

Missionary Families of Christ SENIORS RETREAT

The Seniors Retreat (SR) serves as the entry point to formal membership in the Seniors Assembly (SA). Seniors are those who serve as Chapter Servants and higher. Fulltime pastoral workers also are part of the SA.

Objectives of the SR

1. To inspire the participants to live out more fully and more intensely their life in the Lord and in MFC.
2. To foster a greater commitment to the MFC vision and mission.

Contents of the talks

1. Our Call and Mission
2. Leaving All for God
3. Giving All to God
4. Servant Leadership
5. Shepherds over the Flock
6. Our Commitment

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TALK No. 1 : OUR CALL AND MISSION

Expanded Outline

A. Introduction.

1. God is about a mighty work in the world today. We as MFC are privileged to be a part of that work. We need to understand more what God is doing, in order to align ourselves with His plan.
2. God works through servant leaders. You as seniors (elders) are among those called. The fulfilment of God's plan through MFC is dependent upon your response.

B. Stages in the development of MFC.

1. God established Couples for Christ (CFC) in 1981. God intended CFC to be an evangelistic movement. It started with couples, because God wanted to form the core of the family—the husband and wife.
2. In 1993, CFC established its Family Ministries—for kids, youth, singles, handmaids and servants. Now there was something for every member of the family.
3. In 2007, there was a split in CFC. Out of that was formed a remnant, the Couples for Christ Foundation for Family and Life (CFC-FFL). Now, having already implanted the basic mission of evangelization through family renewal, God had prepared CFC-FFL for the final conflict. This is the war for the culture of life in this third millennium.
4. In 2019, to better reflect who we are and what we had become in accordance with God's design, we changed our name to Missionary Families of Christ (MFC).

C. Our life and mission.

1. Our charism is evangelization founded on family renewal..
2. We continue to be an evangelistic and missionary movement.
 - * Every member should be an evangelizer. We evangelize in the day-to-day environments of our lives.
3. We work for the renewal and strengthening of the family.
 - * We build up and expand the different Sections of MFC (couples, handmaids, servants, singles, youth, kids).
4. We fight for the culture of life.
5. We do work with the poor.

D. What is God doing?

1. We are living in the end times. Throughout the world, there is unprecedented evil. The spiritual warfare is intense.
 - a) The enemy is going all out to destroy faith, family and life.
 - * Immorality and secular humanism are rampant.
 - * Families are breaking up. Families are no longer being established.
 - * There are the scourges of abortion and same-sex marriage.
 - * There is a new paganism and mass apostasy in the Church.
 - b) There are many Christians/Catholics who are nominal and secular. At times they are even the enemy within.
2. But God is also at work.
 - a) God is raising up lay ecclesial movements, of which MFC is one.
 - b) Christians are being called to holiness, to discipleship, to serving God with their all.
 - c) God's plan is in the works. Eph 1:9-10.
3. God has raised and prepared MFC to do His work in this third millennium.
 - a) MFC, then CFC, started in the Philippines. This nation now stands as one of the last remaining bulwarks against the assault on family and life. The Philippines has a prophetic calling to be God's light in Asia and to the world.
 - b) But God's work is worldwide, and He calls other Christians in many other nations to participate in the work as well.
 - * MFC is an international Catholic community that is doing work throughout the world, with many different nationalities among its members.

E. What is our response?

1. We need to understand the vision. We need to see what God has made of CFC and what He expects of MFC.
 - a) MFC is not just some good work or renewal program, but is the very instrument of God to renew faith, family and life.
 - b) MFC is not just a service for us, but a way of life. We are to give our life and mission the priority that God wants us to give. We are called to give our all.
 - c) We are privileged to be part of MFC, which is a mighty wave of the Holy Spirit during these crucial times.
2. Know that many forces will oppose MFC.

- a) Obviously the devil.
- b) But also other Christians, even within the Church.
 - * There are those who do not understand or cannot see the vision.
 - * There are those who limit the Holy Spirit to fit their own agenda.
- c) Even from among our own ranks. This already happened in the crisis of 2007.
 - * There are those who will veer away.
 - * There are those who are comfortable and thus are not ready for the massive work and what it will require of us.
 - * There are those who are selfish with the resources God has entrusted to them for the work.

3. Our positive action.

- a) Resist the world, the flesh and the devil that all conspire to keep us from God's plan for our lives.
- b) In faith, accept God's vision for our work. Allow the Holy Spirit to expand our vision. Pray for God's will to be done, for His plan to come to pass in our lives.
- c) Then be firm and steadfast in following through. Become the warrior that is Joshua, who takes the land according to the plan of God. Jos 1:6-9,16-18.
 - * Be persevering. Be consumed by the vision.
 - * Make your personal response. Jos 24:15b.
 - * Grow in that response. Jos 24:14.
 - Fear the Lord: be in awe; acknowledge Him as Lord.
 - Serve Him completely: not halfway, not lukewarm, but all out.
 - Serve Him sincerely: not functional, not just a service, but our very life.
 - Cast out other gods: no other priorities, attachments; give yourself totally.
 - * Have God as the sole focus of your life and service.
 - Secular work is important, but our most important work is to serve God and be an instrument of His will.
 - Time is important. We are busy so we need to prioritize. Give God His due. Ps 127:2.
 - Money is needed, and God provides. But we are just stewards. We use our resources for God's purposes.

F. Conclusion.

1. These are exciting times. We are in the end times, when the final conflict between good and evil will come to conclusion. This third millennium is a time of evangelization and building God's kingdom. There is great urgency in our work.
2. We are privileged to be a part of it. And to be at the forefront! It is truly humbling that God can use us in our weakness.
3. God is at work. He has provided richly for us. The rest is up to us.

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TALK No. 1 : OUR CALL AND MISSION

Participant's Handout

- A. Our mission is to renew the family and to defend life.
- B. The major components of our mission are:
 - 1. Evangelization
 - 2. Family renewal
 - 3. Defense of life (pro-life)
 - 4. Work with the poor.
- C. Our response.
 - 1. Understand and accept the MFC vision.
 - 2. Be firm and steadfast in pursuing the vision. Dedicate ourselves to the mission. Be like Joshua.
 - * Be persevering. Be consumed by the vision.
 - * Make your personal response. Joshua 24:15b.
 - * Grow in that response. Joshua 24:14.
 - Fear the Lord: be in awe; acknowledge Him as Lord.
 - Serve Him completely: not halfway, not lukewarm, but all out.
 - Serve Him sincerely: not functional, not just a service, but our very life.
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 - Money is needed, and God provides. But we are just stewards. We use our resources for God's purposes.

Scripture references: Eph 1:9-10; Jos 1:6-9,16-18; Jos 24:14-15b; Ps 127:2.

Questions for reflection:

- 1. How much do I want to be a part of God's work in and through MFC?
- 2. Am I open to serving God completely in MFC?

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TALK No. 2 : LEAVING ALL FOR GOD

Expanded Outline

- A. Introduction.
 - 1. You are now facing a major step forward in your life in the Lord.
 - a) There is so much more that God has for you, and what God wants of you.
 - b) Remember: the call is to holiness (1 Pt 1:15-16), to perfection (Mt 5:48), to a total giving of self.

2. We want to look at some obstacles to following Christ, so we can let go and leave all for God.
 - a) Lk 9:57-62. These are Jesus' words to 3 would-be followers.
 - b) His words are interesting and perplexing. For the first (v.57-58): non sequitur. For the second (v.59-60): harsh. For the third (v.61-62): unreasonable. But we know Jesus is not such a person. So what is his meaning?
 - c) Jesus is laying down the foundation for following him. He is making clear what will be required. He is surfacing possible obstacles to discipleship.

B. The three obstacles.

1. The expectation of an easy and comfortable life.
 - a) When we are new in the Lord, we find life rosy, our prayers are answered, we have peace and joy. We all want these.
 - * The first man (v.57) must have heard much about or even experienced the great things Jesus did. Following Jesus must have meant for him the opportunity to lead an easy and comfortable life.
 - * But Jesus replied (v.58). Jesus started with a borrowed stable and ended with a borrowed tomb.
 - * Thus Jesus is saying: Before you follow me, count the cost. We are thus forewarned: following Jesus means a life of trials, sacrifice and suffering. We are not induced to follow Jesus under false pretenses.
 - * But of course, in the midst of pain and difficulty, there will be joy. Mk 10:28-30.
 - b) We are called to be different.
 - * Unlike the world, which is only after comfort, pleasure, etc.
 - * There is a cost to being different. Mt 10:37-38.
 - * Jesus' call is to a very high ideal. It would be a disservice if we think that being a Christian need not require too much of a difference. It would hurt our mission and the cause of Christ.
 - * For us in MFC, the cost comes in such things as:
 - Total submission to our way of life.
 - The giving of our time, talent and money.
 - Making our life in MFC a top priority, and reorienting everything else around it.
 - c) If our expectations about following Christ are unrealistic, we will surely be disappointed and we will experience real difficulty.
 - * It is important for us to know Jesus' call, that it will involve difficulties and pain.
 - * We need to decide to make a total commitment.
2. Strong attachment to personal priorities.
 - a) The second man (v.59). His meaning: he wants to serve his father first, and only after the father dies and is buried will he follow Jesus. The second man wants to be free of other things before he commits himself fully to Jesus.
 - b) We are the same way.
 - * There are many things important to us: family, work, social life. These are good things, but they can stand in the way of totally following the Lord.

- * We may have priorities that merely satisfy personal preferences, or bring us riches, fame, honor. For example, “I love my family, so I can’t make time to serve.” Or one gets a promotion, and due to more demands of work, drops his service.
 - * We relegate the Lord to the back seat. He is still with us, but not in the driver’s seat.
 - * Many times we rationalize. For example, “My family is important and needs my time, so I can’t attend meetings all the time.” “I can’t serve because I am concentrating on my business. But then I create jobs, and I may even tithe more.”
 - * Family, work, etc., are important. But the Lord is much more important.
 - * We need to understand God’s ways. If we put Him first, then He will take care of our family. God wants you, not your money.
- c) This passage also warns us to guard against lethargy, inertia, procrastination, fear, indecision.
- * When God calls, we should “seize the moment.”
- d) And so Jesus replied (v.60).
- * Jesus and God’s kingdom are our foremost priorities.
 - * Of course, there is room to have secular jobs, to spend time with our family, etc. But all these are only means to following Christ and building God’s kingdom.
 - * We act according to God’s priorities, not ours. What matters is what God wants, not what we want.
3. Attachment to the past.
- a) The third man (v.61).
- * We may move forward to follow the Lord but our hearts are still yearning for the “good old days.”
 - * Know that our areas of weakness before will be the areas where we will be tempted.
 - If now trying to live more simply, we may desire to dine out, to party, etc.
 - If now focusing on the family, we may long for our boys’ night out.
 - If now doing service, we may look to our old times of recreation and taking it easy.
- b) Jesus’ reply (v.62).
- * An undeniable truth: no plowman can plow straight if he keeps looking back over his shoulder.
 - * If we are to “make straight the path of the Lord” in our lives, then we need to look forward to Jesus.
- c) What can help us to do this: know that nothing the world offers can compare with what God offers, that is, His very life in us.
- d) If we look back, then our attachments to our past will compete with God’s call to give ourselves totally to Him. Thus these attachments become idols.
- * The consequences of clinging to past idols could be terrible. Ezek 14:6-8.
 - * We know that sin can cut us off from God. Thus we need to make a complete break with our past sinful life.
- e) To the third man, Jesus did not say “follow me” nor “go back.” But what he says in effect is “I accept no lukewarm service.”
- * The man is left to make his own decision. Jesus will not force anyone. You too will need to make your own decision.

- * This gives us an insight into Rev 3:15-16. Jesus wants us all out for him. We are to leave the past behind. We are to recognize only one God.

C. Conclusion.

1. Following Christ is the highest of ideals. Our model is perfect, Jesus himself. We are called to be like him.
2. Always be on the watch for these three obstacles: expectation of an easy and comfortable life; attachment to personal priorities; attachment to the past.
3. The Lord calls us.
 - a) He calls us to fullness of life, to experience peace and joy. But also to expect pain, suffering, and the cross.
 - b) We are to have Jesus as no. 1.
 - * Live for God alone.
 - * Leave our old life behind.
 - * Look forward only to the Kingdom.
 - c) Since Jesus calls, he will empower us by his Holy Spirit.
 - * We need not be afraid to commit our lives to him.

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TALK No. 2 : LEAVING ALL FOR GOD

Participant's Handout

A. Three obstacles to following Christ fully.

1. Expectation of an easy and comfortable life.
2. Strong attachment to personal priorities.
3. Attachment to the past.

B. Following Christ is the highest of ideals.

1. We live for God alone.
2. As God will empower us with the Holy Spirit, we need not be afraid to commit our lives to Him.

Scripture references: 1 Pt 1:15-16; Lk 9:57-62; Mk 10:28-30; Mt 10:37-39; Ez 14:1-8; Rev 3:15-16.

Questions for reflection:

1. Do I realize the cost of following Christ? Am I ready to face trials, sacrifice and suffering for Christ?
2. Is God and His work in MFC my first priority? Can I go all out for God, and live for Him alone?
3. How have I experienced the joy and fulfillment of leaving all for God?

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TALK No. 3 : GIVING ALL TO GOD

Expanded Outline

A. Introduction.

1. We all have things we value—money, power, career, activities, relationships, children, achievements (even spiritual).
 - a) We value these and often cling to them.
 - b) And for things of great value, we can make tremendous sacrifices.
 - * To be able to buy a car or house, we are willing to pay for the next 5 or 25 years.
 - * For the love of people and freedom, heroes have given their lives.
2. Have we ever considered that which is really most valuable?
 - a) Have we considered the worth of Jesus? Of the heavenly kingdom?
 - b) Mt 13:44. Picture the scene.
3. What happens in our encounter with God is similar.
 - a) We accidentally bump into the Lord.
 - * We are not treasure hunters. We are not really out to seek him.
 - * Perhaps we met the Lord through a TV show, or at the instance of an insistent spouse or parent or boss, or through the persistence of a friend.
 - b) Whichever way, the Lord shows a bit of the treasure chest (heaven). Do we dig it up?

B. Important points.

1. The man bought the field, not the treasure.
 - a) The man would not be able to afford the treasure.
 - * We too cannot buy God. We cannot earn the kingdom.
 - b) But we do not need to. Because we are only asked to give what we have: our old life.
 - * What an exchange! The treasure for our measly life.
 - c) Thus the cost to us is everything that we have and are. We are to sell all.
2. The man sells all.
 - a) Jesus is worthy of our all.
 - * Anything else pales in comparison to Jesus.
 - * We are to hold nothing back. We are to give 100%, and give it unconditionally.
 - b) In light of what Jesus has done for us, our response is often too small.
 - * Jesus held nothing back, but we do. We withhold areas of our lives. We are protective of our time, talent and treasure. We are invested in our own personal interests.
 - c) Our response should be like Levi. Lk 5:27-28.
 - * Levi left everything behind, abandoning his security.
3. The man sells joyfully.
 - a) He was happy to give up all, since he was getting a tremendous bargain.
 - b) Likewise, giving ourselves to God should not be a sad but rather a joyful experience.
 - * Not done grudgingly.
 - * Not feel “cornered” by spouse, parent, boss or friend.

- * Not feel “I’m too young; let me enjoy first.”
- c) Levi threw a big party! Lk 5:29.

4. The treasure is hidden in the field. It is not visible to the world.
 - a) The kingdom of God is an unseen reality, like oxygen or nuclear energy.
 - * Thus the world sees only a worthless field.
 - b) The man’s friends might well have found him crazy, when he sold all in order to buy the worthless field.
 - * In the same way, we can be seen as “crazy” when we attend regular meetings, have daily prayer time, raise our hands in worship, speak in tongues, forgo opportunities for secular advancement.
 - * We are at times considered fanatical or extreme.
 - * People may be laughing or distressed at us. This is because they have not found the treasure.

C. Fools and fanatics.

1. The world considers us as fools.
 - a) But this is OK, because we are fools who get the approval of God.
 - * 1 Cor 1:27. 1 Cor 4:10a.
 - * It is something to be proud of!
 - b) In fact, if others do not consider you a “fool,” then you need to examine your life and see if you are actually living it as a committed disciple of Jesus.
 - c) If all of us in MFC are fools, then we are in good company.
2. We are looked on as fanatics.
 - a) But is it fanatical when we respond based on what God has done for us?
 - * If anyone is excessive, God is! Out of love, God became man and died for his enemies.
 - b) Our response is too small.

D. Selling all.

1. And so we are called on to sell all in response. What does this mean?
 - a) It could be literal (like St. Francis of Assisi).
 - b) For us, it often means something else.
 - * Letting go, not holding on to things. Detachment.
 - * Decision to follow God fully.
 - * Allowing God to reign in our lives.
 - * Giving over direction for our future.
 - * Surrendering our ambitions, lifestyle, relationships.
 - * Serving him wholeheartedly.
 - * Doing whatever he asks of us.
 - c) That is hard. Many times we can’t fully let go. We cling to our little treasures.
2. Our response should be like that of Abraham.
 - a) Gn 22. Abraham was called on to sacrifice his son Isaac.
 - b) Oftentimes we have our Isaacs.

- * These may be people, habits, relationships, things, etc. All are dear to us. They are not necessarily bad.
 - * The Lord may call us to give them up. It may be a time of testing or purification.
 - * We say that we give our all to the Lord, but then hold back on some things.
- c) Can we respond like Abraham?
3. Let us examine ourselves.
- a) What is it that comes between us and God? What is more precious than the riches of the Kingdom?
 - b) What stops us from becoming disciples? Like Levi, to leave all?
 - c) What is our price?
 - * The Lord offers his Kingdom in exchange for our measly life. How do we respond?
 - * How much does it cost us to follow him?
4. There will be many calls to the altar of sacrifice. We will be called on to give up our Isaacs.
- a) What we hold on to is nothing compared to God's offer.
 - b) Paul recognized this. Phil 3:7-8.
 - * In the light of Christ, he reappraised gain as loss.
 - * He forfeited everything for Jesus' sake.
- E. Conclusion.
- 1. God has already revealed Himself to you (through your life in MFC). You already have a foretaste. But there is much more.
 - 2. Lk 12:32-34. Where is your heart? If not on the Lord, then you are missing out on a great deal.
 - 3. Be like the man who found the treasure. Be like Levi, like Abraham, like Paul.
 - 4. Let us rejoice because God is our treasure, and give our all to God.

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TALK No. 3 : GIVING ALL TO GOD

Participant's Handout

- A. Jesus is the greatest treasure.
- 1. To acquire this treasure, we need to sell all.
 - 2. It is a great joy to acquire this treasure.
 - 3. We are to be fools for Christ.
- B. Selling all.
- 1. Detachment, following God fully, yielding our lives to Him, serving Him wholeheartedly.
 - 2. Get rid of our "Isaacs."
 - 3. Consider all as rubbish in the light of Christ.

Scripture references: Mt 13:44-46; Lk 5:27-29; 1 Cor 1:18-31; Gn 22:1-18; Phil 3:7-11; Lk 12:32-34

Questions for reflection:

1. How do I value the worth of Jesus, especially in relation to other things of value such as family, work, personal interests? Where is my heart?
2. What are the “Isaacs” I need to give up?
3. Am I willing to sell all in order to gain Jesus, to be a fool for him, to fully let go of my life and cling simply to him?

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TALK No. 4 : SERVANT LEADERSHIP

Expanded Outline

A. Introduction.

1. In order to accomplish His purposes in the world, especially in raising up ecclesial movements, God makes use of servant leaders.
 - a) Servant leaders stand in God’s place. As such, they need to serve according to the example of Jesus.
 - b) According to Jesus, the leader is the servant. Mt 20:25-28.
 - c) “Servant leadership” is a seeming oxymoron. The words “servant” and “leader” seem to be diametrically opposed.
 - * Leader = power, position, influence, submission from subordinates.
 - * Servant = no inherent power, having the lowest position, submission to a higher authority.
2. In order to serve like Jesus, we need to look to Jesus’ example.

B. A servant leader needs to be Jesus’ disciple.

1. If we are to be servant leaders, we must first of all be a follower of Christ. Jn 12:26a. We are called to discipleship. Mk 8:34.
2. There are three elements of discipleship.
 - a) Self-denial.
 - * We look not to our own welfare, desires or gratification.
 - * We count ourselves as nothing, as we are merely slaves.
 - * This enables us to love God with our all. This allows us to give our very lives for the cause of Christ.
 - * This enables us to live to serve others. Jn 15:12-13.
 - b) Embracing the cross.
 - * The cross is the very message of Jesus. The cross is the very way of life of a committed disciple.
 - * As we serve Jesus, there will be trials, challenges, obstacles, oppression, persecution. Acts 14:22b.
 - * The cross is our way of purification. It is the way of holiness.
 - * We embrace the cross with joy. Col 1:24-25.
 - c) Following Jesus.

- * To follow Jesus is to obey him, to live according to his ways, to reflect him in all we think, say and do.
 - * A servant by definition is one who obeys.
3. The true servant leader is one who not only lives for Jesus, but one in whom Jesus lives.
 - a) In denying self, there is nothing more of self to come in the way of serving Jesus.
 - b) In embracing the cross, there is no suffering that cannot be endured for Jesus.
 - c) In following Jesus, only Jesus will now direct his life and work.
- C. A servant leader needs to be like a child.
1. Here is another seeming contradiction.
 - * A leader has stature, position, is capable, is someone important.
 - * A child during Jesus' time had no stature in society, is often incapable without the help of others.
 2. The disciples had been arguing about who was the greatest in the kingdom.
 - a) Jesus told them the first should be last and the servant of all. Mk 9:33-35.
 - b) Then he took a child and gave the lesson. Mt 18:3-4.
 3. What is it about little children?
 - a) Children have purity of heart.
 - * Servant leaders must not be out for power, position or privilege. They must not build turf or have a personal agenda. They should simply want to serve.
 - b) Little children are helpless and dependent on others.
 - * We are nothing without God. Apart from Jesus we can do nothing (Jn 15:5).
 - * The world abhors dependence on anyone other than self. For us, it is precisely our dependence on God that enables us to become His instruments.
 - c) Little children have no accomplishments to brag about.
 - * Servant leadership demands humility. Mt 23:11-12.
 - * Greatness in the world is accompanied by pride. A servant leader recognizes that all his achievements are due to God's blessing. 1 Cor 4:7.
 - * Such dependence resulting in humility is a key to even more of God's favor and power. 1 Pt 5:5b-6.
 - d) Little children are simply told what to do and are expected to obey.
 - * We call Jesus our Master. We must obey him.
- D. Conclusion.
1. As seniors (elders), we are called to be servants.
 - a) Such is totally contrary to the ways of the world.
 - * We are leaders but are servants.
 - * We are to be like little children.
 - b) Such is the only way of true leadership. Jesus came into the world as a suffering servant.
 2. God gives us the privilege to stand in His place. We are to carry out His very plan for the life of the world. We can only do so according to His way.

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TALK No. 4 : SERVANT LEADERSHIP**Participant's Handout**

- A. According to Jesus, the leader is the servant.
 - 1. Servant leaders serve according to the example of Jesus.
 - 2. “Servant leadership” is a seeming oxymoron. The terms “servant” and “leadership” seem diametrically opposed.
- B. A servant leader needs to be a disciple of Jesus. Three elements of discipleship:
 - 1. Self-denial.
 - 2. Embracing the cross.
 - 3. Following Jesus.
- C. A servant leader needs to be like a child.
 - 1. Purity of heart.
 - 2. Total dependence on God.
 - 3. Humility.
 - 4. Obedience.

Scripture references: Mt 20:25-28; Jn 12:26a; Mk 8:34; Jn 15:12-13; Acts 14:22b; Col 1:24-25; Mk 9:33-35; Mt 18:3-4; Jn 15:5; Mt 23:11-12; 1 Cor 4:7; 1 Pt 5:5b-6.

Questions for reflection:

- 1. Jesus is Lord and Master but took on the posture of a slave. Jesus came not to be served but to serve. How am I now seeing this whole call to servant leadership?
- 2. Am I willing to deny myself and take up my cross in order to be able to truly follow Jesus?
- 3. How do I rate as a little child according to Jesus’ standards?

Book reference: “Servant Leadership” and “Following Christ” by Frank Padilla.

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TALK No. 5 : SHEPHERDS OVER THE FLOCK**Expanded Outline**

- A. Introduction.
 - b) Seniors have been called by God for a specific purpose—to be shepherds over His flock.
 - a) Such task is called pastoral care. It is the care given by a shepherd to his flock.
 - b) How seniors serve will determine not only the spiritual well-being of the flock, but also the vibrancy of the work of the community.
- 2. Shepherds look up to the Chief Shepherd and down to the sheep.

B. Looking up and looking down.

1. It is Jesus who is the Chief Shepherd. Those who have experienced salvation are his sheep. It is a delegated authority and privilege that we have been given to care for his flock.
 - a) This is such a great privilege. We do the very work of God.
 - * God is taking a chance on us.
 - * We are instruments of His grace and blessings for others.
 - b) This is such a great responsibility. God is enlisting our help.
2. We care for the flock in the way that God would care for them.
 - a) This necessitates that we know God and His ways more and more.
 - b) We shed off our secular minds and put on the mind of Christ.
 - c) We eschew worldly wisdom and take on godly wisdom.

C. Caring for the flock.

1. Our marching orders: 1 Pt 5:1-4.
2. Jesus' definition of a good shepherd: Jn 10:11.
 - a) This is a call to unilateral, unconditional, self-sacrificial love.
 - b) We give our all, holding nothing back, even our very lives.
3. Elements of pastoral care.
 - a) We do it not by constraint but willingly.
 - * We are not forced to do this work. We are volunteers.
 - * We should not be grudging in accepting the service.
 - * We must joyfully take on the challenge.
 - b) We do it not for shameful profit.
 - * It is not a job, and not a means to carry out our own agenda.
 - * We never look to personal advantage, whether making money, having power or influence, building turf, being acclaimed.
 - c) We do it eagerly.
 - * With enthusiasm, zeal, intense interest, strong and urgent desire, quick responsiveness.
 - * The task is important, because we stand in for Jesus himself.
 - * Our efforts can have eternal consequences.
 - * This is one of the best things we can do in our lives. It is worth investing our time and effort.
 - d) We do not lord it over those under us.
 - * Though we have God's authority, it is given so we can serve.
 - * Though we are authoritative, we are not authoritarian. Though we issue directives, we are not dictators.
 - * We do not seek blind obedience.
 - * Though we correct, we are open to correction, even from subordinates.
 - e) We are to be examples to the flock.
 - * We live what we teach.
 - * We model how to follow Jesus.

- * Though we face personal challenges in responding to God, we are on our walk towards holiness.

4. In all the above, we see that Peter stresses the proper attitude or posture. He is not after the technicalities of doing a job, but rather he is concerned about the condition of the servant's heart.

D. Spiritual disciplines of a shepherd.

1. To do God's work is very challenging for man. To take on God's mind and heart is a great challenge.
 - a) We need to have constant training and practice.
 - b) God gives us three spiritual disciplines: prayer, fasting, almsgiving.
 - * Jesus tells us to be perfect as the heavenly Father is perfect (Mt 5:48).
 - * Jesus follows this up with his teachings on almsgiving, prayer and fasting (Mt 6:1-18).
2. Prayer.
 - a) We pray everyday.
 - * We do not allow any reason—whether busyness at work, or an illness, or family challenges—to keep us from our daily prayer time.
 - b) We read the Bible every day.
 - * We involve our whole family in the Bible through the Liturgical Bible Study.
 - * Attend Catholic Bible studies whenever there is an opportunity.
 - c) We read spiritual books, especially those about our very own life and mission. These are the writings of the Servant General.
 - d) We are mindful of the need to forgive others as God has forgiven us (Mt 6:14-15).
3. Fasting.
 - a) We fast from food at least once a week.
 - b) We consider fasting from other worldly desires—a TV show, a regular recreation, etc.
4. Almsgiving.
 - a) We give alms whenever the community asks for alms for some purpose.
 - b) We give regular support to our work with the poor and our prison ministry, apart from our regular tithes.
 - c) We participate in our works of mercy, like visitations of the sick or the dead.

E. Conclusion.

1. Being a shepherd over God's flock is hard and challenging work.
 - a) Many times it can seem unrewarding, when even those we serve do not appreciate what we do.
 - b) But Jesus the Chief Shepherd is our model. He is the suffering servant (Is 53:3-11).
 - * Through his suffering Jesus justified many.
 - * We walk the way of Jesus. As such, we open ourselves to affliction for the sake of others.

2. But God is never outdone in generosity.
 - a) In His love and justice, He also rewards those who serve.
 - b) We do spiritual work, and so we receive spiritual wages.
 - * We look to the unfading crown of glory to be given by the Chief Shepherd himself.
 - * Our satisfaction is not only for the moment, but for all eternity.

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TALK No. 5 : SHEPHERDS OVER THE FLOCK

Participant's Handout

- A. Seniors are called to be shepherds over God's flock.
 1. Shepherds look to Jesus who is the Chief Shepherd.
 2. Shepherds care for the flock in the way God would care for them.
 3. Our marching orders: 1 Pt 5:1-4.
 4. Jesus' definition of a good shepherd: unconditional, self-sacrificial love.
- B. Elements of pastoral care.
 1. We do it not by constraint but willingly.
 2. We do it not for shameful profit.
 3. We do it eagerly.
 4. We do not lord it over those under us.
 5. We are to be examples to the flock.
- C. Spiritual disciplines of a shepherd.
 1. Prayer.
 2. Fasting.
 3. Almsgiving.

Scripture references: 1 Pt 5:1-4; Jn 10:11; Mt 5:48; Mt 6:1-18; Is 53:3-11.

Questions for reflection:

1. Do you understand that you are standing in for Jesus and you need to serve according to His standards and ways?
2. Are you willing to give your all in the way of self-sacrificial love?

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TALK No. 6 : OUR COMMITMENT

Expanded Outline

- A. Introduction.
 1. God's vision for MFC: to be an evangelistic movement that will be His instrument to renew faith, family and life.

2. This is such a great privilege. We with our weak human flesh are being entrusted with divine work. How do we cope?
 - a) Know that we are called not because of our own merit, but simply by the grace of God. Now if God calls, then He provides.
 - b) Our responsibility is to respond to the call, and to allow God to form us so that we will become worthy and effective instruments.
 - c) All, especially the seniors, need to appreciate the vision and the call. As such, we come together in a Seniors Assembly where we are provided a continuing support environment that can help us mature more and serve better.

B. Goals of the Seniors Assembly.

1. To provide a strong support environment for seniors and fulltime pastoral workers.
 - a) To live out fully God's call to holiness and discipleship.
 - b) To encourage one another in pursuing the mission of MFC.
2. To be the backbone of MFC.
 - a) To be committed to safeguard the MFC vision, mission and culture.
 - c) To have total dedication to MFC, and invest our lives in it.

C. Elements of our commitment as SA members.

1. Utmost faithfulness to our life and mission.
 - a) Living out the MFC covenant.
 - b) Attendance at all official MFC or SA activities.
 - * Make these our first priority.
 - * Be punctual (aim for arrival time).
 - c) Exercise of true financial stewardship.
 - * Give at least a full tithe (10% of after-tax income).
 - * Participate in resource sharing when able (interest-free loans to members).
 - * Give alms (when hat is passed for special needs).
2. Submission to elders over you.
 - a) Heb 13:17.
 - * Necessary for your personal growth, for unity and good order in the body, and for moving as an army.
 - * Not contingent on your perception of how good your elder is.
 - b) *Active* submission.
 - * Be free to bring up any question, unclarity, complaint.
 - c) Covers your service in MFC.
 - * Assignments. What, where.
 - * How to conduct your service. Be eager for input.
 - d) Covers your personal life only as it affects the life and mission of MFC.
 - * E.g., it is up to you where you invest your money; but if you are not a good witness by investing in a beer joint, your elders will assert their headship.
 - e) You need not fear because your elders are accountable to the Lord.
 - * They are loyal to you.

- * Also, you can appeal. Through the different levels of leadership, even all the way up to the Servant General.
- f) Actively pray for the elders (Heb 13:18).
 - * Their decisions will affect your life.
 - * If you pray, then you need not worry because God Himself will direct them.
- 3. Total dedication to service in MFC.
 - a) Our service in MFC is a top priority.
 - b) We are open to doing missionary work.
 - c) We serve with a spirit of sacrifice.
- 4. Exemplary witness of daily life.
 - a) In or out of MFC, we can be a model to other members.
 - * Like Paul in 1 Cor 11:1.
 - b) Stamp out vices and addictions.
 - * Vice: an immoral habit or trait; a habitual indulgence in harmful practices.
 - * Addiction: giving oneself frequently or persistently to an indulgence, practice, etc., which is not good or necessary for our life in the Lord.
 - c) Our personal business dealings or service in government must be beyond reproach.
 - d) Be proud to proclaim to the world what you have become.
 - * Evangelize others actively.
 - * Use MFC novelties such as T-shirts, pins, stickers, bags, etc.
- D. Conclusion.
 - 1. These are indeed exciting times.
 - * Spiritual warfare is intensifying. We are in the end times.
 - * We are into a millennium of evangelization and building God's Kingdom.
 - * We are part of God's work throughout the world.
 - 2. What a privilege!
 - a) But we also have the corresponding responsibility.
 - b) We will be held accountable for talents unused, opportunities missed, lack of generosity of self.

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Commitment to God in the Seniors Assembly

By the grace of God and the power of the Holy Spirit, I will strive to grow as a servant leader, and I dedicate myself to the task of renewing and defending faith, family and life, by giving myself in total commitment to the Lord, to my brothers and sisters, and to my life and service in MFC.

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TALK No. 6 : OUR COMMITMENT **Participant's Handout**

- A. Vision for MFC: to be an evangelistic movement that will be His instrument to renew the family and to defend life.
- B. Function of the Seniors Assembly:
 - 1. To provide a strong support environment for top MFC leaders.
 - 2. To be the backbone of MFC.
- C. Elements of our commitment.
 - 1. Utmost faithfulness to our life and mission.
 - 2. Submission to elders.
 - 3. Total dedication to service in MFC.
 - 4. Exemplary witness of daily life.

Scripture references: Mt 28:16-20; Heb 13:17-18; 1 Thes 5:12-24

Questions for reflection:

- 1. Am I ready to seriously try to live out faithfully and fully my life in the Lord in MFC?
- 2. Will I live my life as a living, vibrant witness to Christ and the power of His Holy Spirit?
- 3. By God's grace, will I now dedicate my life totally to God and be a faithful member of the SA?

Commitment to God in the Seniors Assembly

By the grace of God and the power of the Holy Spirit, I will strive to grow as a servant leader, and I dedicate myself to the task of renewing and defending faith, family and life, by giving myself in total commitment to the Lord, to my brothers and sisters, and to my life and service in MFC.

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(SG. Oct 7, 2019)