nd floor of the KFC outlet was instantly made available to us. He truly is an awesome God! Still, His plan for us that day was far from over at that point.

And yes... we did not wait long for food to be served. Because of the cancelled birthday

party, there were chicken and burgers ready for serving. God was providing us with a complete feast!

In spirit, we were celebrating the 27th CFC Anniversary, in a setting planned and prepared by God.

As we rejoiced and basked in God's presence, despite the devastation of a typhoon, He clearly reminded us to live out both the spiritual and social dimensions of the gospel. God was still in control!!

The entire day was a faith experience worth treasuring. Although it started on an uncertain note for us in Las Piñas, it progressed into a Spirit-led vibrant worship, and ended with an overwhelming joy amidst God's grace and provisions for the faithful.

In a text message received Sunday night,



Mimi David wrote, "We were all affirmed with the Papal Nuncio's homily and Bp Gabby's message. God affirmed you too while connected in spirit!" Indeed, CFCFFL is affirmed. And we thank God for this joyful celebration among our families – celebrating in spirit with our brethren who made it to Marikina. ■







Batangas



Thailand



Nicaragua



Poland



Ireland



Rome



Switzerland



Slovenia



Spain



Milan



Mindoro



Canada



Ghana



National Bilibid Compound



Davao



*We are called to proclaim the good news  
of Jesus to the whole world (Mk 16:15).*

*We are his witnesses (Lk 24:48). Every  
CFC-FFL member is an evangelizer, in the  
normal day-to-day environments of our  
lives. We look to doing mission beyond  
our own environments to the very ends of  
the earth.*

# Evangelistic & Missionary

# THE INDIGENOUS PEOPLES:

## Cared for & Loved

*Contributed by Bonjie Bonjibod  
CFCFFL Work with the Poor*

There is great promise in our work with the IPs. It is a venue where the whole country can work together in providing opportunities to preserve their rich culture. A partnership with the Catholic Bishops Conference of the Philippines-Episcopal Commission on Indigenous Peoples-Southcentral Luzon (CBCP-ECIP-SCL) has greatly facilitated this undertaking. In addition to the Archdiocese of Bataan which has supported efforts in working with the Aetas in said province, CFCFFL has likewise opened doors for partnership with the Mangyan community in Occidental Mindoro.

The Mangyan Village was adopted by the CFCFFL Chapter at Abra de Ilog as their mission area. It is composed of 50 Mangyan families of about 250 individuals who are part of the Iraya Mangyan tribe. They live on a hilly portion a few kilometers from the town proper. Most families live in houses made of bamboo / wood materials and cogon roofs. Villagers, especially children, need training on hygiene and sanitation. A government-funded contractual teacher or Instructional Manager (IM) handles the education of children and adults at the site. The teacher, Angelbert Manalo, is a Mangyan member of the village. Teacher Angel has just finished the Christian Life Seminar (CLS) which

harvested 7 couples and 2 singles. He is now an SFL member.

Due to neglect or lack of action by concerned authorities, the tribe is living in poverty due to discrimination and lack of opportunities. Another reason is illiteracy. Only 10% of them are literate. A congregation of nuns has an on-going formal education program where they sponsor children to the elementary school. Villagers subsist in planting root crops and working on contractual manual labor jobs.

Little by little, the IPs are beginning to trust once more... as they see the sincerity of those who come to them... in the desire to work with them. It was late last year when the area was visited by Danny Bagon (Occ. Mindoro District Head), Cesar Ramirez (Batangas District Head), Joel Besa (FTPW, South Luzon), Bong Boongaling (PFO Batangas) and Bert Deocampo (Mangyan Mission Team Leader), Manny Estrella (CFCEFI Literacy Program Coordinator).

In order to continue the evangelization efforts, the CFCFFL Mindoro constructed a 5x7m concrete chapel at the site, which was blessed and formally opened on Dec. 21, 2008. This is part of CFCFFL's vision of making the village a CFCFFL Restoration Village (RV). Aside from the chapel, a school room and communal toilets will also be provided.

The initiative of the CFCFFL Occidental Mindoro Team in helping the Mangyans is very noble. The villagers are very receptive with the evangelization and community development efforts of CFCFFL. The component programs of our Work With the Poor (WWP/ RV) are ready for implementation in the village as soon as funds are available.

To better understand what it takes to work with the IPs, an appreciation talk was conducted by the Episcopal Commission on Indigenous Peoples (ECIP) last December 13. ■





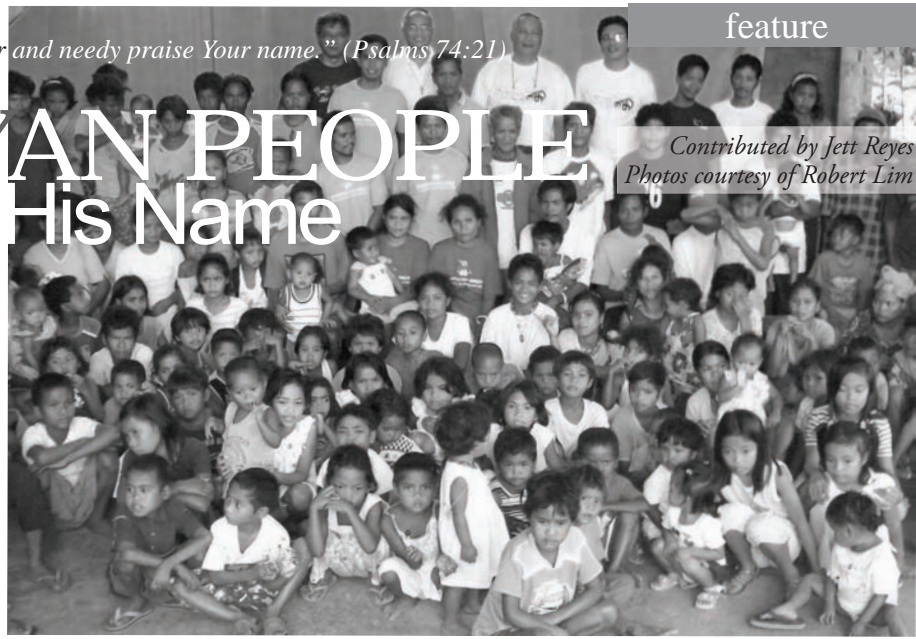
*"Do not let the oppressed be put to shame; may the poor and needy praise Your name." (Psalms 74:21)*

feature

# THE MANGYAN PEOPLE

## Worship & Praise His Name

Contributed by Jett Reyes  
Photos courtesy of Robert Lim



Nothing comes even close to putting God in the center of the lives of His people. Thus, Couples for Christ Foundation for Family and Life (CFCFFL) was called to be evangelistic and missionary. Its resolve to introduce Christ and the good news to indigenous peoples also lie at the very core of this evangelization.

And this is what the CFCFFL brethren from Occidental Mindoro and Batangas set out to do in mission. Led by Bert De Ocampo (who took the lead role in the project), Angelbert Manalo (Indigenous Peoples Coordinator for Occ. Mindoro), Danny Bagon (Occ. Mindoro Provincial Area Head) and Cesar Ramirez (Batangas District Head), they were supported by the Work with the Poor (WWP) team from Metro Manila, led by Rene Evidente and CFCFFL Servant General, Frank Padilla.

On the 20th of December 2008, a concrete chapel, built as a result of donations from and efforts of both CFCFFL Occ. Mindoro and CFCFFL Batangas, was turned over to the Iraya tribe (composed of 54 families, and the only remaining Catholic-leaning tribe among the Mangyan people). Modest in design and though still rough in finish, this chapel now provides the Iraya tribe with an appropriate venue in order to celebrate Mass – a venue for them to worship and praise His name!

The eventful day began with a two-and-a-half hour RORO (Roll-On-Roll-Off) boat ride from the Port of Batangas in Batangas City to

the pier at Abra de Ilog, Mindoro Occidental. The CFCFFL mission team (34 persons from CFC and family ministries) expectantly boarded the RORO vessel at 4:00 a.m., complete with food and provisions, and was advised to prepare for a knee-deep river crossing in order to reach the Iraya ancestral land in Barangay Atipan.

Concerns regarding the river crossing were eliminated when the Irayas surprisingly greeted the delegation with a

(yellow variety) and buko (meat and juice).

Fr. Vic Cisneros, SVD, parish priest of St. Rafael Parish where the ancestral land belonged, arrived late in the morning and celebrated the Holy Mass at the new Iraya chapel. Conveying his joy at the work that has been started, he expressed his anticipation for a mass Baptism for the Irayas in the near future.

A sumptuous lunch hosted by CFCFFL followed the Mass. Brothers and sisters shared food with the tribal folk in a joyful fiesta atmosphere.

The worship which followed, punctuated by joyful songs of praise led by the CFC Youth for Family and Life, saw not only the CFCFFL brethren singing and jumping in awe before the Lord, but also the Iraya men, women and children!

Before the mission team departed, messages were given by the CFCFFL Occ. Mindoro and Batangas leaders. Rene Evidente and Frank Padilla likewise gave their messages ... extolling the work of the Lord and the hospitality of the Iraya tribe. In response, Pepe Manalo (called

"mayor" by the tribal folk), the tribal chieftain, acknowledged and thanked CFCFFL for their support - and for providing the tribe with a chapel that it can finally call its own. The mayor also expressed his happiness that at last, his tribe will now be a truly Christian one.

Plans are now being mapped out to provide for other useful physical structures and implement programs that benefit the Iraya tribe.

God certainly will not allow His people to be put to shame. Blessed with the new chapel, the Irayas will long be praising His name! ■



newly-constructed bamboo foot bridge that crossed the 30-meter-wide shallow river. God indeed works in the hearts of men! And certainly, the Irayas exhibited their love of neighbor with this hospitable welcome gesture.

Fellowship activities then filled the entire morning. CFCFFL organized basketball and fun games for the Irayas and set up an ukay-ukay that provided the tribe with usable clothing. The Irayas, for their part, gave their visitors tours around their picturesque hilly land and their properties – showing how their residences were clustered per extended family group; they also sampled off their staple food – kamoteng kahoy

# THE SPRINGTIME HARVEST IN EUROPE



Contributed by Tony & Ruby Borja  
CFCFFL Regional Coordinator for Europe



**O**ur 2008 Spring Euro mission trip was the most hectic and physically exhausting mission after visiting 16 cities. Spiritually, it was the most exhilarating, inspiring and exciting mission!

The presence and the power of the Holy Spirit was undeniably felt and experienced during the CLSs (Christian Life Seminars) conducted by the different areas, some as early as November 2007. There were areas who have finished their second CLS. More and more participants are attending the CLS now. The service teams make the participants feel the love and joy in the community like in the early years of CFC. Even assemblies and teachings have doubled, if not tripled, in attendance. Worship is more intense and the presence of the Holy Spirit is felt stronger. There is the spirit of one big family in the community and there is more zeal for evangelization.

In cities like Vienna, Geneva, Oslo and Copenhagen, leaders and members alike have been empowered to go out on mission. CFCFFL was brought to many provinces in Austria, Denmark and Norway. Geneva brethren are now

actively serving in France as their mission area. They have conducted CLSs and given different teachings in Cannes/Nice, Paris and Marseilles. The first CLS conducted in Marseilles yielded 33 new members. Paris, which CFCFFL started with one couple, a true remnant raised by the Lord, now has more than 50 members! In Milan, with the initial 13 remnant members, they now have 55 members in just four months. Interestingly, Fr. Benny, the Danish parish priest in Ebsjerg, Denmark, adopted CFCFFL in his parish as part of their family and life ministry. He invited parishioners to the CLS and gathered nine participants of different nationalities including Malaysians, Ukrainians, Iraqis, Danish, Vietnamese and others.

We were happily surprised with Germany. Although it was divided, those who opted to stay with CFCFFL were the faithful ones in their household, teachings, assemblies and conference attendance. By God's grace, tithes and contributions were not affected. There is more peace and joy in the community and a renewed zeal for mission, especially in Hamburg.

Not to be outdone are the youth. In Barcelona, where CFCFFL started with two couples, the 1st Youth for Family & Life (YFL) camp they conducted had 38 youth participants from different organizations in the parish. The same is true in Turin, Italy when they conducted their first youth camp. With the help and support of the parish priest, they had more than 75 youth participants. It is very clear that God is working

powerfully in areas where CFCFFL members are in the minority (very few areas at that). By His grace, they are equipped with courage and love for God and community that they are able to move on in spite of the obstacles and persecutions they experience.

Everyone is now excitedly anticipating the forthcoming YFL Euro Conference in Slovenia and the SFL Euro Conference in Norway, both to be held this July. Also, the back-to-back



conferences of CFC, SvFL, HFL, KFL are to be held in Vienna, Austria this August.

The pervading mood in Europe is love, peace and joy. Truly the Spirit is working marvelously in and through CFCFFL in Europe. As long as we are faithful to God and remain humble amidst all the blessings He showers upon us, He will anoint us and bless the work of our hands.

We give all the praise and glory to God for the work He has done and continue to do in the region. ■



# ROME-BASED YOUTH TRANSFORMED

*Contributed by Cocoli Javier  
Missionary and CFCFFL Young Ministries  
Coordinator for Europe*

There were 18 of them, and most belonged to three different fraternities or gangs. The oldest was 19 and majority were in the 15-16 age range. The gangs they belonged to were known as “True Brown Style” (TBS), Royal Crips (RC), and True Color Gangsta (TCG). They were involved in fights, initiations and vandalism. They were brought to the camp with great effort by Ryan Asinas, a Youth for Family & Life (YFL) Coordinator, who spent so many months hanging out with them, setting up basketball games and attending their meetings.



The camp service team was composed of youth volunteers from all over Europe: Ron Deala and Yliza de Claro of Oslo (Norway), Joseph Diaz of Vienna (Austria), Noche Francisco of Sweden, Jasper de Claro of Oslo (Norway), Bro. Richard Diaz (a Scalabrian Missionary of the

Sentro Filipino of Rome), Ron Deala of Oslo (Norway), and Tirso Pons of Regio Calabria, one of the provinces of Italy near Messina. This team was formed with the belief that they were the best team, being most experienced to serve in youth camps. At the same time, this particular camp was seen as a “training ground” for them to handle challenging situations and challenging people.

Difficulties were faced during the camp, but nothing was beyond God’s power! The participants and the volunteers witnessed how hearts hardened by hurts and resentments were softened by the love of God! There were those who were not interested in any of the talks, but eventually became attentive and receptive, especially after they were prayed over. The tougher ones opened up and cried. It was a touching moment. Yet, there were also a handful who were not ready to commit themselves to Christ. However, those who did truly committed to a life of active service for the Lord!

One particular participant, known to be among the toughest of the group Royal Crips, touched us all. He was the only one who voluntarily surrendered his cigarettes. He served during the mass, which surprised his gang mates. He stayed on after the camp to spend some more time with the service team, ending up joining the team meeting and recollection. He shared how the camp liberated him, and how much he has been desiring to serve the Lord. He also expressed how the camp provided him the opportunity to find his way back to God. He was very thankful that he was accepted for who he really is.

What also touched the participants was the presence of their parents on the last day of the camp. Their great love for their children was strongly felt. It was the kind of love that would lead children to Christ.



The participants, their parents and the service team were not the only ones who were joyful for the camp. The chaplain, Fr. Romy Velos, Chaplain of Sentro Filipino in Rome, was also very happy when he saw such a meaningful gathering of the youth. He appreciated how the service team came from all over Europe. He said this is a manifestation of faith, service and mission.

On his part, Ryan has drawn out a number of activities to further provide spiritual nourishment for the youth. He has likewise strengthened partnership with Sentro Pilipino, an institution which has greatly supported efforts at molding the youth particularly this youth camp, as well as with the different youth gangs to get more young people to join such camps.



Contributed by Giella Sanchez  
CFCFFL Missionary, Indo-China

# GO FISH INDOCHINA

In a region where Buddhism is the main religion, evangelization seems to be challenging in a different angle. Locals widely use their own languages, and that barrier adds up to the challenge.

For years now, we have a well established community in the Indochina region. And even now with CFCFFL, we have vibrant servants in the flock, specifically in Thailand, Cambodia and Viet Nam. In the Filipino communities in these areas, God has called many to be in our community. CFC FFL is a way of life for them, and largely a source of inspiration and strength to live outside of the Philippines. They truly fulfill God's mission to bring His love to the ends of the earth.

God won't settle with just bringing His love to the Filipinos, and moreover, to just the Catholics. He has greater plans. And truly, He has manifested this in the recent victories in the Indochina region in our youth ministry. Truly, an awesome way to "go fishing"!

## THAILAND

Sawadee Ka! The Thai welcome greeting that opens a world of beauty through its culture. YFL has started to establish its mission with the Thai youth. A college tied up with the ministry. St. Theresa's Inti College (STIC), having a Thai School Director whose personal mission was also to evangelize, YFL became an answered prayer.

In the Youth Camp of Youth for Family & Life (YFL) Thailand that was held September 19-21, 2008, STIC sent eight Thai students to take part. Praise God for raising two Filipino youth in the service team who are fluent in the Thai language to do the translations. It was an overwhelming weekend of faith and friendship. Not only were the Thais moved, but also the Filipinos who felt that God has more plans than what they have initially experienced. Half of the Thai participants were actually Buddhists, but non-practicing. They certainly had the chance

to know God, and started to believe that He is real. They agreed to be prayed over, and they were willing to open more their hearts to what the community could offer them.

And God has blessed the mission in STIC more. The college agreed to hold monthly activities with YFL even with the other students. To capture the hearts of more students, YFL is having "crowd activities" in the school, once a month, through games, dance workshop and English tutorials. Around 100 students have taken part so far. This is a way to build friendships, which could further lead to their entry to the ministry.

## CAMBODIA

In a country that has less influence from the Western part of the world due to its geographical location, Cambodia has always been a great place for the mission. Our expatriate children who are part of YFL continue to rebuild the ministry. But then again, God has more plans.

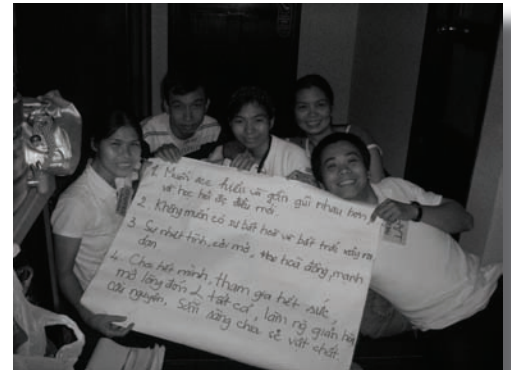
A meeting with the parish priest of Ban Tum Pon, in Phnom Penh, Cambodia was held last year. The YFL core group offered the ministry to serve the youth in that area. The Italian priest readily gave permission. Considering that most of the youth are also Buddhists, Fr. Ban Tum Pon advised that we focus on values formation first, as it is something that they would

further the mission in Cambodia.

## VIET NAM

The community has been a strong one in Viet Nam ever since. With Catholics comprising 40% of the country's population, particularly among the locals which number a good 2,600 strong, the work of evangelization is at a prime. But although their religion is favorable to the community, the culture still has its major influences from Buddhism. In short, the community's way of life becomes a challenge for them.

In YFL specifically, it is a challenge to keep up the numbers by providing them activities and nourishment that would keep them coming back. This October was truly a time of revival.



appreciate. Most of these youth grew up in poverty, thus it delights them when people come to their place and spend time with them.

YFL has been regularly visiting the parish. Twice a month, after the local mass, around 15-20 youth stay in the parish vicinity to learn and build friendships with our YFL group. They are being introduced to God, and taught values such as gratitude, hardwork, patience, chastity and respect that they can apply in life. A youth camp is planned for the early part of 2009 to

A series of activities allowed them to bring back the fervor of being in love with God. They also saw that each and every youth can be their brother and sister, and they have family in the ministry. The Covenant Recollection held for them was a new beginning.

Four members of CFCYFL, along with the couple coordinators attended the YFL Planning which brought out the vision for the ministry. There is a hunger to bring more youth to get to know God. A challenge of bringing back old members who have stopped their community life is up. A strong pastoral formation for the members is the way to go. And the group is one in dreaming that more youth can be evangelized through a youth camp in the coming year.

In these three countries, a lot of things still need to be learned. It is a journey to discover how to effectively evangelize and bring forth the mission in the way that would fit them. As challenging as it is, it is a mission worth fighting for. Every smile that was seen in the Thai, Khmer and Vietnamese youth was an affirmation that CFCYFL is a blessing to them. They too, are hungry for love. They would want to have God







**E**l final de la misión aquí en Nicaragua ya se está acocando...y por supuesto no dejaremos a las Siervas del Señor a un lado por estas importantes mujeres paso a ser también por la cual la comunidad Nica es taaaan maravillosa!

Para revivir el por mucho tiempo silencioso ministerio, y con la ayuda de esta súper Tía Silvia Delgado, la nuevamente ungida cabeza de Siervas en toda Managua, las siervas del señor en Reparto Schick tuvieron un "Mini Retiro" el pasado 16 de noviembre...un domingo...un tiempo para tranquilizar los ánimos, para relajarse y descubrir la belleza poder y encantos que fueron entregados a ellas... y para mi sorpresa, 51 preciosas damas arribaron con tal anticipación y dinamismo, que incluso yo quede pasmada! Me refiero a que ellas estuvieron literalmente asombrosas.

Un simple evento de un día entero con 2 charlas y dinámicas para romper el hielo... (incluso hicimos que balancearan un limón con una cuchara en sus bocas ¡ja ja!) Si ellas también son muy activas y MUY competitivas. Algo iluminador...algo que las hizo regresar a sus hogares sintiéndose tan especiales y amadas.

Con el éxito de este mini retiro tenemos mucha gana de hacerlo otra vez la siguiente semana, el 23 de nov. Ahora en el área de Villa Libertad...en la cual 13 damas estuvieron esperando a recibir algo "nuevo" .Entonces armadas con el mismo equipo de servicio reforzado y bien armado de desde Reparto Schick

...las sacudimos con lo mejor! Créanme... estas veces, ellas estuvieron maravillosas y afirmaron estar en Siervas del Señor.

Verdaderamente amo trabajar con ellas ...no se que otras palabras podrían describir la genialidad de estas damas. Digo, estas señoras enfrentan un sin número de luchas...siendo madres y padres al mismo tiempo, muchas veces sintiéndose solas, abandonadas y confundidas... pero aún entre todas estas inseguridades y preguntas de la vida llámales para asambleas, ellas están allí...para ser parte de los equipos de servicio en campamentos y PVCs (cocineras, decoradoras, guerreras de la oración y para todo tipo de servicio posible puedes contar con ellas ) ellas están allí.

Y me di cuenta de que Maria...emblema de una verdadera Sierva del Señor...me hizo orar más por un corazón listo y dispuesto. Por que la mayoría del tiempo los obstáculos lanzados en mi camino pueden ser bastante desafiantes. Pero al igual que en la batalla que nuestra madre Maria y la confianza en el Padre, todo Vale la pena! Ser una Sierva del Señor en efecto de verdad es un Poder de Dios! ■

# SIERVAS SUPER PODEROSAS

Contributed by Kristine Dianne Albino, Missionary

## SIERVAS POWER!

**T**hroughout our mission in Nicaragua, the amazing women of Siervas Del Señor (Handmaids) played an integral part why the Nicaragua community is so awesome!

A recollection last November 16 revived the Handmaids of Reparto Schick, with the help of Tia Silvia Delgado, the newly-appointed

head of Siervas in all Managua. It was a time to relax, unwind and rediscover the beauty, power and charm that were bestowed upon them. It was a surprise to see 51 beautiful ladies arrive with such anticipation and dynamism, that even I was blown away! I mean, they were literally AWESOME!!

The Siervas savored the meaningful talks, games, and of course, the food during the whole day event. It was an experience which made them go home feeling so special and loved.

The Lord led us to conduct the same session a week after, this time in the area of Villa Libertad, where 13 ladies were expecting to receive something "new". Armed with the same service team from Reparto Schick, we gave these ladies the best! Once more, we were blown away and affirmed to be in Siervas Del Señor.

It was such an experience working with these "cool" ladies! In spite of the struggles they are experiencing - being a mother and a father at the same time, feeling alone, abandoned, confused as they face life's uncertainties and questions - they are always there during assemblies, they

make themselves available to be part of service teams for the camps and CLSs as they gladly serve as cooks, as they make decorations, as they quietly serve as prayer warriors. They are open to any kind of service!

They truly remind me of Mary... the emblem of a true Handmaid! They made me pray more about a ready heart. Mary's faith and trust in the Father never faltered! For being a sierva ... a handmaid...is indeed a power from God! ■



# THE GREAT MISSION

## ADVENTURE IN LATIN AMERICA

Contributed by KD Albino  
Missionary

As I write this, it has been almost 20 months since I left the Philippines to take on the greatest adventure of my life – mission work. In this life as a missionary, I am amazed at how God can come up with countless ways to surprise me. When I look at the state of my life right now, I see how God's hand has always been behind every chapter of my life story. It is His hands that led me to where I am right now – in Latin America.

I was one of the 10 Filipino missionaries who left the Philippines last May 2006 to begin a new chapter of the evangelization work for Latin America. As a group, we go by the name "Latamaries". (Latin American missionaries): Dave Balino and Teny Mardo for Peru; Joji Ibuna and Eds Tan for Ecuador; Marie Relucio and Jeoffrey Jumig for Costa Rica; Khyme Esteban and Norman Lucas for Panama; Bonn Linatoc and I for Nicaragua.

It was a tough assignment as we committed to a two-year mission. Two years away from family, friends and all that we love to do and to have. As for me, it meant giving up my car, my air-conditioned room with my private bathroom, my credit cards, my cell phones and everything else that defined my comfortable lifestyle. I had to learn to live without my mom's delicious home-cooked meals, my dad's music that never fails to make me feel relaxed, and

sharing in the crazy laughter and funny stories of my five younger siblings. I had to leave my dearest Singles for Christ (SFC) household and



miss those assemblies, teachings and conferences that always bring me "spiritual high". It was a calling for me to step out of all these comfort zones.

When I finally arrived in Nicaragua on June 2006, it was time to take in the reality of the widespread poverty in this country. It was a poverty that was caused by years of civil war and revolutions, catastrophic natural disasters and an oppressive government. There were five



to seven-hour brownouts everyday. The weather was scorching hot and homes did not have electric fans. Houses had roofs without ceilings so that is like living in an oven during daytime. Water from the faucet is not safe to drink and garbage is everywhere on the streets. Bathrooms had no doors, except for a shower curtain.

The poverty has also caused an alarmingly high crime rate. Houses are like cages as these are completely enclosed in bars and gates are padlocked even when there are people inside

the house. People are careful not to carry or wear anything expensive or anything that might catch attention lest they risk their own safety on the streets. It is dangerous, especially for a foreigner-missionary, to be walking alone on the street after sunset. It was a time of intense purification as the Lord has truly put my "yes" for His work to the test.

Another difficult challenge we, Latamaries, had to face was the language barrier. I had to deal with serious doubts if I could be a missionary in a Spanish-speaking country. How do I talk about God to the Latinos when all I knew was Level 1 Spanish? I questioned God's calling for me. Yet in my prayer, God affirmed



me that I was in the perfect place at the perfect time with the sufficient talent and skills needed for the work, just as He had planned from the very beginning.

For Latin America, the beginning took place in 1996. A Spanish-speaking Filipino couple, Edwin and Nila Andrews, responded to God's call and began the evangelization work of CFC in Latin America and the Hispanic missions by holding the first Programa de Vida Cristiana (or Christian Life Program) of Matrimonios para Cristo (or Couples for Christ) in Mexico. It was a humble beginning as only one household was formed. As the Lord led them, Edwin and Nila then proceeded to conquer more Latin American territories.

Shortly after, three more Spanish-speaking Filipino missionaries (based in the U.S.) helped the Hispanic missions. Marissa Estrada helped form the Siervas Del Señor (Handmaids of the Lord), while Gino de la Rama and Mary Grace Pingoy took care of building up the junior family ministries – Ninos para Cristo (Kids for





Christ), Jovenes para Cristo (Youth for Christ) and Solteros para Cristo (Singles for Christ). These courageous men and women of God were passionately building up the groundwork for Latin American missions, while I was still busy learning biology and geometry in highschool. Who would have thought that I would be a part of this important work of evangelization 10 years later? It amazes me when I reflect on how God has planned my conception so that I can someday participate in His beautiful plan for



the mission work for Latin America.

Pope Benedict XVI called Latin America the “continent of hope”. Forty-three percent (43%) of the world’s 1.1 billion Catholics are in Latin America. This is why this region has the biggest potential of evangelizing the world. But the church also faces huge Latin American challenges to its moral code from traditionally Catholic populations getting more lax on its prohibitions on abortion, divorce and premarital



sex. For instance, in my mission area here in Nicaragua, 80% of couples are living together without the sacrament of marriage. Of the remaining 20% of couples who are married by the state, only 5% of these are married in the Catholic church. God showed me this truth and has given me a greater urgency for our work for families and for life here in Latin America.

It has almost been two years since I first came here in Latin America. So much has happened and I have been completely changed

by this mission work. From the original ten missionaries, only 7 have remained to complete the mission. The girl power combination of Marie and Khyme courageously brought the junior family ministries to the provinces of Costa Rica. Dave and Teny stormed Peru with their passion and zeal. Ecuador (where we have the biggest CFCFFL community in Latin America), literally captured Eds’ heart as she recently married Paul Morales, a true-blooded Ecuadoriano and a committed servant of the CFC community. (Eds and Paul are currently in discernment if it is God’s will for them to be a missionary couple for CFCFFL.)

As for my beloved Nicaragua, Bonn and I are simply amazed at how God has blessed the community since it started in 2003 with only 3 couples. Matrimonios para Cristo in Nicaragua has grown so much in 5 years. In total, we have more than 600 members from all the family ministries. But what gives a true delight to my heart is to see among the members – from Tios, Tias, brothers and sisters and even kids, the



exact spirit of community life that I experienced in the Philippines! The same spirit that inspired me to be a missionary is now here in my very own mission area, Gloria a Ti mi Señor! (Glory to You, Lord!) Oh how beautiful it is to worship Him in Spanish!

Despite the poverty and danger, I feel very blessed to have been given the privilege to do mission work here in Nicaragua. I praise God that I did not know how to speak Spanish when I got here. It was a true humbling experience that made me completely depend on God’s grace and not on myself. He taught me to focus on learning the language of love than learning to speak Spanish. Indeed, the language of love can cut across ALL barriers. It is my love for God and for the people that I serve that led me to learn and appreciate the Spanish language.

The day I first said “yes” to being a missionary, God’s promise to me was this: “I will show you love like you’ve never seen it before...”. He was faithful to His word. He opened my eyes to see how I am His great love. Despite my sins,

my infidelities and my past, I am loved by Him who loves perfectly and unconditionally. His love and mercy for me is greater than who I was, who I am and who I will be.

My two-year mission may soon be over, but serving God is my lifetime commitment. Soon, I may no longer be a missionary for Nicaragua, but I know that I will remain a missionary to any place where God will bring me. The Lord’s work here in Nicaragua will go on with



or without me. He may ask me to continue or He will call somebody else for the work. But I will forever be grateful to God for choosing me, among many, to be an instrument of His great work here. After this experience in mission, another chapter in my life will begin. And it will again be, as God has promised, something like I’ve never seen before. How exciting!

Never did it cross my wildest dreams that I



will be doing what I am doing now. Much less did I imagine myself going across the globe to discover the “greatest job on earth”. Yet here I am – a missionary in Nicaragua and I am having the best time of my life. Discover it yourself. Pray hard, discern well and seek good counsel. Do not worry if you feel you are not qualified for the work. It is God who will qualify you. If God gives the desire in your heart, jump in and join the great mission adventure! ■

# BATANGAS SPREADING GOD'S word

*Contributed by  
Cesar Ramirez  
CFCFFL Batangas*

The CFCFFL Archdiocese of Lipa conducted several Christian Life Seminar (CLS) in the entire Province of Batangas for the year 2008. The largest CLSs conducted were held in two (2) vicariates. The Vicariate of Batangas City held from March to May, 2008 with 121 participants. This CLS finally yielded 66 new members composed of 10 couples, 24 Singles, 21 Handmaids for Family and Life, and 1 Servants for Family and Life. The seminar was headed by its CFCFFL Vicariate Head Fred and Mayette Montinola, Vio and Ellen Delizo Nilo and Aida Aclan.

The other vicariate which yielded also the largest CLS graduates was at Vicariate II in Cuenca, Batangas which ran through August-October, 2008. The venue was at the Parish of St. Isidore Labrador. There were about 136 participants who attended. At the end of the CLS, we had a total of 100 new members - 37 couples, 11 Singles for Christ, 6 Handmaids for Family and Life, and 9 Servants for Family and Life. The seminar was headed by Boongaling & Sis. Joy Boongaling, Danny & Nancy Sandoval, and Cid & Laura Frio. ■







# GOD AMONG THE CAPTIVES

*Contributed by  
Cesar Ramirez  
CFCFFL Batangas*

**T**he other notable CLS was conducted by the Social Ministry headed by Art and Rose Alido at the Nasugbu Municipal Jail, Nasugbu, Batangas last Sept-Nov, 2008 with Rudy Echavia, and Noel Rosales as the Team Leader. The total number of graduates were 26 inmates. Likewise they also conducted a CLS at the Batangas Provincial Jail last April - June, 2008 headed by Alex Buenafe as the Team Leader. The total number of graduates were 52 inmates.

Indeed, the Lord is working actively through CFCFFL in renewing and restoring families and lives. God has opened doors for us to bring His message of love, forgiveness and hope to all His children, including our inmates in our jails. ■



# EUROPE ABLAZE!

God is truly alive in Europe!

## CFCSFL

The European Singles Conference was held on July 4-6, 2008 at Oslo, Norway, where eight countries were represented: Denmark, Iceland, Sweden, Germany, Austria, Italy, Ireland and Norway. It was a weekend of prayer, worship and fellowship led by Patrick Oconer, Denver Daradar and Cocoli Javier. Each day was started with the recitation of the Rosary. Deepening Workshops on Contemplation and Intercession, Discernment and Spiritual Journaling were likewise conducted. We also had the imposition of the brown scapular after the Mass on the last day after a thorough explanation by our priest presider. It was such a blessing as people committed to pray the rosary everyday for our evangelization work in CFCFFL.

The conference ended with a Friendship Evangelism Workshop and a very powerful empowerment Praisefest led by Patrick Oconer.

Contributed by Patrick Oconer  
International Coordinator, CFCSFL



## CFCKFL

The kids couldn't ask for anything more! It was definitely a fun day at the Family Fun Park in Vienna, Austria where the CFC KFL had their "Joy Adventure: The Search for the Real Treasure", A World Kids Congress. Around 50 children enjoyed the obstacle course, slides, trampolines and games. More meaning was brought to the weekend through the workshops which were focused on the HEART of KFL. They also enjoyed a musical starred in by KFL and YFL Vienna which presented to the children that their families and Jesus Christ are their real treasures! The Kids likewise gave their all during the Praisefest before concluding the conference. It was also a touching site to behold when the delegates prayed over their parents and led the community in singing and dancing the closing praise songs.

Contributed by Gay Racoma-Javier



## CFCFFL Is Now In Ireland!

God is so good! The Christian Life Seminar in Navan, Meath in Ireland harvested 11 couples, three Servants for Family and Life members, six Handmaids for Family and Life members, and four Singles for Family and Life members. Thus, 35 individuals, including two locals, have committed to a renewed life in Christ.

Camps for the youth and kids will likewise be organized very soon! Fr. Gerry MacCormack, Parish Administrator of St. Mary's Church, was very enthusiastic about this work. He even dropped by and met us during one of the sessions.

Contributed by Larry Castillo  
CFCFFL Vienna





### CFCYFL

*The CFC Youth for Family and Life had their equally awesome conference as well. Held in Slovenia, it was attended by the youth and couple coordinators from 11 countries (Austria, Greece, Italy, France, Albania, Slovenia, Norway, Sweden, Iceland, Switzerland and Denmark). The delegates experienced joy to see that this year's participants were the "new generation" of youth leaders. It had a mix of activities from sports competitions to workshops and band fests. The praise and worship was led by one of our mission volunteers, Lawrence Jaramillo. Austria won the band fest.*

*Spiritual deepening workshops were given to help the delegates enrich their Christian life. The highlight of the conference was the exposition of the Blessed Sacrament which allowed the participants to spend time before the Holy Presence of God. The Mass was celebrated by the Bishop of Ljubljana whom we had the privilege to meet after the Mass, together with our CFCFFL leaders of Slovenia and Austria. A leaders training with around 75 youth leaders in attendance followed the conference.*

*Contributed by Joseph Tesoro, International Coordinator, CFCYFL*



### God Touched Hearts in Slovenia

*The priest called the couples one by one. For every couple, he put his stole over their joined hands and asked the husband and wife to give their vows in their own words. The priest, Fr. Leopold Grcar, shed a tear during this touching moment.*

*This was one experience which moved everyone. It was during the mass culminating the Marriage Enrichment Retreat 1 held in the town of Brezje in Slovenia. Conducted by Paul and Pavla Tootill, and Boris and Carmen Pecaric, the MER had five couple participants, although one couple left on Saturday evening and could not come back for the last talk on Sunday. The other couple was Matej (Paul and Pavla's son) his fiancée. Paul and Pavla encouraged them to attend in preparation for their marriage. It was also touching to see how one couple had all their six children present during the retreat.*

*What proved so amazing was the Lord's leading that these couples be motivated to join CFCFFL by way of the MER! Though Paul and Pavla just met them for the first time on the first day of the retreat, the prevailing atmosphere during that weekend was that they were like family. Perhaps, the Lord merely used the retreat to encourage these couples to eventually take part in the Christian Life Seminar, and that they will be used to encourage other couples like them.*

*Contributed by Larry Castillo  
CFCFFL Vienna*









*Our life and mission is founded on strong families in Christ. We recognize that the future of humanity passes by way of the family. We defend and strengthen Christian marriage, we raise our children to be the next generation of God's people, we establish our homes as pieces of Kingdom ground. In our defense of the family, we are called to a strong advocacy and defense of the culture of life.*

# Focused on the Family

# CANADIAN JOYRIDE: A Spiritual Experience Like No Other

Contributed by Raymond Arguelles  
CFCYFL Area Coordinator

Some 125 young adults of the CFCFFL Youth for Family & Life (YFL) assembled last August 16 & 17, 2008 at McMaster University, Hamilton, Ontario for what they call as the Joyride – 1st YFL World Youth Congress. Most, if not all, have considered this Joyride as a spiritual experience like no other as the seeds for spiritual growth have been sown into the hearts of the YFL leaders and members like the mustard seed expressed in the Gospels. “It is the smallest seed of all, yet when full-grown it is the largest of plants” (Mt 13:32). They have had the spiritual experience

that will allow them to grow as the H.E.A.R.T crusaders, having to Honour God, Empowered and willing to Act, to Relate and to Testify.

This spiritual experience began on the 13th of July 2008, the very day of the Kids for Family

their Joyride on the 14th of August 2008. After almost 30 hours of trip via Greyhound bus, the 21 YFL Winnipeg, led by their Couple Coordinator, Emil & Grace Feliciano, arrived at Hamilton by 10 am on the 15th of August. After a quick sight seeing tour of Niagara Falls, passing through Niagara-on-the Lake with stopovers at the winery, Butterfly Park and the falls itself, the group arrived at McMaster University by 8 pm.

The Joyride Weekend officially began on August 16 as the delegates started to arrive at the very vast McMaster University. The Joyride YFL WYC began with the Holy Mass, celebrated by Fr. George of the Parish of St. Patrick. It was followed by the Joy Parade as the different YFL Chapters with their different sports cars and banners headed by their CFCFFL Chapter Servants paraded into the hall. The delegates were called in and creatively identified as Brampton Porsche, Hamilton Hummer, Mississauga Jaguar, Downtown Ferrari, Scarborough North-East Durham Viper, Scarborough North West-Markham Mustang, Scarborough South Alpha Romeo, and the Manitoba BMW.



and Life (KFL) Congress. As we were about to leave for the said congress, we discovered that our van, among all the other vehicles in the parking lot, was singled out to be vandalized. This I believe was the start of the spiritual battle we were about to face in preparing for these conferences.

The sign is clear. The enemy, the devil, is not pleased with the evangelization work we are doing. These conferences are an answer to the Lord's call to sow the seeds of His Word to the youth. What the Lord wants was made very clear - the Joyride is to be the event for Him to sow seeds to the youth and to proclaim that “the reign of God may be likened to a man who sowed good seed in his field” (Mt 13:24) and “the reign of God is like a mustard seed which someone took and sowed in his field” (Mt 13:31). The leading is all about sowing seeds!

The Winnipeg delegates officially began

This Joyride also highlighted the launching of the H.E.A.R.T. crusade. As a community, CFCFFL is now set to focus on the family as one of the 7 core values. YFL is one of the Family Ministries. “CFCYFL exists to provide an





environment for the youth to HONOR God through a life of holiness, to EMPOWER them to ACT in humble service, to encourage them to RELATE in joy with their family, community and the Church and to TESTIFY God's love." The new culture will see these as the FACE of CFC YFL – Fun, Acceptance, Christ Centred, and Excellence.

The highlight of the Joyride Weekend was the session, entitled "Overjoyed". After the very inspiring message on the challenges facing the youth of the world today and the promise of God to save and protect His people as He did to Moses, Daniel, David, and Job, the session was capped with the Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament. In that solemn presence of the Lord in the Blessed Sacrament, the assembly was led to surrender all their weaknesses in humble submission to the Lord. His majestic presence was the real transforming presence that we experienced like what the Apostles

did at the mountain of the Transfiguration. His majestic presence brought miracles of healing in the hearts of the youth as they wept and cried over such



overwhelming power of His presence.

The day ended with a celebration. A fellowship party saw the young and old, children and parents all dancing and having fun together. It authentically

depicted the FACE YFL culture.

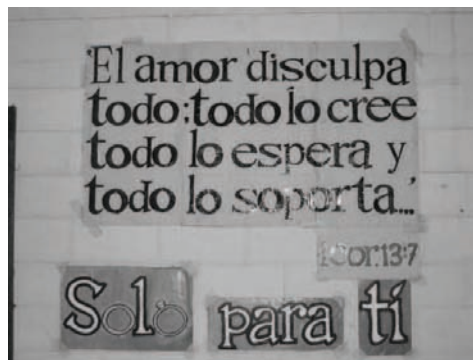
The Joyride ended on Sunday with the session on "The People of Joy", capped with a Praisefest led by Paul Lim. In the afternoon, Winnipeg delegates continued with their Joyride tour of the city. The next day, they were off for another long journey back to Winnipeg.

In all these, the Joyride was indeed a spiritual experience like no other. This was all because the Lord Himself was the driver. He led the team right at the very discernment of the conduct of the conference. The experience was like no other for each family that came and served. At the end of the Congress, we saw parents and their siblings hugging each other with tears of joy. This is the very reason why the Lord, our God, rejoices over his people and renews his people with love. Yes,

"the Lord, our God, is in your midst, as a mighty Saviour. He will rejoice over you and renew you in His love" (Zeph 3:17). ■

# MATRIMONIOS PARA CRISTO NICARAGUA M.E.R.

It was very meaningful and romantic! Twenty-eight couples of Matrimonios Para Cristo –Nicaragua renewed the love and promise they once shared a long time ago, during their Marriage Enrichment Retreat (MER) held recently. The theme was "Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things... Only for you" (El amor disculpa todo; todo lo cree, todo lo espera y todo lo soporta... Solo Para ti...) taken from 1Corinthians 13:7. It was MPC-Nicaragua's first M.E.R., and there were no words to describe how awesome God was during those days. ■





# CFCFFL KALOOKAN SHOWS THE WAY: FIGHTS RH BILL 5043

*Contributed by Chona Nillas, CFCFFL District of Kalookan*

One of the most inspiring qualities perhaps of Bishop Deo Iniguez, Jr. is his determined efforts towards pro life, in defense of the family. This must have been the very inspiration that our leaders in CFCFFL have adopted leading them to take the very first steps at Congress in relation to petitions against RH 5043.

Such was the dear Bishop's resolve that he dedicated all homilies during the Simbang Gabi masses towards pro life and in defiance of RH 5043. Our very own Ric and Josie Rivera were so motivated by the Bishop's advocacies that they exerted extra efforts and enlisted the assistance of Pro Life Philippines and Sis. Lily Perez of the Archdiocese of Manila who supplied videos entitled, "Simula ng Buhay", "No to Abortion", "Life Conspiracy/Hidden Agenda" and the Testimony of Dra. Ligaya Acosta, former undersecretary of the Dept. Of Health who expounded on the harmful effects of contraceptives and the program of population control. These video clips were shown during the dawn masses.

Not content, the December 28 masses became the culminating activity of the diocese in its pro life efforts for 2008 by dedicating the Feast of the Holy Family to 'Pamilyang Pilipino.' We were so touched by the community prayer prior to the final rites, excerpts of which are as follows:

"O Jesus, our most loving Redeemer, Who having come to enlighten the world, with Your teaching and example, willed to pass the greater part of Your life in humility and subjection to Mary and Joseph in the poor home of Nazareth, thus sanctifying the Family that was to be an example for all Christian families, graciously receive our family as it dedicates and consecrates itself to You this day. Defend us, guard us and establish among us Your holy fear, true peace and concord in Christian love: in order that by conforming ourselves to the divine pattern of

Your Family we may be able, all of us without exception, to attain to eternal happiness. . . . .  
" (Prayer Source: Catholic Family Handbook, The by Rev. George A. Kelly, Random House, Inc., New York, 1959.)

All CFCFFL members in Kalookan wore green that day, including their family members. Grandchildren were in tow, right up to the Lolos and Lolas. It was a true family affair, defending and calling on other families. That day, you can

see "green soldiers" young and old giving out green leaflets against RH 5403 all throughout the masses. What a sight to behold!

We sincerely pray to the Lord that the Filipino family become devoted to protecting life and defending the family; and that while the feast of the holy family is over, this prayer become part of every family's continuing petition to our Lord. ■





# 21<sup>st</sup> CFCFFL BATANGAS ANNIVERSARY

*Contributed by Cesar Ramirez, CFCFFL Batangas*

The first major event conducted after the restoration of the community was the celebration of the 21st CFCFFL Founding Anniversary, held on November 9, 2008 at Batangas City Sports Center. The affair was attended by members from various vicariates and ministries, wearing blue anniversary bracelets with CFCFFL letter print outs to signify membership and attendance to the event. The kick off activity started with a parade dubbed as "JOYWALK" started from the People's Quadrangle to the venue, accompanied by a mini band composed of pupils from Batangas City East Elementary School. This was participated in by CFCFFL members carrying placards with different slogans manifesting protest and rejection on the passage of Reproductive Health Bill no. 5043 now pending at the Lower House.

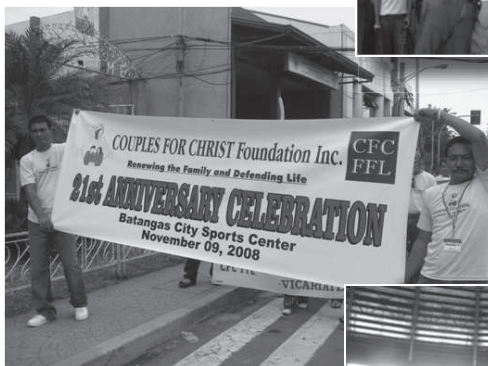
The program proper started with the Enthronement of our Lady Mary Mediatrix of All Grace, carried by the top leaders of the Batangas District. This was followed by the consecration of all CFCFFL members to our Lady. The Chapter Leaders of CFCFFL Handmaids for Family and Life initiated the praying of the Holy Rosary. After which the full worship started to signal the execution of the main activities, Cesar Ramirez welcomed the attendees. Luz Amparo from the City Government of Batangas, also a CFCFFL member and Atty. Florencio De Loyola, representative of the Provincial Governor Vilma Santos Recto likewise delivered

their Anniversary message. Fr. Eyang Ramos, the Spiritual Director of the CFCFFL Archdiocese of Lipa, gave the inspirational talk.

The different vicariates did an interpretative presentation of the different CFCFFL Core Values. The creative props, costumes, and the dances completed the fun and merriment.

Indeed the participants jumped for joy,

as they joined, witnessed and experienced the presence of the Lord in the midst of the celebration of the 21st existence of CFC-FFL, formed and organized for one purpose – to give God all the glory due Him. The event ended with a jubilant praise fest led by the Kids Coordinator, Lem Guico. ■









*We are part of the larger family of CFC-  
FFL, a global family of many different  
nationalities and cultures but all sharing  
brotherhood and sisterhood in Christ. We  
desire to move forward together in our life  
in the Lord, providing love, affirmation,  
friendship, support and healing. We are  
committed to the good of our brethren,  
always living the truth in love (Eph 4:15).*

# Being Community

One way Paul describes the Christian life is likening it to a race, and we to athletes who participate in that race. As we today have our Family & Sports Day, it is appropriate to look to the deeper meaning of our coming together in this sports venue and in this celebration.

What is required of athletes in order to win? They need a sense of purpose, training, physical fitness, team support and endurance. For Christians to run the race of life well and to attain the ultimate prize, we need the same.

### A SENSE OF PURPOSE

We must have our goal in mind, and doggedly and single-heartedly pursue it. Athletes run to win, to attain the gold, to stand out among the field. The goal is what motivates them, what makes them give their all.

It is the same way with the Christian life. We must look to the goal we are striving for. Thus it was for that great apostle Paul. "Just one thing: forgetting what lies behind but straining forward to what lies ahead, I continue my pursuit toward the goal, the prize of God's upward

calling, in Christ Jesus." (Phil 3:13b-14).

For us, our ultimate goal is being with Jesus in eternal glory in heaven. That should be our singular pursuit. That should determine everything else we do in life. That is what should keep us straining forward, through the ups and downs of life, undeterred by difficulties and trials.

This is God's upward calling. It is being raised up to imitation of Christ, to holiness unto the Lord, to perfection unto the Father. And it is ultimately being raised up to heaven, where God has already reserved a special place for us.

### TRAINING

To achieve their goal, athletes need to be trained.

They not only look to the goal, but they need to know the best way to win the race. They need especially the wisdom of more experienced

athletes and trainers. They need to look to what already works. They need to study the ways of top athletes who have gone before them.

It is the same way for the Christian life. Christians need to be trained in the ways of God. God needs to be able to show us how to live our Christian lives. This comes in the form of sound teaching and instruction. This comes



from Jesus through our times of personal prayer, through the Bible which is the inspired word of God, through our leaders in community, through our pastors in the Church.

"The aim of this instruction is love from a pure heart, a good conscience, and a sincere faith." (1 Tim 1:5). We are to love as Jesus loves, with purity of intent towards all. Our consciences should be properly and well formed, according to the authentic teaching of God through His Church. Our faith is to be sound and sincere, lived out concretely in our day-to-day lives.

### PHYSICAL FITNESS

Training is intended to keep athletes physically fit, for the race is rigorous and demanding. For Christians, we need not only keep physically fit, honoring our bodies that are temples of the Holy Spirit, but more especially we are to keep spiritually fit. We must be fit for the fight. This means that our goal must be to be holy as God is holy, so that we can



# ON RUNNING THE RACE

By Frank Padilla  
CFCFFL Servant General





become His fitting and worthy instruments in the world.

Paul was very deliberate. "Every athlete exercises discipline in every way. Thus I do not run aimlessly; I do not fight as if I were shadowboxing. No, I drive my body and train it" (1 Cor 9:25a,26-27a). And if athletes train in this way for a human race, how much more Christians! The athletes "do it to win a perishable crown, but we an imperishable one." (1 Cor 9:25b). The winning athlete will have his one-time moment of glory, but we will share in God's glory for all eternity.

Further, such training and keeping fit is throughout our lifetime. We must keep at it. We must be faithful every day to our prayer time

fraternal correction, receive encouragement and inspiration. Here we have opportunities to serve which helps us to grow, and are enabled to move forward together in communal holiness.

And all share in victory or defeat. "Now you are Christ's body, and individually parts of it. If one part suffers, all the parts suffer with it; if one part is honored, all the parts share its joy." (1 Cor 12:27,26). We are all in this race together.

## ENDURANCE

The race is tough. The demand on physical bodies is extreme. The goal often seems so far away. Athletes can only finish the race if they endure, if they persevere, if they fight discouragement and fatigue, if they call upon that extra ounce of strength that is always within them.

It is the same with the Christian life. We must endure. We must persevere. "It is necessary for us to undergo many hardships to enter the kingdom of God." (Acts 14:22b). There will be disappointments coming even from brethren. There will be persecution from worldly secular powers. There

we look to Jesus, we look to his holiness and righteousness, and to his telling us to follow him and walk in his ways. Thus we also "rid ourselves of every burden and sin that clings to us" (Heb 12:1b). These are what weigh us down in our running the race.

And finally, we are to endure all and do so with joy, just like Jesus did. "For the sake of the joy that lay before him he endured the cross, despising its shame, and has taken his seat at the right hand of the throne of God." (Heb 12:2b). If we follow Jesus, that path leads us all the way to the cross. We are to embrace the cross of Christ. But that path also leads us beyond the cross, into the very throne room of God.

## RUNNING TO WIN

And so my dear brothers and sisters in Christ, I urge you, "Run so as to win." (1 Cor 9:24b). Be not mediocre in your Christian life. Be not co-opted by the comforts of life. Be not distracted by the allures of the world. Do not give in to the demands of the flesh. Resist the temptations of the enemy. Be single-minded for God. Give your all and hold nothing back. And already rejoice in the victory that is at hand.

And so the race is before us. God has provided whatever we need to finish the race and win. Now it is up to us.

I pray that all of us can be able to say, with Paul: "I have competed well; I have finished the race; I have kept the faith. From now on the crown of righteousness awaits me, which the Lord, the just judge, will award to me on that day, and not only to me, but to all who have longed for his appearance." (2 Tm 4:7-8).

See you all at the finish line! ■



and our Bible reading. We must be faithful to our life and mission in community. We must keep moving ahead on the path to holiness. We can never take our current spiritual standing with God for granted. Paul had this attitude, saying, "for fear that, after having preached to others, I myself should be disqualified." (1 Cor 9:27b). Now that would be a tragedy.

## TEAM SUPPORT

Great athletes are not self-made persons. They cannot achieve their greatest potential without others helping them. An athlete needs his coach, trainer, teammates (as in a relay race), nutritionist, physical therapist, and his supporters cheering him on. For us Christians, this team support is provided by our community (parish and/or religious group).

It is Christian community that provides us the environment of training, support and growth. Here we undergo formation, are given



will be oppression from the evil one. There will be crosses to carry.

How do we endure? We go back to what we started with: we keep our eyes fixed on Jesus and the goal of salvation and eternal glory. So "let us ..... persevere in running the race that lies before us while keeping our eyes fixed on Jesus, the leader and perfecter of faith." (Heb 12:1c-2a). And as







*Contributed by Benjie & Elaine Gadi  
CFCFFL Regional Coordinator - UAE*

# FAMILY DAY AT UAE



It was indeed a "JOY to be with Brothers and Sisters", the Family Day theme chosen by our CFCFFL brethren at United Arab Emirates. The day was blessed not only with beautiful weather, but with the joy shared by those present with one another. Members from Dubai, Sharjah, Abu Dhabi, and Al Ain came in throngs at the Mubassarah Park in Al Ain to take part in this jubilant activity.

There was a wonderful exchange of brotherhood and sisterhood as the members built tents, shared food, and had so much fun during the games and fellowship. Those present likewise learned so much from the mini-talk and sharing given by Bro. Benjie Gadi, CFCFFL Coordinator for the UAE.

Truly, the United Arab Emirates is jubilant with the joy in being with brethren in CFCFFL. ■

## CFCFFL Lubeck, Germany Extends Assistance to Occidental Mindoro



A small group of 22 zealous and generous souls in Germany has done so much for the needy in the Philippines!

It was a simple fund-raiser initiated more than a year ago by a group of CFCFFL brethren in Lubeck, Germany. It generated enough resources to bring joy to some students of St. Joseph Pilot Elementary School in Occidental Mindoro. Another event which generated more funds was held recently at the St. Birgitta Hall, also in Lübeck. Aside from St. Joseph Pilot Elementary School, part of the proceeds likewise go to St. Joseph Seminary in Mindoro, and some poor children in San Juan.

*Contributed by Sally Jovellano, CFCFFL Lubeck, Germany*





# CFCFSFL Makes a Difference

*Contributed by Patrick Oconer  
CFCFFL Singles International Coordinator*

The USA Singles for Family and Life (SFL) Conference held in New York on August 8 to 10, 2008 was truly a spirit-filled event. Two hundred fifty Singles gathered from all over the USA for a weekend of activities, sharing, and fellowship.

It was amazing to see how the work of God manifested itself in different ways in the lives of these young people. We were privileged to witness how God is using CFCFFL to affirm people and to encourage them to appreciate His presence in their lives!

Mama Mary's presence was totally overwhelming all throughout the congress, especially during the procession of the image of the Blessed Mother. We also had the exposition of the Blessed Sacrament during the conference which gave everyone an opportunity to spend time in adoration. This moment before the Blessed Sacrament made such a big impact on all those present during that very touching period. As the New Yorkers would say, the experience

was "AWESOME"!

The Congress likewise made the powerful statement that, although we may be miles apart, "let us continue to be one in heart and mind, in mission and vision... all in the spirit of serving one another. We are one world under God! Let us all do our part, go fish, and get out of our boats, and make a difference!" ■





CFCFFL Toronto was exhilarated over the events celebrated by the community.

The CFCFFL Canada National Conference - Joy in Christ Weekend, held at the Toronto Congress Centre, was attended by more than 650 participants from all over Canada : Vancouver, Edmonton, Calgary, Winnipeg, Ottawa and the Greater Toronto area.

The conference started with a well organized registration, Holy Rosary and Eucharistic celebration officiated by Fr. Carlos Sierra, Pastor of St. Andrew's Parish. In his homily, Fr. Carlos gave an explanation on what "charism" and "founder" mean. He added that lay associations need to be aligned with God and Church to have harmony and unity, and being a community has to be logical, liturgical and ecclesiastical.

The delegates cheered and waved colorful flaglets as their city of origin was called in

the roll call of delegates by the emcees, Bro. Beppo and Sis. Ye-yel Paredes. The cheers of the Singles for Family and Life (SFL) and Youth for Family and Life (YFL), who were part of the Production Team, echoed from all corners of the hall.

The activity was followed by the CFCKFL World Kids Congress Joy Adventure with roughly 130 children and parents in

attendance. It was held at the Clarkson Community Centre in Mississauga.

The community was likewise thankful for the opportunity to gather 20 members of the clergy for the Night with the Clergy held at the Rembrandt Banquet Hall in Scarborough. Bishop Grecco and CFC Founder Frank Padilla were there to welcome the delegates. ■

# Exciting Toronto





# COMING TOGETHER IN SPIRIT

Sounding off just a week prior to the affair, the call for this particularly unique Music and Praise Party came in a bit late so it was quite expected that not many people would make it to the event. Looking back, it was almost as if the event would not even materialize at all due to the numerous perceived barriers that gave hint of hindrance to any possibility of staging the modest and unconventional gathering. It was mid-December after all and every person we knew was either going to attend another party or host a Christmas party themselves.

But happen it did... and everyone who went there, albeit few in number—were glad they came.

The event held on the night of December 18, 2008 in a Marikina Village Clubhouse saw a rare but definitely Spirit-filled gathering of Music Ministry people from both sides of CFC as FFL minstrels met with their Global counterparts and shared a wonderfully sentimental evening of music and praise... together!

Seemingly like a family living away and separated from each other for some time---no

walls, fences nor borders (imagined or otherwise) were strong enough to keep everyone who came in that night from warmly embracing each other as brother found brother and sister found sister



and everyone else found each other.

As the night went on, praise music was randomly mixed in with regular secular numbers as the bands led by Tony Cruz of CFCFFL and Rey Peralta from CFC-Global joyfully shared

playing time for the night with songs from the 70's and 80's thrown in the mix. Lito Legaspi's group, from CFC-Global added their own touch to the evening for some added 60's flavor.

The evening ended with a beautiful Praise Session that ultimately became the highlight of the affair as music ministry brethren from both sides held hands together again after so long with hearts full – worshipped as one! Sharing the same songs and most of all, the same prayers... it was quite plain to see the spiritual lineage of each one who was there that night. As summed up by both Glen Angeles from CFCFFL who led the worship and Thess Lugue from CFC-Global who helped make the arrangements, the evening was neither about issues nor walls nor of barriers, it was all about the Spirit which has led everyone that night to come together in united celebration of Christmas with friends and family. ■

*Contributed by Jet Revilla  
CFCFFL National Band*

# AGAIN COMING TOGETHER IN SPIRIT

A graphic artist need not have to weave his magic to assemble a bevy of personages representing the Church, State, CFCFFL and CFC Global in one picture. A single click with a camera is all it takes to affirm that differences in beliefs and priorities are not obstacles to progress. The event: groundbreaking ceremonies for a new convent in Greenwood's Executive Village (GEV), Cainta, Rizal. Timestamp: November 30, 2008 at 10:00 AM.

The residents of GEV led by the officers of the Chapel Pastoral Committee and supported by the CFC

family, initiated a move to upgrade its mini parish into a full parish under the Archdiocese of Antipolo. Prerequisite to this is the construction of a convent within the confines of the chapel.

accompanied the rites. A simple groundbreaking ceremony ensued followed by a sumptuous meal and joyous fellowship.

Shown in picture is Bishop Reyes, Mayor Mon Ilagan of Cainta, the CFCFFL group led by Pasig District head Gary Guarnes and wife Arlene, Chapterhead Danny Amul and wife Nora, CFCFFL-EFI Full Time worker Manny Estrella and wife Vangie, Chapel Temporalities head Choi Joaquico and wife Marge. Also present are our CFC Global brethren Ed & Bless Perona, Gerry & Tess Ravida,

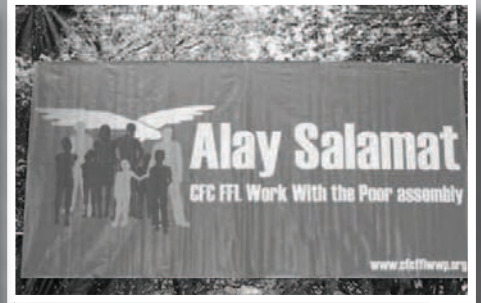
and Ted & Lap Azores together with the rest of the officers of the Chapel committee. Another click, please? ■

*Contributed by Manny Estrella, CFCFFL Education Ministry*



On November 30, 2008, coincidentally the feast day of San Andres Apostol, the village's patron saint, Bishop Gabriel Reyes officiated the 8:00 AM mass and the CFCFFL Greenwood's choir







*We recognize Jesus' mission to bring glad tidings to the poor (Lk 4:18). We look to both the spiritual and material upliftment of the least among our brethren. In doing so, we will be in solidarity with the poor by striving to live a simple lifestyle, to share our resources, and to fight for social justice in the world.*

# Living a referential option for the Poor

*If God is with us, who  
can be against us?*

# THE CFCFLL WORK

Contributed by Vicky Villarosa  
CFCFLL Capiz

In June 2002, upon returning from the Gawad Kalinga Integration Congress in Marikina, Siong Villarosa together with other brethren in the community excitedly went to see Msgr. Dexter Irisari, the Parish Priest of Mount Carmel Parish to ask him for a possible site for our work of community development through Gawad Kalinga.

Msgr. Irisari recommended the Alba Village in Dinginan, a relocation site for squatters in Roxas City. The group further conferred with Dr. Leny Arcenas, a member of the City Council, and the City Panning Office for the site development plan of the village.

As the group visited the relocation site, all were surprised at its deplorable state. The houses looked so dilapidated with walls and roofing materials made of plastic, gunny sack materials, and carton boxes. Many families did not have their own toilets. Garbage was scattered everywhere. Children ran around naked and dirty. There was no electricity or running water. Hygiene and environmental cleanliness did not seem to be important to them. What was more important was making sure that there was food on the table. In fact, 70-80% of the population appeared to be malnourished. Transporting commuters using a tricycle, selling fish in

the market, washing clothes, and working as porter in the market were the major sources of livelihood.

After conducting a population profile, the group arranged a meeting with the beneficiaries, the Barangay Captain, the CFC Area Head and the CFC worker of GK from Manila.

Despite having met the necessary requirements, it was unfortunate that Alba Village could not be a recipient of GK assistance.

Nevertheless, the group was not discouraged to pursue the cause of the Alba Village which by this time had deeply touched the heart of the group. Sincerely believing that the Alba Village is a very depressed area needing assistance in every aspect of its family community life, the group pursued with the original plan to assist the community. Indeed, there was more to just

The City government allowed a health clinic to be built at the entrance of the village. This was made possible through donations which poured in from CFC and non-CFC members who were sympathetic to the cause. The clinic was blessed and inaugurated by Msgr. Dexter Irisari on November 16, 2002. Volunteer doctors, dentists and nurses serve at the clinic. The Sisters of the Servants of the Poor and the Daughters of Charity of St. Anthony Collage Hospital donated clothes, medicines and other services. Informed about the need for medicines, Congressman Roging Dadvivas donated boxes of medicines and sacks of rice.

Inasmuch as the team needed funding and could not make solicitations, the team decided to form an association registered with the SEC. Thus, St. Joseph the Worker Association, Inc. was born. This became the service arm of the household of Siong Villarosa which continues to meet regularly every Friday evening.

A resident in the area outside of the village, Mr. Henry Yap, donated to the Association a lot of 500 square meters.

Again, with the help of funds from friends and relatives residing locally and abroad, particularly the USA, and also from the Sisters of the Servants of the Poor, the group built a school building consisting of 2 rooms, each measuring 4 meters x 6 meters. This was blessed and inaugurated by the Archbishop of Capiz, Msgr. Onesimo Gordoncillo.

The Sisters of the Servants of the Poor provided school materials and assigned two sisters



improving the homes of the settlers but more on the long term support for value

re-orientation through spiritual formation, education, self-sufficiency through livelihood initiatives, and improvement of health and nutrition.

The decision was quickly made – let us extend an arm to them, no matter how short! The group decided to start with the programs on health and education with a clinic and school building.



each to teach at the school, to follow up out-of-school children to conduct adult education and to make home visitation.

It is heartwarming to learn that our kindergarten graduates are doing very well and are excelling in the regular elementary schools they have moved up to. It is very fulfilling to see the changes happening in the families of these children because of the value formation programs offered in school.

Every summer, catechism classes are also being conducted in the community with the help of Cora Jugo, Handmaids for Family and Life (HFL).

This year, after Typhoon Frank left the country, the Vice Mayor of Roxas City, Hon. Ronnie Dadivas came upon Alba Village during his inspection tour and noticed the school and the clinic built by the St. Joseph the Worker Association. He contacted the group and indicated his willingness to help. To date, he has provided chairs and tables for the school.



By 2009, this household group is aiming to start a livelihood program.

The members of the group now gladly find themselves in CFCFFL. Looking back, the group believes it has been set apart and has persevered during the past years in preparation for this time that they have to strongly manifest their love for family and life with courage and conviction. The group has been affirmed in its work for God's poorest of the poor through CFCFFL with the fire of the Holy Spirit strongly burning in their hearts.

The group is constantly reminded: "If God is with us, who can be against us?" ■



feature

# WHEN COMPASSION BRINGS HOPE & TRUST

*Contributed by Art Salazar  
District Head  
CFCFFL San Pablo, Laguna*

In early 2008, a madman showered bullets on the residence of the Pili family located on a hilly barangay of Hornalan in Calamba, Laguna. Cherry May Pili, 17 years old, the eldest of the Pili children, managed to escape death, along with her younger siblings, Erika and Angelito. They were orphaned by their parents, Gerry and Glo Pili, active CFCFFL members. Three other Pili daughters died in the incident.

How is Cherry coping, together with Erika and Angelito? Cherry shares how compassion allowed them to see hope and trust in Jesus ...

"I stopped studying because I had to work to support Angelito who is 10 years old and now in Grade 5, and Erika, who is 8 years old and now in Grade 2. Our brethren from CFCFFL Laguna, Cavite, Paranaque and Rizal likewise contribute for the studies of my siblings.

"We left the place where the massacre happened and are now staying at the home built for us by CFCFFL and Habitat for Humanity. We feel so much peaceful and secure now, knowing that we live in a durable home with our relatives nearby. This is so much unlike the one we used to have which was merely made of wood and with no sturdy doors and windows. Though we used to live on a breezy area, there was no sense of security. Nevertheless, I never expected that such a tragedy would happen to



our family. I do not know of anybody who may be harboring ill-feelings towards us.

"I have a very simple dream, and that is to see Angelito and Erika finish their studies and land good jobs so they can build a bright future. I believe this is my parents' dream as well. CFCFFL is helping me build this dream... along with building a home for us." ■

(NOTE: Cherry May was hit with eight Armalite bullets and miraculously survived the massacre. The madman later fell to policemen's bullets. On the other hand, Erika was hit in her thigh, while Angelito, though unscathed, is trying to recover from the trauma. The grief and shock they were in were replaced by joy and laughter. There is light and hope in their lives now.)

# CFCFI-HABITAT FOR HUMANITY SIGN MEMORANDUM OF COOPERATION



**T**he Couples for Christ Foundation, Inc. and Habitat for Humanity Philippines (HfHP) signed a Memorandum of Cooperation formalizing a partnership to further their pro-poor programs. HfHP is a Christian group which aims to provide decent homes to the marginalized, while CFCFI has its own Work with the Poor (WWP) ministry which is focused on community development and evangelization. Under the MOC, Habitat can be called to help in the shelter program of selected Restoration Villages, while CFCFI's WWP handles the community development programs such as community life, education, livelihood, health and environment. In the same manner, Habitat will tap CFCFI's WWP to assist in selected Habitat communities in the implementation of its programs.

During the signing, Butch Bautista, HfHP Chairman, and Frank Padilla, CFCFFL Servant General emphasized the Christian aspects of the two organization's work with the poor efforts, and expressed optimism in the knowledge and experience that both organizations bring to the partnership. ■

## Lessons in Jail

Contributed by F. Xavier X.S. Padilla  
Missionary

**I**t was a few years ago when I had the life-changing opportunity to go inside the Davao City jail. It was an experience, to say the least, and it impacted me a lot, even until now.

I also had the chance to go to the New Bilibid Prison-Maximum Security Compound to hear Mass on the occasion of the Solidarity Week of the CBCP. While inside, we got to meet the CFC FFL members. Being there tugs at your heart. We may be inclined to say, "They are criminals, and they deserve to be there", but we tend to forget that they are people too. They have feelings. They have families. They love. They hurt. They have heartbreaks. They hope. They have faith. They are just like you and me.

I won't get into the Criminal Justice System - about how the guilty go free while the innocent rot in jail, and how justice is sometimes served only to the one who pays the most. However, I think it is something that needs a lot of attention and sacrifice.

I had to fight back the tears that day. When I got home, I was so tired - emotionally, physically, spiritually. I took a shower. I hugged my baby. I kissed my wife. I had dinner. I watched TV. I slept on my bed ... and I thought of all those inside the Bilibid who would give anything to do just that. ■



## 10 Less Homeless Families

Contributed by Bonjie Bonjibod  
CFCFFL Work for the Poor

"10 Less Homeless Families". Thus announced the tarpaulin of the Lyceum of the Philippines Batangas at the entrance of the Sotero Laurel Restoration Village at Brgy. Sico, Batangas City on the occasion of the blessing and turnover of 10 houses in June 2008. Indeed, it was. Ten poor families, mostly CFCFFL members, were awarded their own homes. The ceremonies were preceded by Holy Mass at the site. The Lyceum donated the houses and has committed for additional 50 units as well as assistance in education and livelihood programs. The Laurel family was represented by Ms. Jojo Laurel. Batangas City Administrator Philip Baroja and Brgy. Sico Chairman Jose Rizal Tejada likewise graced the occasion. CFCFFL Leaders Frank Padilla, Nonong Contreras, Oca Oblefias, Rene Evidente, John Peter Vui, and Cesar Ramirez (the lot donor) were also present. ■



# House Blessing & Turnover to the Laguna Massacre Orphans

The blessing and turnover of the house for the Pili orphans of the Laguna massacre took place last October 19, 2008 at Brgy. Hurnalan, Calamba, Laguna. The beneficiaries are the three siblings orphaned when a madman peppered their old nipa hut with armalite bullets killing their parents, who were CFCFFL members, and three other siblings in May 2008. When offered a house to be built for them, they requested for one made of concrete with proper locks for the front door.

The CFCFFL Work With the Poor ministry through its Member Housing Initiatives

undertook the building of their house through a joint undertaking with Habitat for Humanity Philippines. Our CFC FFL district in Laguna prepared the foundation and flooring while Habitat provided the steel frames, walls, roofing, doors, windows, etc.

The eldest of the children, Cherry Mae, was emotional while delivering her message during the turnover ceremonies, leaving those present teary eyed. She thanked the community for their support after the sad incident that befell their family. They consider our community their second family, having been cared for by the CFC FFL chapter in their area.

Giving them a house is just the beginning. God gave these children to CFC FFL, to the Laguna district in particular. While Cherry may be able to land a job, we still continue to support the children, nurturing them according to God's plan. Those who wish to contribute to the children's welfare (education and other basic needs) may do so by contacting us through the WWP website - [www.cfcflwwp.org](http://www.cfcflwwp.org). ■

## A Home We Can Call Our Own

After a year and a half of living in temporary shelters, the families of Ariel & Rose Sandagon and Medel & Marissa Garibay were finally awarded their new homes last year. They were listed as beneficiaries of another work with the poor undertaking, but no houses came up until the CFCFFL community, through its Work With the Poor program, took the initiative to construct their homes. The CFCFFL chapter at Dalandanan, Valenzuela where the two couples are active, mobilized their members every weekend to construct the homes. Funds became available after an appeal for help was made through the internet. Roland Nillas, District Head of Caloocan and Ver Acuna, Valenzuela Chapter Head, awarded the homes. ■







# "ALAY SALAMAT" CFCFFL WORK WITH THE POOR GATHERING



*Contributed by Bonjie Bonjibod  
CFCFFL Work with the Poor*



**T**he kids in the picture say it all. This was what the event was all about. The Alay Salamat, a CFC FFL Work with the Poor gathering, was to thank the Lord for His goodness and love for the poor.

About 300 families from the nine Restoration and Mission Villages trooped to the Department of Agrarian Reform (DAR) gym in Quezon City to give thanks, be inspired, and have fun. The event started with worship, then the participants heard talks about love of God and how to respond to His love. While the parents were listening to the talks, the kids were treated to an entertainment by clowns provided by the CFCFFL education ministry. In the Holy Mass that followed, Fr. Soy Fernando, in his homily reminded those present that doing good to those in need should translate to spiritual transformation of both the giver and the receiver. He said, "Ang paggawa ng kabutihan ay dapat humantong (o magmula) sa sariling

kabutihan."

The highlight of the event was the ukay-ukay (rummage sale). It was such a big hit with our brothers and sisters. CFCFFL members from the districts of Bulacan, Novaliches, Antipolo, Paranaque, Pasig, Cubao and Caloocan donated second hand but useful items. Also spotted rummaging and making their own purchases were the security guards of DAR. A popular stop was the WWP booth, manned by the St. John Baptist - Taytay Vicariate



Social Ministry Team, where goods flown in by CFCFFL members from Seattle, Washington were sold. The districts retained 80% of their sales for their own WWP programs while 20% went to defray costs of the event.

The stage play, "The Quest for the Real Treasure, Jesus", presented by CFC Kids for Family and Life, was simply a delight. Adults and children alike were enthralled by the play as they were affirmed Who the real treasure is! A Kids praisefest followed. An empowerment prayer led by Nonong Contreras, CFCFFL Head for the Social Ministries, concluded the event. ■



Contributed by Peggy Burgoyne  
CFCFFL Work for Life

# Women at the Correctional



**T**he Correctional Institute for Women (CIW) is a prison place in Mandaluyong City, specifically for adult women convicted of crime. Several NGOs, civic and religious organizations offer their services at the institute. One of these is CFCFFL.

The CFCFFL work with the poor at CIW, guided by the seven core values, is focused on the formation talks of the Teodora Ministry for the empowerment of women (rebuilding their human dignity using their feminine genius). The sessions likewise touch on the Blessed Mother Mary as their model, the lives of women saints bringing out their virtues, as well as civic women leaders. The importance of the Divine

Mercy, and most importantly evangelization of other women as well as their families, and the integration and support for those released from the institution are also given prime importance.

A helpful tool in the formation of women is the book "40 Days with Mary", written by Frank Padilla. The celebration of Mary's feast days

every month, and the value the women place on praying to our Lady as Mediatrix of All Grace, has developed in them an appreciation of Mary as

intercessor.

Moreover, great learning are constantly drawn from the Teodora Basic Seminar and Workshops, with beautiful outputs on the "Authentic Womanhood" and "Threats to Motherhood and Family". The inmates as well as their leaders highly appreciated these talks. Aside from realizing the threats to womanhood, motherhood and family, the mothers and grandmothers expressed their appreciation that even if they are confined, they would be able to impart these learnings to their loved ones who

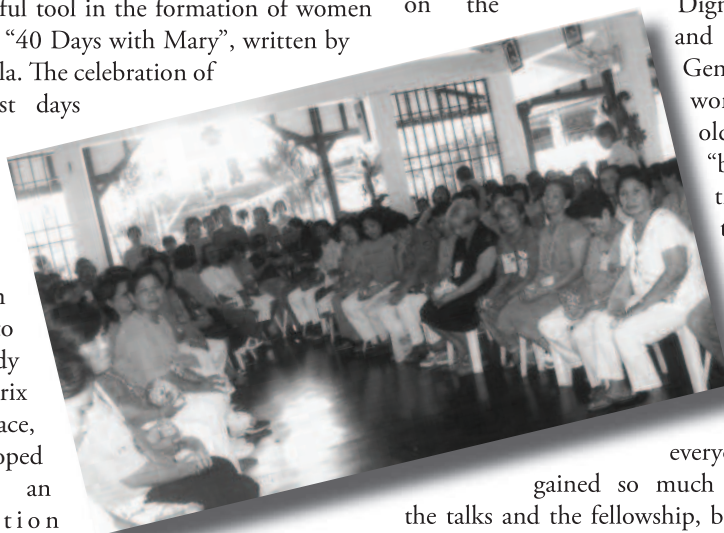
visit them. Truly, they found meaning in their womanhood and personhood. Other sessions from where the women gained helpful insights are Teodora's Catechetical Module, particularly on the

"Dignity of Woman" and "Feminine Genius".

The women, young and old alike, truly "blossom" every time they attend these sessions. They have learned to fix themselves up and warmly smile and greet everyone. They have

gained so much not only from the talks and the fellowship, but also from the sharing of resources after every session, which includes partaking of medicines and toiletries, and manicure and pedicure sessions!

Their beauty come from within, as a result of the realization that God has a plan and purpose for them. They found meaning and purpose in life. They were affirmed that even if they are confined, they can do much to touch the lives not only of fellow women inside the correctional, but also touch those who serve them! ■









*We are privileged to serve God and His people, both in and out of CFC-FFL. We serve with the mind and heart of Jesus, who came to serve and not to be served (Mt 20:28). Leaders are to serve with humility, self-sacrifice and submission to the Chief Shepherd, to whom we will render an account (Hb 13:17). He who wishes to be great shall be the least of all (Mt 20:26-27).*

# Exercising Servant Leadership

Contributed by Myra Menguito  
CFCFFL Education Ministry

# LOVE THAT LIBERATES

**T**he CFCFFL Ministry for Restorative Justice has been quietly serving our inmates for years now. It has touched countless lives... countless souls... not only of the detainees, but also those of the volunteers who are passionately determined to free the captives from all sorts of bondage through the love they generously outpour. Such kind of love which liberates gained not only the applause of God, but of men as well. It is such love which gains the trust of others. It is such love which is anchored and strengthened by one's trust in the Lord.

Recently, volunteers of our Ministry for Restorative Justice were awarded the Gawad Paglilingkod Award during the 21st Prison

Awareness Sunday with the theme, YOUR LOVE IS MY GUIDE, LIGHT AND STRENGTH. The award is given to individuals

punished".

Being a relatively new term to many, "Restorative Justice" is understood by only a



and groups who have rendered exemplary and invaluable service to the prison ministry. Our CFC-FFL brethren, Laya Victoria, PJ San Felipe, Jr. and Conrado Mercado, were among those honored, and at the same time, humbled, by this recognition. Here, they share about the fulfillment they experience in this service.

## LAYA VICTORIA

Serving inside the Maximum Security Compound of the National Bilibid Prison (Max-NBP) is a humbling process. It gives you no political, business or social connections. It does not give you the spotlight nor does it give you "pogi" points. It is an area of service few will venture into because of the stigma attached to the crimes committed by the inmates. In effect, few voluntarily give or share what they have because of the common attitude that "prisoners deserve to be

handful. Many will even say, "Only fools will embrace this kind of task". All these and more make working with the poor inside the NBP not easy. Nevertheless, God has His ways. If He wants a thing or work done, He blesses and equips. Among God's manifestations of His provision is when we share our "biyaya" (blessing) of rice, toothpaste and soap to prisoners for the last four years, every Saturday of the month, without fail, from donations. We have witnessed how the Lord generously provided for any undertaking He wants to blossom. Recently, our ministry experienced a crisis. As we held on to our faith, God was quick to respond by sending a donor who donated a sum that will take care of our "biyaya" from October to December of this year. It was truly a blessing!

Moreover, for the last four years that we have served inside Max-NBP, God has allowed us to see His miracles, especially during typhoons: the rain stops as soon as we get to the compound, and downpour resumes as soon as we reach the covered courts. Upon leaving, the rain once more stops, and





downpour resumes when we reach our respective homes.

These are only a few incidents I can cite, pointing to the direction that God wants us to pursue in this service with the poorest of the poor.

At present, the CFC Servants for Family and Life (SvFL) is conducting a Christian Life Seminar to almost 200 inmates. This started last October and will end last Saturday of December, increasing our membership to more than 600 inmates. Added to this, from nine faithful volunteer CFC-FFL workers, our number has gradually increased to 14. Just recently, two more brothers joined the group, making us 16. We all serve every Saturday without fail.

We pray that more souls will take interest in, and volunteer their time, talent, and treasure to, our work inside Max-NBP.



### **PJ GOSE SAN FELIPE, JR.**

I have been serving in our Ministry for Restorative Justice for more than three years now. God brought me here when He spoke to me through a dream, and this He did thrice! In my dream, I killed people and eventually saw myself behind bars! I had no idea what those dreams meant, until I met Bro. Ramon Arguelles eight years ago in Baguio, where I was serving as a Unit Head of our ministry for singles. Bro. Mon was then the Regional Head of Singles who was also working fulltime for CFC. It was to him whom I mentioned about my desire to serve fulltime or as a mission volunteer.

I have learned so much from the inmates, and serving them made me re-think about my values as a person. I used to favor death penalty. For me, life should be paid as ransom for life taken. However, when God called me to serve these people ... those neglected and unloved by society... my faith and my beliefs changed. It came about through "Ugnayan sa Pamilya", a program of the CFC prison ministry whose objective is to locate the lost families of the

prisoners from Max- NBP. I volunteered to handle one inmate from the death row, who shared with me that his immediate family never visited him since the time he was imprisoned 10 years ago. Though he did not tell me the reason



why, I found out the truth from his family when I visited them. I caught myself speechless when his wife told me that the reason why she and their children never wanted to visit him was because he raped his own daughter. I felt so helpless at that very moment. That time, I did what the Lord asked me to do – I asked his wife to forgive her husband and for her to visit him. I also talked to his children, but all I saw were pain from all the wounds their father caused them, except for the youngest son who misses his "tatay" so much. Somehow, I saw hope and forgiveness in the eyes of the mother and the children. This death row inmate is only



one of many who long for peace, reconciliation and forgiveness from the people they have hurt. I believe this is the kind of justice the Lord desires... a justice that is restorative in nature, not the kind which kills and is punitive. I call these moments where I see God's mercy as my "Jesus moments". These moments eventually led me to be a part of advocacy groups such as the Coalition Against Death Penalty, Restorative Justice Network, and Philippine Action for Youth Offenders.

As my service in our prison ministry

led me to see and treat prisoners as human beings who also feel, it has also deepened my relationship with God. I believe my apostolate in this ministry will last forever because Christ is very much alive in the inmates.

### **CONRADO MERCADO**

I began serving the inmates upon the invitation from Bro. Jerome Rebuena three years and four months ago. I believe the inmates need our love and care to overcome their difficulties and challenges. Some of them might have been spiritually challenged before they were imprisoned, and now is the time for them to receive spiritual guidance, enlightenment and upliftment. It has always been my commitment to be of help for initiatives such as these, and I was more than willing to render myself useful to



these endeavors.

During the course of my service in the Prison Ministry, I realized that I was born not for my self, but I am here to serve and make myself available for others, especially the inmates whom I have learned to know and love through the years. These realizations strengthened my relationship with God as I heeded His call to share myself with others for His greater glory.

I also have my own trials to conquer, but with God's help I shall always remain victorious because it was Him who called me. His words, "What you do to the least of your brethren, you do it to Me" is my inspiration. ■



# Stories FROM PRISON

Contributed by La-i Victoria, CFCFFL Ministry for Restorative Justice

## Touching Hearts

“Patay na siya!” These were the shocking words that rang in our ears. Yes, Plomeda is dead. The news hit us hard. Sister Chato Lebadesus was most affected. How can this be when she recalled that she just recently witnessed the joy in his face when she gave him two pairs of pants and two polo shirts, a donation from the Home Office and hand-carried by Bro. Oca Oblesias.

Plomeda was a 61 year old asthmatic from Bacolod City, convicted of rape. He was a “tawid dagat”—a prisoner from the province crossing the sea who receives no visitors or gifts. This was why Plomeda had only one shirt and one pants, which he washed and wore since 2002, the year he had his last visitor. Other than his request for medication for asthma and hypertension, he did not ask for anything else. Like all members of CFC-FFL, he received his monthly “biyaya” of soap, toothpaste rice or noodles. He seemed content. A quiet man, he sat and listened attentively to all the teachings given during CFC-FFL gatherings every Saturdays.

It was on a “Biyaya-Saturday”, when Brother Nonoy and Sister Chato, both confused and tired, tried to settle the distribution of donated goods. On Sister Chato’s arms were old pants and polo shirts she wanted to give away, but to whom? Being sensitive to the Spirit, Plomeda caught her attention. She gave him these. To her surprise it fitted very well as though it was tailored for him. Plomeda wept uncontrollably. We thought that this was purely out of gratitude. It was only then that we found out that he wore his old cloths for six years. We did not know, and he did not ask for clothes.

He said that he prayed for these and his prayers were answered. He firmly believed that “kung may kailangan ka, hingin mo sa Diyos. At kung sadyang para sa iyo, at iyong kailangan, ibibigay ito sa iyo”. Such faith! His trust in God is again fully confirmed in the pants and shirts he prayed for and received. The confirmation of his faith was the reason he cried. A few days later, he died of heart attack. Plomeda died poor and alone,

but left us with a very strong message of trust and faith in God. He touched our hearts.

To the one who gave Plomeda his pants and polo shirts, we thank you! We thank you for the joy you gave him. Without you knowing, a man’s faith that his GOD is a generous GOD, is fully confirmed, and he carried this faith to his death. For all those who gave and who continuously give, THANK YOU! You have eased a burden our Prison Brothers carry.

To bring a smile in faces that have lost hope and to know that you are the reason behind it is a most rewarding experience. Again, we invite all to join us to experience the joy of serving. Be part of liberating our imprisoned brothers.

“And God, who supplies seed for the sower and bread to eat, will also supply you with all the seed you need and will make it grow and produce a rich harvest from your generosity.” —2 Cor.9:10)

## Pastoring with a Heart

Noah caught our attention during one of the group sessions in an earlier CLS. He prayed fluently in Pilipino—unusual for a young man in his mid-twenties and social background. I do not know exactly what Noah’s crimes are. I was simply told that he is a “Sputnik” and was a member of “Akyat Bahay Gang”, a hold-upper, a recidivist—the reason he was sent to Maximum.

One day, Noah requested us to send a birthday card he personally made for his mother. He crafted this beautifully with his slightly deformed four-fingered right hand. The gesture deeply touched us, and “Ugnayan sa Pamilya” decided to accompany the card with a small box of chocolate-coated cookies.

When next Saturday came, we informed Noah about this along with his mother’s response. “Naku, ang aking anak! Kakainin nalang, ibinigay pa.” Noah was stupefied. He

could not believe that anyone could do this for him—a prisoner! With head slightly bent, partially covering his homely features, and in between sobs, Noah was able to release from his heart what he kept for so long.

At a very young age, Noah was forced to support his younger brother and two sisters the easiest way he knew how. He comes from a very poor family. He could never recall a time when his father was sober. Worst, his father would beat them all for reasons Noah could not understand. He loves his mother dearly, but she was herself addicted to gambling.

While serving one of his sentences at the City Jail, his father died. Noah was allowed to visit his father’s wake. There, he spat at his father’s coffin, giving vent to deeply rooted anger, hatred, bitterness and resentment. After a few more brushes with the police, he ended up at the Maximum Penitentiary, NBP.

Inevitably, Noah treated us like his family. Every Saturday, he was the first to greet us at the arrival area. We took advantage of this opportunity, advising him to pray for his parents, forgive and forget the past, and embrace a new way of thinking. It was so easy talking to him this way that during one of our conversations he admitted that prayer has taught him to forgive and forget the past little by little. The new Noah did not escape the eyes of his mother. She was surprised to see Noah serving as a sacristan at the Maximum Security Chapel.

Surely Noah is destined to be a future leader of CFC-FFL inside Maximum, so we thought. But unexpectedly, he was transferred to Medium Security Compound and we lost track of him. Sadness and uncertainty gripped us. Who would continue his pastoral support at Medium? But God takes care of His people. Just recently, we were told that Noah is still an active church worker at the Medium Security Chapel. The seed of faith, even so small, continued to grow in the heart of this young man just because of simple kindness extended to him and to his mother. Praise God! ■





## Death Row The Power of Prayer

I am a survivor of the "Death Penalty Law" - during the Dark days of our "Penal System". I couldn't stop thanking God for sparing my life on the date of my execution Aug. 25, 2000. To afford malacañan a thorough study on my case, I was reprieved - extended to live up to Dec of same year. a 'Commutation of sentence' to life imprisonment was granted. I have nothing except God and His verse written by Mark 11:24 about the 'Power of Prayer' - that what thing so ever we desire in prayer, believe that we receive and we will have it. I have been a witness to God's immensely generous and far-reaching touch.

## The Power of the Holy Spirit

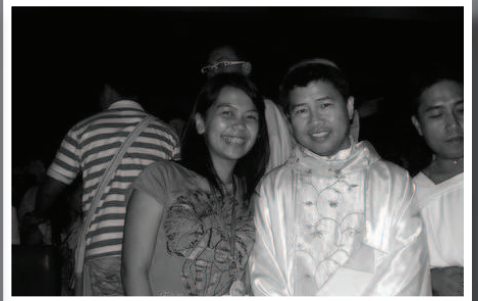
Reclusion  
Perpetua

I have seen the Lord mysteriously use me as His instrument. I joined the CFC-CLS and made this my personal choice to completely surrender myself to the Lord to do His will. I am a heavy smoker smoking two packs a day since I was in High School (for 40 yrs). I feel the need to extricate myself in the bondage of addiction to cigarettes. Twas when I received the Baptism of the Holy Spirit - the 7th session of the CLS that I was able to totally manage to stop. Praise God and thanks to CFC-CLS I made it.

Truly when we say yes and courageously open to God, we allow Him through His Spirit to enter into our lives. We can then overcome human weakness by the Power of His Love and Healing.

Robert  
NBP chapter.







*We in CFC-FFL are an integral part of the Catholic Church. We are submitted to our bishops and to the pope. Our life, formation and service will conform to Catholic values and ideals. We make ourselves available to be of service in the parishes and dioceses, especially in the areas of family and life. We look to Mary, the mother of the Church, as our inspiration and help.*

# Being a Servant to the Church

# Victory! THE 10<sup>th</sup> CHILDREN'S ROSARY RALLY

Contributed by Myra Menguito  
CFCFFL Education Ministry



**T**hey came in throngs. They looked so polished in their uniforms. They were disciplined as they lined up to register, after which they proceeded to their “commissioned” areas. It was one of the most beautiful sights. It was like seeing an avalanche of armies who were in unison to defend their faith and celebrate VICTORY at the same time. They were troops composed of very young soldiers... children in fact... armed with a very powerful weapon - the Holy Rosary. This event, which marked the 10th ANNIVERSARY OF THE CHILDREN'S ROSARY RALLY held at Tiendesitas on October 11, 2008, saw the gathering of over 1,000 children from private

and public schools from NCR and nearby provinces of Luzon. This included members and coordinators of CFC – KFL members. The venue, which can only accommodate 800 people, overflowed with God's people, clad with faith and love for Jesus and Mary. It was such a moving moment seeing all the participants, especially the children, praying with one voice, as they asked for Mother Mary's intercession

was brought forth through a tableau of the Joyful Mysteries prepared by the CFCFFL Kids for Family and Life and acted out by children themselves, and each Our Father, Hail Mary, and Glory Be led by children as well, as they lifted up each decade and bead for intentions to uplift the culture of life!

The praying of the Holy Rosary was immediately followed by the celebration of the Eucharist officiated by Bishop Honesto Ongtioco of the Diocese of Cubao, Bishop Raul Martinez – former Bishop of Antique, Rev. Fr. Roque da Costa of Family Rosary Crusade-Manila, and Rev. Fr. John Phalen, CSC – President of the Holy Cross Family Ministries. After the mass, the multitude were given time to savor their lunch and enjoy the Ark Avilon Zoo at Tiendesitas.

We could see Mother Mary smiling that day. We could see Jesus happy as He saw His Mother very pleased. We saw everybody anticipating the same big event... with more children ... next year!!!!



through the Holy Rosary and celebrate Jesus' victory.

The event opened with a very touching parade of floral offering for Mother Mary. The emcee, Mr. Bernard Canaberrall of the Family Rosary Crusade, delighted the delegation through his animated way of giving catechism.

This year's theme, “SAVE CREATION THROUGH MARY: CELEBRATE LIFE AND FAMILY”, focused on one of the great challenges faced by God's people these times: the fight for human life! In a very subtle way for young children to understand, this message





# Integrating with the Parishes: the District of Parañaque Experience

*Contributed by Jojo I. Dunglao, CFCFFL District of Parañaque*

**T**he District of Paranaque (DOP), guided by the CFCFFL Core Values, excitedly pursued community life which inspired the brethren. Specifically, the core value on “Being a Servant to the Church”, led the DOP to tread the path of active parish involvement. Said district, which covers the territorial boundaries of the cities of Paranaque, Las Pinas and Muntinlupa, is composed of forty-seven (47) parishes, one (1) chaplaincy and one (1) shrine, and divided into six (6) vicariates. Mary is the patroness of Parañaque, venerated under the title, “Nuestra Señora del Buen Suceso”. Bishop Jesse Eugenio Mercado, DD, an Auxiliary Bishop of Manila, was appointed as its first Bishop by Pope John Paul II and continues to serve until this time. As we welcomed his blessing with utmost enthusiasm, the DOP brethren moved on to render service in their respective parishes and integrate our ministries with the parish commissions.

Though integrating with the parishes is no easy task, the steadfastness in faith of our brothers and sisters made everyone persevere in the work. It was clear that “Being a servant to the Church” requires our active participation and valuable contribution in terms of time, talent and, yes, treasure. We shed off our trans-parochial mindset and took a step further – we joined the Parish Renewal Experience weekends organized in our respective parishes and encouraged our members to attend forthcoming sessions. We embraced Mary as our patroness and intercessor and are no longer alienated from the Marian devotees in the parishes. We have likewise been in constant communication with the clergy, which truly enhanced our relationship with the priests and the church workers as well.

More than a year after and with several CLS conducted, we see a new calling in our evangelization work. God is asking us to add focus in bringing the good news of salvation to the least of our brethren, pursuing Jesus’ mission in bringing glad tidings to the poor. The clergy have always mentioned this in various meetings and fora but most especially during light moments shared with their newly found CFCFFL family. Recently, we were asked to spearhead the Natural Family Planning program for the diocese. Our Pro-Life Ministry is rejuvenated and will be working with the Family and Life Commission of the Diocese. ■

## MARCH FOR LIFE IN ECUADOR

*Contributed by Paul & Eds Morales  
Missionary Couple*



**T**he Matrimonios Para Cristo, together with the other movements here in Ecuador, had their March for Life! It was a moving celebration for all of us as we prayed for peace, family and life. It was one of the most meaningful expressions of faith, because even if the country has a president who is pro-choice, this did not impede them from fighting for God. It was a peaceful journey, though we really felt that the enemy really tried to discourage us.

During the mass, we were all reminded about what it meant to be a Catholic, and that the challenge is for us to be real Catholics EVERYDAY – in thoughts, words and deeds. Though Ecuador is known to be 90% Catholic, only half of are practicing Catholics.

A lot still has to be done. The fight for life continues. We need more Catholics who are passionate enough to stand for their faith. ■

# Having a Big Heart for God's Word:

## THE Y! EXPLODE EXPERIENCE

Contributed by Raine Eguico  
CFCYFL Missionary



Last November 29, 2008, the Youth Explode Series: The Bible Adventure Begins happened at the Bulwagan ng Panginoon (formerly Folk Arts Theatre), gathering almost 8,000 Filipino youth. It was an event open to all Filipino youth made possible by the Philippine Bible Society, National Council of Churches in the Philippines, Philippine Council of Evangelical Churches, and the CBCP Episcopal Commissions on Youth and Biblical Apostolate.

It was an ecumenical event that welcomed different youth members and leaders from different Catholic and Protestant groups and communities, aiming to promote awareness on the relevance of being anchored on God's Word. This one-day event came about as a result of surveys showing that 60% of Philippine population do not own a Bible. From that 60%, more than half (70%) of teenagers and young professionals do not see the importance

of God's Word in their lives. Some others have their Bibles but they do not know where to start, do not know how to read it, or they do not understand the versions of the Bibles that they have.

The event started with a Bible March coming from two points - from the Rajah Sulayman Park in Malate, Manila and from the Derham Park in Pasay City. The youth coming



from the two points met at the area between the Cultural Center of the Philippines and Aliw Theater and moved as one big group going to the Bulwagan ng Panginoon.

Before the event, some leaders of CFC Singles for Family and Life and CFC Youth for Family and Life attended the Facilitators' Training last November 15, 2008. CFC SFL and CFCYFL are recognized youth groups of the Federation of National Youth Organizations, which unites

Catholic youth groups in the Philippines. FNYO, as part of CBCP ECY, asked the participation of CFC SFL and CFC YFL and thus became the delegates who would facilitate the youth participants who would come for the said big event.

On the day of the event, the CFC SFL and CFCYFL members wore green as it was the color assigned to the youth coming from the Roman Catholic Church. It was indeed a new experience both to the facilitators and the participants. Though the delegates present came from different youth groups and churches, it was amazing to see how they were united in their passion for the Lord, especially during the plenary sessions conducted by LA Mumar and Bo Sanchez, and through the group sharings that happened after each plenary session.

The 8,000 youth there might have different religions and might have different perspectives about faith, but it was also clear that the Lord really worked in that big event, as He touched the hearts of everyone and made them realize that there is more to God's Word – that each one's heart will be blessed even more if only it is made open to His powerful and mighty Word.



# Living His Word: Insights on the National Conference for Youth Ministers

*Contributed by Joy Aguila  
CFCYFL Mission Volunteer*



The event was an opportunity to see how God greatly blesses the Catholic Church. It was the National Conference for Youth Ministers (NCYM) which was held at Jaro, Iloilo City.

Attended by several Catholic Youth Ministers all over the Philippines, the NCYM witnessed the coming together of priests and youth missionaries from the different Catholic churches. The experience of being able to come in unity with other Catholic youth groups and missionaries from the different Catholic Church Dioceses from various places in our country was wonderful. It was awe-inspiring to realize that everyone who were present during that conference that the diversity of everyone were called to serve different communities, ministries and youth groups at different is unified by one

at its fullness if only we draw it from His word, if His word is shared to the whole world, and if our lives bear witness what we have learned through His words.

Doing these is not at all easy, especially in a world where we are enticed to draw life and happiness from different material and worldly things. The world tells us that we can be truly happy if we have and buy for all that it offers --- fame, success, comfort, luxury and wealth. The Lord tells us otherwise. He reminds us that

God's Word more real in my life. The Lord wanted me to do more than just appreciating, listening and reading His Word. He wanted me to personally live it out, to bear witness to what I have heard and seen in my life through His word, to make it the breathe of my life, to make it the heart and core of all that I am doing and venturing on. I believe that this message is true not only for youth ministers, priests and missionaries, but for all of us! I have realized that the challenge for everyone is to perseveringly



same mission and call – to share the Word of God and His love to all. Indeed, the Lord works powerfully through the Catholic Church in our country.

With the theme, "Youth Ministers: Drawing and Sharing Life in God's Word, Witnessing to the World" which was inspired by the verse "... the word of God lives in you (1 John 2:14), the conference expressed how much beautiful it is to faithfully nourish oneself with the word of God and to allow it to shine and emanate in life.

The priests and other youth ministers affirmed that our lives can be only experienced

real happiness can be sourced from Him alone, and that the eternal joy and peace we relentlessly yearn for can only come from Him. He is the real Joy-Giver, and it is His joy to give us all we ask from Him. What makes it all the more special is that when He gives, He gives abundantly and faithfully.

As a youth missionary, I have already learned to appreciate and read His Word. I read the Bible everyday and listen to the Word constantly when I attend the Sacrament of the Holy Eucharist. After hearing the Lord through the conference, I was really challenged to make

seek the Lord through His Word so that we may understand the promise of the fulfillment of life and happiness that He is constantly giving and inviting us to lavish on. He has gifted us with His Word through the Holy Scriptures so that we may be guided and led to the everlasting life He wants us to have. He wants us to take hold of that gift and embrace it in our lives.

The Lord is truly great. He loves us so much that He gives us His words through the Scriptures and that He insists on wanting to make us experience the promise of incomparable happiness that He has prepared for all of us. I pray that we may all take heart in accepting the gift of His Word in our life. I pray that we may be able to draw life from His Word. I pray that we may live out the Word and witness it to our families, our friends, our parishes, our communities, and to the rest of the world. I pray that the Word of God may truly live in all of us. ■

## Some Observations Regarding the Laity and the Lay Association

By Bishop Gabriel Reyes, DD  
CFCFFL Spiritual Director



**T**he great Dominican theologian, Cardinal Yves Congar, said in the 1980's: "Without doubt, the most wonderful gift of the Holy Spirit to the Church in our time is the awakening of the laity. Their desire to become more and more to be Church."

Indeed many of our Filipino laity have awakened and many of them are doing their best to live fully their "Being Christian." Because of religious ignorance, many of our Catholics have a wrong notion of their Faith. If you ask a typical Filipino Catholic what does it mean to be a Catholic, he will answer more or less like this: To be a Catholic means first: to know some doctrines from the Catechism, second: to fulfill some religious observances like going to Mass on Sunday, fasting and abstinence and third: to try your best not to go to hell. This answer is partly true but far from complete. Besides, it is a very un-inspiring and dry concept of Christian life.

On the other hand there are an increasing number of Filipino Catholics who will answer in this way: To be a Catholic means to have a personal relationship of love with our Lord Jesus Christ and to grow in this relationship of love in our life. This love for Jesus includes love for our fellow human beings. Jesus is the number one and central value that permeates our whole life and to grow in love for Him is the main endeavor of our life. At present, many of our laity have this mind-set and are striving to live according to it in their daily life. In this way they are responding to the universal call to holiness which Vatican II has been stressing in the Decree, "Lumen Gentium," Chapter V. Many of our laity are really endeavoring to grow in holiness.

We can say that the main instrument that the Holy Spirit used to breathe this new and refreshing life on our laity is the many lay movements and associations, such as the cursillo, the charismatic movements, marriage encounters, parish renewal experience, neo-

catechumenate, Focolare, Opus Dei, etc. the lay associations and movements have done so much good to our laity.

The lay associations and movements have done a lot of good to the Church but it is good to remind them that their primary loyalty is to our Lord Jesus Christ and to His Mystical Body, the Church, not to their association. If a Christian truly loves the Lord Jesus then he will also love His Body, the Church. You cannot love the head and at the same time hate the body. If you do not love the Body, the Church, then you do not truly love the Head, our Lord Jesus. By Church, we mean the Holy Father, the Bishop, the priests, and all the baptized. Christ and the Church is the "whole Christ" (Catechism of the Catholic Church, No. 795).



St. Joan of Arc said: "About Jesus Christ and the Church, I simply know they're just one thing, and we shouldn't complicate the matter." The unity or communion of the Church with Christ is based on the divine life the members of the Church receive in baptism. In baptism we receive a second life, were born again. When we were born we received human life from our parents. That is why we are called children of men. When we were baptized, we shared in God's own life, we received divine life. That is why we become children of God. We became members of God's family. We became children of the Father, brothers and sisters of God the Son, and temples of the Holy Spirit. Christ tells us in the Gospel that He is the vine and we are the branches. The same divine life flows in the Head, Christ, as in the branches, us. St. Paul says in his letters that Christ is the Head and the Christians, the Church, is the Body. The same divine life flows in the Head as in the

members of the Body. The Church has a double dimension: communion of each Christian with Christ and the communion of Christians with one another.

Christ has also willed the Church to be His instrument of salvation. All salvation comes from Christ, the Head, through the Church, which is his Body (Catechism of the Catholic Church, No. 846). The Church is the sacrament of salvation, that is, it is a sign and instrument of salvation. A sacrament is a visible sign instituted by Christ to give grace. A sacrament is a visible sign of something invisible and contains and makes present what it signifies. The Church is the sacrament of Jesus because Jesus is in the Church and gives us His salvation, His graces through the Church, especially through the sacraments and Word of God. The ultimate and most important purpose of any lay association or movement is to bring its members closer to Jesus, the source of our salvation, and to the Church, His Body, through which He gives us salvation. Other goals and objectives of an association should not go against this paramount purpose but should lead to it.

As for the apostolate of the laity, it is good to quote from the apostolic exhortation "Christifideles Laice" (On the Christian Lay Faithful) of Pope John Paul II, No. 14, § 9: "The participation of the lay faithful in the threefold mission of Christ as Priest, Prophet and King finds its source in the anointing of Baptism, its further development in Confirmation and its realization and dynamic sustenance in the Holy Eucharist. It is a participation given to each member of the lay faithful individually, in as much as each of one of the many who form the one Body of the Lord: in fact Jesus showers his gifts upon the Church which is his Body and his Spouse. In such a way individuals are sharers in the threefold mission of Christ in virtue of their being members of the Church, as St. Peter clearly teaches, when he defines the baptized as "a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's own people" (1 Pt 2:9). Precisely because it derives from Church communion the sharing of the lay faithful in the threefold mission of Christ requires that it be lived and realized in communion (with the Church) and for the increase of communion itself, (with the Church)." ■



**T**he Lord is very sure we will face difficult times. Actually, we do not even have to wait for it. Some of us have experienced many challenging moments and some of us are going through very, very difficult times right now. Going through difficult times? What does the Lord tell us to do?

First of all, face it. Denying it will not help! Running away from it will not help at all. Face the difficult times. "Face the persecution," the Lord says. There is no use running away from it because it will get ahead of us anyway.

Second, during the difficult times, remember the victorious moments of the past. That is what the First Reading reminds us to do because we have had our little successes,

## CRITICAL TIMES

(Luke 21: 28-33)

By Bishop Soc Villegas, DD  
Spiritual Adviser  
CFCFFL Young Ministries



little triumphs, and little victories in the past. When times become difficult, God gives us the capacity, the gift to remember. The memory of the victories of the past will give us courage right now, at the present moment.

And the third recommendation from the Lord is that when we go through difficult times and we are afraid, we must remember that the antidote to fear is not courage. The antidote to fear is trust. When we are afraid, we must not depend solely on ourselves. When we are afraid, trust in the Lord.

All of us will go through difficult times.

Some of us are going through difficult times right now. Let the message of the Lord be our guideposts at this moment. First, face the challenge. Second, remember the victories and the triumphs of the past. Remember the happy moments of the past and let that provide the energy for us to move on. And third, trust in the Lord because by trusting in the Lord, we cannot but let go of fear. ■

[Reprinted with permission from Bishop Socrates B. Villegas' book *Love Like Jesus (Thoughts from the Heart)*]

**Y**ou must have heard of instances where a dad, before dying, has given his son, a replica of a star, or a ring, or a golden bracelet, as a remembrance of what he wanted his son to live and die for, after he had left this world. Looking at the souvenir, the son would be kept inspired at all times to live up to the ideal his father put before him; and he would be drawn to come back on track, when he tended to fall below the expectations of his deceased father.

Before He left this world, Jesus left us the Eucharist, not that we might just look at the bread and wine; not even to merely eat and drink of the bread and wine, as any other ordinary physical act. He left us the Eucharist, so that we could come to Him, as a community, and celebrate His dream, His Vision for our community. And His Vision is that all become more and more like Him, united as one big family; and that our world will be freed from hate and misery reflecting the Kingdom of God. Through the celebration of the Eucharist, He wishes to deepen this intimate relationship (we call this a covenant relationship) with us, as individuals and as a body, by being constantly nourished, strengthened and empowered at the Table of the Word and the Table of the Bread, thus bringing us closer to the Vision of CFC FFL.

Besides expressing our desire to continue in this close relationship with Him, within the

## THE EUCHARIST IN THE LIFE OF OUR COMMUNITY



By Fr. Justin Sequeira sss

Eucharist itself, we promise to live out our side of the covenant, outside of the celebration, in a concrete way by living out our CFC FFL covenant.

### The Eucharist and our CFC FFL Covenant

When, as a community, we frequently come together to listen to the Word of God, we will be gradually putting on the mind of

When we pray for one another (not only silently), but openly, at the Prayer of the Faithful, we again become witnesses of God's love to those in need, be it those among our family members, or our parishioners or the poor of the parish. (Cf. our covenant: deepening our bonds within the family, the community and the parish.) We pray as if they are our very needs, thus already living out our Vision.

At the Liturgy of the Bread, as a community, we bring to the altar our service, our expertise, our strategies, our struggles and the obstacles that would come into play whilst making the Vision of CFC FFL a more concrete reality, in the light of the Word of God spoken to us earlier. When the celebrant praises and thanks God on our behalf, we join our praise and thanksgiving to his, for what lies ahead of us, once our Vision is realized. We conclude this part of the Eucharist with a soul-stirring Great Amen, because nothing in the community will make us happy, except doing what He wants of us to realize our Vision! (Cf. our covenant: deepening our bonds within the family, the community and the parish.)

During the Communion Stage of the Eucharist, while singing the Our Father, we see ourselves along with others, making the whole



God, our Father, and we will be growing into the likeness of Jesus, our Brother, proclaimed in the Gospel. (Cf. our covenant: becoming like Christ and growing in holiness.) We will, by and by, find the ways of the world distasteful and unattractive to us. Celebrating the Word of God, as a community, will help us make God's ways and thoughts sharpen the Vision of CFC FFL.

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# Mary, Mediatrice of All-Grace

By Fr. Melvin Castro  
Spiritual Director, CFCFFL Intercessory Group



After the Liturgical reform of Vatican II, every 31st of May we celebrate the Feast of the Visitation of Our Lady to her cousin, St. Elizabeth. But before that, it was an almost universal celebration that every 31st of May was the Feast of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Mediatrice of All Graces (yes, in the plural which is quite different from the column title which is in the singular).

It was the Belgian Cardinal Désiré Joseph Mercier who started the campaign in the early part of the 20th century to have the title of Our Lady as Mediatrice of All Graces to be proclaimed as a dogma of faith. Later as well he would make that "twin" campaign for the canonization of then Blessed Louis Marie Grignon de Montfort side-by-side with the campaign for the title of Our Lady as Mediatrice of All Graces. In fact, in his discernment, the proclamation of this Marian dogma will be achieved through the canonization of St. Louis.

Cardinal Mercier died in 1926. By that time, neither was St. Louis canonized nor the particular Marian title defined as dogma of Faith. He had that consolation, however, that Pope Benedict XV granted in 1921 to the whole of Belgium an Office and Mass of the Blessed Virgin Mary,

Mediatrice of All Graces. This Office and Mass were extended by the Holy See to many other dioceses and religious institutes, so that the commemoration became almost universal.

It is told that the definition of the Marian dogma never occurred because of objections of many theologians. Whatever the reason was, the Church did not see it opportune that time.

Finally, in 1947 Louis Marie Grignon de Montfort was canonized. He was one of the outstanding devotees of Our Lady and through his many writings, particularly the book, True Devotion to Mary, he laid out his particular Marian spirituality of total consecration to Mary as her slave.

The word slavery may sound too offending to our contemporary ears. And yet, we can view in a very positive manner. Slaves, during olden times, were considered commodities and properties of their owners. In a sense, being slaves of Mary means to be owned by Her, but not as a commodity nor a property but instead voluntarily we declare ourselves to be a possession of Our Lady. A possession that she

not go far from their owners. In the spiritual sense, through the Total Consecration to Mary, we freely "chain" ourselves to Her so that no sin nor evil could make us be detached nor run away from Her.

Months after the canonization of St. Louis came the reported apparitions of Our Lady in the Carmelite Monastery of Lipa in 1948. And yes, believe it or not, in those apparitions, Our Lady identified Herself as Mary, Mediatrice of All-Grace (and yes it was in the singular). Our Lady even explained why it was in the singular form All-Grace, she said that such word refers to Christ who is the source of every and all graces.

In those same apparitions, Our Lady requested the Carmelite nuns to consecrated themselves to Her as Her slaves following the devotional manner enunciated by St. Louis Marie Grignon de Montfort.

Were all these coincidences? Most certainly not. We can safely assume these are the fruits of the prayers and efforts of Cardinal Mercier and many others who truly believed in the title of Mary as Mediatrice of All-Grace. And particularly, it crosses our mind that it was Cardinal Mercier who decades before already prayed for the canonization of St. Louis and through that canonization the approval of the title of Mary as Mediatrice of All-Grace.

We are told that Cardinal Mercier in his death bed repeated over and over again, Mary Mediatrice, Mary Mediatrice.

Now, that we are fast approaching May 31 and end of the Marian month of May, we turn to Our Lady yet again in a very special manner under that very special title, Mediatrice of All-Grace. Monstra Te esse Matrem, we sing in the Ave Maris Stella, show unto us that You are our Mother.

May indeed Our Lady come to intercede for all of us, but especially come to the aid of our families whose sanctity and dignity are again facing an onslaught of attacks from many fronts.

Monstra Te esse Matrem! Ave Maria. Ad Jesum per Mariam. ■



will safeguard and protect from all harm and danger. A possession that she will treasure and cherish.

The slaves as well, in olden times, were chained. They were chained so that they could





By Fr. Francis Gustilo  
Assistant Spiritual Director, CFCFFL

# CENTERED IN CHRIST

**A**s CFCFFL treads on its journey of faith, it is called to witness to its Core Values. The year 2009 sees this journey with an understanding and appreciation of three of CFCFFL's Core Values: Centered in Christ, Empowered by the Holy Spirit and Building a Community of Families.

In this light I thought to share with you my personal faith-understanding of the person of Jesus Christ as a result of my constant search for His face in my life-history and in my ministry as a priest.

When we are introduced or when we introduce ourselves, many a time what we say or what is said of us concerns what we are presently doing. In a more formal setting of introducing a person, like a speaker of a conference, one might even hear the person's curriculum vitae - a long litany of past achievements. We may also approach Jesus Christ in the same vein. We may know Him as our Savior, the one who died on the cross to redeem us and all mankind, He who preached in Galilee and cured many infirmities. All this is true but it is that way of knowing him from what he did.

But come to think of it, we do not introduce ourselves in a similar fashion to our relatives or among close friends. Another form is used. It lies in the qualities of WHO we are to them, like "Best friend ko 'to"; "Siya yung sinasabi kong 'my generous mother'"; "He's my son".

In the Gospels that we hear during Sunday liturgies, we come to know what Jesus did during Sundays in Ordinary Time and the Lenten Season. But if you notice carefully, as in the recent season of Advent and Christmas, particularly in the great feasts of his Birth in Bethlehem and his Baptism in the Jordan, the introduction of the angel as well as the voice from heaven about Jesus is that He is the Son of God. Actually, a more careful meditation of the Gospels will lead us more and more to know Jesus for WHO He is than for WHAT He does, that is, for His singular quality of being God's Son. In fact, His invitation of "Follow Me" prods us strongly to become like Him in His attitude to God - an obedient Son whose main concern is to do the Father's will - "unless you become like little children, you will not enter the Kingdom of God".

Our faith tells us that God became man - He dwelt amongst us. But our faith also indicates more specifically that between the three Persons in one God - the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit - it is the Son

who became man. It is not the Father nor the Holy Spirit that was made flesh, but the eternal Word, as St. John would state it in his Gospel. This creed we possess has very important implications for us.

Firstly, we know who we humans are. Ash Wednesday clearly reminds us who we are: "Remember, man, you are dust and to dust you will return!" Dust! Look at the soles of your shoes - that is what we mean by dust. Being human we are nothing... nothing ... nothing. And God became dust? God in the person of the Son became as we all are - nothing? Yes, St. Paul in his letter to the Philippians, mentions this truth: "Though He was equal with God, He did not deem to grasp this equality with God. Rather, He emptied himself and became human as all men are, obedient as a slave, obedient unto death, death on a Cross!" Who then are we, who then am I, but emptiness in comparison to God; and yet that God deemed to be like me in everything I am except sin?

This is the resounding truth. God became one of us - Emmanuel - and He did this for a singular reason. He comes to be one of us to tell and show us that though we are nothing, in God the Father's heart we are so precious: "For God so loved the world that He sent his only Son so that no one may perish!" In this sense, knowing Jesus as the-Son-of-God -who-became-man, we come to know better who truly we are in the eyes of God - the nothing who is everything in His love!

Secondly, if the Son of God became man, then we can say that man is the Son of God. In becoming human, the Son of God shares with us His eternal relationship with the Father. Our being precious in the Father's heart is such because He has made us His children in His only Son. Like His Son He wishes no one of us to perish but to live and live forever. Like His Son, we no longer look forward to have heaven as a reward. God instead deemed it to be our inheritance. We all have a right to enter heaven. It is now our home, where we find ourselves with God who is our Father.

Moreover, Jesus - the Father's Son - showed us what being Son is like. In his eternal relationship with the Father, his fundamental attitude is one who welcomes, accepts and receives everything from God. The Father is the Source of everything and the Son simply reciprocates the Father's love with his filial love of obeying and fulfilling whatever the Father gives him. We, too, as God's children cannot give anything to God. All we can be is to be receivers of His grace and goodness. Ours is the basic attitude of opening ourselves up to the Father's embrace, welcoming everything He gives and trusting that all these are good for us. Remember that Jesus accepted even death on the cross, for the singular reason that it was the Father's design for saving humanity, His brothers and sisters. And since we are all children of God, we are at all times brothers and sisters to each

other. To live as God's children would mean to love my neighbor as my brothers and sisters.

From these two realities of trusting the Father's love and serving our brothers, we can now aptly understand what Jesus responded to the scribe who asked what must he do to enter eternal life - what must he do to share the life of God: "Love God with all your heart, with all your strength and with all your mind, and the second is as important as the first, love your neighbor as yourself." Jesus' faith and trust in the Father and His great love for all mankind characterizes Jesus' identity as Son of God. We are asked to be the same. He tells us "Follow me!" In fact, He would also say to his disciples: "Unless you become little children, you cannot enter the Kingdom of God."

All this that I have written until now is common knowledge already. But the problem is that we keep on forgetting it. So what should we do in order to be constantly aware of the reality of our identity as God's children?

Jesus' method is his constant prayer.

Prayer for us goes immediately out of the window because we have so many things to do. And the many things to do are so important because we got used to identify ourselves to what we can achieve rather than to who we are. We have been deceived by the Evil One to think that only when we are able to produce something, we are better persons, we are useful, we are appreciated. Jesus, of course, worked by preaching the good news and by showing the goodness of God in his miracles and cures. But we also find him early in the morning in a deserted place, praying.

On one occasion while He was at Mount of Olives where He usually took refuge to pray, His disciples asked Jesus to teach them to pray. He replied, "When you pray, say: 'Father!'" Prayer for Jesus is to be with the Father, to remind himself of the Father's love and goodness, to simply allow the Father's love to shine on him and as if tan his skin like the morning glow of the sun. Every morning, He would simply receive and accept what the Father has in store for Him. Prayer made Him realize that it is not only in doing and achieving that He is someone to the Father, but above all it is in being His Beloved. For this reason, we understand why when Jesus was on the cross for three excruciating hours, He had only the word "Father" on His lips from beginning to end. The first word on the cross states: "Father, forgive them". The last word says, "Father into your hands I commend my spirit".

There at Golgotha when the crowd, the chief priests, the soldiers and even the criminal crucified on His left side would taunt Him to do something and thus show them His greatness, like coming down from the cross, Jesus did not succumb to the subtle temptation. By having the Father always in His presence, Jesus simply trusted the ways of God and fulfilled His will to stay on His cross. All three hours on this crucible of fire, Jesus was with the Father, praying Abba-Father!

If CFCFFL has chosen to be centered in Christ as its primary core value, it must be because Christ offers us the very reason of our existence and the only style of life as Christians. Putting all our trust in the Father's love and welcoming everything from His hands open us to great internal peace. Loving one another as brothers and sisters because we are all the Father's Beloved makes us instruments of His peace.

Because we have taken Christ to be our center, may we all experience and give His peace. ■

# Cry for Help

Contributed by April Frigge  
CFCFLL Iceland

... from page 57

Abortion is so common in Europe. Doctors and social workers tell women that the procedure is just like removing a wart or getting rid of a blob of tissue. Thus, society does not respect the family's need to grieve over the lost life. "After all," they claim, "who cries about having a wart removed?" They fail to see that when a natural and God-given



response such as to grieve is buried and ignored, it can cause what has been called "Post-Abortion Stress Syndrome," which sometimes appears years after an abortion. This syndrome is characterized by crying fits, nightmares, flashbacks, deep depression, and/or suicidal tendencies.

The opportunity to attend the Lourdes 2008 Pro-Life Prayer Congress by the Human Life International in late 2008 gave me more learning regarding the above. With the theme, "Healing the Wounds of Abortion," the conference discussed the heart-rending destruction which abortion causes not only to the unborn child, but also to the mother, father, and siblings of the aborted child, and to society in general. Further, the Lourdes Congress focused on the effects of abortion upon the family and society. A lot of people think that an abortion done years before does not have any effect on later children whom a mother may deliver, but research has shown that many "survivor siblings" (children born to a mother who had an abortion before or after this child's birth) actually have an accurate sense that

"someone is missing" from their family, and that these children exhibit symptoms of "survivor guilt," similar to the symptoms experienced by survivors of natural disasters. They feel guilty that they were chosen to live. These children know (or sense) that their parents have already gone to the extreme length of having one (or more) of their other children killed. The "survivor" child was a "wanted" child (Remember the United Nations motto for the year 2000, "Every child a wanted child?"), but subconsciously, this child worries: "What will happen if I don't behave, or when my parents' circumstances change? Will I be killed too?" These are terrible feelings that



can lurk deep in the hearts of children born into families damaged by abortion, and yet they make their presence known by the children's tendency to take big risks: "I survived once, let's see if I survive again!". They may likewise feel worthless, and may have the tendency to drown their fears/pain/anxiety in drugs, alcohol or sex.

During the conference, two Canossian sisters from Ukraine shared about how they met women who have had 16 abortions! They said the people of the Ukraine walk around "like the living dead." This stark reality should drive us to our knees in prayer for mothers and fathers who have felt driven to abort their own children... to beg God to open their eyes to their need for His mercy. We should also be pleading with God to change the mindset of our culture which considers pleasure and comfort as more essential and welcome, than God's gift of a new life. Lastly, we should be there for these wounded men, women, and children, offering them God's timeless message of redeeming love!

It may help us all to read an excellent article by Victoria Thorn (Founder of Project Rachel, an abortion-grief ministry), one of the speakers at the Lourdes Congress. The article gives a more thorough picture of the effects of abortion on children and families and society. One can access said article through [www.afterabortion.org/PAR/V5/n1/wounded.html](http://www.afterabortion.org/PAR/V5/n1/wounded.html). ■

Body complete together with our gifts and talents. Our sharing of the Sign of Peace helps us realize how we need to compliment each other. At the Breaking of the Bread, we rejoice in seeing how when we put each other's gifts, talents and skills together, our world can be such a different place, than what it is at present. When we sing the Lamb of God, we ask pardon for those moments when we fell low in our Vision, envying each other, and putting each other down, instead of realizing how the other's absence would render the Body of Christ ugly and deficient. Our Amen-response to the Body-of-Christ's call for commitment by the Eucharistic Minister will be a loud and clear recognition and acceptance to pray and speak and teach and train and finally die like Him, to make that Vision as real as ever. Our partaking of the One Bread and the One Cup binds us all the more in the realization of the One Vision we have as one community. (Cf. our covenant: deepening our bonds within the family, the community and the parish.)

St. Paul admonishes the Corinthian community (I Cor 11:17-34) for their lack of consideration towards the poor in the community. He places before them the pattern of Jesus' self-giving at the Last Supper, as a model that they should follow; for the rich used to come early before the Community Celebration of the Eucharist and finish all the food, which was meant to be shared with the poor. In another place, he admonishes the same community for their lack of love, even though they are high on the gifts (I Cor 13). If after celebrating the Eucharist, there are still the poor among us, then we can truly say that our Eucharist has become a lie. (Cf. our covenant: reaching out to the poor)

About the kind of service leaders in the community should render, St. Paul puts the self-emptying of Jesus as a model; because although He was God, Jesus put aside His godliness (removes His outer garment at the Last Supper) and took on the form of a slave (wraps His waist with a towel to wash the feet of His friends) - Philip 2: 2-11. (Cf. our covenant: servant leadership.)

Coming to the Eucharist, then, should excite us more than ever because as an evangelizing community, we have a golden opportunity to Proclaim the Good News to those around us by our vibrant praise and contagious love, drawing them to Him, the source of their life and joy. (Cf. our covenant: being witnesses.)

## CONCLUSION

The Eucharist is the heart of the Church, because without the heart the body is dead. What keeps the Body of Christ alive and ticking is the warmth of the love of the members of the





community, the source being the Holy Spirit. The recent crisis showed us how it was brought near to death, because the warmth that the soul would have given the community was ebbing away, if it had not left the body already. Without that love, you have a collection of planners and workers; no more a community.

What will bring it back to life is not our over-ambitious dreams and plans which has self-seeking interests and glorification of the self at heart. The frequent celebration of the Eucharist is the moment when the Vision and Mission of CFC FFL can become clearer, nearer and dearer to our hearts. ■

*Editor's note:*

*Fr. Justin, from the Blessed Sacraments Fathers of India, has been working closely with the community for the past eight (8) years.*



## CFCFFL World

### CFCFFL- DISTRICT OF MANILA

We started 2008 with around 185 couples and 155 family ministry members. We were present in 6 parishes out of the 89 parishes of the Archdiocese of Manila.

Each CFCFFL chapter in the district conducted at least one Christian Life Seminar, while the Servants for Family and Life conducted a Christian Life Seminar at the Maryhill Retreat House in Antipolo and another one at the Lay Formation, San Carlos Seminary, at Guadalupe, Makati. A Christian Life Seminar was also conducted at the Cardinal Sin Village, in Sta. Ana, Manila, in November. The participants were members of the Family and Life Ministry and Basic Ecclesial Communities (BECs) of the parish.

We ended 2008 with 225 couples, 51 Servants for Family and Life (SvFL), 54 Singles for Family and Life (SFL), 45 Handmaids for Family and Life (HFL), 70 Youth for Family and Life (YFL), and 100 Kids for Family and Life (KFL). This gives us a total of 770 members in 12 parishes.

Truly the Lord adds to our number daily. To Him be the glory. ■

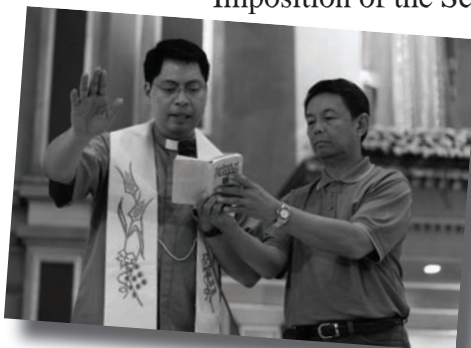
*Contributed by Charlie and Emel Reyes  
District Head, CFCFFL- District of Manila*

## Mary at the Heart of CFCFFL

Marian Congress, September 8, 2008



Imposition of the Scapular, September 8, 2008



Lipa Pilgrimage, August 9, 2008



Way of Mary, October 25, 2008





# CFCFFL World

The CFC Youth for Family and Life had their Nehemiah Weekend where 300 youth leaders and couple coordinators from all over Luzon were given teachings on how to develop leadership qualities of Nehemiah, a faithful servant of God who was responsible in rebuilding Jerusalem. A highlight of the event was the washing of the feet which was a symbolic gesture of servanthood.



The Joyride Conference was brought to CFC FFL (USA) where around 500 youth from all over the US converged at the University of Washington Seattle to celebrate God's faithfulness and His being our mighty savior!



A crowd of ecstatic youth flocked at Cinema 9 of SM North EDSA for the HOOKED Praise Concert. About 1,100 youth members and leaders were affirmed that truly, Nothing can separate us from the love of God, the event theme taken from Romans 8:39. CFCYFL fulltime workers and missionaries, Jepoy Meneses and EJ Aguila, were the praise/worship leader and speaker, respectively.



The Quest for Real Treasure ultimately gave an adventure of joy to around 300 children and adults from the Philippines and abroad! Each delegate savored the thrill of the adventure held at the Fr. Kigi Cabarlotto School in Tagaytay. The delegates made the most of the weekend which was packed with activities such as Kids Play, fun games, praise parade, sports clinic and exciting workshops! In addition, around 45 children in Virac, Catanduanes delighted in God's presence during the very first Kids Camp in the area!



Contributed by Joey Oliva  
CFC Kids for Family & Life



# CFCFFL World



Fifty CFCFFL members were nourished during their Vineyard Weekend Retreat. The Retreat, held at the Alpadi Compound in Antipolo, provided spiritual upliftment through talks aimed at shaping the Singles to respond to the call of the times, whatever circumstance they may be in. The gospel according to John served as the backdrop of the retreat.



Leaders of CFCFFL gathered much inspiration during their Nehemiah Weekend. An impact of the program was a deeper appreciation of servant leadership and growth in relationship as brothers and sisters. This activity was held at the Alpadi Compound.



The CFCFFL leaders of North America gathered for the CFCFFL Summit, held in Panama and attended by 65 SFL leaders. The Summit was filled with talks and activities which truly nourished, inspired, and mobilized the Singles to carry on the task of making CFCFFL an effective venue to evangelize young men and women in the US!



The CFCFFL gathered almost 1,000 of its members and leaders for the SFL Identified! CFCFFL International Coordinator Patrick Oconer explained that as SFL continues to strengthen its foothold in Metro Manila and gain more areas in the provinces and the world, the question remains, What SFL is all about and what makes it different and stand out. This is what SFL Identified affirmed. This event was held in Metro Manila (held at the Department of Agrarian Reform in Quezon City), Luzon (hosted by Laguna), and Visayas (held in Biliran).





# SHOPPE

## Life!

Contributed by Debbie Rodrigo  
CFCFFL Shoppe

Products help sell a company. Products create mileage. Products express one's corporate identity. However, do products reflect how a company or team is united and one in their vision and mission?

Definitely!  
Products clearly manifest being community!

Being community – it may be easy enough to practice spiritually, even emotionally. But is there a way that one can concretely and visibly practice this core value?

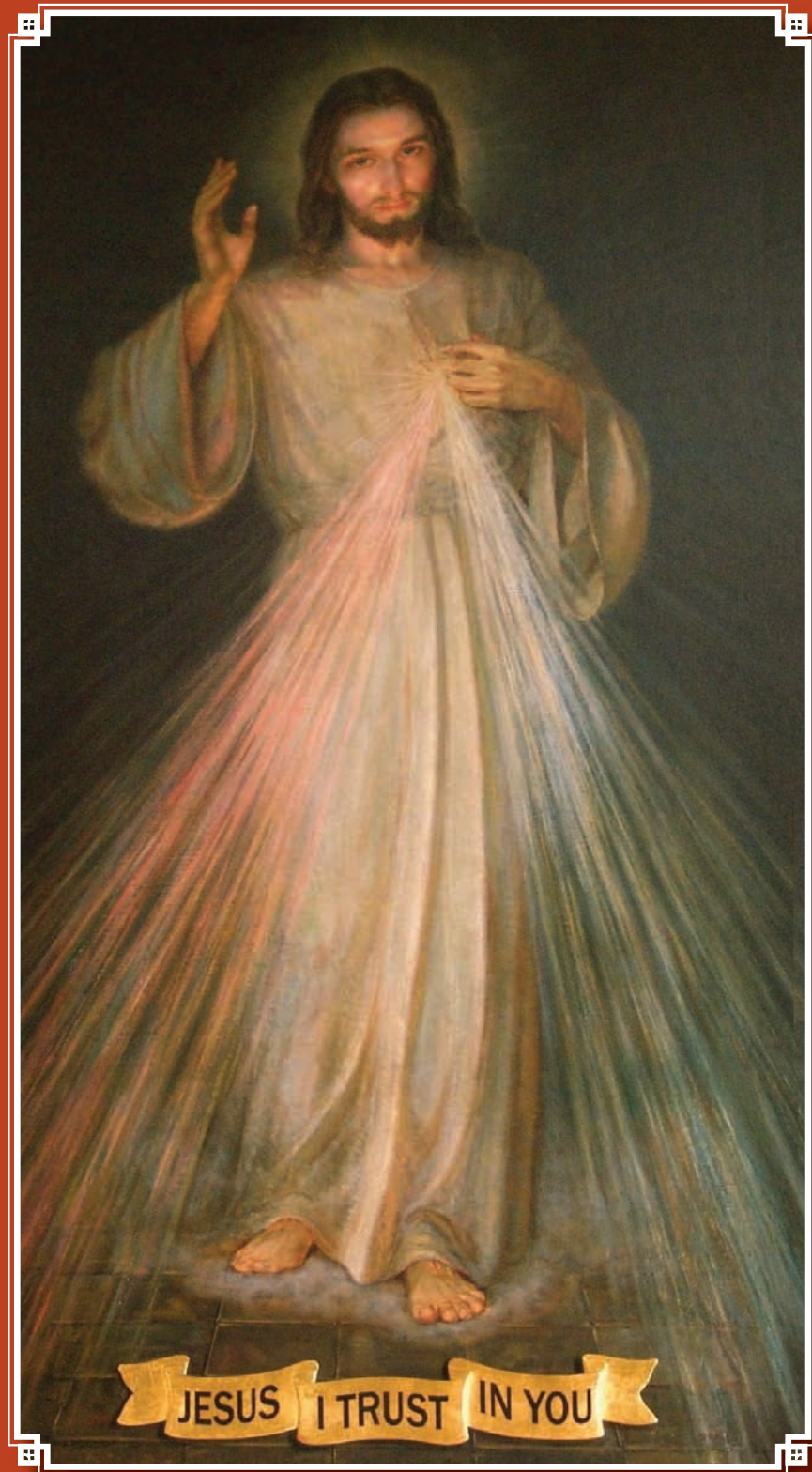
We've all been members of a club at some time in our lives. It might have been the glee club in grade school, or the sports club in high school. It may have even been as a member of an organization in college, if we were so inclined. Some people we know are even members of a fan's club of some celebrity of the moment (that's me – Noranian at heart). But does our community, the CFCFFL, stand in the same league as a club?

Membership – whether in a club or in a community presupposes a sense of belongingness. With it comes a feeling of pride, but more than that, a shared vision and a love for the common good. Surely, these are the same trademarks, the same signs that unequivocally brand us as members of CFCFFL.

In the CFCFFL Shoppe, we envision ourselves as being the company of choice working in partnership with individuals and organizations to achieve the goal of effectively communicating the advocacy of family and life. This is our shared vision, our common goal. As such, our products should depict our love for each other as brethren through a common identifier – a logo, a design, a color – at the same time clearly showing that above all, we are lovers of family and life. It should reflect our sense of pride and of belonging, and enhance our knowledge of the values and issues. It must likewise encourage our adherence to a set of beliefs that make us distinctly pro-family and pro-life.

By buying our products, you not only support the community financially. More importantly, you demonstrate your sense of oneness with all the other members by sporting that logo, that design, that color – that shows you are proud of your belief that CFCFFL indeed stands up for family and life. ■





### Three O'Clock Prayer to the Divine Mercy

You expired, Jesus, but the source of life gushed forth for souls, and the ocean of mercy opened up for the whole world.

O Fount of Life, unfathomable Divine Mercy, envelop the whole world and empty Yourself out upon us.  
O Blood and Water, which gushed forth from the Heart of Jesus as a fount of mercy for us, I trust in You. (3x)  
Amen



# **COUPLES FOR CHRIST Foundation, Inc.**

Renewing the Family and Defending Life