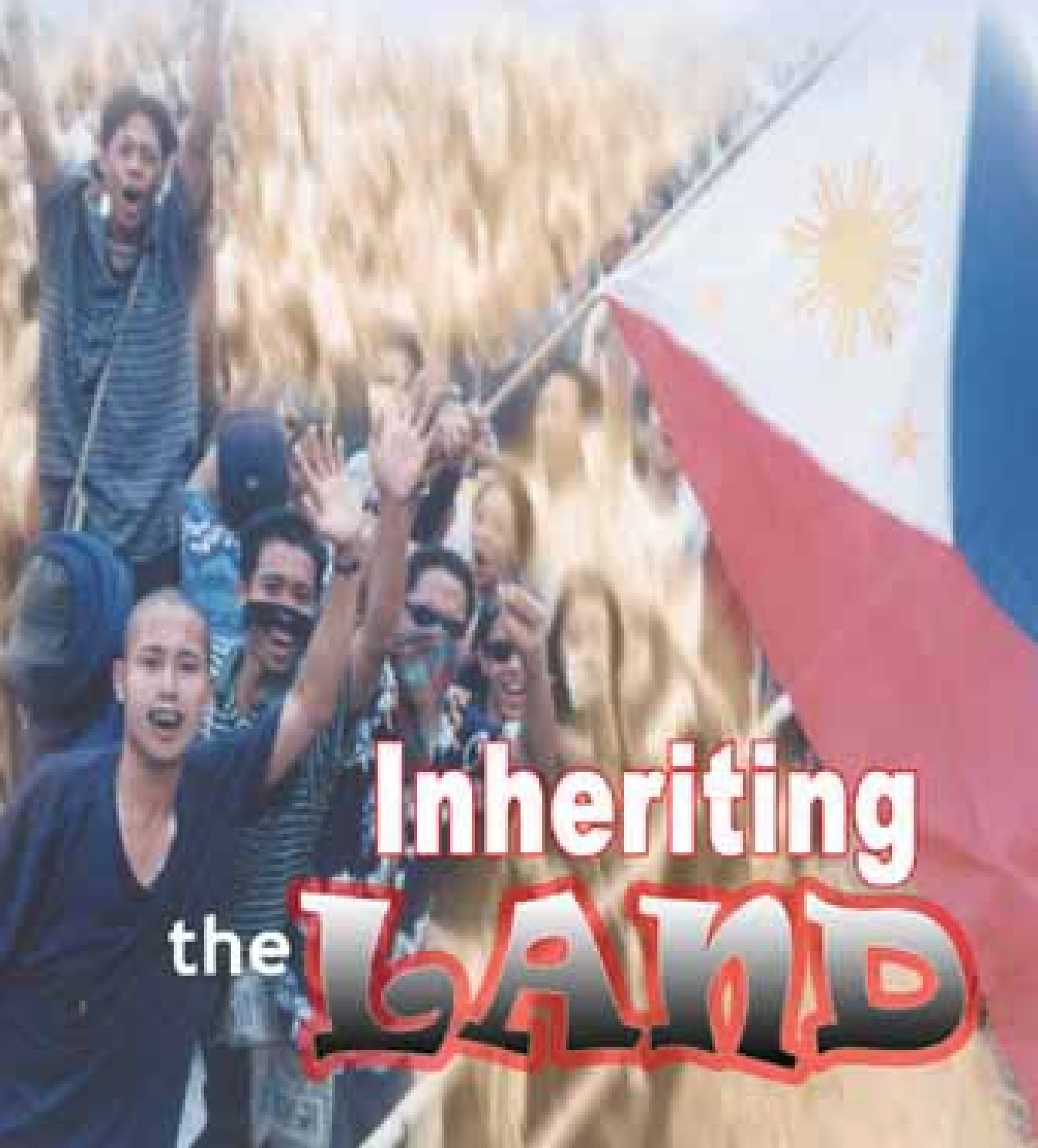


Ugnayan

March – April 2002

Volume XIII Number 2



Inheriting the **LAND**

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Ugnayan is a rich Filipino word that stands for fellowship, unity of heart and mind, relationship and friendship; it means bridging the gap, communication, linkages and understanding. It is also an official publication of Couples for Christ and its Ministries, seeking to follow Jesus Christ's instruction to bring God's message of salvation to all.

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“Build up, build up.”

So goes our theme for this year. We will continue to build up spiritual structures—renewing the lives of individuals whose bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit, establishing Christian homes where Jesus reigns, and strengthening the institutional Church of which we are members. At the same time, we will build up physical structures—building houses for the poorest of the poor, bringing life and vibrancy to neighborhoods, establishing communities of caring and sharing.



From the DIRECTOR

As we do all these, we will be about an entirely new aspect of our mission—that of building a nation. This year we are emphasizing our thrust for nation building in the Philippines. Our goal:

**to build one nation
under God
that will be a
light to the world.**

But even as we focus on the Philippines for the moment, we know that our mandate is to participate in the work of making disciples of all the nations (Mt 28:19). It is thus that our global evangelization efforts will also move forward without let-up, and this year we will surpass the 100-country mark.

But again, we are not just bringing our ministry of renewal into the different countries, we are not just renewing individuals within a particular country, we are actually into the work of nation building. And we are into this in radical and challenging situations. I cite two examples.

South Africa is a country that has been wracked by division caused by apartheid. Eleven years after the collapse of apartheid and eight years into the transition to democracy, South Africa is still divided—among blacks, whites, coloreds. CFC entered South Africa in 2000, brought to the border town of Mafikeng by CFC Botswana. Last November 2001, we started CFC in Johannesburg, the recognized hub for the country. Since then, CFC has started to grow rapidly, especially among the youth. And we continue to focus our resources on building up a critical mass for our work. Of our six fulltime single missionaries to Africa, four are based in Johannesburg. But what has happened in such a short time is that we have brought blacks, whites, coloreds and Indians together. Our first South Africa-wide prayer assembly in March this year brought together our members

from different places and socio-economic classes, but more importantly, it brought together brethren of different color, all praising the Lord and witnessing to God's goodness. This is a foretaste of things to come. God will use CFC to help unite South Africa.

In the Philippines, a big problem is the Muslim insurgency in the south. Different administrations have tried to resolve the problem, but have not succeeded. In fact the situation continues to worsen. Vested interests are pitting Christians and Muslims against each other. The potential for fragmenting the country is real. It is recognized that the solution lies in true economic development and addressing the grievances of the poor and oppressed in Mindanao. In this situation, CFC will attempt to do its share. Starting with small initiatives in such places as Zamboanga, we have now tied up with Muslim educators, community leaders and politicians, agreeing to bring our *Gawad Kalinga (GK)* work to Tawi Tawi, the southernmost province of the country. Here we will build houses for both Christians and Muslims. Here we will build mixed Christian-Muslim communities.

Thus we look to our work as an antidote to disunity and violence, and a key to unity and peace. Could the Lord be laying the foundation for CFC to do a global work of fostering unity among different races, religions and cultures in the different countries? Could CFC help bring unity among Christians and Muslims in Indonesia? Christians and Buddhists in Thailand? Christians, Hindus and Muslims in India?

Indeed unity is a work of the Holy Spirit, which is being manifested in the work of CFC. We have been uniting husband and wife and fighting against separation and divorce. We are uniting families, bridging the gap between parents and children. We are uniting communities, bringing together rich and poor.

All this is in accordance with God's plan, "for the fullness of times, to sum up all things in Christ, in heaven and on earth" (Eph 1:10).

God is a God of unity. And even now, God gives us a glimpse of what will happen in heaven if we continue to do His work. "After this I had a vision of a great multitude, which no one could count, from every nation, race, people, and tongue. They stood before the throne and before the Lamb" (Rev 7:9).

In our work for unity, we ourselves need to strive for unity. We need to be one with God. And we need to be one in CFC, the body that God is using. Satan, out to destroy God's work, will continue to try to break us up, for he knows well that "every kingdom divided against itself will be laid waste, and no town or house divided against itself will stand" (Mt 12:25). Satan tried when CFC got involved in the political crisis in the Philippines, which led to the ouster of President Estrada. He tried when CFC spearheaded the 13-0 Movement, in its fight for new politics and good governance. He tries to agitate some members, including leaders, who cannot appreciate the social dimension of our work, and the thrust for total human liberation. He tries by focusing some overseas leaders in insisting on building their own version of CFC, apart from the totality of our one work, with its center in Manila.

We need to resist the incursions of Satan. We need to strive to appreciate the fullness of the vision and mission of CFC, fusing the spiritual and social dimensions of the gospel. We need to humbly look to the overall leadership of the CFC Council based in Manila, which has been tasked to keep CFC united and true to its God-given vision and mission. We need to build up and not tear down. If we do build up, then we will see CFC being used mightily by God to do His work of renewing the face of the earth, of making disciples of all nations, and of uniting all under Christ.

**One vision, one mission, one culture.
One work for total human liberation.
One global community. This is CFC.**

Let us cherish and defend what God has given us. And let us move forward in our one work, with ever-growing commitment.

Growing in the Lord

By : Rouquel and Nina Ponte

From the Tabernacle of the Altar

MISCONCEPTIONS AND FALLACIES. They shroud the Christian's idea of Jesus at the tabernacle. Emotionalists paint a portrait of a lonely Christ – sorrowing, pathetically waiting for His creatures who never come to worship and adore. He is bereft in His aloneness; a mysterious enigma of a desolate God who, in the dark, is resigned to wait, and wait, and just wait ...

But He is God. Not man. He never grows weary nor becomes discouraged. Despondency never consumes Him. Christ in all His power and might can simply wish a command and His creatures will come rushing in hordes and packs to the houses of worship to glorify The Maker. An abandoned Creator at a dimly lit Church is a negative concoction of a romanticized and sentimental mind.

At the tabernacle of the altar, Christ sits enthroned in majesty and glory. His radiance and splendor fills the place. He is King reigning in victory. And the King draws us near.

So, we come to Christ in the tabernacle of the altar – not to beg nor plead for He is God, not man. And God wants to give in a way that is bigger and deeper than the width, the length and depth and height of our needs. He puts His finger at the very point where we need help the most. The moment of our greatest need is the moment of our divine, loving power encounter with Him.

From the tabernacle of the altar He reaches out to touch, to heal, to make whole, to cleanse, to transform, to empower, to bless. He fills us with Himself – the very SOURCE OF LIFE AND GRACE. He desires to come inside of us. And He wants to stay... forever.

His will is to walk this earth once more. But our legs will be His legs. Our feet will be His feet. He longs to listen to unvoiced groans of grief, to touch unimaginable miseries. He needs our arms and hands to be able to do so. He comes to us with the immensity of His LOVE.

A little girl once asked her grandmother, “Grandma, how big is God?” The grandma wisely answered, “God is so big He can hold the whole world in His hands. But He can be so small that He can curl up inside your heart.”

Once we permit God to reside in our hearts and to love through us, He will step out into the world having been born through you and me. Gal. 2:20 says, “It is no longer I who lives but Christ who lives in me.” If Christ lives in me, then I am a walking tabernacle whose destination is the tabernacle of the streets. In the streets are lonely people, needy people, REAL people in whose lives Christ lives, nonetheless.

to the Tabernacle of the Streets...

and **BACK**

From the tabernacle of the altar, Jesus would want to roam the tabernacle of the alleys, of dark side-streets in search of incoherent drunks, catatonic drug-addicts and sensuous, de-virginized whores. The cursing unchurched and the godless sinners He would gather round to bring home with Him. “Jesus heard this and said, ‘Those who are well do not need a physician, but the sick do. Go and learn the meaning of the words I desire mercy, not sacrifice. I did not come to call the righteous but sinners.’” (Matt 9:12-13)

Christ roams the world in search of the destitute, the derelicts, the homeless, the deprived, the oppressed, the sick and the dying. Under the bridges, in hospital wards, homes for the aged, institutions for the demented – he looks all over to minister to the “living dead” – victims of unmet wants and needs and . . . loneliness.





Loneliness, the often unseen monster that victimizes this crowded modern world. That is why Christ cries out “Comfort, O comfort My people,” says your God. (Is. 40:1)

Harold J. Sala tells of an elderly woman, Jean Rosenstein. “Though living in a city with millions of people she felt very much alone. One day Mrs Rosenstein sat at a table in her cramped, one bedroom apartment and put her thoughts on paper. The arthritis in her fingers made the writing difficult and painful.

The scrawled words read, ‘I’m so lonely I could die. So alone. I cannot write. My hands and fingers pain me I see no human beings. My phone never rings.. I’m so very old, so very lonely. I hear from no one Way past 80 years old. Should I die? Never had any kind of holidays, no kind. My birthday is this month Sometimes I even feel sure the world ended, and I’m the only one on earth. How else can I feel? Oh, dear God, help me. Am of sound mind, so lonely, very, very much. I don’t know what to do.’”

Is a Jean Rosenstein living nearby – yet unseen by you; unnoticed by everyone? A woman might be living in the tabernacle of

total aloneness forgotten by people too busy to care. Christ hurts for her. You hurt for her. All that is necessary to end her loneliness is just one real friend. Is that friend you? We need each other, and the friendship of the One who will never leave or forsake us. Friendship overcomes loneliness and enriches your life.

BE A FRIEND. TOUCH A LIFE.

- ◆ Sit at a park bench with a la-a-arge bag of popcorn and a good story book for children. Invite the street children and young vendors to join you. Distribute the popcorn. Then tell them stories. And tell them about Christ.
- ◆ Invite a beggar to join you for hamburger and a cup of coffee. The guards and waiters won’t shoo him away. You are a valued customer – and he is with you. That personal regard and high esteem you will accord him might be the priceless gift he needs to restore his faith in people, in himself, and in God. Oh yes – while sipping coffee – tell him of God’s love.
- ◆ Buy a kilo or two of fruits in season. They’re so cheap now. Head off towards the bent, little old woman vendor selling newspapers and cigarettes at the busy street corner near the gasoline station. Tell her it’s God’s gift. You may want to give her a rosary next time you go to her. And invite her to be your long-distance prayer partner every evening.
- ◆ Prepare an extra sandwich in addition to your child’s *baon* (packed lunch). Make it really special. Tell your child to give it to the janitor in school. Accompany it with an inspirational verse that you copied from the Bible.

- ◆ For the mistress of the home: Have a chit-chat with your househelper. Try to know things about her you have not known before. Don't be disappointed if her response is not what you expected. After all, she is used only to hearing you give orders and commands.

She's not used to chatting with you. But if done with love, humility and sincerity, that moment of interaction may go a long way in bridging the gap between two hearts.

Loneliness, the often unseen monster that victimizes this crowded modern world.

- ◆ Immerse yourself in our GK work, CFC's work with the poor. Many think of GK as a mere project. But it is not just a project. Projects are sterile – without heart and life. But GK is alive because it's all about LIFE – the LIFE GOD wants all of us to live; a life of sharing, compassion and real loving.

of the cross, kneel down and tell God of the lives you have touched. Ask for greater grace and courage so that tomorrow when the new day dawns, you may go back again to touch more lives for Christ. For indeed, the call is not easy. You need grace and courage to do so.

From the Tabernacle of the Altar ... to the Tabernacle of the Streets ... and back! And while there once more at the Tabernacle

of the Altar, with eyes closed and head bowed down ... in prayer and stillness... AWAIT HIS BLESSING AND ENJOY GOD'S PEACE.

No man is an island.

It's of utmost importance that I don't become fully contented and satisfied with my life, (oblivious of everyone else) for as long as there is even one person out there who's trying to keep body and soul together but cannot because there's no one who notices and cares enough to help.

GK is not all about money. Yes, it involves some amount out of our pockets. But that is love in action, isn't it? Some grumble and say that it is draining their resources. But God is a God of miracles. If out of the goodness of our hearts we share with joy and gladness, the little that we give, God may give back transformed to a **MIRACLE. OTHERS' MIRACLES. YOUR OWN MIRACLE!**

When evening draws near, leave behind the altar of the streets, go back to your home or to a nearby church. And there, in the shadow

Discussion Guide :

1. How can I have a deeper personal encounter with Jesus during my prayer time?
2. Do I see Jesus in the face of my spouse and children? Our helper? The person I meet in the street? The people in the workplace?



9th YFC-ILC

A Christian WOODSTOCK

By Rosette D. Correa

We had stopped several times to ask for directions but now we were finally here – the site of the Youth For Christ International Leaders’ Conference at the CFC Village in Talisay, Batangas. My husband, my daughter and I went out into the 36 degree heat of the morning sun. The scene before us was awesome. There were tents pitched everywhere and anywhere we looked, there were teenagers, all of them trekking in one direction.

“This is exciting!” my husband muttered. “It’s like being in Woodstock.” Woodstock did seem to match the festiveness and the movement of the crowd at the CFC Village. The only difference was that Woodstock was decadent and screamed of worldly activities, whereas here in Talisay, it was an atmosphere of being together for one purpose - the worship of God within the brotherhood of the CFC family.

“You’re right,” Frank Padilla beamed at my description of the place. “It is like Woodstock. A Christian Woodstock!” He described the place as the future CFC Village, where two hectares will be devoted to a Renewal Center that will be used for retreats and conferences. “We were blessed to have been given these two additional hectares of land for that purpose.

The other parts of the land will be used for the Gawad Kalinga shelters CFC is building for the poor.”

Frank and the other CFC leaders, together with 15,000 youth delegates, were waiting for President Gloria Arroyo to arrive. Frank explains why the President was so keen on taking part in the festivities. “She is very much interested in the Gawad Kalinga projects as well as in the ministry of street gangs in the depressed areas we call SIGA. It is a project to keep them away from the activities that lead to crime and bring them to God and work for His ministry.” The President was coming to look at the model homes the youth had built for the TATAG, CFC’s shelter program for the poor.

The gathering was truly historic. The sheer size of the youth participation, all excited in spite of the heat, the swirling dust, the inadequate accommodations, attested to the fire enkindled in the young hearts to serve their God and to have fun while doing it.



Luis Oquiñena praying over Pres. Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo at the 9th YFC-ILC in Talisay, Batangas. Others in photo are Gerry Padilla and Deputy Executive Secretary for Legal Affairs Joe Tale.

The First Day

On April 5, the first day of the conference, the different YFC chapters from all over the country presented through a parade the beauty and color of their culture. The participants came prepared for their presentations and in spite of the harsh conditions, everyone was enthusiastic and excited. FLAME presented their products at a fashion show.

The most inspiring event of the day was the gathering of the delegates around the center stage for the talks. As Gigi Maipid, wife of Ernie, the CFC National Coordinator for Youth for Christ put it, "It was like seeing people gathered for the Sermon on the Mount. The delegates were seated on the ground, wherever there was space, ready to see with their eyes and hear with their hearts. It was truly amazing to see young people gather for the Lord."

New Face, Familiar Smile

Ernie himself reflected the enthusiasm palpable in the whole conference. He recalled how one of the members of his planning team experienced a vision after an ocular inspection at Talisay. He saw long lines of youth and vehicles lining up to get to the place, just like the journey of the Israelites out of Egypt to the Promised Land. He saw people in abundance and in merriment, and there was a spectacular parade of colors and people.

Luis Loyola 18 years old Provincial Head of YFC Albay.

"We came here with 100 delegates, traveling on a non-aircon bus for 10 hours. I have been a YFC member for six years and this is my fourth YFC-ILC conference.

I really enjoyed the talks, particularly the talk of Tito Ernie Maipid on "Inheriting the Land". Right now, we are experiencing the inconveniences of living off the land, but we actually don't mind them because we are here to worship. For me, we should first know how it is to live simply. Here in Talisay we have the ground for our floor and the sky for our roof and this has forced us to truly appreciate the land we are to inherit. This conference, I hope, will allow me to make my own plans to further serve the Lord. I hope to work full-time in the youth ministry in my hometown."

This promise of the Lord unfolded on the first day of the event, during the parade of areas. "I can't tell you how incredible this feels for me." Ernie beams. "Our 10,000 registered delegates swelled to 15,000 as walk-ins came the day after, and the merriment grew. The new registrants didn't even mind if they missed the meals and other benefits of the first day, for they came to listen to God's word and be one with their brothers and sisters. Isn't that spectacular?"

In spite of the natural reluctance of the youth to be organized and to lead in God's service, Ernie believes that doors should not be closed to the possibility of the youth growing with God through the family. "The basic perspective of some people, even some parents, on the youth of today is not very encouraging. But as Christian parents and leaders, we all must learn to interact with our youth and to allow the children to discover their leadership capabilities and their relationship with God by themselves, with our guidance of course."



Jojo is a SIGA member from Bagong Silang. He is also employed by FLAME Ministries as a silk screen printer.



Laya Scholars: These youths from Bagong Silang received scholarship grants from prominent schools like Ateneo, U.P. and U.S.T. through the Laya Scholarship Foundation.

Steff Marquez, Belle Tomang and Krishna Manuel YFC Isabela

" We have been with YFC for three years now and we always enjoy attending the ILC. These conferences never fail to show us the value of making friends. We always look forward to the talks. This is where we learn a lot of valuable lessons, where we meet people we can relate to, people of the same age and with the same concerns.

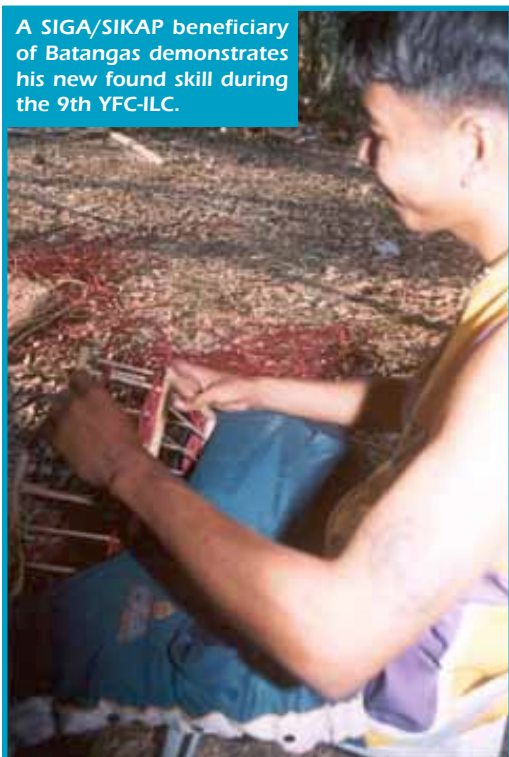
The meeting of different cultures is a blessing indeed. Whenever we meet together like this, even if you do not know the people you encounter, all you have to do is say "Hi, Brother!" or Hi, Sis!" and you get instant friends. It's really a good feeling because when we Filipinos come together, it's like we are one country under the greatness of God."

Ernie cited the difficulties some of the delegates encountered in getting to the venue. The delegation from Leyte, overshooting their expected number of participants and not having enough funds to go via their original travel arrangements, had to travel to Talisay on flatbed trucks, sitting on wood benches for at least 28 hours! "That simply shows that the youth can endure amidst adversities. Our Youth for Christ, having dedicated themselves to God, are especially resilient because they know that these difficulties come in the course of glorifying God."

Making New YFC Friends

The conference had a fiesta theme. Thus, the whole event was a cacophony of sounds and a plethora of events. There were sports such as cheerdancing, 2-ball challenge, basketball and volleyball being played simultaneously. In other areas, participants were involved in such events or games as Mural-making, Water Gun Maze, Joust Gladiator, Human Checkers and Kite Flying.

A SIGA/SIKAP beneficiary of Batangas demonstrates his new found skill during the 9th YFC-ILC.



Bem Porticos, YFC and Bogzie Bogo, SFC, Bukidnon

It's really hot here, but we can survive. Water's really a problem, but everything else is alright. Going back to the roots is never easy. Besides, knowing 15,000 other youths are suffering with us for God's glory is the ultimate sacrifice I believe everyone wants to be part of. It's hard but it's a happy event."

There were even cultural activities such as native dance performances and chorale singing.

Although it seemed that the conference was chock-ful of games and other fun events, the spiritual dimension was not forgotten. After a hard day of fun and competition, the youth gathered for worship and to listen to inspirational talks before settling down for the night. On the second night, Saturday, popular show band Freestyle lighted up the night with a spirited performance.

Being in the midst of all these – the festive air, the fun and games but most especially the zeal for the Lord apparent in the youthful faces, I rued that I missed this kind of opportunity in my own youth. I envied the youth at Talisay their enthusiasm for God, for not being ashamed to call the Lord their friend and brother, for enduring all for His service. But I was glad that my own daughter had witnessed this kind of magic. This was the bonus of our being in Couples for Christ – that we could witness to the next generation the love of God and His faithfulness. Here, on the dust-filled hills of Talisay, we saw God in the faces of the youth. Here, we were not separated by age, nor skin color, nor dialect. Here, gathered together on this piece of land we all call home, we were all God's children.

**Dominic Cabauatan, Athena Paz,
Gino Gapo, and Hera Yangson
YFC Leyte**

" We had a gruelling 28 hour trip. All of us experienced muscle pain and other body aches as a result of the trip but the moment we got here, we were glad we made the trip. All of these - the dust, the heat, the rough living conditions, even the lack of water - are all meant to show us that we can endure anything and everything for the Lord."

**Kristine Apale, YFC Metro
Manila**

"It's shameful when we Metro Manilans complain about the conditions here. What right do we have to grumble when people from the provinces, for example, General Santos, had to travel by bus and endured more hardships than us just to get here. Yet you still see smiles on their faces and they still exude the genuine desire to be here."





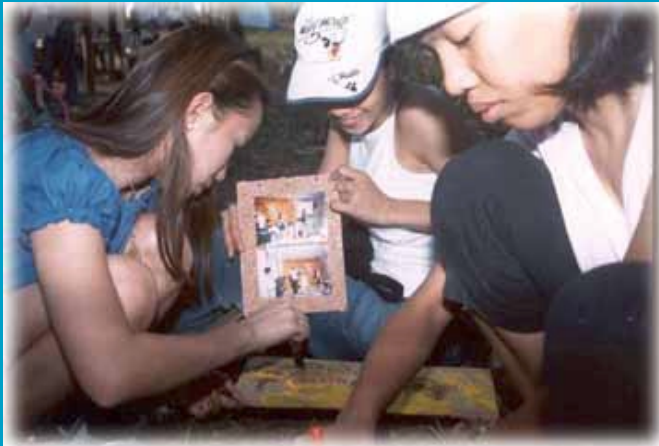
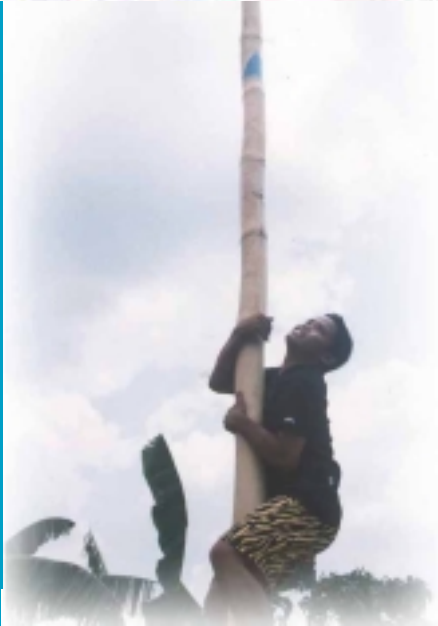
**Elena Estanislao,
YFC Metro Manila**

"Serving the Lord this way and knowing Him in exciting ways by meeting people and serving them is a good exercise for us students from UP and Miriam. When I joined YFC, there were things my former youth ministry in church did not teach me that YFC did. That's why I always volunteer to be on the service team to do God's work."



For me being in YFC means a deeper commitment to taking care of the spiritual growth of our peers. After being given so much by God, why shouldn't we give some of ourselves back to Him?"





**Pinky Chan, Abhe Icaro
and Liezel Orsino
YFC Pililla, Rizal**

"This is a great adventure for all of us. This is our first time to attend such a gathering and we are having so much fun. It's wonderful to see different youths with the same purpose gather in one place. There are a lot of us who can't afford to travel all over the Philippines, that's why if you gather people from different places in an event like this, it's like being in their place."



Good Governance

Repairing a Damaged Culture

By: Manny Catabas

The St. Thomas More and Associates held its first Conference on Good Governance last 26 to 27 April in Subic, Olongapo City. The conference aimed to gather all CFC members holding elective and appointive positions in government, and to instill in them the values and principles espoused by CFC. In addition to government officials, representatives from the private sector were also invited. The three-day conference provided much-needed time for reflection on each individual's role in rebuilding the people's trust in government. The conference also featured a workshop where the participants were asked to plan their course of action in ensuring that they perform their duties amidst a system damaged by rampant graft and corruption.

A Culture of Corruption

Addressing the delegates on the opening of the conference, CFC Director Frank Padilla said "Our country is blessed because it is a beautiful land and the Filipinos are a noble race. We have a rich tradition and a unique culture. But sad to say, notwithstanding God's bountiful blessings upon our land and our people, we are today a broken nation." he said.

The private sector lamented the inability of those in government to render service to the people especially the poor. Many of the private sector representatives are active in the CFC's Gawad Kalinga Project and have been exposed to the realities of life in the poor communities of the country – no potable water, lack of decent housing and scarce opportunities for employment.

"Being a public official for a long time, I was exposed to a corrupt system that seems to be imbedded deeply in our culture. It seems that graft and

corruption is now our way of life, whether it be in the public or the private sector. It is very sad that we seem to be creating a culture of corruption. Is this the legacy we will be leaving to our children? We as CFC members must take action to repair the damage corruption has done to our country," said Conference Coordinator Dante Liban, who was a three-term congressman of Quezon City.





Visayas. Because of that deep conviction, he earned the respect of the people as well as his subordinates who willingly attended the CLP seminars he organized in every precinct under his jurisdiction. It wasn't long before he was able to eradicate the drug problem in three barangays in Leyte by mobilizing the whole community. The project, called Barkadahan, provided

An Impossible Dream

Dante continues: "The transformation of our politicians and the institution of reforms in our political system may be an impossible dream... maybe even quixotic, but I know of many God-fearing and well-meaning politicians who have defied the odds and won." He cited Mayor Jesse Robredo of Naga City, who has earned international recognition from the United Nations, as an exemplary public administrator. Mayor Robredo is an active CFC member. With sheer political will, he instituted reforms in the city government and eradicated illegal gambling or "jueteng" (Jueteng is a popular kind of lottery among Filipinos but is not sanctioned by the Philippine government). Because of his many reforms and his clampdown on many establishments that promote vices, he lost many of the political allies who supported him during election. However, despite the lack of political machinery, the citizenry of Naga City continues to support the mayor and his programs.

Police Gen. Efren Fernandez, also a CFC member, shared that because of his deep conviction that God is his Supreme Commander as embodied in every policeman's creed, he firmly stood his ground against some powerful politicians during his stint as PNP Regional Commander for Eastern

the youth an alternative where they can seek spiritual and moral guidance. The project is still going strong in Leyte, a testimony to Gen. Fernandez' efforts to improve the community. "Because of my fear and love of God, I was empowered to mobilize the community and working together, we have left a legacy that will redound to the benefit of all. It is this kind of partnership the country needs... a vigilant civil society and a government bound by morality run by honorable men and women." he said.

Keynote Speaker DILG Sec. Joey Lina raises hands during worship at the Good Governance Conference.



A Future Full Of Hope

In his keynote address, Department of Interior and Local Government (DILG) Secretary Jose Lina, the conference's guest of honor, noted that politicians are so involved with worldly things that they find it hard to be reformed. "They play a critical and strategic role...it is imperative that they realize that there is a God they will account to." he said, "Most of those in government lack the necessary guidance in spirituality and values. This is the root of the problem among our politicians." He then exhorted CFC and the STMA in particular to continue its work of advocating good governance. He assured STMA of the DILG's unconditional support for its ideals.

STMA chairman Joe Tale gave the final address and challenged everyone to be bold in transforming the country. "Our work of nation-building has already begun through the different GK areas that serve as flickers of light in this nation. It signifies the hope of our countrymen for a better future. It is now up to you as public officials to make them blazing rays of radiance.", he said.

The conference was capped by a very solemn ceremony – a covenant signing. The conference hall was enveloped in deafening silence to give each delegate a time to reflect on what those three days meant for each of them and what the future shall be for a nation torn apart by prejudices. The covenant for good governance everyone signed states that the individual binds himself/herself: (1) to practice morality in public or private life; (2) to hold policies that are pro-God, pro-life, pro-family and pro-poor; (3) to oppose or not be a part in corruption and (4) to fight for justice, peace and integrity of creation.

With firm resolve evident on their faces that the Lord truly is with them for the restoration of the land, everyone lined up towards the covenant to affix their signature. This signified their wholehearted compliance to the ideals of good governance.

"You may be a small force today, but together, our collective effort could be a potent force to reckon with. CFC has already reached the critical mass level to be influential. Our basic foundation is our love for God." Social Ministries Director Tony Meloto exhorted the delegates.

Everyone agreed that the power of the Spirit was strong and pervaded the conference. While everyone confessed to being initially unsure of their expectations of the conference, the talks, the sharings and the covenant they signed erased their doubts that they, as a collective force, can and will make a difference in Philippine government and society.



Remember them? Mang Pandoy and the three boys of the Bangkang Papel represented the Philippines' poor people.

Budget Sec. Emilia Boncodin addressing the delegates at the Good Governance Conference in Subic.



Letters from Africa



(Ed's note; Paul (extreme right in photo) is one of six young men and women who have committed to living in South Africa and Botswana for a year as missionaries. Here he shares his new life as a true servant of God.)

February 24

I really had a great day today serving at the El Dorado Christian Life Program. We were supposed to be at the first YFC camp but it was postponed so all of us (the members of the Africa Mission Team) except Charisse (Ubod) were at the CLP. Charisse couldn't come because there was no longer room for her in the car. Roland and Chona Nillas went straight from the airport to the CLP. What a dedicated pair! Luis (Oquiñena) and the other guys in the team who will be staying in Johannesburg were also there.

February 26

Yesterday we had Family Day at the house of Paul Henry, a CFC member here. They had a pool and a trampoline. I bounced on it the

whole day playing with the little kids and now I have sores everywhere. We ate a lot! It was a nice day where everybody got to know everybody within the family. Today, I woke up at 6am and immediately prayed. Then I drove for Sethu and her brother Mswakhe (hope I spelled it right) to the city of Johannesburg. It is about 45 minutes drive from where we stay. Here in South Africa, 45 minutes means it is really far particularly since we drive not below 80 km!. I'm getting the hang of driving here.

March 4

We just had our planning this morning. They are thinking of not going to Botswana anymore since we might lose our momentum but I told them I should leave as early as I can for Botswana so Ruel and I can start the work



The first youth camp in South Africa with 10 youth graduates (School Based Program)

on the way to Gaborone (Botswana). We'll be fixing our visa there. Maybe Ruel and I can be transferred there by April 1...I hope. Our camp in Botswana is scheduled on the 5th of April. I will be leading a camp this March 15 at El Dorado. I'm really excited because the participants will be mostly blacks. They're such fun to be with. They really enjoy music and that's the one thing we will have in common —

MUSIC!...

there beginning with the camp this first week of April. But plans might still change especially since Tito Frank Padilla is coming. I'm all agog to start the work so I can meet my goals for the year.

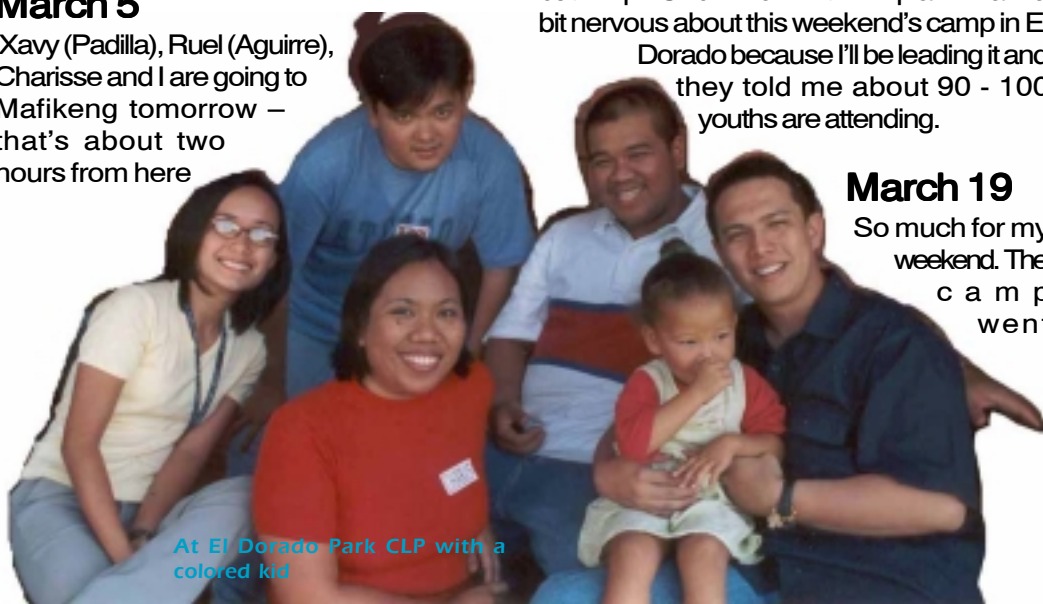
We had a camp this weekend. The children here are really something! While we were giving the talk, everyone else was doing his own thing. But one thing I learned though is it made me more prayerful.

March 5

Xavy (Padilla), Ruel (Aguirre), Charisse and I are going to Mafikeng tomorrow — that's about two hours from here

March 11

The camp last weekend was different from the last and made me realize the truth of what Jesus said — that He came not for those who are well but for the sick. One thing great is that they are asking me to join one of their youth bands in Victory Park. I think that is a strategic move — for me just to connect with them first through our common love for music, then later I'll ask them to be YFC's. Then we can have a music band in our next YFC conference. That is still in the drawing boards but I hope God will bless those plans. I am a bit nervous about this weekend's camp in El Dorado because I'll be leading it and they told me about 90 - 100 youths are attending.



At El Dorado Park CLP with a colored kid

March 19

So much for my weekend. The camp went



Our second Youth Camp in South Africa had 57 youth graduates. Here they pose with Saint John Parish youth.

really well...as far as them getting the message, but the way they were? Oh my God! The boys drained the swimming pool, broke several windows, including the window of the canteen and stole the chips and juice near the window, they locked us in our rooms...and many other incidents. The girls are ok though. On the whole, however, they were very appreciative of our efforts to give them our time and our love. Maybe they just need a lot more attention??

March 22

This morning Shok (Arriola), Tito Frank, Charisse and I went to see the archbishop of Johannesburg. The good news is he is officially welcoming CFC and its ministries to his diocese. This is really great for it will give a big boost to our work here. We also went to visit an orphanage where all of the kids have AIDS. We played a bit with them but it was so heartbreaking knowing how sick they all were and how little we can do for them.

Today we will be having an assembly for the youth in El Dorado, those who just finished camp – remember them? The really pesky (spirited) ones?? Who knows, we just might be able to choose leaders from among them. They sure have the energy.

March 26

Xavy is on his way back to the Philippines already. Today Tito Frank is leaving also. Now it will only be the six of us. Next week we are

all off to Botswana and Zimbabwe, after which only four will return to Johannesburg. Ruel and I will be staying in Botswana. Tito Frank told me to be especially watchful about our options in Botswana. He says if I feel there is a lot of work to do there, then we can make the decision to stay. If the work will not be that exciting, he says we should go back to Johannesburg since the team definitely needs us there too. So I need to open my eyes and my heart to what God wants me to do here in Africa.

April 1

I just finished packing my things for the Botswana trip. We will be doing a camp and a Singles Weekend Retreat (SWR) for the Singles for Christ there. I eagerly await the response to our work there.

April 3

Today was quite a long and hectic day spent just talking with a lot of people...building relationships. In the evening we had a meeting with some CFC and SFC leaders. We are expecting about 100 youths to be in the camp this weekend and for sure it would be a very tiring weekend. But this is all for the glory of God! I have offered myself to bleed for Him. I guess God is asking me to bleed some more. That was my prayer this afternoon when we went to mass, before we met with the bishop here in Gaborone.

April 5

A Filipino sister is inviting us to go to the Kalahari Desert early Monday morning. She works in the area. She says this is a very good opportunity for us to be exposed to the bushmen - the real tribal Africans. We will be staying there overnight. I will bring lots of water to drink. She advised us to do so since there is no potable water there.

I got this fantastic feeling last Wednesday when we went to give an orientation to the youths who will be joining the camp this weekend. They are all students at a school here in Gaborone. They were celebrating mass when we arrived so we decided to join them. They were singing a *capella* with a bit of native drum accompaniment but wow!! What a beautiful sound they made! I bet they will be the people who will be singing loudly when we get to heaven.

April 8

The weekend camp was great! There were about 100 participants, all of them blacks. Right now we're looking forward to our trip to

Zimbabwe. They say it takes about 15 hours overland by bus. We are still looking for other travel options such as by train. Everyone is of course concerned about our security there since it's supposed to be risky for tourists. When people learn we are going there, their usual reaction is incredulity, then they all say "God bless you."

April 10

The Kalahari desert is not totally a desert and they actually call it a wilderness because there is vegetation. I had a nice experience there. Charisse, Sister Mari, JP (John Paul Alvarez), Ruel and I left Gaborone at 6:30 a.m. on a small pick up. We males were at the back of the pick-up and of course there was no cover and it was really hot! We arrived at Hunkutsi (the edge of the desert) at 11:30 a.m. and we had to transfer to another vehicle (a 4x4) which is owned by a very nice Irish priest named Fr. Julian who has been there for 40 years! Right after lunch we went straight to the heart of the desert. It was an hour or more of riding over rough and sandy terrain before we reached the settlement of the bushmen. That



Our third Youth Camp in South Africa with 84 youth.

was where I had the best experience so far. The priest decided that we'll celebrate mass although there were just six of us (including him) but as we were preparing for the mass, there was a sudden sand storm. It went on for about 15 minutes. When the storm went, we began the mass but the priest discovered he had forgotten his missal. It was a good thing I had my "In His Steps" and the Bible. The priest said at least we have the important part of the mass (the reading) because we cannot make that up. After the mass, we went back to the settlement where we stayed overnight. The sky was very clear and I even saw a couple of shooting stars. Someone asked why I was so silent and I said I was missing my girlfriend. She said that is just one of the crosses I will have to bear here in Africa so I might as well carry it with a smile. How true!!

We spent the morning talking with the natives with Fr. Julian doing the introductions. Fr. Julian said the natives have not been baptized yet but he is beginning from friendship. He says the whole idea is just to show them that Christ can be their friend too. We left the area soon after and arrived back in Gaborone at about 7:30 p.m.

April 12

This evening we met with the Singles. We joined their household meeting. They shared how touched they were

during the time they served in the youth camp. Even the parents were very happy about what transpired during the weekend. I just feel so lucky to be chosen as an instrument to touch these people's lives.

April 13

We have our visas for Zimbabwe already. We were supposed to leave here Monday morning but we were told there are no bus trips in the daytime. That means we need to leave Sunday night so that we can be at the border Monday morning. That's what our visas stipulate.

April 23

Yesterday was my birthday, as you know. A CFC family (their family name is Te Braaks) asked me what I wanted for dinner and I thought they were just joking so I said lamb chops, fries and vanilla ice cream. Guess what? They invited us for dinner at their house and the food was exactly what I ordered! There was even a cake Aunt Colleen (the wife) baked. They also served crocodile meat. I liked it - it tasted like chicken! It was really nice of them to go to so much trouble for me. Again I felt so blessed... missing all of you but truly blessed because God has brought me to this fantastic place.



The Africa team pose with one of the tribal dancers.

I am here in Nigeria for God's mission and it has just dawned on me that my past mission experiences were just "picnics". In the past almost all my mission work had rewards attached to it (well of course because GOD is good always) among them the beautiful places the Lord allowed me to see, the sight seeing tours, the comfortable (and free!) accommodations at the homes of our brothers and sisters in the community, the gifts and souvenirs, the good food and the many learning experiences. I can honestly say I enjoyed going to mission assignments.

Here in Nigeria, the Lord has shown me another face of mission work. This is the "real mission". There is no sightseeing because there are no beautiful places to see. There is litter and garbage everywhere, even on the main expressway in the middle of the city. There is no garbage collection system! Epidemics are a common occurrence and diseases cannot be eradicated. People have lost their sense of beauty and cleanliness. The government has failed to provide basic services to the people. Government employees have been on strike for several months because they are not being paid their salaries. The teachers just recently came back to school after almost eight months of strike. Corruption both in the government and private sectors has plunged the people into dire poverty.

In case you get the impression that Nigeria is a poor country, you would be wrong. Nigeria is a very rich country, one of the top oil producing countries and very rich in many natural resources. Importation of all sorts of products is a big business in the country. Imported luxury cars like Volvo, Audi, Mercedes Benz and Honda can be seen everywhere in the city or even in the villages. There is heavy traffic in the city, much worse than in L.A. or Manila. One can be stuck in his vehicle for almost 3 hours for what would normally be a 30-minute drive because of the sheer volume of traffic, undisciplined drivers and frequent vehicular road accidents. In Lagos alone in

Dateline – Nigeria

To Walk as JESUS Walked

by Rene Rieta

2001, there were 3,000 vehicular accidents and about 600 cases or 20% of these were fatal. The lifestyles of people here are very extreme. The rich people have a very affluent life, constantly buying new clothes, jewelry and other luxuries while the majority are struggling to survive with the meager income they earn.

Survival is the name of the game. Business scams are very common as are armed robberies. The

church and religious groups are a favorite target, especially the Sunday Mass collections.

Power interruptions are part of the normal routine. If your area gets more than six hours of electricity (and not even on continuous basis), you would be one of the lucky ones because most areas of the country have an average of less than four hours of electricity. It is said corruption is responsible for this state of affairs because many government people

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are involved in the sale of power generators. For the already marginalized, life is miserable here. For the rich who have a lot of money to buy generators and to maintain their lavish lifestyle, life is grand, although they have to spend even more money to protect what they have. The rich build enclaves with high walls thick iron bars and multi-heavy padlocks, all the more isolating themselves.

This is the kind of mission environment we are in right now. Menchie Donato was right when she said **“There is no SAFARI in Nigeria, only SUFFERING”**. No perks at all. One should not get sick or injured here because there is no good hospital. Private hospitals look worse than any government hospital in the most remote area in the Philippines.

Certainly this is not the place to go, in the eyes of the world. Who would want to live in a place like this? But this is precisely the reason why our Lord Jesus Christ came to this world. His mission is to liberate his people from all forms of oppressions and to bring glad tidings to the poor. I am sure, if the Lord is physically present, He would surely go to this kind of place to bring His good news of salvation.

Yes, the Lord is certainly present here because He has promised that He will be where people need help. Praise God for the positive response of our brothers and sisters in Canada, who cheerfully took the burden of this mission. Ricky and Irma Cuenca and their group are doing great sacrifices for the mission. Our brethren in Canada are spending thousands of dollars, leaving the comforts of their home, leaving their families behind and risking their lives in order to bring God’s salvation to this place where many people would not dare to go. It is very encouraging to

know that we have committed brothers and sisters like them.

What they have planted will surely flourish, because we have members in Nigeria who are committed and believe in our vision and mission. A HOLD member in Onitsha has offered us a 3-bedroom house with 2 toilet and bath for CFC use all year round. People persevere in attending (for 8 straight days) our Christian Life Program under the open sky. Using only candle lighting (remember the power failures?) the participants read their discussion handouts avidly. They are faithful in holding household meetings even though there is the very real threat of armed robbery

or violence. Mass celebrations here take about three hours but everyone stays and there is a lot of joyful singing and dancing. Daily morning mass attendance is like our regular Sunday masses back home so you can well imagine that Sunday masses see churches filled to overflowing.

The bishops and priests are very supportive of CFC, even providing us accommodations in their convents. We are blessed to have Fr. Mario Cueto and his group, the Oblates of St. Joseph in St. Mary Church in Lagos, who are very generous in hosting us.

“There is no SAFARI in Nigeria, only SUFFERING”.

But the greatest blessing in doing this mission work is knowing we are doing the will of God. To the Lord Jesus be the glory!

Teodora Files

by: Teodora: *In Defense of the Authentic Women*

Threats to Family & Motherhood

The world is a smaller place to live in because of rapid information technology. It is changing fast as ideas, attitudes and beliefs travel and are assimilated across nations and cultures in an instant. Many of our traditions are being discarded for new ones, often without our even noticing it.

Not all these changes are beneficial. Let us look at some of these modern attitudes and ideas that are subtly but systematically eroding our institutions of family and motherhood. We should be aware of these negative influences and guard against them.

SECULARISM

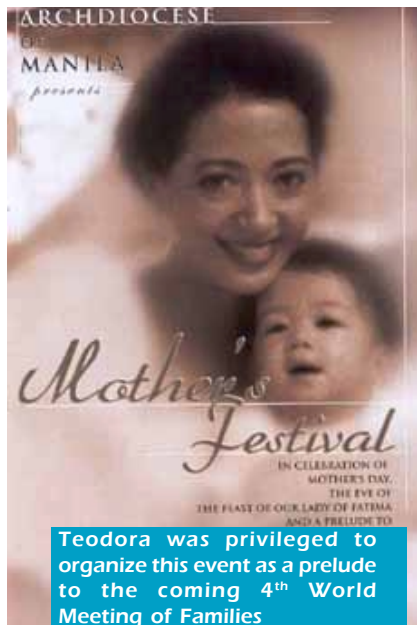
Today, we see so much emphasis being put on the physical, the temporal or the worldly. We call this secularism. God and the supernatural aspect of life are relegated to the background as unimportant or irrelevant.

HEDONISM

Today many people believe that the pursuit of happiness and pleasure is the highest good. This is referred to as hedonism. We see this mentality reflected in

contemporary slogans like “Just do it” or “No fear”. Consequences, sin and punishments take a back seat to the consideration of how much pleasure the act will bring.

As part of this pursuit of pleasure, sexual permissiveness is encouraged. The virtue of chastity is laughed at as being old-fashioned or impossible to achieve. The youth today are given permission to enjoy sex as long as they protect themselves against the negative consequences (Sexually Transmitted Diseases and unwanted pregnancies) by using condoms and contraceptives. TV programs are replete with story lines where the characters have sexual relationships with different partners. Teen magazines teach readers how to enjoy sex to the max.



In the United States where safe sex has been promoted for thirty years among the youth from preschool, the problems of unwanted pregnancies and the spread of STD's have worsened. They are now dealing with the problem of preteen pregnancies, the spread of a greater variety of STD's and an unbelievable rate of legal abortions. Taking the cue from the West, many are already lobbying for the legalization of abortion in our country.

Suffering and sacrifice is seen now as old-fashioned or as an evil. It is said that "*Ang mga martyr binabari sa Luneta.*" (Martyrs are shot at the Luneta Park). Today, forbearance is seen as foolishness. For example, a woman who wants to work on saving an unhappy marriage is seen as being weak or stupid. In other countries, couples can have 'no-fault divorces' meaning that the couple can get divorced anytime. They do not even need to have a reason. In the Netherlands a divorce can be obtained in 20 minutes. Many people in these countries go through multiple marriages leaving a string of children confused about who their family is. Today, many are lobbying for the legalization of divorce in our country.

We have been hearing of 'The Right to Choose'. This refers to the right of men and women to have complete freedom on what they want to do with themselves. Included here is the right to choose when and how to be pregnant (to abort), to choose their gender (to be gay), to practice their own sexuality as long as the other person gives his consent (to be a pedophile), soon to engineer the characteristics of their future children, to choose their profession (to be a prostitute), and to choose when and how to die (euthanasia).

MATERIALISM

In our consumer society today, what we own and how well we live measure our worth and happiness. We are influenced to pursue material wealth above all things. Many modern couples postpone having children until they have a house, a car, a stable career and other material comforts. They feel their children are deprived if they do not go to the best schools, get the best toys, etc. This has also produced a generation of spoiled and soft children. There is a proliferation of easy money schemes like sweepstakes, jueteng, TV game shows.

There is a lot of emphasis on how one looks, especially for women. A look at the beauty ads will show that people can lose/gain weight, enlarge/reduce their breasts, sculpt their body, remove unwanted hair, replace missing hair, tattoo faces and bodies, make skin dark or light, get rid of warts, wrinkles, pimples, have shiny hair, have fake nails, etc. There is now no excuse not to look perfect. It is good to look our best but it becomes excessive if we see our identity as how we look and not who we are inside. Being beautiful has become so important that beauty industries are said to even use cells from aborted fetuses for creams and lotions.

CONTRACEPTIVE MENTALITY

We hear of pollution and overpopulation. We are warned that in the future, there won't be enough for everyone. People have become liabilities and users of precious resources. Children have become expenses and not blessings as they were once regarded.

Today's society is a throw-away society. What is not useful is discarded. In this age of paper plates, plastics and take-home food, we throw away inconvenience, sacrifice and hard work. In many parts of the world, this throw-away mentality also applies to the sacredness of life. Many unwanted babies are routinely aborted in many parts of the world. In the US, women who are above 35 have to have their unborn child genetically tested. If the child is found to be at risk of having birth defects, the mother is 'counseled' to consider having an abortion. Many people are lobbying for the right to die. They see the life and prolonged suffering of a terminally ill person as useless.

In many poor areas, the people are tricked into sterilization. Many are fitted with IUD's without their knowledge. These are funded by First World nations who spend billions of dollars to make sure that the Third World countries' populations are limited. A few years ago, anti-tetanus toxoid shots were given to women of childbearing age in Third World countries. Many unsuspecting women later complained of miscarriages and infertility. It was discovered that some of the vaccines were laced with infertility drugs.

PERMISSIVENESS AND TOLERANCE

We now are cautious about being 'politically correct'. This means that we should respect that people are different and be more understanding of the ways of others. This is a good attitude to adopt but it should not mean accepting actions of others that are clearly immoral.

In today's world, we are taught situation ethics or that there are no absolutes when it comes to morality. Everything is relative and depends on the circumstances present in the situation. You will be the only one who can judge if what you did is right or wrong. A child molester once said that he didn't feel guilty because he had the consent of the child he molested because the child accepted his money.

Many people do not think pornography is bad as long as it is viewed in private where 'no one gets hurt.' Studies have shown that there is such a thing as addiction to pornography and that many sexual crimes are committed by people who are addicted to pornography.

We often hear it said that, "If it hurts no one, its okay." or "To each his own." In the name of tolerance and acceptance of the difference in others, we are conditioned to accept what we used to think were perversions or immoral as simply someone's 'thing' or unique preferences (i.e. sado-masochism, body mutilation, pedophilia, fetishes). Homosexuality is now said to have gone mainstream. Today as of latest count, there are 8 different sexual orientations which are lobbying to be recognized.

HUMAN PRIDE AND SCIENCE

Science has greatly advanced our understanding of the human mind and has shown that we are capable of doing much more than we have ever imagined. Many are starting to believe that humans are capable of so much that they have started to doubt the existence of God.

Because of the great advances in science, scientists believe that one day soon they will be able to finally create human life in a petridish, and not just a life but a perfect life! We hear of cloning, in vitro fertilization, freezing of sperms and eggs.

Today infertile couples can already buy eggs and sperms and hire surrogate mothers to carry the fertilized egg to completion. In a few years they will be able to put together a human whose characteristics were designed in a lab. If perfect human beings can be engineered, not-so perfect children will become unacceptable to parents. Many will be allowed to die or aborted. Some may even be used as mere donors of human organs. Parents in the future will choose to have children in a petri dish rather than the natural way. This will mean the end of the institution of marriage and family.

If man can create life, he can also destroy life. Death penalty and euthanasia, vigilante killings, discarding the deformed, disabled and helpless, wars especially on minorities and 'terrorists', forced sterilization, abortions, in vitro fertilization are all examples of the mentality that we can end 'useless' life if we desire to.

Put all these influences together and we will see a society where a woman will find motherhood inconvenient and a threat to her plans for self-fulfillment. Science will make families irrelevant. God and morality will not make sense in a materialistic and hedonistic world. As mothers, let us protect our most important role as life-givers and nurturers!

Thank You, women who are Mothers! You have sheltered human beings within yourselves in a unique experience of joy and travail. This experience makes you become God's own smile..."

Pope John Paul II
Letter to Women

The theme song from the classic movie “Exodus” begins with the words – “This land is mine, God gave this land to me. This great and ancient land to me . . .” It seems like an echo from the times past, a time almost forgotten and yet the lyrics and music continue to remain hauntingly captivating, powerful; and yes, a plaintive and constant reminder of our pains and struggles.

The scenes are contemporary and yet they somehow enable the viewers to weave a connection into the past- the continuing saga of God’s people for survival through hostile times against hostile neighbors through adverse circumstances. It also narrates their flight from captivity, to freedom, to captivity . . . all happening in cycles through the millennium. Through it all, God has remained faithful, despite His people’s wavering faith.

In so many ways, we as Filipinos and as CFC can very well identify with the Israelites, both ancient and their modern day descendants. After all, we are God’s people, chosen neither because of our prowess nor stature but precisely because of our weakness. We are insignificant in the family of nations and our material poverty. Our strength lies in the steadfast faith that has carried us through.

Just like the ancient Israelites, we Filipinos have had our fair share of ups and downs, with more downs lately. Time was when we stood a head taller than the rest of Asia, but a succession of bad leaders, gross mismanagement and calamities, have found us near the bottom of the Asiatic heap. For almost a generation now, we have lost our anchor and compass and our best and brightest left our shores for an outward migration to greener pastures -- to escape poverty, to find fulfillment of their dreams, to escape political oppressions, or simply to distance themselves from burgeoning apathy and hopelessness.

God’s love is truly boundless; His mercy and compassion limitless. In His perfect timing, as He hears the cry of His people, He extends His loving hand. His answer was in planting Couples for Christ in 1981 making it the prophetic community molded after His own heart.

MEDICAL MISSION MINISTRY

Reclaiming the LAND

By Jose Yamamoto, M.D.

Our first years constituted a period of building the church of the family and generally coincided with the years when the nation wrestled with rapid migration that saw the loss of some of our best talents. Still God’s plans unfolded; CFC grew by leaps and bounds, presently finding presence in all the provinces of the nation (79) and in many other countries (97 as of last count).

The Call of the Moses Generation

Just like the diaspora of God’s people of the Bible, the foreign communities where the Filipinos were transposed became the loci of the Christian Life Programs (CLP’s) of CFC. Thus were established the CFC communities abroad. In clear appreciation of God’s call, CFC and the family ministries catalyzed the renewal of many peoples of various nationalities, proving themselves to be ‘families in the Holy Spirit renewing the face of the earth’.

Beyond bringing more and more families into a renewed relationship with God, CFC is being called to be the agents of bringing glad tidings to the poor. Akin to the call of God for Moses, a similar call was extended to the generation of top CFC leaders to lead the ‘people to the promised land’. While indeed it seemed like a good idea to stem the massive exit of the Filipinos from our

homeland, and reverse the outward trend so that their expertise can be utilized here, the stark reality of grinding poverty and creeping despondency looms large. But then again, God has other plans, for His timetable cannot be delayed.

Five years ago, it became very clear that CFC's response to the challenge of the new millennium was to bring to reality and flesh out the nebulous concept of total human liberation. Thus were the social ministries born, to respond to the new expression of the mission of building the church of the poor, as enunciated by the Church. Slowly at first, CFC found its bearing; its mission had been refined and now, the advent of an integrated GK program (Gawad Kalinga) concretized the form and substance of the work of the community.

Starting this year, the stream of support for the various social ministries, particularly the CFC Medical Mission, continues to flow; on the one side from our CFC brethren here and abroad and in a larger sense, from new groups and organizations. New found partners came forward with generous and concrete offers to help us in our missions and to help us rebuild the nation (PAGES of Louisville and New Jersey, MMF of Michigan, NORTAF of Dallas, German doctors from Berlin, British doctors from Aberdeen Scotland, and others).

Because of our work with the poor and the bigger challenge of contributing our share to rebuilding the land, would it be farfetched to expect people from across the continents coming in to help? People of our own race and others, too? We are to be reassured for in Isaiah 60:4 – 'raise your eyes, and look about; they all gather and come to you; your sons from afar, and your daughters in the arms of their nurses'.

Pass the Mission to Joshua and Caleb

Drawing the parallel between the wanderings of the Israelites in their deserts, we too have our own share of needless wanderings. While the Israelites lost a generation except for Joshua and Caleb, we need not trace the very same footsteps. There is hope and there is this great opportunity that is too precious to squander. But there is very little precious time to waste. We need to act not in haste but in deliberate

"In my four months of work as a full-time doctor in CFC-MMFI's work for the poor program called Gawad Kalinga, I have realized many things. I have had to go through a very long academic life before finally finishing a degree highly regarded by most people. Of course it is but natural to again embark on further training to upgrade my skills and earn my place in the ranks of physicians. But deep inside, there is a yearning to help those who really need help. That is, the poor who seldom have access to quality medical care.

The work we have started in the depressed areas of Bagong Silang, Smokey Mountain and Payatas has helped a lot of people. The people appreciate many of our projects like the shelter and livelihood programs but it is in our medical missions that people find the love and sincerity of our work. For it is when they are sick, when they are most vulnerable that we come to help them. We give them medicine, we counsel them, and if needed we even accompany them to hospitals for further management. At times we even pay for their medicine out of our own pockets. Even during non-working hours we are at the community doing house visits to those who cannot go to our clinic because of lack of money for tricycle fare. As we earn their trust and heal their sickness, eventually they pour out not just their physical ailments but even their worries and concerns. More than curing them, the doctor becomes a counselor, a healer. Just like Jesus Christ did in His short life here on earth.

– by Eric P. Cayabyab, M.D.



UST Singers with Organizing Committee of the Music and Mission Concert.

and obedient response to God's call. Much like Moses standing in the slopes of Mount Nebo, who saw the distant outline of the promise land but was prevented from entering it, we too are able to see the dawn of a new future in our land. But we must 'seize the moment' for to do nothing or to tarry in our response would be to court the possibility of the vision slipping from our hands. Worse still, we may even lose the glimpse of our promised land to the looming darkness.

The young generation is capable and willing to respond. They have the energy and the zest for the challenge. And if we allow them, we can challenge their idealism and harness their passion for the greater good. We have made inroads in the Medical Mission because of our ongoing CLP's and evangelization among the young doctors. There are newly minted volunteer doctors serving in our GK areas, among them Eric Cayabyab and Jingby Mendez. There are many more like them in the horizon.

Medical schools have joined the growing work. The UST faculty of Medicine and Surgery

adopted our GK health program as part of their curriculum for preventive and community medicine. MCU School of Medicine is following this path. If UST and MCU are in partnership with CFC, can the others be far behind? The journey is just unfolding and even this early, we already see the fulfillment of God's promise to His people.

Our Response

The right response should be that of expectant faith and joy in being part of this great journey. It feels good to see the torch of the mission being passed on from the Moses generation to that of Joshua's. When you see senior CFC doctors and their younger colleagues, standing shoulder-to-shoulder, ministering to the health needs of the poor and the helpless, you know that we are on the road to reclaiming the land. And to see coming from distant shores the manpower and resources to help in this work would be affirmation indeed.

See how good and pleasant it is to dwell in the Promised Land!

Health Corner

By Jose Yamamoto, M.D.
Head, CFC Medical Mission

What is the tie that binds William Arimbuyotan of Laoag, William Angtuaco of Manila, Jun Africa of Laguna, and David Guevarra of Quezon City? They are all CFC members, under 50 and recently, underwent bypass for coronary artery disease.

There is a notion that heart disease is prevalent among the septuagenarians and the obese. Correct but not entirely. None of the four is obese; one or two are slightly overweight but definitely not obese. Nobody smokes. Their blood sugar is not categorically in the diabetic level, more along the top normal. Their common risk factors are hypertension and elevated cholesterol and triglycerides.

In the past issue of UGNAYAN Health Corner, the roles of the antioxidants had been emphasized. After a coronary bypass, it is important to doubly emphasize the necessity of secondary prevention in order to prevent the recurrence of the coronary artery blocks. Bypass grafts are good when they remain open and the responsibility of the doctors and the bypassed subjects is to work together to keep the grafts patent. Over time, there is an acceptable rate of graft degeneration, particularly the leg veins. Nowadays, more arteries are being used as graft conduits. Unless the risk factors are eliminated or at least altered, the real risk of recurrent coronary artery disease remains.

In the face of this threat, what must one do? Fortunately, a lot can be done by learning and internalizing some basic facts:

1. continue the medications prescribed for hypertension. Included are aspirin and other blood thinning agents that may be prescribed by your physician.
2. moderate and regular exercise – an example is brisk walking for 30 minutes daily or at least, 3 times a week. A suitable alternative is aerobics.

A Different Band of Brothers

3. control of blood sugar – obviously, those with abnormal blood sugar (diabetics) need closer supervision (medications, diet, exercise). Diet and exercise work well among those with insidious prediabetic blood sugar level and especially among the overweight category.
4. antioxidants – judicious intake of Vit. E in combination with Vit. C. Other antioxidants that work well with Vit. E and C are alpha lipoic acid, and catechins (from green tea extracts)
5. good dietary habits – Stay away from saturated fats – mainly from animal fats. A very good common sense indicator is when food stands and you notice “sebo” floating or caked in the surface, that is saturated fat. Eating more plant and fish protein, more fruits and vegetables makes for diet that works synergistically.
6. no smoking – This should be easy for us at CFC to do since we normally look on cigarettes and smoking as vestiges of our past life that we can, and should, do without.
7. supervised use of lipid lowering agents – primarily the so called “statin” compounds. Together with good dietary habits, these agents have shown tremendous value in lowering the risks of recurrent heart disease.
8. use of omega 3 fatty acids – “Fish Oil” in common man’s parlance. It works quite well with dietary measures and lipid lowering agents. What it does is mainly to raise the level of good cholesterol (HDL) and counterbalance the adverse effect of the bad cholesterol (LDL)
9. vitamin B complex especially Folic Acid, at 400 mcg/day.

These are general statements on secondary prevention but it is a good starting point on the road to becoming **fit for the fight**.

“Ask not what your country can do for you, rather ask what you can do for your country...”

stirring words by John F. Kennedy, one of the most prominent leaders the world has ever produced. It still rings true to this day, especially in a country torn apart by partisanship, prejudices and corruption.

With the ongoing battle for hearts and minds, God’s army started mobilizing all its forces: the Couples, the Singles, the Youth and that reliable support group, the Handmaids and the Servants of the Lord. Elite units coming from the different sectors of Metro Manila came voluntarily to be trained how to build Tatag houses for the poor in Bagong Silang last March 27 and 28. And those brave volunteers who were trained are then expected to bring back to their respective sectors what they have learned and experienced during those two days of valor.



The Spirit of Dumaguete

by Manny Catabas

The affair was intended to serve as the kickoff to the CFC National Build, scheduled for June 1 and 2 of this year with the completion of the 1,000 houses funded by the government of President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo and CFC’s share of additional 1,000 houses for the poor. The CFC National Build is a major CFC event for the year, as this will show how the government and respected organizations like CFC can work together as partners towards a common goal in alleviating poverty.



With this development, the Spirit of Dumaguete has proven to be the catalyst for this national project by CFC. It will be recalled that it was in that city where the SFC International Leaders Conference held its SFC-Build in a GK project of CFC Negros Oriental last February 15 to 17. That memorable event proved that even ordinary people are capable of transforming a nation and its people. The SFC-Build event even impressed President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo, which led to her granting CFC 30 million pesos to build 1,000 Tatag houses for the poor as a way of showing her government's support for CFC's Gawad Kalinga projects nationwide.

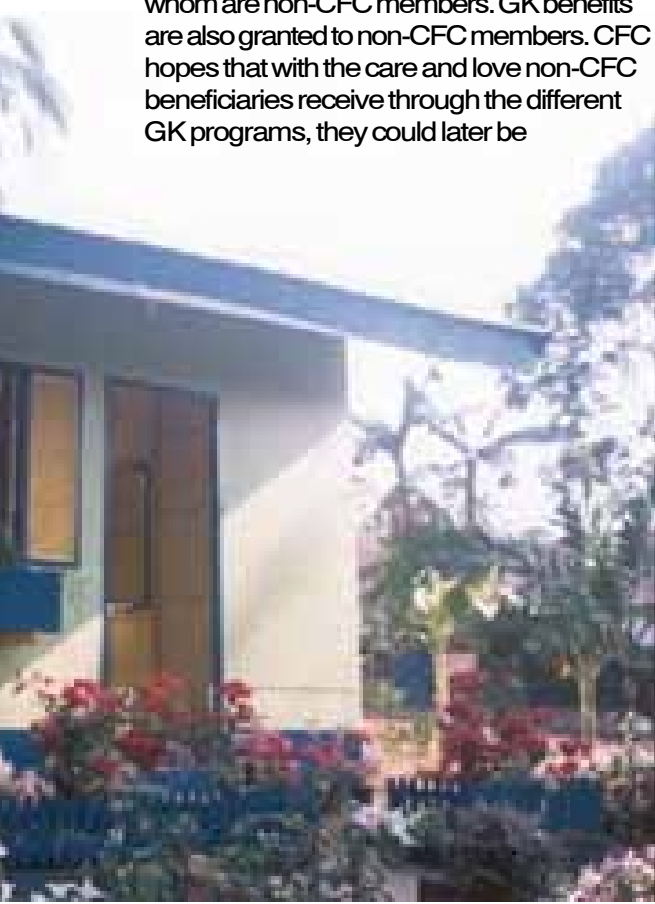
To spur greater consciousness and enthusiasm for this important milestone in the history of CFC, the CFC National Council and GK officials decided to bring the dynamics of the SFC Build to the national level. An ongoing GK National Office project for Phase 7 in Bagong Silang was chosen as the training site. There, 14 houses are being built in a clustered site that will benefit 14 families, majority of whom are non-CFC members. GK benefits are also granted to non-CFC members. CFC hopes that with the care and love non-CFC beneficiaries receive through the different GK programs, they could later be

evangelized and be enthused to join the community. Currently, the GK has seven working programs in four categories: (1) for shelter: the Tatag Program; (2) for the children's and youth's educational and developmental needs: the Sibol, the Sagip and the Siga programs; (3) for health and nutrition: the Lusog Program; and (4) for livelihood: the Kapitbahayan and the Sikap programs. Aside from the 14 houses' ongoing construction, Phase 7 already has an existing 19 families that have already benefited from Gawad Kalinga's Tatag program.

In spite of the short notice and it being Holy Week, many people came to the Build Training Program at Bagong Silang. GK officials were amazed by such show of fervor for the project. The two-day activity was characterized by the exhilaration displayed by the volunteers as they performed wholeheartedly every task that was assigned to them. Many of them even brought along their own tools, such as hammers, saws and screwdrivers, while their wives brought food for sharing not only among themselves but also with the beneficiaries. The Filipino culture of "Bayanihan" was truly evident that day.

"I am really dumbfounded. I am already old and may only have a few years more to live. But never in my life did I expect this to happen to my children and me. Until now, I can not believe that I now have a real house to live in. I thank God and Couples for Christ, you are the true Christians", an elderly woman beneficiary in her 70's said to a volunteer. Then she cried unabashedly as the volunteer, at a loss for words himself, just embraced her delicate frame.

With the success of both the SFC Build and the better than expected result of the training program conducted during the Holy Week, CFC is now one in shouting – **ONWARD CHRISTIAN SOLDIERS! THE WAR AGAINST POVERTY MUST BE WON!**



EFI Corner

In God's (Day) Care. It began as a day care center in 1995 in Greenhills, San Juan. CFC members brought their pre-school aged children to that day care where they were taught Christian values, values meant to prepare them to face the bigger world armed with Christ's character.

The Lord was not content.

From one day care, the effort to provide Christian education to small children grew to a number of schools around the country, known as the CFC School of the Morning Star (CFC-SMS). All these SMS centers are supervised by the CFC Educational Foundation, Inc. The teachers are trained in early childhood education and on how to implement CFC's Integrated Bible-Based Curriculum. Though not all of them are equipped with

rebuild **MY** children's paradise

by Myra Menguito



credentials fit for a teaching career, they are nonetheless very much willing and open to where the Lord would lead them, their schools, and the ministry as a whole. The Lord likewise opened more doors: offering special education classes for differently-abled children and allowing the ministry to further its programs through exposure to trends/issues in early childhood care and education.



While they play and build with blocks...

However, the Lord wanted more. Certainly, God was preparing the ministry for a greater, tougher, and more challenging work ahead.

From Bagong Silang Onwards.

The opening of the CFC-owned pre-school in Bagong Silang, Caloocan City in 1996 marked the community's first move to bring Jesus' knowledge to those yearning for excellent education for their children, yet had no means to send them to such schools. For CFC-EFI, it meant the Lord's anointing to assist the SIBOL/SAGIP Programs under Gawad Kalinga. It meant forming the hearts of its ministry workers to appreciate the call to work with the poor. It meant the genuine desire to love the children who do not even know their names, birthdays, and ages; to care for the children who are growing up with fathers who drink alcohol like water; to understand the children who need to learn more about cleanliness/hygiene because they live in an environment where hygiene is not a priority.

Though working with the poor does not come easy, the heart of EFI pours out to these brethren. Each moment spent with them brings to mind the bounty of God's blessings. It is a call for us to love, to share and to care.

Special, Indeed.

We love them no less. The physically, emotionally, and mentally-challenged children find a special place in our classrooms. They may have several limitations, but we believe they also have qualities and skills that compensate for whatever disabilities they may have.

CFC, through EFI, has opened grounds for planning a suitable

curriculum for these challenged kids. It has recently worked with the Southeast Asian Institute for the Deaf (SAID) at Miriam College in Quezon City. Certainly, programs shaped for these children contain all the values and virtues we want them to possess, as well as the elements needed for the development of their academic skills.

As the ministry prepares to bring this program to the differently-abled kids who are part of SMS and the SIBOL and SAGIP programs, CFC-EFI workers are likewise set to attend seminars and trainings to further their skills in handling the very special ones, and to better understand and address their needs.

Rebuild. From one day care to several pre-school centers around the country. From a pre-school to a ministry. From SMS to SIBOL and SAGIP. From the abled to the uniquely-challenged children.

All these are expressions of God's mandate

“Rebuild my beloved children's future. Rebuild the paradise I have created for them.”

Crossword Puzzle

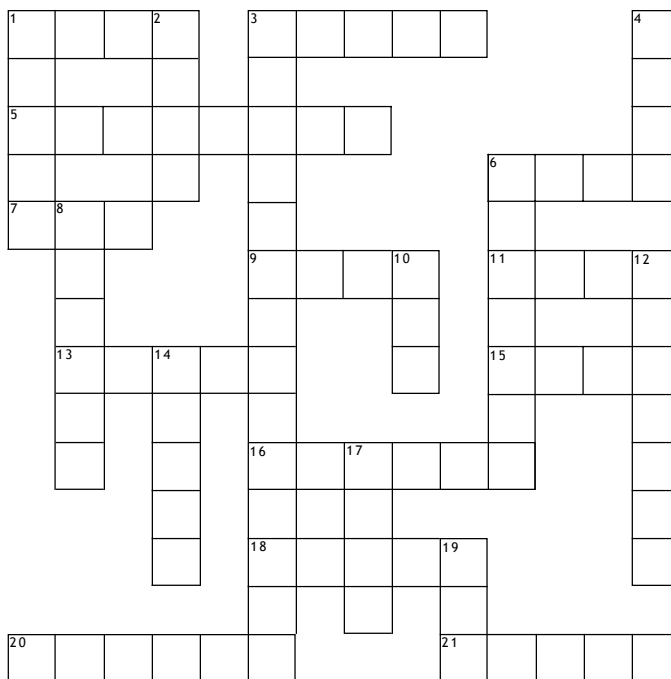
ACROSS:

1. Month the CFC was established.
3. Place where exodus began.
5. Destination of Paul when struck down blind.
6. St. John's description of God.
7. Transgression
9. Israel's first king.
11. Holy Mountain
13. First foreign country where CFC was established
15. Came down for 40 day and nights
16. The city the Apostle Paul was a native and citizen of.
18. Animal commonly used to cross deserts
20. Book containing stories between time of Joshua and Samuel
21. Carrier of Jonah after he was cast into the sea

DOWN:

1. He betrayed Christ
2. Joshua was to erect an altar in this mountain
3. Another name for the Book of Sirach
4. Major river that runs through Egypt
6. A friend Christ raised from the dead
8. Famous Old Testament Prophet
10. His wife turned into a pillar of salt
12. A city that proclaimed a fast and put on sack cloth
14. He slew Goliath
17. The city Emperor Nero put to the torch

(answers on P. 38)



All Systems go for National Build

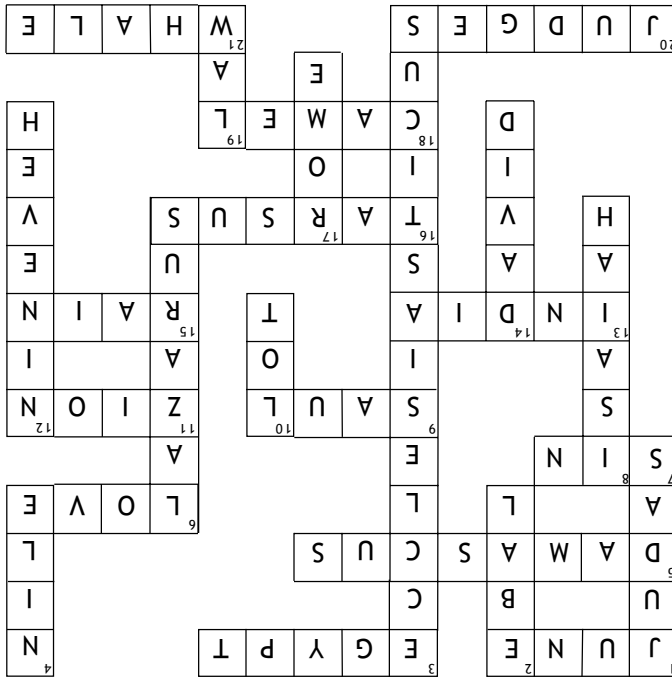
By Bing Hizon

Everything is in place for the **NATIONAL BUILD** scheduled for June 1 & 2 where 1,000 houses will be built for the poorest of the poor nationwide. In preparation for the big event, workshops and construction dry runs have been conducted in all the regions for the Tatag Teams that will participate.

In Metro Manila, the workshop and dry run were held at Phase 7 of Bagong Silang last March 27–28. It was a unique experience for the different Sector Teams who not only built 14 houses but also interacted and shared meals and Maundy Thursday services with the beneficiaries and their neighbors. It was a sight to behold—conducting the Stations of the Cross through the narrow alley ways, culminating with the reenactment of the washing of the feet. Truly, it was a break from the traditional way of attending services in church. Perhaps this could be the start of a new way of commemorating Christ's passion in CFC.



Answers to Crossword Puzzle



The Medical Mission Ministry sponsored a concert titled “Music and Mission” last April 7, 2002 at the Medicine Auditorium of UST. The concert featured the University of Sto. Tomas Singers, a premiere mixed choral ensemble, under the baton of Prof. Fidel Gener Calalang, Jr.

Almost a thousand people, from the academe, the medical and paramedical profession, business, the CFC community, friends and relatives and students were entertained by a repertoire of heart-moving, soul-soothing sacred songs like “The Prayer”, “Ave Maria” and hits from such musicales as “Les Miserables” and “Miss Saigon”. The chorale also rendered Tagalog songs like Galawgaw and Waray-waray.

The finale, Pilipinas Kong Mahal / Ang Bayan drove home the message, the very essence of the concert – that our work with the poor is fast gaining ground and re-building our nation though not an easy task is as imperative as the very air we breathe. Liberating our less fortunate brethren from their plight against poverty is also liberating ourselves from our very own poverty and bondage!

Music and Mission



Singgolympics 2002

The 4th Singles for Christ Singgolympics (sports fest) was held last April 21, 2002 at the Philsports Complex formerly known as the ULTRA. It was a whole day event participated in by 2,700 SFC members of Metro Manila and for the first time by nearby provinces such as Bulacan, Pampanga, Rizal, Cavite, Laguna and Batangas. The sportsfest featured track and field events, cheering competitions, parlor games and swimming events. CFC chapter heads and servants serving in SFC also competed in the games under a special category. One of the objectives of the games is to promote physical fitness and health awareness. As the saying goes “you can’t serve God to the max if you’re not in good health.”





Singgolimpics

The doctors and nurses of the CFC Medical Mission Foundation volunteered their services. Fortunately, no one really needed medical attention except for one case of pulled hamstring muscle.

One of the highlights of the events was the cheering competition which was won by Bulacan with their breath taking moves. Allan Basco (Bulacan) provided the day's high drama when he exploded in the Men's Long Jump event with a distance of 6.54 meter almost beating the national record by a few centimeters according to the professional sports officials present.

SFC North B bagged the over-all team Championship, followed by East B second place and Central B third.



The SFC Singgolimpics is a yearly activity not only in Metro Manila but is being done all over the world. We look forward to seeing more and more CFC and SFC members healthy not just spiritually but physically – truly fit for the fight!



olympics



The Agony and the Ecstasy. Top photo shows the joy of winning while left photo shows a runner grimacing in pain because of a pulled hamstring muscle.

Sharings

When I read about Couples for Christ in 1989, a movement that was charismatic, missionary, communitarian and collaborative with the laity, I immediately felt drawn to it. My entire life had been prepared by the Lord for that moment. First He sent me to Pune, a city in India, to study theology so that I can interact with seminarians from different parts of India with various cultures. Then He allowed me to be a diocesan priest after my ordination in a place far from home so I could learn to be detached from familiar places and to adjust to new situations, places and people. I got involved in the charismatic renewal, a real blessing because the charismatic way is truly a dynamic way of experiencing and sharing the Spirit with others. Then, in His own good time, the Lord placed me in the Congregation of the Blessed Sacrament in Mumbai, a big move from being a diocesan priest to a member of a religious congregation. I have been with the congregation for the last 20 years. It is here where the riches of the Eucharist were unfolded to me and it is here where I learned how to live in a community.

In 1994, CFC came to the area where I was ministering as a Blessed Sacrament Religious, looking for a priest speaker to give some talks in the CLP modules. Thus began my relationship with CFC. Aside from giving CLP talks, I have conducted recollections, celebrated the Eucharist at Marriage Enrichment Retreats and eventually I became one of the three CFC chaplains of Mumbai in addition to my work as a religious.

Certain upheavals erupted within my life and I saw them as a sign from the Lord, indicating that He wanted something different for me. So after much discernment, I felt that the best way to know more about God's plan for me was to take a year's leave of absence (permitted by the Church) and to see CFC at close quarters in the Philippines. This CFC Goa arranged for me.

After coming to the Philippines, I was led to burn my boats, as it were. When it was time to return to India, I discerned that I was to

the FILIPINO experience

By: Fr. Justin Sequeira, SSS

stay here to learn more, to experience more. Since that decision, I have felt blessings upon blessings (spiritual, medical, material and pastoral) being poured upon me. I have travelled to various parts of the Philippines, within Manila and outside of it (Kalinga, Ifugao, Tarlac, Bulacan, Daet, Naga, Laguna, Lucena, Bataan, Iligan, Cagayan de Oro, Pagadian, Ozamis, Tacloban, Ormoc, Cebu, General Santos, Davao, Tagum, Zamboanga, Kuran, Ipil), addressing ECG gatherings, or conducting recollections/retreats on the

Eucharist and its relevance to the CFC vision and mission in general, and of late, its relevance and the power that can emanate from it for our work with the poor.

✿ that Catholic pastoral formation based on sound spiritual theology and sound Catholic doctrine need to be imparted so that the CFC members will be convicted Catholics rather than lukewarm ones

What have I learned from my stay in the Philippines about CFC life?

- ✿ that given the numbers and with the deepening of the vision and mission of CFC in all its members (not just in the leadership), this community can transform the whole nation
- ✿ that no Catholic community is as wholistic in its vision, mission and formation as CFC
- ✿ that CFC has to be a way of life and not just a hobby
- ✿ that the household meeting is a powerful tool to help the members experience love and acceptance, to clarify doubts and confusion in their personal and marital/family lives, to make sure that the members hold on to the basics and to help them understand and assimilate the vision and mission of CFC
- ✿ that the CFC leaders of various levels, through their servant leadership, have an awesome task of forming their members and preparing future leaders to make the vision of CFC a palpable reality; that they need to be open to constant renewal and be always willing to learn and move out of their comfort zones
- ✿ that CFC has given birth to many wonderful missionaries among its members, setting a brilliant example to clergy and the religious

I have been in the Philippines for almost a year now. My trips to many places and my interaction with many CFC members have enriched me and allowed me to see that truly, this is where God wants me to be. I have just been informed that my leave of absence has been extended by another year and again I take that as both a blessing and an affirmation of God's plan. I can no longer think of a time when I am not in this community. When that happens, I know I will feel a terrible void in my life.



Rarely do we find people who easily detach themselves from the way of life they have gotten used to. It is indeed difficult to leave behind our comforts, security, friends, and especially our family. We still find such people though. One of them is Bill Slettedahl.

A Good Life

Forty-nine year old Bill shares that his life in the U.S. was quite successful according to the world's standards. *"Our ethic in the U.S. is based on work. The only way we get anything is when we earn, and that was what was instilled in us at a very young age."* Bill has been working since he was 14 years old. *"I worked part time when I was in my teens. My first job was I delivered papers. I also mowed lawns on weekends, and after school on certain days of the week and on weekends I also worked in a burger stand."* His perseverance allowed him to buy a car when he reached the age of 18. *"There I realized that by hard work, you can buy things you need and want."*

Bill's enterprising spirit led him to opt for self-employment. *"I've got 30 years experience in construction. After working for three decades, I felt I had to give up my business because my time became more valuable. I found myself not having enough time for it, so I decided to simply work for my brother. Gradually, life became better. I became close to God. But sometime after this period, I somehow went through a period of spiritual dryness."*

God's timing was perfect. At the time when Bill was contemplating joining a Christian fellowship or community, CFC members came to his parish and announced a forthcoming orientation for Couples for Christ. *"I believe it was in February 2000 when I joined the Christian Life Program for Servants of the Lord."*



BILL Builds

by Myra M. Menguito

The Time to Build

Eventually, Bill found himself building beautiful relationships and friendships with his brethren in SOLD, particularly in his household group composed of 20 individuals. *"I found a home in the community,"* exclaims Bill. *"I'm very active in my service, especially during CLP's. I love facilitating and listening to all the talks and teachings."*

It was in July 2001 when Bill attended a CFC Conference held in San Francisco, U.S.A. He was attentively listening to all the talks, but one particular talk struck him. *"Tony Meloto was giving a presentation on ANGKOP, specifically on building homes for the poor. That was an inspiration for me to help the poor in any capacity I can."* It wasn't long after this that Bill decided to come to the Philippines to work with the poor.

Bill arrived in the Philippines in January 2002. Life was never the same again. *"Since I got here, I was semi or directly involved with a few things. First and foremost was during the International Leaders' Conference of SFC held in*



Dumaguete, Negros Oriental.

Helping build 16 homes for the poor was a great opportunity to fulfill my desire to help the poor. I've also been helping set-up the Audio Visual Room of Bagong

Silang High School. Still, an opportunity for me to help out was on March 29, 2002 when the CFC community built 14 homes in Bagong Silang, in preparation for the 'big day' in May and June where the Philippines will witness the construction of a thousand homes for the impoverished nationwide." For Bill, all these are instrumental in creating an awareness among communities that nothing is impossible. "I just feel proud and privileged to be a part of this. I hope there will be more in the next 10 months that I'm here." Every experience likewise is a chance for Bill to see how things are done here, which for him is a little bit different from what he was accustomed to. He says, "I'm learning different techniques and technologies."

Something Unique

Seeing how the poor people live in the Philippines is truly something Bill has never experienced. "We don't have this in the U.S.", he explains. "God has touched me in a way that He opened me up so that I am now willing and eager to do whatever one man can do in trying to help the people here. The realization is for me to be of service in whatever capacity I can."

I Love It!

"I've been here for a few months, and I love it!" says Bill with much gusto! He also loves his "new home", which is the Angkop Dormitory. He affirms, "It was strictly my own decision

to come here and stay, with guidance from the Holy Spirit. I was really determined to come here."

Bill truly finds life in the Philippines very pleasant. For him, it brings to mind several things. "God has given me so many gifts and blessings in life. I've got everything I need. I could say I'm well taken care of. I have no complaints, I love the weather and the people. I love the poor."

Bill Rebuilds

Bill sees hope and promise in the work he is doing now. As he declares, "What I've been inspired most, motivated by, uplifted by, stimulated by, and empowered by, is the vision which I came here with. I see the same vision in the CFC community, and I'm hoping to see it in the nation. Everyone seems to be ready for change, and that's what it takes to move forward. People are ready to get motivated, and to work towards building this nation and bringing the people out from the depths of being impoverished. I think I can be instrumental in empowering the people with a strong message of hope. I see that with encouragement and motivation, we can move towards the right direction."

Bill has detached himself from his comforts in the U.S., and found another meaningful life in the Philippines. Bill may have had hesitations about his security in this country, but God's abounding love and grace provided him a refuge beyond His expectations. It may be hard for Bill to be away for quite some time from his friends and family (including a 21-year old son and 19-year old daughter) in the U.S., but he truly found another set of family in his CFC brethren in the Philippines. As he said, "I'm here on a mission, to be of service, to contribute, to give freely of myself to the people here in the Philippines."

Trusting. Faithful. Loving. Caring. Selfless. That's Bill!

A famous Jesuit Missionary to the Philippines, Fr. James B. Reuter, used to say:

“God writes straight on crooked lines.”

This was very much the case when Peggy and I served at the second CLP in Malta (our 90th country) way back in November and December of last year.

A couple, Philip and Josephine Grech, was introduced to us. We were told that although they had been married for some 25 years, their relationship was at such a stage of tension that a breakup was imminent. On one occasion, Philip had this to say:

“I have known Josephine for several years before I asked her to start going out with me. I always had a great admiration for her because she was always decent in the way she dressed, talked and acted.

For the first few months everything promised a great future together. We were happy to be in each other’s company. Then we got our first house and the difference in the way we looked at marriage became more than obvious. Instead of facing the problem squarely in the face, we hid it away, pretending it did not exist.

When we got married, the problem, in my opinion, got out of control. Still we did not admit TO EACH OTHER that there were problems. I talked to friends about them but never to her. Somehow we survived 25 years of living together. I never felt married to her. I never felt that intimate closeness towards her so necessary in married life. In fact when I compared the way we behaved to the way other couples behaved I began to hate the idea that she was my wife. We did things at the same time, but never together.

Then in November we attended the CLP sessions. I felt that something which I never



Living with a Stranger

by John Leo Burgoyne, Jr.

experienced before was happening to me. I could not explain what it was. To cut a long story short, I began to ‘feel’ her presence. Still things went on as usual.

Josephine had her own story:

“At home I didn’t feel needed. I expected my family to say ‘thank you’ but the only things I heard were about what I had done wrong. Then I used to look at the cross and say to myself ‘Surely, Jesus did much more good than I did! What thank you did he receive? What can I expect? Maybe it was what kept me going.

We used to go out often together. When we went out as a couple alone, we hardly said anything to each other. When we went out with friends it should have been a time for relaxation, but I only grew more tense since my husband loved to see his friends laugh by saying that his wife was his biggest cross. He also referred to his marriage as the biggest mistake he had ever done. I could never take his words lightly.”

Needless to say, there was an air of anxiety for the CLP team since we were never sure whether Philip and Josephine would return to participate in the next session of that CLP. But, praise God, they were present at every session. Philip even adjusted his work and social commitments so as not to miss any talk. In the end he made the commitment to CFC but Josephine abstained due to her reservations.

I returned to Malta in February of this year to conduct the MER 1. This was held at Mt. St. Joseph Retreat House, a Jesuit villa overlooking scenic hills and fields of Malta, including the island where the Apostle Paul was shipwrecked. Here, great things began to happen.

Philip describes his experience:

“Then we attended the MER I. For a few days before the MER I I prayed to the Lord to give me

strength to accept His will. At the Marriage Healing session I felt something deep down in my heart-happiness which I have never felt before in the presence of Josephine. For the first time the Lord helped me to realise that I was not holding just a woman in my arms, but my wife. I still cannot express the feeling I experienced during those few moments. They were worth the 25 years of waiting I have had been through.

Since then the atmosphere in the house has completely changed I still find it strange the way she acts as my wife, but the Lord is constantly giving me the courage to accept her as she is. For 25 years I have been trying to change her culture, now I am accepting it for what it is, even though it's not what I expected out of marriage. I can never stop praising the Lord for helping me to start enjoying married life, even if after 25 years”.

Josephine also has her own account:

“I went to the MER I in my old moody self. But I saw my husband cry and I heard him say how sorry he was. The words he said seemed to be just what I wanted to hear. When I went to the first CFC meeting I thought it was going to be just a talk. But up to now I'm still there. What I like about it is that they preach LOVE. They tell husbands to love their wife and not just accept her (because they can't do anything else). Our God is a God of Love not of Fear. He can surely do impossible things. We only have to have Faith and wait for His timing, which is different from ours.”

This story does not end here. There is another episode that I must narrate from my own perspective.

That late Saturday afternoon of the retreat, after the 5th talk, Josephine opted to stay in her room and forgo the 6th session. She was too tense and sick to the stomach to attend the talk on “Healing Our Marriage.” Her cousin, also a participant, went down to fetch her. She dutifully came up to the session hall and sat there, but in very great pain. However, all that changed, and for the better. Half way through the prayers for forgiveness, Josephine and Philip were embracing and crying unabashedly. It was an emotion-packed event!

After completing the healing session, I retired to my room to prepare materials for the rest of the retreat. Philip knock on the door and requested to come in to speak with me. He narrated that, for most part of 25 years of his marriage to Josephine, he did not wear his wedding ring except on a very few occasions, and only for show. He could not understand what prompted him to request Josephine to search for the ring and bring it along to the MER. This she did. After the healing, Philip told me that he got the ring, put it on his finger, and committed that it will never leave its place again. In tears, he gave me a brotherly hug and left the room. As the door closed, I jumped for joy and exclaimed: “YES, LORD!”

Ever since our husbands were called to help with the Tatag projects, we have felt this desire to get more involved in the CFC work with the poor. We went several times to Bagong Silang in Caloocan to conduct interviews with the beneficiaries. However, we felt this was not good enough.

Then we heard about the Values Formation program being given to the GK areas. In September 2001, we were called to attend the Trainors Workshop. Both of us had our own fears but we were confident that the Lord would equip us with the necessary skills and training for us to become good trainors. A second meeting was scheduled and it was here that we realized this was God's answer to our prayer-that we immerse ourselves in the Values Formation Program. We felt this was something we could offer, and we had the time for it.

Even in Small Ways

by Lina David and
Mia Aytona

Just recently, we finished our sessions in Bagong Silang for the market vendors of Phase 7. The participants will be beneficiaries of the Micro-Lending program of the Tekton Guild. It gave us joy knowing that even in a small way, we were able to contribute in improving and re-orienting their values. We cannot afford to be mere bystanders in this vast work. We must help make a difference. There is so much work to be done. We need to go out there and do our share!

We are no longer afraid for we know that He will be there to guide us every step of the way.

We were finally attending the Marriage Enrichment Retreat. We have been active members of Couples for Christ for two Years but had had to postpone attending the MER the previous year because of the untimely death of my mother-in-law. It was also during this time that Mon and I began having problems with our marriage and we decided to separate for a while. Because of my mother-in-law's recent death, Mon had a perfect excuse to give our daughter who was always asking why her dad had to stay with Lolo – he had to take care of his widowed father. Except for our regularly scheduled household meetings, we only saw each other when he fetched and took our daughter home from school, and that was the arrangement for about four months.

After a few months of being apart, Mon and I settled our differences and he came back to live with my daughter and me - and my mother. We came to live with Mommy after we had to sell our house because the amortizations became a burden and we had lost our business to the Asian economic crisis. I decided to move on and went into teaching, something I have always wanted to do, and Mon just contented himself with what projects came, never wanting to work as an employee. And my mother did not appreciate that.

I was never a rebellious child. Up to this day, I am still the same obedient daughter who never fought back and who always apologized for things that I was not even aware I did. Perhaps the only rebellious thing I ever did was to marry Mon, someone Mommy never thought would be good for her youngest daughter. She would always enumerate to me Mon's faults and inadequacies.

Recently, for the first time in my life as her obedient and prudent daughter, still calm, composed and respectful, I told her how much I have learned from being married and being part of Couples for Christ. I told her that the patience I have had all along was preparing me for challenges like these, and that I know I don't have to worry about our current problems.

The stack of books she had on her nightstand was a perfect ending to my testimony. She attended a session with the BLD last year in Hongkong with my aunt and she brought home

My LOVE for Mommy

by Rosette D.
Correa

issues of Didache and other publications, as well as praise tapes given to her as gifts. Mon and I thought that we would all grow spiritually together because of our new found freedom with Jesus Christ, but I guess Mommy needs more time. Picking up the books, I told her how much it would mean to me if she lived what she had read. She simply shrugged.

The session on "Healing Our Marriages" allowed me to confront my feelings toward my mother. The speakers were God-sent. Somehow, in the private session Mon and I requested with them, they knew how I felt and what advice to give. They told me to be more patient than ever and to simply allow the love of Jesus to flow from us to Mommy.

My mother has not changed...yet. But I know she will. I am extremely blessed to have a husband who is an obedient and respectful son-in-law. Sometimes, it's a competition between us who will be more patient with Mommy and her idiosyncracies. I lose to Mon more often than I win.

But one thing's for sure. Mon and I and Jesus promise to see Mommy through her journey to Christ. That's the path we're taking as well.

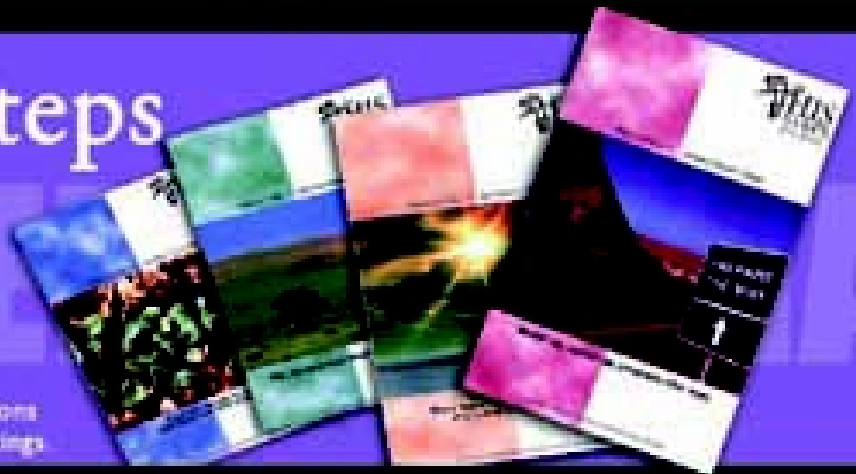
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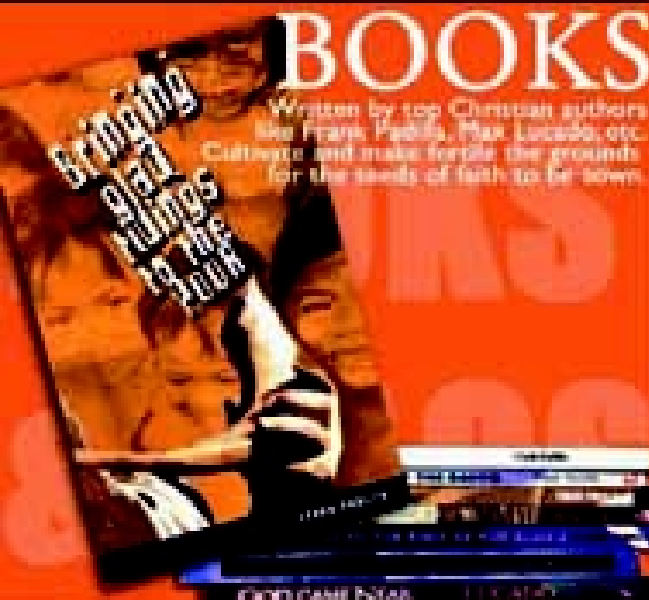
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F O C U S



All things that are on earth
shall wholly pass away
except the love of God
which shall live and last

– Bryant