

Our Theme for 2009

TWO DOCUMENTS FROM THE SERVANT GENERAL

Part One **World Mission Sunday** **October 19, 2008**

My dear brothers and sisters in Christ.

Here is our theme for next year plus the accompanying scriptural verse.

“TRUST IN JESUS”

**“Behold, God is my salvation;
will trust, and will not be afraid;
for the Lord God is my strength and my song;
and he has become my salvation.”**

(Isaiah 12:2)

At the start of the new millennium, as we entered into the fullness of the gospel with its spiritual and social dimensions, the enemy shifted to higher gear in attacking us. What resulted was a veering away that rapidly developed through the years. The very wonderful work of building integrated communities among the poor became the cause of increasing tension. There also developed increasing infidelity to our covenant to no longer living out a lifestyle of evangelization, to unfaithfulness to our life together, to many conflicts among elders. The results were disastrous—poor harvest of souls, many lying low, loss of vibrancy in community life.

God still used us to serve Him, but the anointing was diminished. God still allowed us to celebrate our 25th year in 2006 with great rejoicing, but the seeds for destruction of our life and work were already starting to sprout.

2007

In His goodness and mercy, and in His desire to preserve His authentic work, God gave us a theme of hope for 2007 but brought us to the book of Lamentations. It was intended by God to be a journey of hope and joy, a journey back to His original call and intent for us. God was warning us, in a very profound but graphic way, as to what would happen if we persisted in our infidelities. Lamentations was all about what happened to His people Israel, and how they lost it all.

If we only heeded and learned and lived out the lessons of Lamentations, then God would have forgiven us, brought us back on track, and used us even more powerfully for

the next quarter century of our mission. But it was not to be. One elder said he had no need to lament, as he was without sin. One elder said yes let us lament but get it over with quickly so we can move on. One elder would later say that they were just privately laughing at my insistence on Lamentations.

So the veering away persisted. And this was compounded by the actions of those who were left in top leadership, who began to malign and attack those who wanted to be fully restored to God’s authentic call. There was a lot of disinformation, and even outright lies. The internal conflict escalated.

Some of us moved into restoration mode, to restore CFC from within. But the attacks only intensified. The crisis deepened. Options were severely constrained. The enemy was coming close to his goal of completely destroying CFC. The split became inevitable, as was even confirmed by the Philippine bishops.

God then raised His remnant, in line with our prayer in Lamentations 5:21. CFC-FFL became the restored CFC.

2008

This year our theme is “Joy in Christ.” It is time for great rejoicing for God had brought us back to His original intention for CFC. And now we would have many reasons to rejoice, as we see our life and work being restored, and beyond that, as we again experience how God can use us for His work according to His plan and in the power of the Holy Spirit.

But in accordance with His plan, so that the veering away would not happen again, God knew He needed to raise a holy remnant. And for us to be

holy, we needed to be purified. And a major part of that purification would be undergoing continuing attacks and oppression, unfortunately from our own brethren on the other side. The attacks intensified. Even the Church hierarchy was not spared. Bishops were maligned, if they in any way spoke the truth about our being in the right.

What God was doing was humbling us and teaching us proper Christian conduct in the face of adversity. We were not to retaliate or to malign in turn. We were to just absorb the



blows and rejoice in the privilege of suffering for the sake of righteousness. The other side intensified its unchristian ways, including insisting that we not use the CFC name (versus the clear teaching of Jesus in Mark 9:38-40). They even brought us to court, in the Philippines, the USA and Canada (versus the clear teaching of Paul in 1 Corinthians 6:1-8). And the whole irony was that they had taken on the theme of love in this year, but were not living it (versus the clear teaching of Jesus on loving even one's "enemies").

This year we learned about how suffering and pain are part and parcel of the authentic Christian call. We learned the value of the cross. Paul rejoiced greatly in his sufferings. We were being formed in the same way.

The theme of joy, at the start of the first full year of the life and mission of CFC-FFL, was meant to plant in us the proper virtue, and to plant it so deeply, in view of the persecution from our own brethren, that we would now be well equipped to face years of labor in the vineyard, and never be fazed again by adversities and crosses. We would now be able to truly rejoice always.

2009

Now we look forward to a new year. And the theme the Lord has given us is trusting in Him.

God is continuing to form us, to be a holy remnant, and ultimately to become the families He intended us to become, that He could use to renew the face of the earth. The call to holiness means constant purification, and a determination to go the way of the cross of Jesus Christ. There will be great challenges and trials, there will be human disappointments and frustrations, but we are to trust in Him totally.

In considering the theme taken from Isaiah 12:2, we also look at the whole chapter 12 of Isaiah. It is short, with just 6 verses. This is what we see:

- (Verse 1) With our restoration, we are back in God's embrace and plan. His anger has abated. He is merciful. We are ready to be used by Him as He intended.
- (Verse 2) At the core of our mission is Jesus the Savior. Our message is the good news of salvation in him. Since Jesus is the be-all and end-all of our life and mission, if he is with us, then we will not be afraid, we will trust. The Lord will provide us with power and strength in our work.
- (Verse 3) As God taught us in 2007 and still now in 2008, our lives will be filled with joy.
- (Verse 4) Our basic thrust of evangelization is affirmed. CFC-FFL is an evangelistic and missionary community. We are to proclaim Christ to the world.
- (Verse 5) We are to be a people of praise and worship. We are to reflect the holiness of God. We are to be His witnesses to the ends of the earth.
- (Verse 6) Our great and wonderful God is with us, He is working powerfully in our lives, and we are to always exult

in Him.

My dear brothers and sisters in Christ, the world is darkness, with attacks on the family and against life at the core of the enemy's assault. God raised CFC in 1981 precisely to defend and strengthen His work. This call has not changed. Now, with CFC-FFL, we are in the thick of the fight.

God has been merciful to us, and we want to become His instruments such that His mercy and love might be experienced by the whole world. We need to be prepared, by becoming holy men and women. And we need to do our mission with a passion, giving unselfishly of ourselves, just as Jesus has given of himself for our sakes.

No matter what we face, no matter how intense the attacks of the enemy are against us, be not afraid. Simply trust in Jesus.

I would also like to inform you that we will be looking to devotion to the Divine Mercy. As such, the by-line for our theme for 2009 is "Jesus, I trust in you."

God has given us another chance. Let us never again veer away, and let us always be faithful to our covenant. And let us put on the armor of God for the spiritual warfare that is at hand (Ephesians 6:10-18).

Part Two **Feast of Christ the King** **November 23, 2008**

My dear brethren in Christ,

Just as in past years, the Lord gives us our theme for the year, but it is up to us, through the enlightenment of His Spirit, to see and discern the lessons being taught, and the fullness of the message being given. This is why we need to bring our theme and the accompanying verse(s) to our prayer time, and also discuss these often enough in our household meetings.

I now offer you my further thoughts on our theme.

**"God indeed is my savior;
I am confident and unafraid.
My strength and my courage is the Lord,
and he has been my savior."
(Isaiah 12:2, NAB)**

The Beginning and the End

Our theme verse begins and ends with "God as Savior." Indeed Jesus the Savior is "the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end." (Rev 22:13). Jesus is the be-all and end-all of our life and mission. That is why we are Couples *for Christ*. Everything we are and everything we do is centered on Christ.

Jesus and what he accomplished for us on the cross are the central focus of our lives and our mission. The cross is

the very symbol of God's love for us. God went to great lengths to redeem us, even sending His very own Son to an excruciating death on the cross. The cross is all about God's mercy. God sent His Son even when we were sinners, even as we were the ones who caused him to be crucified, even as we continued to reject him. God will do whatever He can in order to bring us back to Himself.

And of course, our work is all about proclaiming this Savior. God uses us as instruments in order to bring His salvation to the whole world. This is a great privilege. It is hope for the world, and joy for His evangelizers.

Strength and Courage is the Lord

The second line in the verse is quite striking. In living for the Lord and in proclaiming his salvation, our strength and our courage is not only *from* the Lord, but *is* the Lord. God does not only give us strength and courage in order to fulfill our calling, but Jesus himself is the one, acting through us in his Spirit, who accomplishes the task. The strength and power are not inanimate things that are given to us, but are incarnate in a Person.

When Jesus gave his disciples the Great Commission, he made a promise: "And behold, I am with you always, until the end of the age." (Mt 28:20b). Jesus is Emmanuel, the God who is with us (Mt 1:23b). Jesus is not a detached Savior, now in heaven, just looking down on his subjects doing his work; rather, Jesus is hands-on, he leads his troops, he directly engages the enemy in battle.

We know that nothing is impossible with God, because He is God. But we are mere human flesh. How can we do the divine work of God? Well, it is because it is Jesus himself acting in and through us. Thus, if we have faith that this is indeed true, then it will be as Jesus himself assures us, "Nothing will be impossible for you." (Mt 17:20b). Now that is strength, and in that we can take courage.



Our Proper Posture

Since we are mere instruments, since it is Jesus himself acting in and through us, since we can look to empowerment by the Holy Spirit, then we must be confident and unafraid.

First, we must be unafraid. The future is in God's hands, not ours. The power comes from God, not from our puny selves. Whatever happens, God is there for us. The Father already offered His very own Son on the cross for us, assuring us of His great love. "What then shall we say to this? If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare his own Son but handed him over for us all, how will he not also give us everything else along with him?" (Rom 8:31-32). With God on our side, we need never be afraid.

Second, we must be confident. Even in the face of great evil in the world, even while undergoing severe trials, even in seeming defeats, we know that victory has already been won by Jesus. The fullness of victory and salvation will come at the final judgment. Till that time, we endure and persevere. We suffer hardships and oppression, allowing these to purify us and push us closer to God. We simply do our work.

Because of who God is and what He has already done for us, we face a future full of hope. Nothing can "separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord." (Rom 8:39b). We have got it made! So we simply trust in Jesus.

Let us move on

Given all the above, we should give thanks in all circumstances, rejoice always, and pray without ceasing (1 Thes 5:16-18). We thank God for all He has done and for all the graces and blessings that we have received and will continue to receive. We rejoice in our salvation and in the privilege of bringing that salvation to the world. We pray always in order to be connected to the Vine, to keep the faith, and to grow in holiness.

And let us evangelize with a passion. Let us share God's gift of salvation to all. Let us proclaim Christ to the world.

"With joy you will draw water at the fountain of salvation, and say on that day: Give thanks to the Lord, acclaim his name; among the nations make known his deeds, proclaim how exalted is his name."
(Isaiah 12:3)

God bless us all.

Your brother and servant,
Frank Padilla