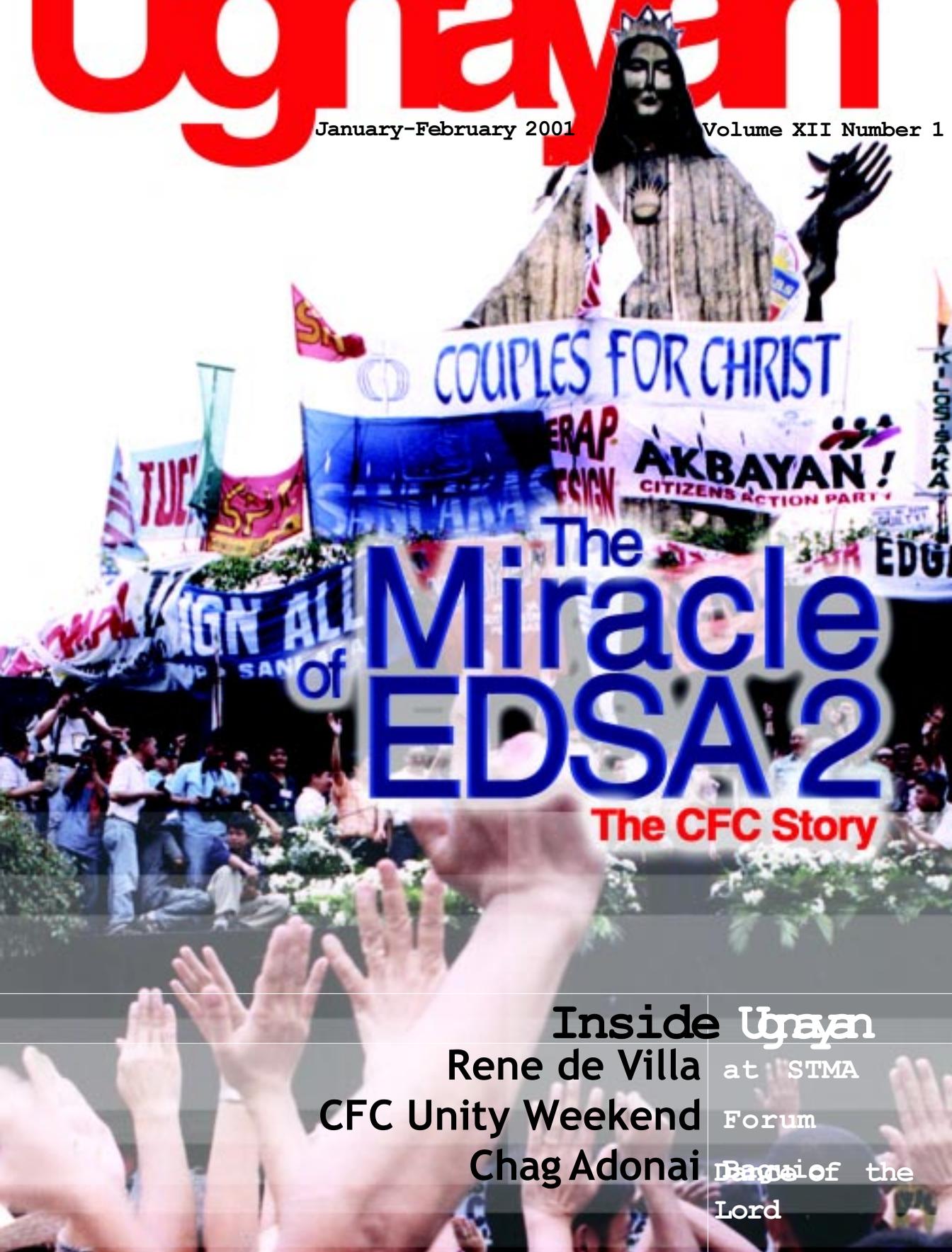


Ugnayan

January-February 2001

Volume XII Number 1



The Miracle EDSA 2

The CFC Story

Inside **Ugnayan**
Rene de Villa at STMA
CFC Unity Weekend Forum
Chag Adonai **Page** of the
Lord

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EDITORIAL

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.

Welcome to the new, redesigned Ugnayan. Truly God's hand is evident in everything we do. He has guided us every step of the way in our desire to bring to you a magazine that is informative, up to date, interesting and more importantly, in fulfilment of its basic goal, a pastoral tool. He has even provided us with a theme for this year, as a take-off from our involvement in EDSA II and our role as prophet and evangelizer in the political arena –

MAKING A DIFFERENCE...

BUILDING A NATION...

CHANGING THE WORLD!

The next issues of the Ugnayan will focus on the people, the ministries, the programs of CFC that boldly proclaim this mission of making a difference in our community life and in society. These are exciting times, indeed, and we are glad that Ugnayan is able to bring these times to life for you.



Once again it happened.

People power in the Philippines! EDSA II! Once again the Church sounded the call, and millions throughout the country responded. Once again God intervened dramatically in the life of this country, ousting a corrupt and immoral President.



From the DIRECTOR

And CFC was right there at the front lines.

Many non-CFC friends have been profuse in congratulating us for our significant role. From our first full-page ad right after Cardinal Sin's call on the President to resign, to our intensified Erap Resign Campaign, to our immediate occupation of EDSA (around the EDSA Shrine) on the crucial evening when the shameful Senate vote was made, to our pitching our occupying tents along the street, to our overcrowded Home Office transformed into a command post, CFC was right at the center of the struggle. CFC was truly God's army, adamant in its quest for truth, for justice, for honor, and for peace.

God had prepared us for such a miraculous event. God had been building up CFC through the years to appreciate the fullness of its mission, that of working for total human liberation. And the trumpet was sounded for CFC on the Great Jubilee Year 2000, where we took on the theme "Bringing Glad Tidings to the Poor," which quickly became our acknowledged work for the millennium.

The stage was set, _____
the army was trained, _____
the battle was at hand. _____

The political crisis was a blessing for CFC, in that it forced us to understand the meaning of what we said our mission was. And we were not only forced to understand, we were forced to start living it out, since we were confronted by an explosive live situation. Could we actually get involved in "politics"? Could we actually "endanger" our spiritual work by engaging in what was seen to be political activity? Could we mix the spiritual and the social, the sacred and the secular? The answer of course was a resounding yes!

It was actually our duty and responsibility to get involved!



And God was not content in getting just some of us involved.

Not just some of the elders. Not just some of those politically inclined. The crisis quickly engulfed the whole country, and challenged the fence-sitters among us. The impeachment trial was not only an entertaining telenovela, but a crash course in socio-political involvement. Here the people began to be conscious of issues of truth, justice, morality, patriotism. People now needed to make a stand. With every explosive revelation of corruption and deceit in high places, the battle lines were clearly being drawn.



God had prepared CFC, and on the eve of the greatest drama in the life of the country, God positioned CFC. The MetroManila elders were having their regular Elders Core Group Gathering, when text messages started to come in. The Senate had voted 10-11 to deny the opening of the crucial 2nd envelope. Righteous indignation was the spontaneous reaction. The CFC Council had a quick huddle. Then the whole body of elders came before the Lord in worship, asking for guidance. The Lord spoke to His people. And the decision was made, to go in a convoy to EDSA.

This crisis, and God's action, are all about our life and mission. EDSA II is about courage, heroism and patriotism. It is about unity, brotherhood and solidarity. It is about sharing and caring. It is about living out a preferential option for the poor. It is about fighting against corruption, oppression and exploitation. It is about building a better future for our children and the generations after them. It is about giving our all, even to the point of shedding blood, for the cause of Christ.



Now we have a new beginning,

and a new opportunity. To build one nation that is under the lordship of Christ. To truly become God's light to the world. This is what is of utmost importance. This is what is of greatest urgency. God has prepared us all these almost 20 years for this work.

With lights blinking and horns blowing, God's army advanced to the EDSA Shrine. CFC took up its position on sacred EDSA ground. The battle was joined. EDSA II was on!



And the rest is history.

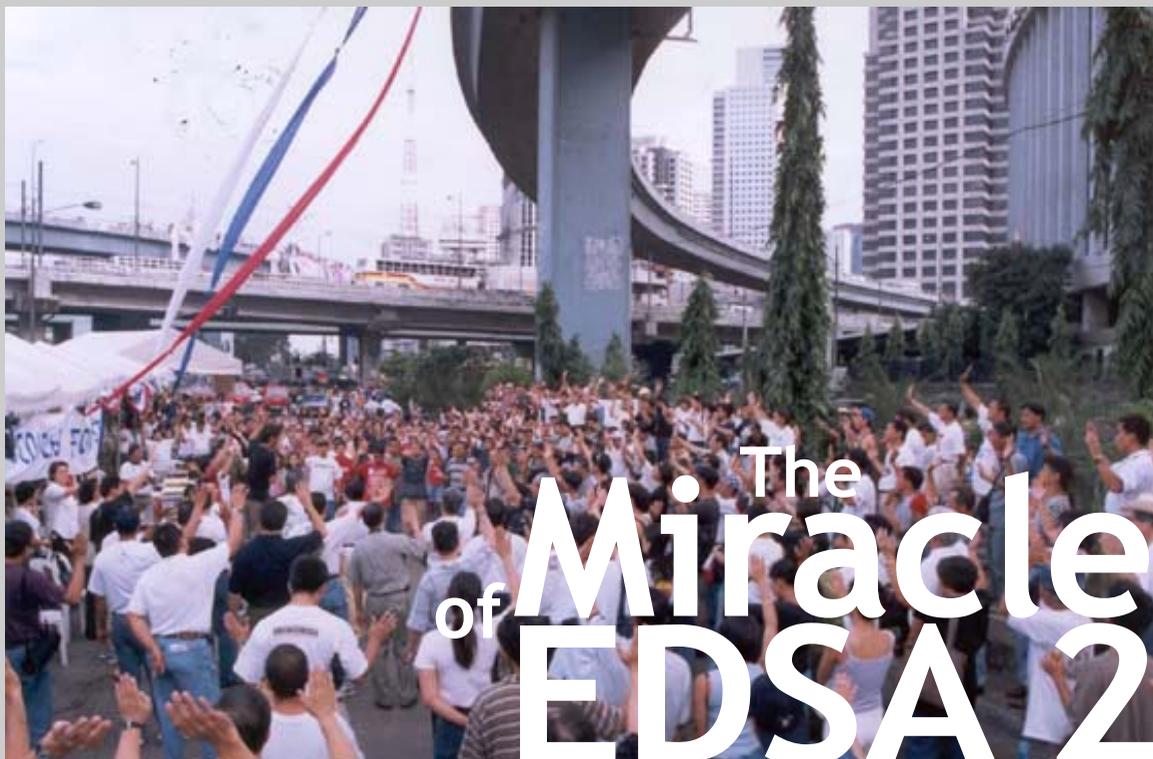
EDSA II has a lot of heroes. And CFC is privileged to have its share. Manny Villar started the impeachment process by his bold, unorthodox, unexpected move in the House of Representatives. Rene de Villa worked behind the scenes to win over the military and police top brass, culminating in their defection to the anti-Erap side, sealing the fate of the President. And there were the thousands of unsung heroes, who gave their all, not counting the cost.



We are ready. We have tasted the victory of EDSA II. God has affirmed us in our mission. God assures of His power.

Let us begin.





The CFC Story

The theme of Couples for Christ (CFC) for the Great Jubilee Year 2000 was "Bringing Glad Tidings to the Poor."

It proclaimed the fullness of the life and mission of CFC, bringing together the spiritual and social dimensions of proclaiming the gospel. Aside from our work with the poor, a significant component was socio-political renewal. It was appropriate that the fullness of our mission would be proclaimed during this year of liberation. In fact, we quickly averred that this theme was not just for the year 2000, but would be our theme for the millennium, until the Lord returns again.

Little did we know that our commitment would soon be put to the test. The Lord had built up CFC for the last 19-1/2 years precisely for this moment, at the threshold of the third millennium, on the eve of that new springtime of Christian life prophesied by Pope John Paul II. And the Lord was impatient. All was in place. Now the work had to be commenced.

Towards the end of the Jubilee Year, the political crisis exploded upon the nation. Governor Chavit Singson accused President Estrada of being the "lord of all gambling lords." On October 10, CFC called an emergency meeting of some of its elders to assess our response. It was decided that in the midst of confusion and uncertainty, CFC had to speak as a prophetic voice, relying on its untainted reputation. It would do this, among other acts, through full-page advertisements.





It is better to light one little candle. CFC members with other people who responded to the call of Cardinal Sin for an indignation mass after the Senate impeachment court rejected the opening of the second envelope.

The nation's verdict. This CFC member is wearing the event's popular shirt bearing the sentiment of the nation.



Its first advertisement came out on October 12. It was entitled "A Quest for Truth." It reflected the desire and demand of the people to know the truth about Chavit's allegations. Cardinal Sin had just asked for the President's resignation. The CFC ad would soon be followed by many ads of many different groups, both pro- and anti-Erap.

CFC wanted to give the President a chance.

Terrible as his alleged crimes were, we tried to grasp at whatever good there was in every person. So we came out with our 2nd ad on October 18, entitled "A Quest for Renewal." We spoke about what makes for genuine renewal—that there can be no genuine renewal unless the culture of gambling is scrapped; unless there is an honest and determined effort to stamp out graft and corruption in government; unless cronyism is eliminated; unless our government officials learn the meaning of true public service and avoid political partisanship when the good of the nation is at stake; and unless government officials turn away from immorality in private life.

We ended with a challenge: 'Mr. President, your choice is clear: to work for genuine renewal, or to step aside for the good of our country.'

But the President was not disposed to do either. And the crisis intensified. The feeling of hopelessness and helplessness intensified as well. We were frustrated with the continuing turn of events. The nation was being polarized. The people were lost in the maze of charges and counter-charges, having difficulty in determining truth from untruth. It was time to try to point out the way. And so we put out our 3rd ad on October 28, entitled "A Quest for Honor."

On October 31, we received a

BOMB THREAT

We averred that our nation was in great peril, that we were a poor country continuing to be robbed by criminals in high places, being turned into a nation of gamblers, and facing economic disintegration. What had gone wrong? Many had lost their sense of shame and honor. We averred that it was shameful and dishonorable—for a President to manipulate the poor and to pit the poor against the rich, thereby fomenting divisive and dangerous class struggle; for Senators to treat the accuser as the accused, rather than diligently striving to seek the truth; for Congressmen to look to partisan interests instead of looking to the interest of the nation, when the very life of the nation is in peril; for some officials to speak ill of Cardinal Sin, a man of God and a true Filipino patriot, instead of heeding such godly persons and looking to their guidance during these crucial times; for administration apologists to attribute the swelling storm to the machinations of the opposition, instead of recognizing the growing anger of the people; and for good men to do nothing when the very life of the nation is in peril.

On October 31, we received a bomb threat at the CFC Home Office. We were starting to hurt some people, and hopefully making a positive impact on the struggle for truth and justice. On November 2, three gunshots were fired early morning outside the CFC Home Office. Meantime, President Estrada had become even more combative. He was not inclined in any way to mend his ways. We no longer had any choice. The CFC Council had an emergency meeting and decided to call for President Estrada's resignation. A later expanded meeting of top elders, including some elders from the Visayas and Mindanao, affirmed the call on the President to resign.



On November 3, Speaker Manny Villar, a committed CFC member, with about 40 other Congressmen, bolted the Administration party LAMP and signed the impeachment complaint against President Estrada.

On November 4, CFC participated in the rally called by Cardinal Sin at the EDSA Shrine. On this same day, CFC put out its 4th ad. Entitled "Mr. President, You Have Failed Us," CFC called on him to resign.

The die was cast. It was all-out war.

Within a week, CFC started a more intensified campaign for Erap's resignation. Its various elders fanned out to the provinces, meeting with our members, educating them about the issues, and consolidating our forces. We printed a primer on our Erap Resign Campaign. The CFC members responded positively and enthusiastically to the challenge at hand. A critical mass was building up within the community.

November 13 was a turning point. On this day, Speaker Manny Villar "rammed" through the impeachment in Congress. It was nothing short of a miracle. Two miracles in fact. The opposition minority was able to pass the impeachment, and the designated prosecutors were not challenged by the majority. God was clearly at work. The Administration congressmen were temporarily blinded and made deaf, unable to effectively object to the crucial proceedings. But Manny paid the price; he was ousted as Speaker.

The Next CFC member to make a sacrifice was Jun Uriarte, Secretary of the DOST,

who resigned from his post. But the President would not let him go. After failing to convince Jun to stay on, President Estrada tried his last card. He offered to join CFC if Jun would stay. This triggered another interesting episode in the role of CFC in the crisis. There was a media frenzy—in print, radio and TV. CFC members themselves debated on whether we should or should not accept the President.



We were in a dilemma. On the one hand, our renewal ministry was open to everyone, especially for sinners. Clearly the President was one. But on the other hand, our accepting the President into our program would coopt us. If we accepted him, we could no longer aggressively push for his resignation. And being one organization at the forefront of the anti-Erap forces and recognized as having no political agenda, we could see how this could adversely affect the whole Erap Resign movement. We needed the input of one person who had a direct line to God. So the CFC Council met with Cardinal Sin, who strongly averred that Erap should not be allowed to join CFC unless he resigned first. On December 15, we issued our memo officially stating that Erap could not join our CLP unless he resigned.

The year ended with a bang – literally. As the CFC Council wound up its year-end planning session, 5 bombs exploded in Metro Manila, ultimately killing 22 and wounding many others. The stakes in the conflict were being escalated. The threat to life and limb was all too obvious. But there was no turning back or toning down. On January 2, CFC brought out its 6th ad, entitled "A Quest for Peace, as a Fruit of Justice, Founded on Truth." That said it all.

On January 14, in a conference with members of CFC Area Councils from all the provinces, CFC formulated its moves to intensify its campaign for the ouster of the President. It was entitled "Hatol ng Bayan." It included all-out mobilization, use of media, a 500-car motorcade from Manila to Baguio with "Resign!" and "Guilty!" posters, a 9-day novena fast, and so on.

Then came that fateful day of January 16.

The CFC elders were having their monthly assembly when text messages started to come. The Senate had just voted 10-11 to block the opening of the crucial 2nd envelope in the impeachment trial. The CFC Council did a quick huddle. Then the elders came before the Lord in worship, repentance, and seeking guidance. Heeding a word of the Lord to proceed to EDSA, the whole assembly decided to move to the EDSA Shrine in a convoy. Text messages and cellular phone calls were made to other CFC members. The convoy of over 400 cars, with horns honking and lights blinking, arrived at EDSA at about 11:15 p.m. Coordinating with Fr. Soc Villegas, CFC moved to block EDSA. Towards midnight and onwards, people started to arrive. Cardinal Sin came to celebrate the Eucharist. A program started, with CFC providing the sound system and assisting in the program. That was the start of a continuing round-the-clock program through the succeeding days.



CFC members stayed on till the wee hours of the morning.

Most left for home to freshen up, leaving a skeleton team behind. Those who left were back within hours. And many more came. That day, January 17, the CFC leadership issued guidelines for nationwide mobilization. Phone lines burned. The CFC national network was called to action. CFC provincial areas mobilized and many took the lead in prayer vigils and rallies.

Back at the center of the action, CFC moved to physically claim territory, by setting up tents along Ortigas Avenue, between its Home Office and the EDSA Shrine. CFC also provided portalettes for the growing EDSA crowd. Free food and drink were given out. The Resign Café was set up. There were ongoing worship and fellowship.

As the EDSA crowd grew, CFC met with God's Coalition for Righteousness, led by Bro. Eddie Villanueva of Jesus is Lord Church. Both CFC and JIL agreed to set up another front at the People Power Monument.



Having already abandoned the impeachment trial, CFC on January 18 issued its 7th ad, entitled "Hatol ng Bayan: Guilty!" The die was cast. CFC intensified its efforts, meeting with its Metro Manila and provincial leaders, issuing a call to urgent action and commitment. It was all-out mobilization of God's army. The crowd at EDSA continued to swell. The CFC Home Office, strategically located very near to the EDSA Shrine, became a command post. Members crowded its offices and its grounds, including Ortigas Avenue all the way to the EDSA Shrine.

On the third day, January 19, the victory of the Lord was at hand.

Top military and police brass abandoned President Estrada. A major player in their defection was Rene de Villa, former Defense Secretary and a committed CFC member. The next day, President Estrada left Malacanang.

On January 21, as CFC participated in a Victory Mass at the EDSA Shrine, its 8th ad came out. It was entitled "A New Day Has Dawned." It indeed was a new day and a new opportunity - to rebuild a country ravaged by crime, corruption, cronyism and loss of moral values, and to reunite a people torn apart by social, religious and ideological conflict. CFC called on the Filipino people to continue the struggle that once again brought us to historic EDSA, and to fight for those values that will bring authentic peace and solidarity to our land. These values are reconciliation based on justice, morality in public service, and a preferential option for the poor. For its part, CFC committed itself to building a country that is pro-God, pro-life, pro-family and pro-poor.

Our vision: one nation under God that will be a light to the world.

The work has just begun.

Righteous Indignation

One problem with some renewed Christians is that they no longer get angry.

In the midst of poverty, crime, corruption, and all the things wrong in the world, they refuse to get angry. Perhaps because they are learning that they must become more tolerant, forgiving, forbearing, non-judgmental, they simply do not feel right getting angry. Or perhaps because they are being taught to endure pain and trials, to bear crosses in life, to be willing to even suffer injustice, they avoid getting angry.

And this is the problem. Simply accepting the situation perpetuates that same undesirable situation. Christians should get angry when the occasion demands it. Such as when injustice is perpetrated against the poor. Such as when truth is blatantly withheld by officers of the land. Such as when the generations to follow are being robbed of their future.

This is what is called righteous anger.

John the Baptist displayed it when he was baptizing in the Jordan. "He said to the crowds who came out to be baptized by him, 'You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the coming wrath?' " (Lk 3:7). He would not condone hypocrisy. He would not simply accept people who went through religious motions but did not reform their lives.

Jesus also displayed righteous anger. He repeatedly denounced the scribes and the Pharisees with harsh words: "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, you hypocrites." (Mt 23). And when he entered the temple in Jerusalem, seeing that the house of prayer had been turned into a den of thieves, he drove the merchants out and overturned the tables of the money changers (Mt 21:12-13). Now that is what you call socio-political activism!

Jesus has shown us the way. If there is anything happening that deprives God of the respect due to Him, or deprives His people of justice, then we not only can get angry, we should get angry.

In the Philippines, anger had been building up against the corrupt regime of President Estrada, especially as the extent of corruption and immorality was gradually uncovered. Finally the righteous indignation of the people exploded with the blatant and shameless cover-up perpetrated by the 11 Senators at the impeachment trial. Within a few days, the Estrada government had collapsed, driven from power by the power of God displayed through His people. Anger led to God's victory!

Today we have a new beginning. But we should not be lulled by the euphoria of EDSA II to believe that now everything is

all rosy. There is still much to be angry about—the extreme poverty, crime, pollution of the environment, injustice, oppression, assault on the family, traditional politics, and so on. Anger is a powerful emotion that can help us fight for what is right and just, in our work for total human liberation.

Paul tells us, "Be angry but do not sin" (Eph 4:26a). It is right to be angry when the occasion calls for it. But we need to be righteous when we do get angry. We avoid violence, vindictiveness, a desire for revenge, or a desire to destroy the other person. Rather, we look to righting wrong, to fostering justice, to desiring the conversion of sinners.

Filipinos are especially forgiving, forgetful of the past, able to find humor in the direst circumstances. These can be real virtues. But let us not forget that the evil one is at work, attempting to thwart God's plan in the world. For every manifestation of that, we should get angry.

Love and Justice

Now that President Estrada has been ousted,

there is talk of reconciliation and forgiveness and unity. That is well and good. But such cannot stand alone. Rather, there can be reconciliation but based on justice. There can be forgiveness but based on repentance. There can be unity but based on morality. Otherwise, these values become empty rhetoric, and cannot truly contribute to the healing of the nation.

All this stems from the kind of God we have. We know God as a God of love. And so love becomes the hallmark of a Christian. We are to love God and neighbor. And love speaks of reconciliation and forgiveness and unity.

But God is also a God of justice. If we want our sins to be forgiven, we need to repent. If we want to be reconciled with someone we have stolen from, we need to make restitution. If we want the nation to be one, there has to be a consensus on moral values that can provide a strong foundation for our common life.

Therefore we cannot just condone ex-President Estrada's sins, nor that of the 11 pro-Erap Senators, nor that of others involved in the massive corruption of the previous regime. Criminals have to be charged and prosecuted. Stolen wealth has to be recovered. Sinners have to have their sins pointed out, for them to repent of these sins. Evil needs to be excised from the life of the nation.

This is simply the just, and loving, thing to do.

CFC's Role in EDSA 2

- Oct. 10** CFC/STMA special meeting to assess our response in the wake of corruption charges by Chavit Singson against President Erap. Decided for CFC to start putting out ads to speak as a prophetic voice in the midst of the crisis.
- Oct. 11** Cardinal Sin calls on Erap to resign.
- Oct. 12** CFC 1st ad "A Quest for Truth"
- Oct. 18** CFC 2nd ad "A Quest for Renewal"
- Oct. 28** CFC 3rd ad "A Quest for Honor"
- Oct. 31** Bomb threat at CFC Home Office
- Nov. 2** Three gunshots fired outside Home Office at early morning.
CFC Council consensus to call on Erap to resign.
Meeting of top elders, including those from Visayas and Mindanao, regarding the political situation. Consensus for CFC to call on Erap to resign.
- Nov. 3** Speaker Manny Villar, with about 40 other Congressmen, bolt LAMP and sign impeachment complaint.
- Nov. 4** CFC 4th ad "Mr. President, You Have Failed Us," calling on Erap to resign.
EDSA rally with significant CFC presence.
PDI editorial cartoon with people against Erap showing a person with a CFC shirt at the forefront.
- Nov. 11** Start of more intensified campaign for Erap's resignation. Elders fan out to provinces.
- Nov. 13** Manny Villar "rams" through the impeachment in Congress. Is ousted as Speaker.
- Nov. 15** CFC primer on Erap Resign Campaign
Jun Uriarte resigns from DOST, effective end of month.
- Nov. 16** CFC 5th ad "Continuing the Quest for Truth, Renewal, Honor," extolling Speaker Villar and Senate President Drilon.
- Nov. 27** Erap asks Jun Uriarte to stay on and offers to join CFC.
- Nov. 28** Start of CFC media exposure in print, radio and TV.
- Dec. 1** Columnist Art Borjal, in his column entitled "CFC - A Philippine Export," extols CFC as "one of the most potent and committed Catholic lay organizations in the Philippines."
- Dec. 3** CFC Council meeting with Cardinal Sin, who strongly avers that Erap should not join CFC unless he resigns.



A Chronology of Events

- Dec. 4** Inquirer editorial is on CFC-Erap.
A. Lipin cartoons by Jess Abrera in Inquirer regarding CFC and Erap. Six cartoons in a row up to Dec. 9.
- Dec. 7** CFC participation in Jericho march.
- Dec. 15** CFC memo officially stating that Erap cannot join our CLP unless he resigns.
- Dec. 21** A photographer hiding under the flyover taking pictures of everyone leaving the Home Office.
- Jan. 2** CFC 6th ad "A Quest for Peace, as a Fruit of Justice, Founded on Truth"
- Jan. 11** CFC meeting with Erap opposition coalition, led by COPA.
- Jan. 14** Formulated "Hatol ng Bayan" moves to intensify oust Erap campaign.
- Jan. 16** On getting news during the ECGG about the 10-11 Senate vote blocking the opening of the 2nd envelope, ECG elders come before the Lord in worship, asking for guidance. Then they move to EDSA Shrine in a convoy of over 400 cars, with horns honking and lights blinking, arriving at EDSA at about 11:15 p.m. Shortly, Cardinal Sin calls for people power. CFC moves to block EDSA. CFC provides sound system and assists in program.

EDSA II is on!

- Jan. 17** CFC issues guidelines for nationwide mobilization.
CFC sets up tents along Ortigas Avenue.
CFC provincial areas mobilize and take the lead in prayer vigils and rallies.
CFC meeting with God's Coalition for Righteousness, led by Bro. Eddie Villanueva of Jesus is Lord Church. Agreement to set up another front at People Power Monument.
CFC sets up the Resign Café.
- Jan. 18** CFC 7th ad "Hatol ng Bayan ... Guilty!"
Some leaders announce the plan to march to Mendiola. CFC opposes, and with the concurrence of other leaders, the plan is shelved.
CFC participation in Luksa ng Bayan prayer chain from Ninoy Aquino statue in Makati to EDSA Shrine.
Meeting with MM Sector Heads and provincial Area Heads regarding call to urgent action and commitment, all out mobilization.
CFC meeting with KOMPIL II represented by Fr. Robert Reyes.
- Jan. 19** Defection of top military and police brass, arranged by Rene de Villa and others.
- Jan. 21** CFC 8th ad "A New Day Has Dawned"
CFC participation in EDSA Victory Mass. Special mention of CFC by Cardinal Sin in opening remarks of his homily.



A.Lipin

by: Jess Abrera





These cartoons by Jess Abrera, CFC member from Antipolo and cartoonist of the Philippine Daily Inquirer, came out in a series from the time the former president offered to join CFC, up to December 9, 2000.

Sharings: Edsa 2

Liway Vinzons-Chato Fraternal-CFC Angkop

Together with CFC members and my own family, we were the first ones at the EDSA Shrine on that fateful night of January 16. During the program at the impromptu rally, I was one of the speakers. Just like what I did on the martial law anniversary on September 21, 2000, I sang in full the song, "Kunin mo O Diyos at tanggapin mo ang aming Presidente, "cronies" at Gabinete, Pakidali-dalian lang." (Take and receive, o Lord, our President, the cronies and the Cabinet. Hurry up, please.) It took only four days for the Lord to make my wish come true.



Marvin Macatol SFC Quezon City

People Power II was a miracle. How else should somebody who was there in People Power I of 1986 describe it?

In 1986, it was okay for me, an adventurous 17-year old UP freshman, to be out there joining the protest rallies, though the dangers were very real: war tanks, fully-armed soldiers and war planes hovering above. Fifteen years later, it was not okay for me to go to the streets and risk my contract of service with the government, considering I am preparing myself for marriage next year and worrying about paying my housing loan and credit card bills. I am sure many of those who were there had similar anxieties. But everyone - employer, employee, self-employed, unemployed - came to be counted anyway.

Why did people choose to go to EDSA? The specific reasons for wanting to oust the guy were varied but the prize was worth the pain. Looking back, there wasn't much pain at all, but did anyone know the whole deal would be over in three days, with absolutely no loss of life or limb? None. Even the prime movers didn't know. Anyone who said in the evening of January 16 that everything would be over by January 20 would have been labelled short of being sane.

Now that the party's over, let's pause and reflect. What did People Power II make out of us?

If you were like me, you do not look very kindly at the person who asks you that question, coming as it does from a "KJ", so to speak. You hate the question because in a matter of seconds it effectively destroys the taste of victory you are relishing. All of a sudden you feel it's your turn to face the impeachment court.

To be a member of the CFC Singles for Christ was not a very popular thing to do before People Power II. People close to me thought I had "mellowed". "What has gone into you?" they asked. Some insinuated that I would not be able to keep for long the safe distance between me and the night life I used to enjoy and the 12 bottles of beer I used to gulp down in one sitting. Some believed with all their hearts that my daily prayer and Bible reading would only last a day, that I would soon feel the terrible pain of choosing between friends and covenant.



Luz Villaroman
CFC HOLD Council

EDSA II showed a more powerful expression of the Filipinos' love for freedom and country. I'm so proud of CFC – the catalyst since the beginning of the issue.



But in the recent crisis, the CFC put up a different face.

It was the face of a Crusader.

"Palaban. Malakas" (Aggressive. Strong) The CFC was one of the most vocal groups who expressed outrage over the non-opening of the second envelope during the impeachment trial. It was one of the first groups who occupied EDSA on that fateful night between January 16 and 17. There could have been bombs dropped there by the guy that night but the CFC would have gathered there just the same.

The faces of CFC astounded even the ousted guy: Congressman and former Speaker of the House Manny Villar; DOST Secretary Jun Uriarte to whom the President made the offer to join the Christian Life Program as a deal for him not to leave the Cabinet; Executive Secretary Renato de Villa; and many more. Your friends say, *Couples ka? Brod mo si Villar? Brod mo si de Villa? Ano? Brod mo rin si Congressman Dante Liban? Ang tigas mo pala, pare!* (You're with Couples? Villar is your brother in the community? De Villa is your brother? What? Congressman Dante Liban is your brother too? You're really something, man!)

With the CFC's face suddenly up high, it should be easier to walk wearing the CFC robes and tassles around the metro. With the victory in EDSA, it should be easier to walk around with a message in your eyes: "Hey, nobody messes around with us! We are SIGA! Servants in God's Army!" But we don't say it. In fact, it's more difficult for us now. How we wish our profile remained as low as before. For the sin of pride is also the seed of our downfall.

The commitment shown by the CFC elders to our covenant during the People Power II was impressive. While they showed boldness in leading the fight against the suppression of truth, they displayed magnanimity in victory. True to its spiritual mission, the CFC remained at EDSA on the morning of January 20. By then the guy was clearly on his knees, beaten and crawling. The CFC decided not to finish his neck off with a single swing of the CFC sword. Instead of marching to Mendiola, the CFC elders came with broomsticks, dustpans and plastic gloves to lead all the other members – couples, servants, handmaids, singles and youth – in cleaning up the street. What a symbolic act for soon everyone would have to clean himself of the garbage of hate and vitriol that had tainted all of us during those four days. For while we abhorred the actions, not the person, we had not been totally spotless in rendering judgment.

By winning, we do not become conquerors who share the spoils; rather we have grown in service to God's people. By winning we do not become judges of men; rather we have performed our roles as messengers of God's message of love and compassion. By winning we do not become lords over those whom we deposed; rather we glorify Jesus Christ as Lord of these islands. By winning we do not become cleansed of our sins; rather we acknowledge our own sins and manifest our struggle to overcome the dominion of sin in our lives.

By winning we do not become invincible; rather we cry in awe at the greatness of the power of God here on earth.

Baby Cedilla CFC South A5, Metro Manila



Everyone has heard by now how CFC got involved in the historical/spiritual event that was EDSA II. We are all aware that for CFC, it was more than history. It was God's call for the community to live out its own call for justice and renewal.

But more than this, EDSA will always be for me a concrete manifestation of the Lord's hand in bringing the country out of darkness. I cannot help but be convinced that He, and not man, was the grand designer of EDSA II.

My husband Gener and I stayed at EDSA till 4:00 a.m. that first morning. After a few hours of sleep, I woke up anxiously, turning on the TV for news updates. I looked at the thinning crowd at EDSA and listened to the confident pronouncements of pro-Erap allies. I was downtrodden. I visited the Blessed Sacrament because I was not really that confident that on this second People Power movement, the people will be victorious. I said, "Lord, I don't think we could sustain this mass action. It doesn't look like Erap has any intentions of leaving. Please, help us Lord."

Then suddenly, I heard in my mind these words: "Remember Sodom and Gomorrah? I asked for ten righteous people or even just five righteous ones and I promised I would not destroy their land. There are more than 5 righteous people in CFC.

So how can I destroy your land? Have faith!"

As usual God was right. That night, the number of people at EDSA was greatly increased. There was fun, laughter, camaraderie and a concerted expression of righteous indignation. And the numbers kept growing.

Then it happened. In the afternoon of Friday (January 19), the AFP Chief and the DND Secretary went to EDSA to declare their withdrawal of support for Erap. We felt that this was the breakthrough that everyone was hoping for. On Saturday, January 20, 2001, at 12:00 noon, GMA took her oath of office as the 14th President of the Republic of the Philippines before SC Chief Justice Davide. I thanked the Lord for being so faithful and for allowing our country to have a change in leadership sans a bloody revolution. While I was in prayer, I was led by the Holy Spirit to open one of my daily devotional books, *Experiencing God-Day by Day*, to the reading of that particular day, January 20:

Tony Gimenez PAH, Baguio-Benguet

I was not at EDSA but in heart and spirit, I was there. I was in Baguio and helped organize the Baguio CFC's response to the call, "Hatol ng Bayan". The CFC banner floated proudly among the throng that filled Malcolm Square and Session Road. I yearned to go down to Manila especially when events began moving swiftly but I knew I had to stay and lead CFC Baguio in this activity. I knew my wife and children were in EDSA, however, and was glad that we were one as a family in this.

" But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light" (1 Peter 2:9) .

Gener and I decided that we would share this with our household on the Monday following EDSA. During my prayer time that Monday morning, the Lord again reminded me how He won the victory of EDSA for us through the Responsorial Psalm for that day, which was Psalm 98:1-6 :

"Sing a new song to the Lord, he has done wonderful things! By his own power and holy strength, he has won the victory. The Lord announced his victory; he made his saving power known to the nations. He kept his promise to the people of Israel with loyalty and constant love for them. All people everywhere have seen the victory of our God."

Having shared this with the household, I felt I had done my part to let people know of God's goodness and God's faithfulness. But God would not be satisfied. I felt He wanted me to share my story with many others. The ECG Assembly was coming up on Feb. 4, Sunday. But "No way!" I said. I would not be able to muster enough courage to share before such a big crowd. But truly the Lord is good. He was not about to give me such an awesome task without further reassurances. He spoke to me again through the Responsorial Psalm for Tuesday (January 23) which was Psalm 40.

" In the assembly of all your people, Lord, I told the good news that you save us. You know that I will never stop telling it. I have not kept the news of salvation to myself, I have spoken of your faithfulness and help. In the assembly of all your people, I have not been silent about your loyalty and constant love"

Thus emboldened, I stood before the ECG and spoke of God's goodness to me, to the Filipino people, to the nation. I had accomplished His mission. EDSA II was not just a people's triumph against injustice, immorality and misgovernance. It was a personal triumph for me because the Lord showed me in very concrete ways how He works in my life.

KT Abano Central A

EDSA II was an example and expression of our charism as a community embodied in our being "MISSION-ready" in our efforts to anticipate the needs of our brother Filipinos and share with them our resources. All of these without losing our focus on God and His plan. What a remarkable contrast to the "trapos" (traditional politicians) who were directing the spotlight on themselves. It was a triumphant, "faceless" and single-minded effort to point the way to God.



Sharings: Edsa 2

Why CFC did not accept Erap's offer to join

On November 15, Jun Uriarte handed in his letter of resignation from the DOST, effective end of the month. He also took a leave of absence for the 2nd half of November. On November 28, when his resignation had been announced by Dante Liban on radio, with a press conference set for the next day, and with media calling incessantly, Jun was summoned by President Estrada. The President asked him to stay for one more month up to the end of the year, citing many reasons for doing so. But when Jun stood fast on his resignation, the President finally told Jun that if Jun stays, he will join CFC. Caught by surprise, Jun remained noncommittal but said he would consult the CFC elders.

Jun did agree to stay till the end of the year, and the debate within CFC started. There were basically two points of view. Those who favored accepting the President's offer cited the fundamental mission of CFC. We were in the business of evangelization. We wanted to win souls for the Lord. We rejected no one, and in fact, were particularly desirous of bringing in the sinners. We did not question motives, but trusted that the Lord could touch any person, if only there was a good opportunity, which a CLP offered. Those who opposed the President's offer were wary of his motives, but were more concerned about the effect on the campaign for the President's resignation, of which CFC was a major player. If CFC accepted the President into the CLP, then it should no longer actively seek his resignation, which in turn would weaken the snowballing Erap Resign movement, which in turn would propagate an undesirable President in office.



***"See, I am sending you out like sheep into the midst of wolves;
so be wise as serpents and innocent as doves."***



It was a difficult choice. Ordinarily, there would have been no second thoughts about it. We simply accepted everyone, especially sinners. But much more was at stake in President Estrada's case. The very life of the nation was involved. The Biblical injunction came to mind: *"See, I am sending you out like sheep into the midst of wolves; so be wise as serpents and innocent as doves."* (Mt 10:16). The President indeed was an accomplished actor, whose propaganda machinery was working overtime distorting the truth. His sincerity was very much suspect. But while we would not judge his motives in offering to join CFC, we also needed to discern the situation and our appropriate response. We owed this to our country.

On December 3, the CFC elders decided to maintain our Erap Resign Campaign, but be open to having a CLP for the President and his Cabinet. A meeting with him would first be arranged to talk about expectations. We also decided to consult Cardinal Sin. A meeting was quickly arranged that very afternoon. Cardinal Sin was very emphatic: the President should not be allowed to join CFC unless he first resigns. He was concerned about CFC being used. He was also sure that the President would soon be stepping down.

So that was that. We held off on a formal announcement of the CFC position, not wanting to publicly rebuff the President nor provoke dissatisfaction within our own ranks. We were also more inclined to believe that he was not really sincere in his offer, and thus would not bring it up anymore with Jun. He did not.

Since some of our people were still asking about, even agitating for, the Presidential CLP, and since the lack of an official pronouncement might have dampened in some way our own Erap Resign Campaign, we put out a memo on December 15 officially stating that there would be no CLP for the President unless he first resigned. But we would be open to having him after he resigns the Presidency.

In the meantime, God once again intervened with EDSA II. Now we will welcome ex-President Estrada to our CLP. Though he still claims to be the President, he is now just one more sinner in desperate need of salvation.

Growing in the Lord

The Community of Believers Was of One Heart and Mind

In the world today there is disunity, confusion and division. In many countries, corruption and immorality are at an unparalleled high. In the Philippines, it has in fact become public, blatantly displayed and institutionalized. As such, many leaders have lost their moral authority to govern.

During times like these, God raises up prophets to take on the role of speaking to His people. Often, God also raises up groups that will work for social restoration. Today, God speaks to us in CFC as He spoke through Isaiah: *"In the time of my favour I answered you; I have formed you, and destined you to be a light for peoples, restoring the land and allotting once more its desolate holdings. I said to the prisoners, 'Go free,' and to those in darkness, 'Come out into the open.' "* (Is 49:8-9a, REB).

CFC's prophetic role

From the beginning, CFC was anointed to take on a prophetic role in the work for total human liberation. Our Christian Life Program (CLP), which is the entry point to membership and participation in the life and mission of CFC, starts with an Orientation Session, which starts with a quote from Luke 4:18-19: *"The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring glad tidings to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, and to proclaim a year acceptable to the Lord."* Though at the start we had taken this passage to refer to the spiritual dimension of the gospel, subsequently we looked to the social dimension, such that now we are proclaiming the full gospel.



Over the last 20 years, more than a million people have come into CFC, first encountering this call in the CLP. God was preparing a prophetic people.

Then the Church sounded the call during the Jubilee Year 2000 to work for the liberation of the poor and the oppressed. Coincidentally, we had decided our theme for the year 2000: bring glad tidings to the poor. In fact, this quickly became our theme for the millennium, until the Lord returns.

Then in the Philippines, the center of the work of CFC, the stage was also set, starting last year and spilling over to the start of this new year, in the political arena, where the poor were pitted against the rich by a President who wanted to stay in power. The moment of truth had arrived for CFC.

The nature of our prophetic call

There are three basic elements to our prophetic call.

First, CFC is to bring clarity to people who are confused. And in the midst of the confusion, we are to seek clarity about our own convictions, about our role and purpose. As we do so, we can then help others find a clear direction.

Second, CFC is to give hope to those who are in despair. As a community, we need to work for total renewal of the land through the work of evangelization, thus helping restore the hope of the people.

Third, CFC is to bring unity to our fragmented land. In the midst of division and conflict, we are called to build unity based on truth and justice.



Unity within CFC

So God has called us to this task. But for us to be effective and fruitful, we first of all need unity within our own community. The Bible tells us that the first Christian community after Pentecost was of one heart and mind, and so were able to accomplish much. In fact, they enjoyed "favor with all the people. And every day the Lord added to their number those who were being saved." (Acts 2:47). We cannot take on this prophetic role unless we ourselves are united as a community.

We need to be intensely loyal to one another, especially to our leaders. We need to respect and openly support positions taken by our elders, even if they are contrary to our own feelings. We need to fiercely guard this loyalty. We are surrounded in the world by people who are masters of deceit and lies and in control of vast resources and propaganda machines that can easily confuse and divide us. We need to look to our elders as people we can trust, even with our very lives.

If we do not understand, we should seek understanding. If we do not agree, we should state our views objectively and respectfully, trusting in our elders who discern the will of God and who have the welfare of our community and country at heart.

Dissenting views will be respected, and brethren espousing them will still be loved. We will continue to be united even in disagreement as we realize that the interest of our community and country is greater than our personal views and feelings. We need to take on the view that CFC is our way of life and a legacy that we can proudly pass on to our children. It will survive Presidents, both good and corrupt.

*"Rise up in splendor! Your light has come,
the glory of the Lord shines upon you."*

In coming elections, we will again be challenged with our political choices. The issue here is not to choose candidates with a good chance of winning, or those who will give back personal favors. Rather, the issue is faithfulness, using conscience in making choices of what is good for the country and looking to the values that we fight for as a community.

If we do not keep united, and if we are unfaithful to our prophetic role, then there will be devastating consequences. If there is no unity and we start to turn against each other, we will split up as a community and disintegrate. If we lack integrity and courage in making a stand on moral issues, we will lose our moral authority. Now CFC is on a high moral plain. But this can be lost, and with loss of moral ascendancy, we will lose our anointing as God's people. Finally, we would also be condemning our children to a future of greater misery, corruption and poverty.

CFC is called to be a major catalyst of change in the Philippines (and other countries as well) to deal with unjust social structures, a culture of corruption and immorality, and declining value systems. To be an effective catalyst, CFC is also undergoing change from doing mostly spiritual work in the past two decades, to the work of addressing social, political, economic and environmental issues.

Change is never meant to be easy, but is necessary for us to grow as a community and as a people. Knowing this, we should make it our goal to work for greater unity, trusting God, trusting our elders, and trusting ourselves that a better life awaits us, as we remain faithful and true.



The changes that are happening around us are part of the preparation for us to be a light to the world. But we will never be truly effective in this mission unless we ourselves address the split-level Christianity within our midst. We cannot be a people who are overtly religious, but continue to accept or even justify sin and corruption in our midst. We cannot be a people who proclaim a mission of total human liberation, but are unable or unwilling to bridge the gap between the rich and the poor within our own community. For example, do we treat our househelp with dignity?

CFC: light to the world

The fruit of our unity and endurance will be peace. Though right now there is a dark cloud that hangs over this land, we do have over a million members who can light up this country because they believe and they give hope.

We as CFC are called right now to arise and shine out and be a light to this land, in preparation for our role to be a light to the world. The words of the prophet Isaiah should resonate in our hearts: *"Rise up in splendor! Your light has come, the glory of the Lord shines upon you."* (Is 60:1).

Let us then be of one heart and one mind, eager to embrace our prophetic role, and ready to become a catalyst of change in rebuilding the Philippines, on our way to winning this world for Christ.

CFC at EDSA 2



From the mouths of babes: we're fighting for our future too!



For God and country. YFC members marching to the EDSA Shrine



Guilty! Hatol ng Bayan



Gary Faustino was the head security coordinator at the EDSA Shrine stage



Cardinal Sin hosted a thanksgiving dinner for CFC last January 24



Foods such as cauldrons of congees or goto are cooked

CFC World in Pictures

(Clockwise from top left)
Kids Day celebration by KFC Negros Oriental

“Barog Cebu” Rally

CFC Hamburg joined the Catholic Week of Germans held in Hamburg, Germany

CFC Unit in Barcelona, Spain under Renato and Beth Glinoga

Mass wedding sponsored by CFC Hamburg





(Clockwise from top)
Pretty CFC women. CFC ladies who performed for the fashion show cum CFC Women Conference aptly entitled Women on Fire. The show was held at the Greenhills Theater.

Assumption-Antipolo High School with their opening dance number during the 1st YFC High School Conference.

Delegates from Mindanao are in deep worship during the Provincial Leaders Conference at Camp Aguinaldo.

Gerry Padilla and Nina Ponte with the participants of the Women on Fire workshop at Camp Aguinaldo

Tony Meloto presented FLAME's objective for the year during Provincial Leaders Conference workshop



STMA FORUM

*The STMA Forum on Saturday, Feb. 3 was well-attended, primarily because everyone was eager to see our very own **Rene de Villa**, newly-appointed Executive Secretary. A member of CFC since 1993, Rene shared at the forum his memories of the events that led up to EDSA II.*

I am humbled by your presence and feeling great because deep in me, in a very personal way, I feel I am home.

If you recall, before the presidential election of '98, we had a big meeting in Guadalupe and I said then that the presidency was a difficult ambition, a different task to fulfill and achieve. But I remember that I also said then that the presidency is only for six years but being a member of CFC is forever. I believe that is why Jun Uriarte, Joe Tale and many other officials in government are here today because this is the community where we all belong. We are CFC, a people of God, first and foremost.

When the explosion came, and the "revolt" broke out, so to speak, on the night of Jan. 16, I received a text message from Joe Tale saying, "Rene, a lot of people are moving. We are here at the EDSA shrine. The Couples are here at EDSA." At that moment, I knew we would eventually gather the numbers that we needed and I felt that EDSA had a rightful place in the effort to change our government. I congratulate the CFC (even if this includes me) for being there.

This thing really started without our knowing it, a long way back when misgovernance, massive graft and corruption, disregard for moral values, greed for money and power and expansion of businesses came into the government in an unprecedented, massive way. I can now say in reflection and hindsight that EDSA was meant to be. But none of us recognized, none of us understood then what was coming. But now that this has happened,

now we recognize that this was not because of us, not because of the multitudes and not even because of CFC, but because our Lord is always watching over us and telling us what to do for our country.

I say this because it couldn't have happened without His hand being there. We were only a few compared to 75 million Filipinos, compared with the multitude that the powerful government had the ability to muster. We had no logistics. We were all volunteers, but we were driven by the desire to respond to the challenge to effect change in our country.



Newly appointed Executive Secretary Rene de Villa



Frank Padilla leading the praying over of (from left) Jun Uriarte, Executive Secretary Rene de Villa and Deputy Executive Secretary for Legal Affairs Joe Tale.

Sometime in December, before Christmas, in my capacity as chairman of the Strategic Planning Group (or Study Group No. 1), I briefed Cardinal Sin, Mrs. Aquino and President Arroyo about the scenario unfolding as a result of the impeachment trial. I told the cardinal we needed the great numbers that the church can muster, all the priests and the nuns. I told him it was time that we mobilized because we might get reversed and lose the battle, so to speak. And the Cardinal said, "Don't worry, Rene, I assure you he will step down." I looked at Rene Valencia and Mrs. Aquino. They were as perplexed as I was because the reality of our analysis showed that we did not have what it would take to take the then president down. Proceeding from logic and experience, my training in general warfare and my experience in EDSA, and proceeding from my analysis of how enormous is the capacity of the government to crush any opposition, I knew that what the cardinal was so emphatic about was just not possible. So I said, "Your Eminence, he will but we need to force him to do it." He invited me to come the following day to explain my analysis strategy and my estimates to all the priests in Metro Manila.

There were very many instances during the entire period before, during and after the EDSA event that made me realize that we were not alone,

that not only other groups were with us but that God was watching and directing. Now it can be told that we met with the heads of all the Protestant churches of the Philippines. They explained they were very much willing to help and, for the first time, all join together in a common cause. We were very much encouraged. But then someone said, you know Estrada is mobilizing the media, which is under his control, and the students are not involved yet. And I said, we must go on. Somehow, I just blurted out, "We must go on because God is not yet finished with His work".

On that fateful Tuesday night, as EDSA was beginning to fill up and simultaneous spontaneous mini-EDSA's were going on around the country, we realized we had practically no organization and no control over what was going on. I knew what was developing but we needed control. But somehow everybody just simply cooperated, including the far left and the far right, and this cooperation gave life to the movement and to the evolving, merging mass that was coming to EDSA.

Our negotiation position was simple: ESTRADA must sign a resignation paper.

But before that, when we were expecting the Senate to respond to the call of the people to discover what was inside that second envelope of Equitable Bank. (and the "NO" prevailed), we were all depressed in Linden Suites. We were saying, "How could this be? How can it happen?" We did not understand, but I said that in spite of it, we had to go on, we had to push through with our plans, no matter what. We must have faith that we were doing what was right by our country, by the Lord and by all the people who believe in what is right and just. We did not understand then that the rejection by the 11 Senate members of the opening of the envelope would be the trigger that will bring about the change. We thought we had been had, that we were under the control of those 11 senators. But in the end, we began to understand what it meant. I guess we should even thank them because without them this would not have happened.

When I was sent by the president to Malacanang to speak with Angara, my mission really was to ask for the resignation of Estrada. I brought with me a resignation document. I was with Bert Romulo and Rene Corona and Angara was with his assistant, the head of PMS, and the son of Governor Remulla. I told Ed, "We came here because we're facing the end of this situation and we don't want any violence. Our credo in this movement has always been active, peaceful, non-violent constitutional removal of the president."

There was a request from the Chief of Staff that we consider and give due course to Estrada's request that we allow him to postpone his resignation for a few days. Our team agreed before going there that we would offer a post-dated resignation and use the period in-between for the transition of the cabinet and the departments.

When I presented the document to Angara, I told him that our mission was to have a signed resignation from his boss by 6 o'clock the following morning." This was at 12 midnight and, if you remember, this was also the time when the crowd at EDSA had begun to talk about marching to Mendiola. Angara balked at this and said, "But that is an ultimatum." And I said, **"Whatever it is, this is the demand of the people at EDSA. He must step down and RESIGN."**

Our negotiations dragged on until 2 in the morning. Angara said our demand for resignation was not acceptable. He said "If I go in to Estrada now and present your demand, he will interpret this to mean an ultimatum." I said, "Well, he has to do it before 6 a.m. because the people at EDSA will come to Malacanang and I am very much afraid that we have more than enough hotheads in our group that could make crowd control difficult." But finally, he said, "OK, these are the points that I will bring back to my principal and we will consider. Come back before 6." We haggled over the time. Angara wanted us to sleep on the issue but we were insistent that the matter be settled before 6 AM, the starting time for the march to Malacanang. We finally agreed to meet again at 5 AM.

Our negotiation position was simple: Estrada must sign a resignation paper. We agreed to consider the factors of transition and the physical protection of his family but there was no compromise on the other issues. Thus, when we came back to Malacanang (at 7 AM, as it turned out because first, we had to settle who will march to Malacanang and how to implement crowd control), we carried with us a one-page document with only about five short sentences on what could be agreed upon.

We were disappointed and frustrated when Angara and company presented us with a 3-page legal contract, every paragraph of which was legalese and double talk, or as Sen. Biazon would say, "legal gobbledygook". We protested. Angara insisted that the one-page resignation document we had earlier presented was no longer needed because the legal contract they had drawn up also addressed the issue of resignation. I am not a lawyer but my companions were and it was clear to us that we were being deceived. After much frustrating discussion, I finally said that everything had come down to the wire because it was already getting late and the marchers were already in Espana. I advised Angara to tell his boss to leave before the marchers come. I told Angara that the bottom line was this: "If you cannot get Estrada to agree that he needs to sign a resignation letter, attested to by you and whoever else, then we have to terminate this discussion because all other actions after this would have no meaning." And Angara replied, "If that's how you feel, then there's nothing I can do." We left Malacanang. I informed Mrs. Arroyo that we had decided to terminate the talks because I felt that the other side was not sincere and not really prepared to abide by what we had agreed upon the previous night. Of course Angara now has a different version of what transpired during those early hours, but that is another story.

Looking back now, God's hand was there still, even in the face of what we thought was the frustrating turn of events. Because at that very moment, without our knowing it, the Supreme Court was discussing the issue and was about to decide that the President take her oath that day before the Chief Justice. Events flowed swiftly after this. The rest you know.

The turn of events, the speed with which they happened, the coordination and cooperation we hoped for but certainly did not expect - what else can these mean other than God was there with us all the time? That is the real miracle of EDSA. He showed His protection and guidance so many times during those four days. The events that tied all these together were miracles in themselves.

When we noticed that the students were not being involved, we asked the schools (initially only seven major ones although we broadened the scope to include all the schools in Metro Manila) to forget about classes and ask their students to join. They all came - 20,000 from UP, 10,000 from San Sebastian, 10,000 from Adamson. We asked the people in the provinces to come and they came in droves. The bishop of Baguio called to say there were 5,000 of them but they were being stopped on Kennon Road. Joey Arguelles of Batangas CFC brought all the CFC brethren to



Manila and were stopped along the highway. They got through anyway. My instruction was simple: either take the regular transportation and regroup in Manila or tie up the traffic so badly the PNP would have no choice but to open the roads.

Who am I to ask people to come, to give instructions and be listened to? I'm just a foot soldier of Couples for Christ. But everybody came. On the first night, only the CFC were at EDSA but the numbers just kept ballooning. The greatest miracle of all was that there was goodwill

everywhere, there was unity of purpose. Not a single shot was fired. Nobody got hurt except for two people who threw stones at the marchers at Mendiola and who were initially roughed up before the police could arrest them. The wonder of it all was the way everything got organized when we really had no logistics. Food, water, towels, everything kept coming in abundance. When I saw all those people, I knew we had reached the critical mass we were talking about, that God was rewarding our faith in His ability to grant us triumph.

Who am I to tell the then Chief of Staff to call his service commanders and to impress upon them that thwarting the will of the people would break this country? We had learned that Estrada was trying to win the service commanders to his side and trying to get them to make a public statement that they were in favor of snap elections. I went to the Chief of Staff and we talked about the duty of the soldier, about patriotism, about how we could help unite, heal and move this country forward, about non-violence and about defining moments. I told him the decision was his alone but he needed to make it immediately. He called his service commanders who all asked permission to consult with their subordinate commanders down the line. Information soon came back - all the field commanders were in support of the people, without exception. The soldiers' only request, their only bargaining chip was this: "Mrs. Arroyo, all we want is good governance." And the President replied: "I will give this country good governance." That very same day, the Chief of Staff marched to EDSA to show his solidarity with the people.

Is this man's work? You tell me. Can the Chief of Staff, can a group of five generals, do this by themselves? Could a group of negotiators accomplish all these? Can a group of people, with diverse ideas, ideologies, backgrounds, ambitions, motives and what have you, come together and exhibit such unity and such goodwill? The miracle was simply this: God was watching and He was guiding. This was all in His plan.

We have triumphed with God's grace. This is my promise - that I will always remind the President and her cabinet that we have a commitment to the people especially in the area of morality and moral standards for governance, in the area of responding to the poor to improve the quality of their lives and especially in the area of corruption. We may not be able to totally eradicate corruption because it is so difficult to change the culture but we intend to make a difference. We will demonstrate that it can be done and whoever comes after us would just have to push this program to its conclusion.

We intend to deliver on these promises. By the grace of God, we can do it.



Teodora Files

By Teodora: *In Defense of the Authentic Woman, Inc.*

WOMAN IN THE SERVICE OF CIVIL SOCIETY

During the recent People Power 2, SIGA youth ("Serving in God's Army": an Angkop program for the youth) from Bagong Silang were asked to join the rallies at EDSA.

Out of obedience, they helped carry boxes of food and distributed them to the people in the rally. Noticing that conviction in what they were doing was lacking and caring enough to do something about it, 21-year old Issa Cuevas spoke with the 15 youth. Telling them what was happening to the country, she made them see why it was important to do something. Visibly moved, the Bagong Silang youth found a new purpose and energy. When asked to put up a CFC streamer, they scrambled up the walls of the EDSA Shrine and hung not one but three streamers.

How one woman's sensitivity, conviction and effort to relate to people was used to make a difference!

A woman's *feminine genius* is a great influence in many fields, whether at home as a full-time homemaker, in education, media, environment, business, politics, government or in works of mercy and social work. A woman's vocation does not call for a mere display of skills but also of virtues that constantly remind others that the aim of human existence is holistic human development, not sheer efficiency.

Recently, we saw how these virtues in women played very significant roles in the recent socio-political developments in the Philippines. Confronted by corruption and immorality in government, the only way to go was to fight evil with goodness. And the victors' only weapons? Courage. Love for truth. Patience. Serenity and sobriety. Non-violence. Piety. Vigilance. Solidarity. Perseverance. Willingness to sacrifice for a higher good.

Fully aware of the possible repercussions and dangers not only to themselves but also to their respective families, women courageously faced the impeachment court to bring out the truth. Revealing the truth can be such a formidable task if one knows it will earn the ire of those powerful people who are hiding behind lies. How difficult it must have been for

the women witnesses to decide to put their loved ones at risk for the sake of the country. The truth had to be uncovered! Once the women had decided to act, there was no turning back. These women patiently and serenely addressed questions at the court despite attempts to derail them or to shatter their composure. No amount of tricky cross-examination stood up to the truth. Among the women judges, we also saw how sobriety and serenity achieved more good than frenzy did.

In the streets

However, the venue was not to be the Senate court. People took to the streets to express their indignation



at the unfair trial proceedings. Women chose not to just quietly remain at home. Young and old, they rallied alongside the men. Non-violent 'people power' was the name of the game. Women were on the stage urging fellow Filipinos to be vigilant. They were among the crowd showing solidarity despite the class differences; they were at the sidelines praying and preparing food; they were in their offices coordinating activities and calling up people to participate.

At the home office

At the CFC Home Office alone, we saw how the women complemented the men in the work. There was Ruth Catabas who used her charm to solicit food and water for the rallyists from generous friends within and outside CFC. We had Helen Coloso who used her motherly skills to organize the food distribution so that nothing was wasted and everyone's stomach was filled (including those of passers-by). We had the front desk staff who patiently addressed thousands of queries and linked the CFC members.

Day in, day out, the women were part of People Power 2. They fought the battle and persevered together with the men. Finally, or rather, to start another chapter in our history, we have a woman president to lead our country towards recovery.

In Teodora

What did our special ministry *Teodora* do during all this? The socio-political crisis opened the door for *Teodora* to join an alliance of different cause-oriented women's groups and serve society in a new way. Little did the women of *Teodora* know that one day they would sit at table with women even from radical groups and join forces for the sake of the country. The alliance started with "A Tribute to the Women of Courage" held last January 4, 2001 at the World Trade Center to honor some of the women witnesses at the impeachment trial – Emma Lim, Menchu Itchon and Clarissa Ocampo. The next activity was supposed to be a metro-wide prayer vigil in parishes and subdivisions while the impeachment trial was ongoing. However, this was set aside by the abrupt end of the trial, and was replaced by People Power 2. The alliance staged a woman's march to let her voice be heard.

The ouster of President Estrada did not put an end to the work of the alliance. Now formally called TEAMWORK, the alliance of women's groups (which includes *Teodora*, Urduja, Gabriela, TOWNS, Tinig ng Kababaihan Movement of the Philippines, Inner Wheel Club, Working Women on Watch, Activista, National Council of Women of the Philippines, Philippine Federation of Business and Professional Women, Association of Major Religious Superiors of

the Philippines, and Women's Desk) is organizing a "Women's Forum on Transparency and Good Governance" on March 3. Here key cabinet secretaries of the new administration will be asked to present their department's agenda or plan of action concerning particular issues. The main objective is to create an opportunity for the women's sector to be heard and to lobby for essential socio-political, economic and cultural issues from the perspective of women. Also, TEAMWORK intends to periodically evaluate the various departments' flagship programs even after the forum. They will be publishing their evaluation in a website to allow more women to participate.

Meanwhile, *Teodora* President and CFC Church Liaison, Maribel Descallar, was invited to be one of the consultants representing civil society whom President Arroyo invited regarding the choice of the senatorial candidates whom she will endorse. It was a great privilege for *Couples for Christ* and *Teodora* to have a voice in this unprecedented historic event which took place on February 10-11. Fourteen senatorial candidates and about ten representatives of various sectors of society were present. In that consultation meeting with President Arroyo, *Teodora* was able to submit, along with CFC, their position paper on what they expect from the senators on the aspects of good governance and new politics.

Our nation has been given a lesson. We got the government we deserved because we did not care enough. We did not want to move out of our comfort zones thinking we would not be affected by some corruption here and there. We did not reach out to the poor, so how could we educate them on whom to vote? Attitudes were the problem, and only a change in attitudes can truly bring about rebuilding of our country.

Woman, with her maternal heart, nurtures not just in the physical sense but nurtures also the values and virtues that we need to make the world a better place to live in. If the wrong values are planted in the hearts and minds of children, then there is little hope for a bright future. Indeed, woman is a key to the holistic development of society.

Women make an indispensable contribution to the growth of a culture which unites reason and feeling, to a model of life ever open to the sense of "mystery," to the establishment of economic and political structures ever more worthy of humanity. Through the insight which is so much a part of your womanhood, you enrich the world's understanding and help to make human relations more honest and authentic. (Letter of Pope John Paul II to Women)

EDSA II or People Power II?

What do we call the miracle that has once again happened in the Philippines? "EDSA II" or "People Power II"?

Though the name is minor compared to the reality, it is also important for posterity and for what has become a source of inspiration for the world.

EDSA II has particular appeal. First, there are other people power phenomena in other parts of the world, such as what happened in Poland led by Solidarnosc. Thus EDSA II makes this miracle distinctively Filipino. We need though to be quick to say that people power was not confined to EDSA but blossomed all over the Philippines.

Second, the name EDSA itself is significant. It stands for Epifanio de los Santos Avenue. Though Epifanio de los Santos is an obscure Filipino to most, his name means Epiphany of the Saints. For Christians, the feast of Epiphany commemorates the coming of the Magi to the newborn Jesus. The dictionary has also defined epiphany as an appearance or manifestation, especially of a divine being; an illuminating discovery; a revealing scene or moment. Thus EDSA to us, by its very name, points to the coming together of God's people to honor the Lord, who has come into their midst in signs and wonders, establishing himself as King over the land.

EDSA II is not just people power, but God's power. EDSA II is not just intended to oust a corrupt regime, but to install Jesus as King and Lord over the land. EDSA II is not just an inspiration to unity and morality, but a call to solidarity and fulfillment of our nation's prophetic role as light to the world.

Our Culture in CFC

Prophecy

Since we do not utilize discerners to screen prophetic messages at our prayer assemblies, it is recommended that those who speak a prophetic word not start with "And the Lord says" nor end with "This is the word of the Lord," or "Thus saith the Lord," or some other variation. Just go ahead with the prophecy without such beginning or ending phrase. It is up to the congregation, especially the elders, to discern whether the prophecy is authentically a word from the Lord, based on 1 Cor 14:29.

Sharing in a Prayer

Sharers should observe the A,B,C of sharing.

A - be audible. Speak into the microphone, do not mumble. Speak to the audience in a way that elicits interest in your sharing.

B - be brief. A good sharing can be made in 7 minutes or less. Try to target for this. Going beyond this time, in case a particular sharing has much significant content, should be the exception. Since the overall time for sharing in a prayer assembly is limited, this affords more people the opportunity to share.

C - be Christ-centered. Do not just tell a story, however interesting it may be, but relate everything ultimately to Christ. The sharing is meant to glorify God, not just amuse or entertain people.

EFI Corner

STAR TALK

The past month has truly been very memorable.

It did not only usher in a new year filled with the promise of the Lord's blessings, but it ushered in a new president as well! We all know what transpired between the fire works of the New Year and the oath-taking of the new president on January 20. We saw things unfold on television and personally experienced the miracle at EDSA.

All these affected not only the grown-ups, but young children made themselves part of it too! They noticed what adults did. Their observations allowed them to form their own perceptions. Yes! The children were very much aware. They saw. They felt. They listened. They spoke. They understood. The only difference was ... they did so with much simplicity, innocence and humor!

Here's what the CFC Educational Foundation, Inc. (implementing arm of CFC in the area of education) gathered from the children in its pre-school, the CFC School of the Morning Star.

Five-year old Jerome Sola thinks that Erap "kidded" the people. When asked why, he explained that, "Erap said he'll build houses for the poor, but he built them for himself!"

When asked what he thought about the EDSA rally, five-year old Andre Espinosa proudly said, "I saw my mom on TV. She was jumping up and down." Did he think Erap was a bad person? "I think he was bad, because the people were asking him to leave!"

On the other hand, four-year old Camille Olivares said the former president did a lot of bad things, specifically "he stole the jewelry from the stores. And his friends were bad too." Five-year old Princess Dolot interrupted by saying that she saw Erap leaving Malacanang. She felt happy now that we have no more "bad" president. When asked who our new president is, Jerome said it was Bush, but for Camille it was, "Julia Mac... Ar..."



Clockwise: Jerome Sola, Renzo Chavez and Andre Espinosa, Princess Dolot, Agi dela Cruz, Camille Olivarez, and Roni Estuar

Four-year old Roni Estuar won't have banking problems because she's very definite about her financial plans: "I'll just keep my money at home, because Erap got lots of money from the bank."

However four-year old Agi dela Cruz's thoughts were, "I don't know why people were asking him to leave. Personally, I don't want him to leave. I think I saw Erap riding a horse, and he was going to a mountain, and that mountain exploded! Those bad people let the mountain explode. Since Erap was not hurt when it exploded, I think he was not one of those bad people."

Meanwhile, four-year old Renzo Chavez saw Erap leaving Malacanang, on his way to a "truck" (perhaps it was the barge which ferried the former president and his family from the presidential palace). Renzo said, "I saw him going home. He'll just stay home and do his work there. His work is writing his name and writing numbers. I think he is good. I saw him helping the people and they were all happy."

Of course, the children had messages for the former president such as, "Don't get our money anymore. Do good. Please return our money!"

And for President Arroyo, the children said, "Be a good woman of the house. Thank you for being our President!"

How children closely observe people and the things happening around them may serve as a reminder for us to be mindful of how we conduct ourselves.

Virtue of the Month:

OBEDIENCE

Obedience refers to one's respect for authority out of love and service.

How do we apply and teach obedience in our daily lives?

1. Teach your children to obey persons in authority provided that what they wish from us does not go against justice.
 - We are not slaves of others, but we have an obligation to obey the just laws of our parents, school and nation.
 - Obedience is the source of true freedom because if we are attached to our own will, we will become a slave of desire (often our intellect does not recognize where good really lies)
 - When you recognize people who have authority and exercise it, you are more willing to obey.
2. Obedience takes humility
 - Even the most powerful people have to follow a set of rules.
 - If understood as a virtue, obedience is not a blind obedience of a slave. If someone were to obey on the outside but is rebellious inside, there would be no virtue there.
3. There is a need to distinguish deep motives which parents ought to recognize so that they can go on to explain them to their children.
 - For small children: partial motives are needed for acquiring the habit of obeying as they make their way to a full appreciation of what obedience is.
 - a small child obeys because he recognizes his parents' authority
 - his parents give him security, affection and a sense of well-being; this leads him to do what his parents want, though he also feels inclined to disobey to test his strength and ability to act independently
 - The higher motive than that for doing what one is told is the certainty that by obeying, we ensure we do not make mistakes.
4. We need to understand the developmental stages of a child's own will
 - From age 2 to 3 - this is the "no" stage where the child recognizes that he has a will of his own
 - After the age of 3 or 4 - a child starts developing his own will (much to the annoyance of his parents); he understands the need for the rules of the game, and once he knows these rules, it is easier to get him to do as he is told; he realizes that a certain amount of organization is necessary to run a smooth life
 - From age 5 - his motivation to obey starts to change; at first, his obedience is in line with it being a virtue (he obeys because of his parents' authority). At this point, parents ought to make demands on their children and explain those demands to make them clear to the children; children also obey to show his affection to his parents.
 - Up to age 13 (approximately) - lack of obedience is more of a nuisance and source of exasperation to the parents; this is the best time to teach children not just to obey but to obey well before they reach adolescence.

It is therefore very important for parents to be consistent in the way they elicit obedience. Otherwise, the children will likely be unable to develop in themselves the virtue of obedience. As we ask the child what needs to be done, tell him WHEN and HOW he should do it and exactly WHAT we want him to do.

Evangelizing the World

This is an update of CFC foreign missions in Ghana, Nigeria and the United States. It is also a story of how God plants one seed at a time, guiding CFC to new areas through single, oftentimes unexpected initiatives.

HOW GOD PLANTS ONE SEED AT A TIME

GHANA

Tony Biney of Ghana completed his Christian Life Program in Libya where he was employed. He asked Ricky Cuenca, Canada Country Coordinator, who had served in the Libya CLP, if CFC could be started in his home city of Tamale in northern Ghana. Not wanting to waste any opportunities, Ricky, as a one-man mission team, together with Tony, conducted the first CLP in Ghana in August for 201 participants. A second CLP, conducted by Ricky with Louie Untalan, also of CFC Canada, brought the total CFC population in Tamale to 277 in just three months.

From Tamale, CFC moved to Accra, the capital city. This time, the seed was carried by the Carmelite Sisters in Tamale and their Filipino contacts in Accra. The Accra CLP was conducted in April 1999 through the help of four Filipino couples employed in Accra. Sixteen couples – 12 Ghanaian and 4 Filipino – as well as 2 priests and 3 nuns completed the program. Four more CLP's followed – in August 1999, November 1999, May 2000 and November 2000. At the end of 2000, CFC Accra had grown to 322 members.

NIGERIA

CFC Nigeria has grown even faster, from just one small seed. One of the graduates in the first CLP in Tamale was James Obioha, a Nigerian trader based in Tamale. Like Tony Biney, he asked Ricky Cuenca if CFC could be brought to his city of Onitsha in Nigeria. Always mission-ready, Ricky and Louie Untalan travelled to Onitsha in November of 1998, right after the second CLP in Tamale, Ghana to make arrangements with Archbishop Albert Obiefuna to start a CLP in Nigeria.



1st CLP in Lagos, Nigeria

Securing the archbishop's clearance, the first CLP in Nigeria was conducted in April 1999 by a combined Philippine-Canada CFC team led by International Missions Director Frank Padilla. The team was composed of Alex and Susan Solis, Ricky and Irma Cuenca and Chit Aquino. The first CLP brought a rich harvest of 242 members, all of them Nigerian.

Subsequent CLP's - in August 1999, November 1999, May 2000 and September 2000- brought the Nigerian CFC population to 1,883 members in Onitsha alone. The first CLP conducted in Lagos in September 2000 brought in 98 members. Onitsha has thus become a cluster-sized community in just a little over a year!

The original mission teams to Ghana and Nigeria were later augmented by more couples from CFC Canada, among them Manny and Chit Aquino, Manny and Ditas Supleo, Louie and Angie Untalan, Frank and Zen Oteyza, Manny and Ditas Supleo, Nick and Norma Borja and HOLD member Zeny Gabisan.

CALIFORNIA

The CFC community in California is flying high! In order to more fully serve God's call to spread His word, CFC Northern California formed what they call a "Trans-Parochial Mission Area" team, aka TRX. The team is the brainchild of Boni Capuyan, CFC sector head of Western USA and implemented by Art and Chona Dancel of Northern California. The project was launched to address the problem of geographical limitations. Local CFC chapters were concentrating on building CFC membership within their communities and had no motivation to go beyond their boundaries. The thinking was that if there was a team officially tasked to transcend boundaries and use the proactive approach in introducing CFC to new parishes, it would bring about positive results.

The TRX team was tasked with introducing CFC and its family ministries to parishes in the area where CFC is not represented or known. The team would also be responsible in conducting any CLP's by acting as servant teams, facilitators and music ministry.

Conceptualized in March 2000, the team was finally formed in April 2000 with nine couples and 1 HOLD. Buckling down to work straightaway, the team drafted letters of introduction to the pastors of different parishes and arranged for appointments to sit down with the pastors. The rate of rejection was very high at first - 9 out of 10 appointments ended in disappointment - with the pastors arguing that they already had more than enough ministries. But the team knew nothing is impossible with God. They persisted and gradually succeeded in wearing down resistance. One sad realization was that they experienced more rejections from Filipino parish priests.

Since that time, the team has been busy. The list of parishes they have been able to penetrate is getting longer by the day. Among them are the following:

1. St. Athanasius Church in Mountain View
2. St. Francis Xavier Church in Seaside (two CLP's)
3. St. Anthony Church in Almaden Valley, San Jose
4. St. Mary's Cathedral in San Francisco
5. St. Lawrence O'Toole in Oakland
6. San Carlos Cathedral in Monterey
7. St. Leonard's Church in Fremont

The demands of doing God's work have been overwhelming for the TRX team. One parish is 100 miles away from their residence, another is 40 miles away. But the rewards have been tremendous as well. The director of the Family Life Office of the Diocese of San Francisco has supported and endorsed CFC in his parish and in the diocese. Oakland was a strategic victory since this is the second largest city in the Bay area where more than 700 CFC families are based. The team has begun talks with the parish priest of Sacred Heart Church in Salinas, about 110 miles south of Fremont. The pastor of this parish became so convinced about the vision and mission of CFC that aside from agreeing to introduce CFC in his parish, he even volunteered to talk to the pastor of a nearby parish.

The TRX team is composed of Art and Chona Dancel, Percy and Minna Verdeflor, Von and Bella Dizon, Ramon and Marylou Delacruz, Larry and Marivic Quinn, Tony and Maria Berdal, Virgil and Maria Apilado, Tonnet and Marlyn Rivero, Alan and Sarah Dimayuga and HOLD Lerma Co.

UNITED for



Metro Manila Leaders Conference

The leadership of CFC Metro Manila greeted the beginning of the 21st century with a new battlecry – “United in Christ”. More than 10,000 leaders from the 12 sectors of Metro Manila and guests from the 79 provinces of the country attended the conference held at the Araneta Coliseum last January 13. The current crisis gripping the country at that time and the need for CFC to actively respond to the church’s call for a crusade against immorality was the dominant theme of the conference.

CFC Director Frank Padilla exhorted everyone to unite so that this crusade for truth, justice, honor and morality may be successful.

Frank Padilla declared that all must be of one mind and one heart if we are to bring hope to a hopeless world. He reminded the brethren that since God is the one who established the system of governance of the people, the Lord may send His prophets to remind government to uphold not only its civic and constitutional duties, but also most importantly, its moral duties for its citizens. Thus, we have to respond positively to the crusade against immorality in government as called for by the church. As the church must be united with Christ, all must be united with their leaders, he said.

5th Glory Songwriting Festival

Batangas Youth wins

Bernard Arce, 19, of YFC Batangas won the grand prize in the Praise & Worship category of the 5th Glory Songwriting Festival. Bernard is the youngest winner in the 5 year-old annual event. His winning song "God Lead My Life" was an early favorite to win the top prize of P20,000 and a trophy. Fellow Batangeño Ms. Maan Borbon interpreted the song.

For the Pop Inspirational category, 1st place went to Joel Agoilo of SFC Davao. He also received a cash prize of P20,000 and a trophy.

Here is the complete list of winners:

Praise & Worship Category: 2nd Place - "Halina't Umawit" by Roland Azor (CFC San Juan); 3rd Place - "We Will Worship" by Leo Araujo (SFC Quezon City). Pop Inspirational Category: 2nd Place - "Kung Mayroon Diyos" by Sonny Rodriguez and Joel Faustino (CFC North A-C2); 3rd Place - "Let His Voice Bring You Home" by Gabriel Ocampo (CFC Pasay).

The board of judges for this year's competition was composed of Frank Padilla, Joe Tale, Chino Toledo, Boyet Palisoc, Rey Sison, and Cherry Veal. Jamie Rivera, whose parents are members of CFC, was the guest artist of the event hosted by Lloyd Young and Iya Yotoko.

According to Tony Cruz, a member of the screening committee, 86 entries were received for this year's competition. He expressed satisfaction at the quality of the entries, a manifestation that **the community is blessed by so many talents that can be used for the glory of God.**



In his sharing, CFC member and former House of Representative Speaker Manny Villar narrated how the Lord guided him in doing his civic duties as a Filipino and his moral duties as a Christian, even if it meant sacrificing his lofty and respected House Speakership position.

A mass, concelebrated by Fr. Ben Beltran, Fr. Raul Escarpe and Fr. Nesty Alerta, signaled the start of the program. In his homily, Fr. Ben Beltran said the root of disunity today is that many of us do not understand the relationship of the spiritual and physical dimensions of our lives. Because of this, many are questioning the role of the church in today's crusade against immorality in government.

For his part, CFC Council member Tony Meloto disclosed the urgency of being pro-active so that CFC's work in bringing good tidings to the poor may flourish. He explained that poverty prevails in a country not only because of the callousness of government leaders towards the plight of its poor people, but mainly because of to the passiveness of its citizenry. A government riddled with graft and corruption will never succeed in implementing a solid program to uplift the lives of the poor.

Joseph, a YFC member from Bagong Silang, shared how poverty drove him to a life of desperation and hopelessness. It was only when CFC and Angkop were established in his area that he realized that there is still a future to look forward to, that there are still people who really care.

Unity Weekend

After a tumultuous but historic week that was EDSA 2, the Metro Manila Elders Core Group trekked last January 26 to Baguio City for the annual Metro Manila ECG Conference. It was indeed a time to reflect on the events that had just unfolded – a manifestation of CFC's leadership position in the Lord's plan of salvation, a unifying force in a world torn apart by prejudices.

The series of events leading to EDSA 2 could not be considered coincidental, said Joe Yamamoto, the first speaker of the conference. There were just too many occurrences that happened with regards to the role CFC played prior to that historic event. However, we can only fulfill the role God has anointed CFC to do if we are united with our leaders, as well as united as a family in the community of God's people.

The second speaker, Nonong Contreras, said that "No matter what, love is to be endured." This is to emphasize that each member of the family has a role to play and both husband and wife should exert all efforts to make their marriage a joyful union. This was further affirmed by Lito and Linda Tayag, the next speakers, who explained that the two typical syndromes – the midlife crisis for men and the menopausal period for women, should not affect marriages.

Towards the end of the conference, Caloy Yturzaeta declared that CFC is an institution built on the foundation of God's plan for man and should not suffer the vicissitudes of earthly kingdoms.

The culminating event, sharings by three of CFC's youth leaders – Tonette Pangan, Anna Meloto and Mari Oquinena – brought the community to tears as they shared how they have dedicated their lives to the Lord. They shared the difficulties they encounter, not just in being leaders but also in living up to the expectations of their parents and the community.

The three-day event was filled with reflection and insights. The participants went home refreshed, re-energized and just awestruck at the wonders the Lord showed during the conference.



From top to bottom:

It was a jampacked weekend at the Baguio Convention Center when the CFC Metro Manila leaders trekked to this mountain city for the Unity Weekend

God bless the children. CFC Children being prayed over by the community during the Unity Weekend in Baguio City last January 26-28.

True love never dies. It seems that Rouquel and Nina Ponte scored very high in their compatibility test



CHAG ADONAI

"Dance of the Lord"

The Social Communication Ministry of CFC has formally organized their Dance Ministry. The ministry is called Chag Adonai, a name taken from a Hebrew celebration called Feast of the Tabernacle where the event is spent dancing the whole day. Literally Chag Adonai means "Dance of the Lord". It is composed of 23 members who have dedicated their passion and talent for dancing for creative evangelization in Couples for Christ.

During the launching of the dance ministry, Mary Jean S. Magcalas, who headed the Talent Management and Development of FLAME-Social Communication Inc., shared how dance has been an effective tool of evangelization for CFC. She pointed to the community of Bagong Silang where at one point, the *Bagong Silangthe Musical* was one of the major motivating factors for some of the active members of YFC in the area. She further shared that dancing contributes to our evangelization work because it creates in the youth the excitement to know more about God. It also bridges the gap between the rich and the poor, since they are able to perform together in the conferences. Dance has also been instrumental in attracting the CFC's children and, in some instances, has been an effective method of rehabilitation from drugs and other crimes.

As an initial activity, Chag Adonai held a fund raising dance concert entitled *As The Spirit Moves* last December 9, 2000 at the Greenhills Theater. The show featured a variety of creative and modern dances, all conceptualized and produced by the group members.

The dance ministry members believe God gave them talents for a reason - to spread God's power through dance. As His Spirit moves, so shall they.

CFC TREES GETS INVOLVED IN LIPA DEVELOPMENT

Archbishop Gaudencio B. Rosales of the Archdiocese of Lipa has commissioned Couples for Christ to create a plan that will be used to develop a 16-hectare land owned by the diocese. In a meeting of the Finance Committee of the archdiocese last February 22, 2001, Couples for Christ was asked to present its Project: T.R.E.E.S. (Project: Towards the Renewal of the Earth's Ecological System) to the Bishop and the members of the committee. Tony Gimenez, the National TREES coordinator and Joey Arguelles, the Provincial Area Director for Batangas, made the presentation. The committee asked CFC to make a plan for developing 10 hectares of the land. The plan shall include planting trees for a one-hectare Legacy Forest, planting trees that can be harvested for timber and planting fruit trees in areas that will be developed into a park and a subdivision.





Butuan City MEDICAL MISSION

On November 17-19, 2001, 13 brothers and sisters from Manila and one from Cagayan de Oro flew to Butuan City for another medical mission.

The Medical Team, led by thoracic surgeon and Medical Mission Foundation head Joe Yamamoto, included Drs. Jun Calimag, Bernard Cueto, Diony Cruz, Boie Sescon and Monique Yoingco. Ophthalmologists Mike Cavan, Cherry Ting, Bong Torregosa and assistant Bong Regner. Nurses Mel Dorado and Ritchie Galano together with Warren Isaguirre and Gigi Maipid, MMF Programs Coordinator, completed the team.

Arriving at 12 noon on November 17, the team was warmly welcomed by Provincial Area Director Butch Ozarraga. City Administrator Rudy Dayaday (also a CFC Leader) received the team during a courtesy call at City Hall. Dr. Joe Yamamoto even managed to do some evangelizing when he consented to be interviewed over television. He expounded on both the medical/surgical mission of MMF and the mission of CFC as a community.

Forty patients were operated on during the mission for ailments ranging from checloplasty to cataract extraction to thyroidectomy and excision of neck and breast mass.

The team maximized their time in Butuan. On the morning of the first day, the unit of Bobot and Bing Monton conducted a CLP for the City General Hospital personnel. The first 6 talks were given on Friday and the next 6 on Saturday.

At the end of a very exciting, joy-filled, and challenging event, Dr. Landoy Bringas, MMF Provincial Coordinator of Agusan said "*There is still so much that we have to do*". The team could only say "*Amen!*"

400 PATIENTS BENEFIT FROM ILIGAN MEDICAL MISSION

The CFC Medical Mission held a free medical and dental clinic last February 4 at the San Lorenzo Ruiz Parish Church in Barangay Tambo, Iligan.

Patients from as far as Luinab, Bayug Island and Dalipuga came to the church. The team examined a total of 260 cases and performed 140 tooth extractions.

Apprehensions were earlier raised that not enough doctors and dentists would respond to the call to mission and that supplies would not be sufficient. But when God calls, He provides. A total of 17 doctors and 12 dentists (both CFC and non-CFC members) and supplies for 400 patients, more than enough for the mission's needs, arrived at the venue. Some doctors even brought their own supplies. Donations were also received from Franklin Quijano, Tikbong Badelles, the Marawi Medical Center and Sanofi Drug Company.

The service team, led by Abay and Tina Carloman, provided snacks and lunch and coordinated the activities. The team was composed of Mawie and Jenny Adeva, George and Inday Cuarto and Dodong and Lyn Echavez. Fr. Dante Anhao, parish priest, expressed his appreciation to CFC for this very laudable program.

PRAYER POWER

Prayer is power! "The fervent petition of a Holy man is powerful indeed" (James 5:16b). How much more powerful is the concerted prayer by the whole people of God! "If two of you join your voices on earth to pray for anything whatever, it shall be granted you by my Father in heaven!" (Mt 18:19)

Let every member of CFC and its Family Ministries include the following petitions in his/her daily prayer as well as in the weekly household prayer meetings.

Until next Ugnayan, please pray daily for the following

... that our new leaders may truly live out the goals of EDSA II by practising Christian values in the exercise of their powers and by being humble and compassionate in their dealings with the people they serve.

... that in seeking to preserve the gains of EDSA II we may help and not criticize, propose solutions and not block progress, build and not destroy.

COOPS FOR CHRIST IILIGAN

NOW ONE YEAR OLD

The Coops for Christ of Iligan (Iligan Lanao del Norte Multi-Purpose Cooperative) celebrated its first anniversary last February 4, 2001. It was put up primarily to help members who were affected by work layoffs and plant shutdowns.

From a small group in 2001, the coop has grown to 149 members with an approved capitalization of P4 million. The Cooperative received its Certificate of Registration from the Cooperatives Development Authority, Region XII, Kidapawan, Cotabato City last year. Since that time, the Coop has granted emergency, education and productive/providential loans to its members amounting to P718,938.00. Except for one borrower, all loan amortizations have been remitted on time.

The Coop has also implemented the Purchase Order System for consumer items such as rice, meat, medicines and construction materials in cooperation with different retail establishments in the area. The Coop's Board of Directors also set aside an investment fund to help finance the registration fees and transportation expenses of participants in international or national leaders' conferences. A special feature of this fund is that it is available even to Couples for Christ members who are not coop members.

The Iligan Coop is proud of the fact that at the end of 2000, they were able to post a positive net surplus. The surplus was very minimal but this is a remarkable feat nonetheless considering that most cooperatives are expected to end up negative for the first two years of operation.

Sharing

**By: Noel and Jennifer Fernandis
CFC Canada**

We had felt that our family needed to join an organization that would help us spiritually and strengthen us by bringing us closer to God.

We had no idea what or where this would be, so we prayed to the Lord to show us the way. As time went by, we worried that God was pointing the way but that we were not receiving the message. So we prayed: "Lord, please do not be subtle, for we have not heard your message."

Shortly after, a couple from the Couples for Christ ministry spoke to our congregation at St. Andrew's church and invited us to the introductory session of the Christian Life Program. We decided to attend. While we were attending the CLP sessions, our 12-year old son, Jeffrey, played with the children at the Kids' Watch, downstairs. Each Friday night, as we listened to the speakers, we became more convinced that this was the organization God was directing us to join.

Jeffrey had been reluctant to join the other kids during our first three sessions. As time went on, however, we noticed that he became eager to join the Youth for Christ. He had bonded with the boys in his age group and he remarked to us that they were quite different from the kids in his school. They were friendly and respectful and did not fight or use abusive language. Speaking about Jesus was normal and you were not considered a freak or a geek if you did.

Jeffrey attended the next YFC weekend camp. When we picked him up on Sunday evening, he was excited and had a glow and an air of

confidence about him. He was filled with the joy of the Lord. In the car on the way home, he told us about the activities of the weekend. The camp had exceeded his expectations. It was run by the older youth and he could relate to them. They did praise and worship and shared their life stories and problems. They were told to put God first in their lives and not to be embarrassed about praying, their manner of dress and ideas that the secular world does not embrace.

On his way to school the next day, Jeffrey said that he felt like a new person and that he was not afraid to face the boys who usually bullied him. He had turned his problems over to Jesus and had asked Him to take care of them. A few days later, some of the children at school told him that he was a changed boy. No matter how they tried to bother him, it did not seem to affect him. He told them about YFC and urged them to join.



Sharing

By: Nwosu Raphael
CFC Lagos-Nigeria

The Nigerian civil war had just ended.

The entire eastern Nigerian atmosphere still smelled of frustration and loss engendered by massive bereavement. We were not the only family who returned to their traditional homestead to mourn the death of kinsmen in the 24-month genocide. Many felt sad, many felt bitter. These emotions gave way to more despair when the families' sorry circumstances were worsened by the action of a priest. St. Patrick's Catholic Church, led by Rev. Fr. John, demolished the families' temporary settlement, leaving them out in the cold.

Razing their bush houses, maize and yam farms in such ungodly manner made me disbelieve my parents' Catholic teaching and jettison their church. I couldn't imagine a Christian church displaying such heartless violence on already battered souls like our poor selves. I thought to myself: "Missionaries did not come with land; they should only be entitled to land willingly given to them and not gained by extortion." It boggled my imagination that St. Patrick's Church at Akwa could go to such length to acquire landed property.

I withdrew from the faith until 1999 when my dear wife convinced me to wed in the Church. But even my love for her was not enough to make me sustain my faith after the wedding.

But thanks to Ricky and Irma Cuenca's introduction of the Christian Life Program in our parish. Through the program, I came to realize that no human being is perfect, so I should only look to

God and not be discouraged by human failure. Furthermore, my neighbor who invited me to the CLP at St. Mary's Catholic Church in Ire-Akari Estate, Isolo, Lagos, helped me to learn never to judge but to leave all judgment to God. I will always be grateful to my neighbor, Paschal Idowu, for reviving my faith and relieving my doubts.

After the CLP, I felt that crumbling of the brick walls that used to surround my heart and kept me opposed to Christian fellowship. I have since revived my faith in Christ and in the doctrines of the Church as embodied in the sacraments of Penance and the Holy Eucharist. Most of all, my family life has changed for the better, My relationship with other people has also improved immensely.

I am now a totally new person in the Lord Jesus Christ, armed with renewed zeal to serve Him within the Catholic faith.



Calling All

Generous Souls!

Do you have a house that is empty? Are you willing to lend your house for a good cause?

The MHHF is a newly-formed association of Christian women who are Singles for Christ members who desire to live together to discern their vocation in life as well as to serve in CFC and/or its social ministries. They are now in urgent need of a house where they can perform this function.

Please contact Ruby Borja at 911-6196, (0918) 910-1056 or at email address bodem@vasia.com for offers or inquiries.

Social

Ministries

Effective immediately, the "Special Ministries" (Building the Church of the Poor) will henceforth be known as the "Social Ministries." In turn, "Special Ministries" will henceforth refer to the Society of the Holy Family, the unnamed religious congregation for sisters, Priests for Family and Life, and Nuns for Christ.

Letter from Alaska

(Ed's note: Fr. Luz Flores sent us a copy of his YFC Alaska Newsletter. We are reproducing here his letter. Fr. Flores has indeed been very busy doing the Lord's work among the youth of Alaska.)

Warm greetings from Alaska! We are happy to share with you our experiences of our first Youth for Christ camp which was held in Talkeetna, Alaska last June 23-25 of this Jubilee Year. The Lord gave us a good harvest of 32 youths and kids combined. The CFC Alaska sponsored this youth camp. Parents and grandparents, uncles and aunts drove a two-hour trip to Talkeetna from the city of Anchorage to witness their YFC's and KFC's graduation. A fired up YFC team from Seattle, Washington with the blessings of the CFC from Seattle and Federal Way, Washington, came to Alaska to plant the first seeds of the YFC/KFC in this last frontier of America.

In this maiden issue of the YFC Alaska Newsletter, we want to share with you the blessings the Lord had brought to the lives of our first KFC/YFC graduates. It is our earnest hope and prayer that the first seeds of YFC/KFC may grow not only in number but also in their love for the Lord, for their parents, brothers and sisters, for each other and for others.

God bless,

Father Luz C. Flores
Priests for Family and Life
Anchorage, Alaska, USA

THESE PRODUCTS ARE:

A

CFC's most basic tools
for evangelization

B

essential in helping
make our growth in the
community more
colorful, inspiring and
meaningful.

C

now available to you at
the nearest Flame
Partners Stall

D

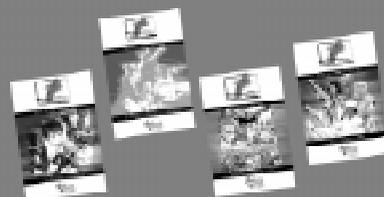
ALL OF THE ABOVE.



ANSWER: D ALL OF THE ABOVE.

There's always something new happening in Couples for Christ. That's what makes life in the community so exciting. There's always that next event to look forward to; an inspiring message to be learned and lived; and new people to meet and love. That's why Flame works so hard to come up with products that are just as exciting and meaningful. Our mission is to support your growth with worship tapes, books, shirts and other novelties. So rush to the nearest Flame booth NOW. We're sure to have something just for you.

FUEL FOR THE SOUL.



FLAME
MINISTRIES
CORPORATED

YOUR PARTNER IN EVANGELIZATION

A NEW DAY HAS DAWNED

A new day...A new opportunity...

To rebuild a country ravaged by crime, corruption,
cronyism and loss of moral values.

To reunite a people torn apart by social,
religious and ideological conflict.

We call on the Filipino people to continue the struggle
that
once again brought us to historic EDSA. EDSA I was wasted
by
indifference, partisanship and self-interest. EDSA II
is our second chance. Let us not waste it again.
We call on our people to fight for those values that will
bring authentic peace and solidarity to our land.

Reconciliation based on justice.

We need to reach out to all Filipinos, including the pro-
Erap camp. However, there can be no real reconciliation if
there is no justice. Criminals must be prosecuted, stolen
wealth must be restored,
injustice must be undone.

Morality in public service.

We need men and women who will be servants of the people.
We must insist on the highest standards of morality. We
reject corruption in any form. We have ousted two corrupt
Presidents at EDSA; we will do so again when necessary.

Preferential option for the poor.

The support of the poor for Erap is a wake-up call. The
poor indeed have been deprived and oppressed. This
situation needs to change. Those who are rich and powerful
must use their resources to alleviate poverty and make a
better life for the less fortunate in society.
For our part, Couples for Christ is committed to building a
country that is pro-God, pro-life, pro-family and pro-poor.

Our vision: One nation under God that will be
a light to the world

THE  COUPLES FOR CHRIST ...

Families in the Holy Spirit Renewing the Face
of the Earth