

THE HISTORY OF MISSIONARY FAMILIES OF CHRIST (MFC)

MFC evolved through various stages of development according to the plan of God. It started out in 1981 as Couples for Christ (CFC), then entered into restoration in 2007 as Couples for Christ Foundation for Family and Life (CFC-FFL), and finally became Missionary Families of Christ in 2019.

Historical development

The *Ang Ligaya ng Panginoon Community*¹ (LNP) had initiated bringing couples together and having them go through a Life in the Spirit Seminar (LSS), as their way of evangelizing couples and recruiting them into LNP. In late 1980, 5 couples went through the LSS and were integrated into LNP. Elated at their success, they again invited couples in January 1981. 16 couples responded and finished the LSS. However, rather than bringing them into LNP, the LNP leaders were considering having a separate group that would focus on couples. So the group of 16 couples continued to meet every week and underwent various teachings. Then in June 1981, the 16 couples made their covenant with God and with each other, calling themselves “Couples for Christ” (CFC). CFC was established.

The 16 couples met weekly in households and had prayer assemblies. Then an expanded LSS, called a Christian Life Program (CLP), was developed. In October 1981, CFC mounted its first CLP. From then on, it continued to grow, as more and more couples were evangelized.

CFC grew steadily through the years. As they grew, there were requests for CFC to be brought to the provinces, and there were requests that non-couples (just husband, just wife, single, widow, etc.) be allowed to undergo the CFC CLP. However, LNP, having various other outreaches,² maintained that CFC was only for couples. Further, LNP was taking the top leaders of CFC and bringing them into LNP. Difficulties emerged, as LNP, considering CFC as a “low-level community,” insisted on faithfulness to LNP activities, while the CFC leaders concerned wanted to expand the evangelization work of CFC.

The tension came to a head in 1993. CFC leaders had gone through a long process of dialogue with LNP leaders, desiring to do more rapid and massive evangelization, looking for ways to co-exist with LNP without adversely affecting its own work, but both parties could not come to an agreement. In April 1993, CFC decided to separate from LNP, to be true to what it believed was God’s call to it.

CFC then went to the Catholic bishops and asked 5 of them to become its Spiritual Directors. The bishops embraced CFC and approved of its separation from LNP. From there, especially in the decade of the 1990s, CFC grew rapidly, massively and globally. By the end of 2000, CFC counted

¹ “Ligaya ng Panginoon” means “Joy of the Lord.”

² LNP had outreaches for businessmen and professionals, for single men and women, for youth, for widows, and for the poor.

1.2 million members. By its 25th year in 2006, it was present in 153 countries throughout the world, with membership not only among Filipinos but many other nationalities. By the first half of 2007, CFC was present in 160 countries.

CFC received official recognition from the Catholic Bishops Conference of the Philippines (CBCP) in 1996, and from the Holy See in 2000 (*ad experimentum*) and then 2005 (permanent).

Towards the latter part of the 1990s, CFC started its work with the poor. This eventually evolved into an integrated and holistic approach to building communities among the poor, and it was called Gawad Kalinga (GK). In 2003, CFC and GK launched GK777, intending to build 700,000 homes in 7,000 communities in 7 years.

Difficulties surfaced, as GK leaders and members got more involved in social work to the detriment of CFC's basic mission of evangelization. In early 2007, the tension and conflict came to a head, with there basically being two camps--CFC and GK. The CFC leadership was unable to resolve it.

In February 2007, 3 leaders of the 7-member CFC International Council (IC), the governing body of CFC, in taking command responsibility, resigned from the Council (but continued on their various service assignments). The remaining 4 continued as the IC. But the tensions remained.

The IC fired people indiscriminately, disobeyed the bishops who intervened in the dispute, refused to dialogue with those who disagreed with them, reneged on agreements regarding the bi-annual elections (in June 2007), and so exacerbated the crisis. A group of CFC leaders attempted to bring restoration from within, but the IC responded by unilaterally firing them from all their services. With no dialogue and nowhere else to go, the group of CFC leaders and members, with the approval of the 3 bishops involved, formed Couples for Christ Foundation for Family and Life (CFC-FFL) and went their own way.³ CFC-FFL is the restored CFC, true to its original charism.

CFC-FFL entered more deeply into the heart of the Church. It consecrated itself to Mother Mary, it had as one of its 7 Core Values that of being a servant to the Church, it pushed its members to be more active in serving their parishes.

In October of 2011, CFC-FFL moved even more deeply in its service to the Church. It promoted generic evangelization, for the benefit of the parishes, without recruitment into CFC-FFL.⁴ This was the start of the Live Christ, Share Christ (LCSC) mission. This was CFC-FFL's response to the call of the Holy Spirit to the New Evangelization.

In October 2019, CFC-FFL changed its name to Missionary Families of Christ (MFC).⁵

³ There actually was mutual agreement between the 2 CFCs that they would go separate ways.

⁴ In the Philippines, LCSC looked to the jubilee of 500 years of Christianity in 2021.

⁵ For the reasons for the change, see the paper "A Time of Transition."

Stages in the life of MFC in relation to the Church

First stage (1981-1993) -- a trans-parochial community. CFC was directly under LNP, which was under the umbrella of the international and ecumenical Sword of the Spirit (SOS). While being Catholic, CFC had nothing much to do with the institutional Church.

Second stage (1993-2007) -- a parallel Catholic community. While being under the bishops, CFC ran parallel to the institutional Church, like railway tracks, going in the same direction but never intersecting.

Third stage (2007-2019) -- as CFC-FFL, a servant *to* the Church. CFC-FFL deliberately seeks to serve the Church through the parishes, offering its various programs. A major service by a parishioner who is a member of CFC-FFL is considered his/her service in CFC-FFL.

Fourth stage (2011 and onward) -- CFC-FFL initiates generic evangelization, done for and on behalf of the parish, without recruitment into CFC-FFL. This is the Live Christ, Share Christ (LCSC) mission. It is being a servant *of* the Church.

Fifth stage (2019 and onward) – CFC-FFL transitions to MFC.

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