

A TIME OF TRANSITION

Feast of Our Lady of the Rosary
October 7, 2019

*“See, I am doing something new!
Now it springs forth, do you not perceive it?”
(Isaiah 43:19)*

It has been 38 years of our life and mission. In that time, the vision that God gave us has continued to evolve. In 1981 we saw the establishment of Couples for Christ (CFC). In 1993 we saw its re-founding. In 2007 we saw its restoration, now as CFC-FFL. In 2011 God gifted us with the Live Christ, Share Christ (LCSC) mission, as our participation in the Church’s work of New Evangelization.

All this has always been in accordance with God’s plan and design. God does not reveal everything at once, but journeys with us as He unfolds the totality of His plan. Today, with the world in darkness and rampant evil, with growing paganism and apostasy, with great challenges even within our Catholic Church, God is revealing the fullness of His design for us.

Where evil abounds, grace abounds even more. In this third millennium, God has called for the New Evangelization, intended to bring renewal and revival to His Church. We are at the forefront of this call. God provides the new wine of the ever-creative Holy Spirit, but there must be a new wineskin to contain it.

In response to the Spirit’s prophetic call for our community, in accordance with the evolution of God’s design, in preparation for the more massive work in this third millennium, we are changing our name. Our new name, effective today, will be: ***Missionary Families of Christ***.

Our true identity

We started in 1981 as Couples for Christ. It was basically an outreach to couples. Only in 1993 did we offer a place for every other member of the family. Further, since 1981, God has revealed more and more of His plan for us, and has moved us closer to the heart of our Church, the body of Christ on earth.

- * In 1981, under the aegis of the *Ang Ligaya ng Panginoon* (LNP), we were a transparochial community, not integrated in the life of the Church.
- * In 1993, after separating from LNP, we moved closer to the Church, but functioned as a parallel community, running side-by-side with the Church but not intersecting, like railroad tracks.
- * In 2007, with the split in CFC and the restoration of our authentic charism, we moved to become a servant *to* the Church.
- * In 2011, with the introduction of LCSC, we moved to become a servant *of* the Church, committed not just to our own evangelization work, but striving to mainstream Catholic lay evangelization.

The name “Couples for Christ” is not longer reflective of our call. Now it is clear who we are and what we are called to do. The two most important aspects of Christian life, especially considering the deepening evil in the world today, are the renewal of families and the work of evangelization. The family is God’s basic unit for society and the Church, and its stability and strength will determine the future of humanity. But there is also the call to do mission. Our Church, of which we are a part, is a missionary Church. This is her most important work.

This is what our call is about. This is what it has always been, but revealed to us by God in stages. This is what God has prepared us for through all these 38 years. This is our identity, our charism and our work. We are Missionary Families of Christ.

Unity and uniformity

The reality is that we have over 10 other different names of our community in different parts of the world. This is due to local circumstances, including the disapproval of bishops of our using the name CFC, due to the existence of another CFC.

In Australia and the United Arab Emirates, we are “Catholics for Family and Life.” In Canada and Papua New Guinea, we are “Community for Christ Foundation for Family and Life.” In Singapore we are “Christ for Family and Life.” In Thailand we are “Christ Foundation for Life.”

And so our change of name is an opportunity to have the same name throughout the world. One community, one mission, one identity.

For the sake of mission

There are some places in the world where we are not allowed by bishops to be established. This is because of the existence of the other CFC, with the bishops not wanting to have confusion or so-called “competition.” These are in places like Africa, the West Indies and Indonesia. (Note: there are also places where the other CFC is not allowed by bishops because we are already present).

If we have another name, then all these places open up to us. And indeed, being missionary, we intend to bring our work to the ends of the earth. There is much that can be done, but this obstacle of the name needs to be overcome.

To avoid further conflict and scandal

While we have moved on from the time of restoration in 2007, the other CFC has at various times and in various places disputed our using the name CFC. This has caused confusion, conflict and scandal. This of course is not good for the overall situation of the Church and her work in the world.

Our taking another name can stop the negativity and hopefully bring peace, so that all parties can focus on doing their respective work.

A matter of branding

The reality is that “CFC,” much as we love our name, is a damaged brand. The scandal of the split of 2007 affected many people negatively. Even up to today, we have people whom we invite to our CLS who say they are not positively inclined because of what they know about CFC.

Further, as many of you have probably experienced, a number of priests and prelates simply refer to us as CFC, during homilies, conference messages, Church fora and the like. For us we know what they mean. But if there are non-CFC-FFL in the crowd, they may end up thinking of the other CFC. Whatever good is said of us and whatever good we do does not then enhance our “brand.”

For the sake of the future generations

Many of us of course would naturally have an attachment to the name we have carried for 38 years. But this is about looking to the future, until the Lord returns once again. This is about our legacy for our children and our children’s children, including those not even born yet. It is best if they have a name that matches their identity. And it is best if they be spared from the confusion and conflict that have arisen due to the name CFC.

Looking to Vatican recognition

To further our missionary thrust, we are seeking recognition from the Holy See, through its dicastery, the *Dicastery for Laity, Family and Life (DLFL)*. In this regard, the DLFL has asked us to change our name, so that the scandal of division will not be highlighted by the official recognition of two CFCs.

The Biblical perspective

In the Bible, we see that oftentimes a person’s name reflects his identity or mission. Adam named his wife Eve, as she would be the mother of all the living (Gn 3:20). Joseph was instructed by the angel to name his son Jesus, meaning “the Lord saves,” as he would save his people from their sins (Mt 1:21).

Also, a person would be given a new name, to reflect a new identity or a new mission. For example:

- * God renamed Abram Abraham, as he would be the father of many nations (Gn 17:5).
- * God renamed Sarai Sarah, as she would give rise to nations (Gn 17:15-16).
- * God renamed Jacob Israel, as he contended with divine beings and prevailed (Gn 32:29).
- * Moses renamed Hoshea Joshua (Nm 13:16). In Hebrew, Jehoshua or Jeshua is the Hebrew name for Jesus. He would lead God’s people into the promised land (as Jesus would in bringing us to heaven).
- * Jesus renamed Simon Cephas (translated Peter), as he would be the rock upon which Jesus would build his Church (Jn 1:42; Mt 16:18).

Now we are transitioning to a new name, Missionary Families of Christ. The name “Couples for Christ” was right for the beginning, as we indeed reached out to couples, for 12 years before starting the Family Ministries. But we have outgrown this name, which is no longer fully reflective of our identity and mission.

For some years now, who we are and what we are called to do has been clear. Our charism is evangelization founded on family renewal. We focus on the two most important aspects of the life of Christians in this world, and that is family and mission. We are families on mission.

It is time for our name to accurately reflect our identity and mission.

Moving on

Though we are changing our name, we are not setting aside the history of our community from 1981, which history is an integral part of who we are. Thus we will continue to reckon our anniversary from 1981.

Also, while we are changing our name effective today, the formal roll-out will be starting January 1, 2020.

We will inform you later about our new logo and what we will call the different sections of the community (the current Family Ministries). We will be providing updated manuals and write-ups.

If you have any questions, please email me directly at fapcfc@gmail.com. I will be happy to address all your concerns.

Pope Francis said in October 2013, "Christian families are missionary families." That is what we hope to be.

You have been with me all this time, through the many ups and downs in our life and mission. I have borne you in my heart and have striven to provide you an environment for your personal and family life support, even as I continued to exhort you to holiness and authentic discipleship.

There is much more that the Lord has for us. I need you with me. In accordance with God's plan, we continue to be destined for greatness in Him. Let us now move on, as Missionary Families of Christ.

God bless you all.

Your brother and co-worker,

Frank Padilla