

# THE COUPLES FOR CHRIST MOVEMENT: A MODEL FOR AUTHENTIC SOCIAL ACTION GROUNDED WITHIN THE FRAMEWORK OF CATHOLIC SOCIAL DOCTRINE

Salvador June P. Lalisan, Ed.D.  
St. Scholastica's College  
[salvadorjunelalisan@yahoo.com](mailto:salvadorjunelalisan@yahoo.com)

## Abstract

A comparative analysis was done between the conciliar document *Gaudium et Spes* and the mission-vision and ministries of the Couples for Christ movement to find out whether the work of Couples for Christ embodies the major teachings and challenges posed by the document and in the process establish the document's relevance in promoting and attaining social justice in the modern world. The study using document analysis and interview found out that indeed the Couples for Christ movement, a lay Catholic movement founded in the Philippines and now in 123 countries, which has for its mission-vision the building of the "Church of the Home" and building the "Church of the Poor" adopts the major teachings of the *Gaudium et Spes* as its framework. It was further found out that the several ministries of the Couples for Christ concretely put into practice the theories embodied in the *Gaudium et Spes* document. The study, therefore, recommends the adoption of the model for integral evangelization patterned after the model used by the Couples for Christ, for similar effects all over the world.

## Introduction

The message of *Gaudium et Spes* is very much relevant today as it was 40 years since it was written. The call for ecumenical collaboration, the challenge for lay leadership and responsibility, the work of the church in the world at large, and the help it can offer to uplift the dignity of human life by improving the quality of living are challenges and concerns that are very much felt in our modern times.

Specific in its concerns are the problems besetting the family. Each one is born to a family. The survival of a human person largely depends on the family members whose love and attention made life possible. This is a living testimony of the capacity of human beings to love beyond self- and a person's initial experience of love. Perhaps we can say that a person's character, personality, moral and spiritual development is largely dependent on his/her initial experience of love within the family. However, modern day families are experiencing challenges from several sectors of society putting it at risk of breaking down.

If the family is the cradle of human formation, then specific care must be afforded to safeguard it from “modern influences” that can rob or destroy its moral fibers. This is a responsibility shared by all Christians since in baptism we all share in the priesthood of Christ and as such, we are tasked to mediate God’s love to each other. We all belong to one big family- HUMANITY. According to the most Rev. James W. Malone on his reflection to the Church in the Modern World: A 30 year perspective, one of the continuing challenges for those pursuing to follow the path of *Gaudium et Spes* is “a need for a renewed attention and further Development of lay leadership and responsibility: understanding that justice is pursued more often by believers’ activities in their families, in their work, and in their citizenship, than in Church committees and Church commissions.” (Woodstock Report, June 1995, no.42, pp.3-8)

This challenge leads us to see the Church as “People of God” and not only as a “hierarchical” church. A paradigm shift is needed to instill personal responsibility among the laity. The COUPLES FOR CHRIST (CFC) movement, a Catholic organization of local (Filipino) roots, “founded by a lay person is committed to the work of global evangelization and renewal. It is a missionary body, and the families throughout the world that make up CFC are to be families that will be instruments of the Holy Spirit in renewing the face of the earth.” (Pontificium Consilium Pro Laicis 470/00/s-61/B-91 a) Its vision-mission, “is to rise in defense of the family which is God’s work. It is called to bring families back to the plan of God. It is called to bring the Lord’s strength and light to those who are struggling to be truly Christian families in the modern world.” (Pontificium Consilium Pro Laicis 470/00/s-61/B-91 a) It has established different ministries (family and social ministries) to pursue the complete human liberation, bound for justice and peace in the world.

A comparative analysis of the nature, vision, and mission of the Couples for Christ Movement, a lay Catholic movement in the Philippines and the teachings of the Second Vatican Council as embodied in the conciliar document *Gaudium et Spes* revealed that the former concretizes the teachings of the latter. In so doing, the Couples for Christ Movement offers the whole world a program of social action or a model that is both reflective of the teachings of the Church and authentic since it strives and is successful in reaching out to the poor through mobilizing the efforts of Catholics who have vowed to put their faith into good practice. By being successful in its efforts, the Couples for Christ Movement renders the teachings of the *Gaudium et Spes* particularly relevant in today’s society.

To clearly present the above findings, the paper progresses into three parts. Part 1 analyses the Couples for Christ Movement—its vision, mission and philosophy; its different ministries; the indicators of its success; and the factors that contributed to its success. Part 2 of the paper puts the vision, mission, and philosophy of the Couples for Christ Movement side by side with the conciliar document *Gaudium et Spes* to show how the Movement embodies the teachings of the document. Part 3 synthesizes the comparative analysis through a model for authentic social action that is reflected in the model that the Couples for Christ follows which is guided by the teachings of *Gaudium et Spes*.

Part 1  
THE COUPLES FOR CHRIST MOVEMENT

**The Nature, Vision, Mission and Philosophy of the Couples  
for Christ Movement**

The Couples for Christ (CFC) is a lay Catholic Movement whose founding members as its movement's name suggests are married Catholic couples. It is a movement that has for its general objective the renewal and strengthening of Christian family life because it fully appreciates that the families of today are in crisis and Catholics have to rise in defense of the family to continue God's work which is the very same.

The Movement is guided by a philosophy that is clearly Christian since its teachings, programs, and approaches flow from unmistakable Christian values, beliefs and behaviors. Specifically, the Couples for Christ Movement is guided by the following beliefs: Marriage is an indissoluble institution. God created man and wife equally. Parents have the right and responsibility to educate their children in order for them to become mature and responsible members of the society. The family should share in the mission of the church through prayers, evangelization and service to others especially the poor. The Christian family renewal is best achieved by allowing the Holy Spirit to lead the lives of the family and by the full use of all spiritual gifts at its disposal.

The vision of the CFC is very clearly articulated. The members view themselves as "instruments of God in raising up families in the power and strength of the Holy Spirit for the purpose of renewing the very face of the earth." The CFC movement sees the world of the future populated by families that have the power and dedication to make it truly Christian. As such, the CFC movement is also clear in its mission to "rise up in defense of His work" which is the family and "to bring families (God's work) back to the plan of God" by bringing "the Lord's strength and light to those who are struggling to be truly Christian families in the modern world." In order to do this, the Movement knows that it has to help raise the level of socio-economic lives of the families. Thus, intrinsic to its mission is "bringing glad tidings to the poor." The CFC also rises up in defense of the poor and the oppressed. It struggles for peace, justice, and integrity of creation thus working for total human liberation in order to establish the Kingdom of God. The movement clearly understands that to do so is the only way to be in defense of God's work.

**The Ministries of the Couples for Christ Movement**

The Couples for Christ movement in accord with its mission to take care of the well-being of the family and its members has what it calls the "womb to tomb ministry" that is divided into two major ministries: the family ministries and the social ministries.

The family ministries work at building the *Church of the home* by looking at the spiritual dimensions of the people's lives. They focus in internal formation and are designed to help the members live their lives in accordance with the Lord's teachings. The Movement apparently realized that desired action happens when there is clear understanding of the heart and mind. The work of the Family Ministries is made possible through its different enabling ministries such as, Kids for Christ; Youth for Christ; Singles for Christ; Handmaids of the Lord; Servants of the Lord. These ministries take care of every member of the family by providing a supportive environment that is characteristically Christian.

The social ministries, on the other hand, work at building the *Church of the poor*. They focus in the social dimension of the people's life in the Lord by focusing in external services designed to help its members "grow in stewardship and servanthood." The social ministries of the Movement take care of the following endeavors: inform the value systems of persons especially the youth; work for a healthy and physically strong nation; help form the protectors of the people and of the State (the armed forces) by stressing civic assistance and helping ensure peace and order in the land; work for restorative justice by forming prisoners to become responsible members of the society; promote responsible parenthood (family planning); mobilize women to care for nation-building; work to reform the whole realm of public service and press for good governance; work for socio-economic-environmental renewal; and work to restore the dignity of the poor, alleviate poverty, and eradicate slums by helping the poor to help themselves in becoming strategic partners in the task of nation-building. In short, the different social ministries of the Movement aim at making all the aspects of the people's social life manifest God's teachings.

### **The Success of the Couples for Christ Movement and the Factors that Contributed to its Success**

The Couples for Christ Movement is a successful movement as indicated by the achievement it has made of its objectives and the optimistic stance that its leaders take of what the movement will become in the future.

The membership to the CFC has been steadily increasing in the last twenty-four years. From the sixteen couples that started it in 1981 membership has grown to 1.4 million. And from a Manila-based organization it has established itself all over the country and in one hundred twenty-three other countries all over the world. In like manner, from an organization of only Filipinos, the CFC Movement now has members from different races, cultures, tongues, and colors. More importantly, since its foundation, the Movement has expanded the scope of its work from one that is solely devoted to ministering to the spiritual lives of couples by means of evangelization and renewal to one that touches every aspect of the life of a person and of society. Through its family and social ministries, the Couples for Christ Movement is now involved in social, economic, political, and environmental concerns.

The future of the organization is likewise set. The foci of future endeavors are the expansion of its coverage and continuation and revitalization of its ministries. To be truly instruments in transforming the face of the earth, the CFC Movement sees itself established in 150 countries by the year 2006. It has plans of attempting to enter those countries considered to be difficult to penetrate because of restrictions set on religions. To do the work, the Movement has to be aggressive in its efforts to enlist full-time and dedicated workers. Among these workers will be missionary families assigned to different places to establish the organization.

The success that the Couples for Christ Movement is experiencing right now may be attributed to several factors. Foremost are its clear vision and the equally enlightened means to achieve it that is anchored on God’s purpose and the Movement and its members’ faithfulness to that purpose. Because of this, the CFC Movement has a reputation of integrity that is instrumental in its success at attracting members. Evolving from this clear vision and program of action is the movement’s strong leadership development program. Another contributing factor to the success of the Movement is its ministries that take care of all the aspects of the person’s life thereby making the organization responsive to the needs of the whole person. Its approach is holistic showing a clear understanding of the nature of the human person that requires spiritual, moral, and socio-economic upliftment.

The Couples for Christ Movement has a tried and tested wholistic model for sustainable community development. Its sustainability rests on its efforts to empower the beneficiaries to help themselves and on the assurance that there is a next generation that will continue its work—an assurance that the CFC Family Ministries provide.

## Part 2

### THE MAIN TEACHINGS OF THE *GAUDIUM ET SPES* DOCUMENT AS REFLECTED AND CONCRETIZED IN THE WORK OF THE COUPLES FOR CHRIST MOVEMENT

Shown in the table below are the major teachings of the *Gaudium et Spes* document and how the same teachings guide the vision, mission, and ministries of the Couples for Christ Movement.

#### Personal and Spiritual Transformation

GAUDIUM ET SPES TEACHINGS	WORK OF THE COUPLES FOR CHRIST
<p>“Man, though made of body and soul, is a unity.” (GS14)</p> <p>“It is man himself who must be saved: it is mankind that must be renewed. It is man,</p>	<p>“In CFC we work for personal transformation in Christ and renewal in the power of the Holy Spirit. We support this ongoing transformation throughout the life of a member, at whatever state of life</p>

<p>therefore, who is the key to this discussion, man considered whole and entire, with body and soul, heart and conscience, mind and will.” (GS3)</p> <p>“This faith should show its fruitfulness by penetrating the whole life, even the worldly activities, of those who believe, and by urging them to be loving and just especially towards those in need.” (GS21)</p>	<p>he/she is at, with peer groupings and continuing formation.” (Padilla:2003, pp.10-11)</p>
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The Church recognizes that faith must be integrated in the whole person, both in his personal and spiritual life. That is, there should not be a dichotomy between his prayer-life and his secular activities. In fact, his spiritual formation, to be genuine, must be reflected in his relationship with the world around him particularly his response to the needy in his midst. The Couples for Christ Movement works within this context in that it provides through its Family and Social Ministries personal and spiritual renewal among its members. There is an ongoing transformation throughout the life of its members with a continuous challenge to become responsive to the call to discipleship.

### Total Human Liberation

GAUDIUM ET SPES TEACHINGS	WORK OF THE COUPLES FOR CHRIST
<p>“In the sphere of economics and social life, too, the dignity and entire vocation of the human person as well as the welfare of society as a whole have to be respected and fostered; for man is the source, the focus and the end of all economic and social life.” (GS63)</p> <p>“The ultimate and basic purpose of economic production does not consist merely in the increase of goods produced, nor in profit nor prestige; it is directed to the service of man, of man, that is, in his totality, taking into account his material needs and the requirements of his intellectual, moral, spiritual, and religious life; of all men whosoever and of every group of men of whatever race or from whatever part of the world.” (GS64)</p>	<p>“CFC provides a wholistic approach to community development. We do not have a handout mentality, nor a hit-and-run mentality. What we do is we build communities. We build for long term. And we build with all elements in mind-feeding programs, health, children’s education, youth work, school scholarships, vocational and technical training, employment assistance, livelihood projects, shelter construction, micro credit, cooperatives.” (Padilla:2003, pp.50-51)</p> <p>“From purely spiritual work of evangelization and renewal, now has made its presence felt in every aspect of the life of a person and of society- being involved in the social, economic, political and environmental realms.”</p> <p>“CFC is giving a whole new importance to</p>

<p>“Justice and equity also demand that the livelihood of individuals and their families should not become insecure and precarious through a kind of mobility which is a necessary feature of developing economies.” (GS66)</p>	<p>the word “wholistic” (or holistic), which it uses to describe its work. For CFC, wholistic has many dimensions, all relating to its wide and all encompassing ministry. It refers to every member of the family, every territory every sector of society, every segment of the Church (clergy, religious, laity), every Christian confession (Catholic, protestant, Orthodox, evangelical, etc.), every aspect of the gospel (spiritual and social), every social dimension (political, economic, environmental).” (Padilla:2003, p.95)</p>
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For the Church, total human liberation means the fulfillment of man’s corporeal needs as well as the fulfillment of his intellectual, moral, spiritual, and religious life. CFC works towards this kind of human liberation by building communities that are envisioned to be self-sustainable in the long term since the starting point is the transformation of the soul, the body, and the mind. The CFC provides a wholistic approach to community building that looks into the aspects of values formation, education, livelihood, shelter construction, and health.

### Human Solidarity

GAUDIUM ET SPES TEACHINGS	WORK OF THE COUPLES FOR CHRIST
<p>“This has been the opinion of the Fathers and Doctors of the Church, who taught that men are bound to come to the aid of the poor and to do so not merely out of their superfluous goods.” (GS69)</p> <p>“The Church is happy to feel that, with regard to the community it forms and each of its members; it is assisted in various ways by men of all classes and conditions. Whoever contributes to the development of the community of mankind on the level of family, culture, economic and social life, and national and international politics, according to the plan of God, is also contributing in no small way to the community of the Church insofar as it depends on things outside itself.” (GS44)</p>	<p>“Now we (CFC) are able to proclaim the full gospel, with both its spiritual and social dimensions.” (Padilla:2003, p.49)</p> <p>“CFC looked to both the spiritual and social dimensions.”</p> <p>“CFC provides a wholistic approach to community development. We do not have a handout mentality, nor a hit-and-run mentality. What we do is we build communities. We build for long term. And we build with all elements in mind-feeding programs, health, children’s education, youth work, school scholarships, vocational and technical training, employment assistance, livelihood projects, shelter construction, micro credit, cooperatives.” (Padilla:2003, pp.50-51)</p> <p>“From purely spiritual work of</p>

<p>“Nowadays when things change so rapidly and thought patterns differ so widely, the Church needs to step up this exchange by calling upon the help of people who are living in the world, who are expert in organizations and its forms of training, and who understand its mentality, in the case of believers and nonbelievers alike.” (GS44)</p> <p>“Let everyone consider it his sacred duty to count social obligations among man’s chief duties today and observe them as such. For the more closely the world comes together, the more widely do men’s obligations transcend particular groups and gradually extend to the whole world.” (GS30)</p>	<p>evangelization and renewal, now has made its presence felt in every aspect of the life of a person and of society- being involved in the social, economic, political and environmental realms.”</p> <p>“CFC is giving a whole new importance to the word “wholistic” (or holistic), which it uses to describe its work. For CFC, wholistic has many dimensions, all relating to its wide and all encompassing ministry. It refers to every member of the family, every territory every sector of society, every segment of the Church (clergy, religious, laity), every Christian confession (Catholic, protestant, Orthodox, evangelical, etc.), every aspect of the gospel (spiritual and social), every social dimension (political, economic, environmental).” (Padilla:2003, p.95)</p>
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Solidarity as envisioned by the Church requires the community of men that includes all classes and socio-economic-political status working together on the “level of family, culture, economic and social life, and national and international politics” within the means according to the plan of God. Clearly, the Church recognizes the need for human collaboration to establish “the reign of goodness on earth.” The CFC recognizes the same need thus it developed a network of community builders comprising of people from all sectors of society both local and international. These people voluntarily offered their services because they too understand that there are no boundaries of faith, race, and ideologies in the work of helping the poor.

### Family Life Renewal

GAUDIUM ET SPES TEACHINGS	WORK OF THE COUPLES FOR CHRIST
<p>“The family is the place where different generations come together and help one another to grow wiser and harmonize the rights of individuals with other demands of social life; as such it constitutes the basis of society. Everyone, therefore, who exercises an influence in the community and in social groups, should devote himself effectively to the welfare of marriage and family.”</p>	<p>“CFC is basically a family life renewal ministry. Its objective is to defend, strengthen and support Christian marriage and Family life.” (Padilla:2003, p.15)</p> <p>“CFC is an instrument of God in raising up families in the power and strength of the Holy Spirit for the purpose of renewing the very face of the earth.” (Padilla:2003, p.38)</p>

<p>(GS52)</p> <p>“Various organizations, especially family associations, should set out by their programs of instruction and activity to strengthen in young people and especially young married people, and to prepare them for family, social, and apostolic life.”</p> <p>(GS52)</p> <p>“Let married people themselves, who are created in the image of the living God and constituted in an authentic personal dignity, be united together in equal affection, agreement of mind, and mutual holiness. Thus, in the footsteps of Christ, the principle of life, they will bear witness by their faithful love in the joys and sacrifices of their calling, to that mystery of love which the Lord revealed to the world by his death and resurrection. (GS52)</p>	<p>“CFC will continue to strengthen and support marriages and Christian families through its family ministries.”</p> <p>“CFC couples are more stable in their Family life because children join them in the community. They begin to have the same vision and mission for life of the family.” (Padilla:1998, p.139)</p> <p>“From a ministry only to Couples- now touching the lives of every member of the Family.”</p> <p>“The Ministry of CFC is fully in line with the direction and priorities of the Church. The Church has always considered itself, as the basic unit of society and the Church itself, to be important in the work of evangelization and renewal. Renew the family and you renew society and the world.” (Padilla:2003, p.134)</p>
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Central to the Church’s teachings is the safeguarding of the sanctity, integrity, and unity of the family since it is the cradle of human life. Therefore, all social organizations are exhorted to contribute towards aforementioned cause. CFC does exactly. It is basically a family life renewal ministry. Its basic ministries—the Church of the Home and the Church of the Poor work hand in hand and simultaneously to “depend, strengthen, and support Christian marriage and family life.”

### Building the Church for the Poor

GAUDIUM ET SPES TEACHINGS	WORK OF THE COUPLES FOR CHRIST
<p>“Every group must take into account the needs and legitimate aspirations of every group, and still more of the human family as a whole. He ought, therefore, to have ready access to all that is necessary for living a genuinely human life: for example, food, clothing, housing, the right freely to choose his state of life and set up a family, the right to education, work, to his good</p>	<p>“CFC’s work is sustainable, not only because the beneficiaries are empowered to help themselves, not only because viable living communities are formed, but also because with the CFC family Ministries, the next generations are already in line.” (Padilla:2003, pp.50-51)</p> <p>“Through its GAWAD KALINGA program, CFC will work to restore the</p>

<p>name, to respect, to proper knowledge, the right to act according to the dictates of conscience and to safeguard his privacy, and rightful freedom even in matters of religion.” (GS26)</p> <p>“Faced with a world today where so many people are suffering from want, the Council asks individuals and governments to remember the saying of the Fathers: ‘Fed the man dying of hunger, because if you do not feed him you are killing him’ and it urges them according to their ability to share and dispose of their goods to help others, above all by giving them aid which will enable them to help and develop themselves.” (GS69)</p> <p>“Therefore every man has the right to possess a sufficient amount of the earth’s goods for himself and his family.” (GS69)</p>	<p>dignity of the poor, alleviate poverty and eradicate slums. CFC will help the poor help themselves to become strategic partners in the gargantuan task of nation-building.” (Padilla:2003, pp.78-81)</p> <p>“We educate our members, especially the poor, regarding their dignity as children of God, and their rights as citizens of their countries.” (Padilla:2003,p.11)</p>
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The church is very strong in its advocacy of providing help for the needy through immediate and long-term programs initiated by lay communities. There is specific mandate for those who have more to be accountable for their needy brethren. The preferential option for the poor has been the CFC’s guiding principle in their work at building the Church of the Poor. Concretely, CFC works towards restoring the dignity of the poor, lessen poverty, and eradicate slums through a program that aims at making them eventual co-partners in nation-building. The Movement aims at removing in the poor the beggar mentality by making them see their contribution in developing their own communities thereby making them productive members of the society.

### Lay Empowerment

GAUDIUM ET SPES TEACHINGS	WORK OF THE COUPLES FOR CHRIST
<p>“The laity are called to participate actively in the whole life of the Church; not only are they to animate the world with the spirit of Christianity, but they are to be witnesses to Christ in all circumstances and at the very heart of the community of mankind.” (GS43)</p>	<p>“CFC is a purely lay movement running its own affairs but is also submitted to the hierarchical Church. It is a servant of the Church.”</p> <p>“CFC is a prime example of lay empowerment, but is a faithful component of the larger Church, submitted to the</p>

<p>“For guidance and spiritual strength let them turn to the clergy; but let them realize that their pastors will not always be expert as to have a ready answer, this is not the role of clergy: it is rather up to the laymen to shoulder their responsibilities under the guidance of Christian wisdom and with eager attention to the teaching authority of the Church.” (GS43)</p> <p>“The Church also realizes how much it needs the maturing influence of centuries of past experience in order to work out its relationship to the world. Guided by the Holy Spirit the Church ceaselessly “Exhorts her children to purification and renewal so that the sign of Christ may shine more brightly over the face of the Church.” (GS43)</p> <p>“It is the laity, though not exclusively to them, that secular duties and activity properly belong. When therefore, as citizens of the world, they are engaged in any activity either individually or collectively, they will not be satisfied with meeting the minimum legal requirements but will strive to become truly proficient in that sphere. They will gladly cooperate with others working towards the same objectives.” (GS43)</p>	<p>hierarchy and to the Magisterium.”</p> <p>“CFC looks to its lay leaders for direction, formation and counsel, but also looks to the clergy and the ordained ministry in the Church for guidance, formation and oversight.” (Padilla:2003, p.97)</p> <p>“At a time when many Catholic laity are still very subservient to the clergy and unwilling to act on their own baptismal privilege to participate in the mission of the Church. CFC has believed in and is actively living out lay empowerment during these times. It clearly sees the movement of the Holy Spirit in using the laity for the mission of the Church.” (Padilla:2003, p.93)</p> <p>“Everything about CFC is lay-its programs, activities, formation programs, leadership training, pastoral care, counseling, governance, etc.” (Padilla:2003, p.93)</p> <p>“Our work with the poor is getting the nod of clergy, some of whom had mistakenly looked on CFC as elitist group. And the Church, which has been vigorously promoting the BECS as its thrust for building the Church for the Poor, is now recognizing the emergence of our communities among the poor as vibrant BECs.” (Padilla:2003, p.50)</p>
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The church recognizes its limitations in providing solutions to problems besetting the modern man and as such acknowledges the expertise and important contribution of the laity in the work towards the upliftment of the dignity of the human person and the betterment of the world. CFC is a purely lay movement that adheres to the call of the church for lay leadership and empowerment while submitting to the hierarchy and to the Magisterium. In its Christian Life Formation (CLP), CFC follows the doctrines of the church and it takes to heart the call for lay responsibility in building the community of God. Members of the movement faithfully believe that they are “anointed” to do that particular task and so their work comes out as inspired and inspiring.

## Nation-Building

GAUDIUM ET SPES TEACHINGS	WORK OF THE COUPLES FOR CHRIST
<p>“Individuals, families, and the various groups which make up the civil community, are aware of their inability to achieve a truly human life by their own unaided efforts; they see the need for a wider community where each one will make a specific contribution to an even broader implementation of the common good.” (GS74)</p> <p>“The common good embraces the sum total of all those conditions of social life which enable individuals, families, and organizations to achieve complete and efficacious fulfillment.” (GS74)</p> <p>“One must pay tribute to those nations whose systems permit the largest possible number of citizens to take part in public life in a climate of genuine freedom, although one must always keep in the mind the concrete circumstances of each people and the decisiveness required of public authority.” (GS31)</p> <p>“All citizens should remember that they have the right and the duty to contribute according to their ability to be genuine progress of their community and this must be recognized by the civil authority.” (GS65)</p>	<p>“We work to help dismantle the unjust structures of society. These are structures in the social, political, economic and environmental realms. We work to institutionalize good governance, to promote a just economic system, and to protect the environment.” (Padilla:2003, p.11)</p> <p>“With massive work of renewal in government agencies, and with its intense promotion of good governance, CFC is fermenting a political upheaval in the Philippines, which is intended to lead to justice, peace and equality in the land.” (Padilla: 2003, pp.1-2)</p> <p>“The movement has a strong positive impact on the renewal of society and of the Church. By the end of the millennium, it would be affecting every sector of society and every aspect of society-social, economic, political.” (Padilla:2003, p.1)</p> <p>“Our work with the poor is also attracting, surprisingly the rich! There are many well-to-do people, businessmen and professionals, who sincerely desire to do something to alleviate poverty in the country, but have not had any real opportunity to do so in a meaningful way.” (Padilla:2003, p.49)</p>

The church reminds its constituents of the need for human collaboration to effect a genuine transformation of lives. To this end the Church encourages the pooling together of resources both human and material in order to achieve synergistic and concerted results. For the CFC this means “massive work of renewal” involving all sectors of the society working together to “dismantle the unjust structures of the society ...in the social, political, economic and environmental realms.”

## Justice and Peace and the Integrity of Creation

GAUDIUM ET SPES TEACHINGS	WORK OF THE COUPLES FOR CHRIST
<p>“Peace cannot be obtained on earth unless the welfare of man is safeguarded and people freely and trustingly share with one another the riches of their minds and their talents.” (GS78)</p> <p>“A firm determination to respect the dignity of other men and other peoples along with the deliberate practice of fraternal love are absolutely necessary for the achievement of peace. Accordingly, peace is also the fruit of love, for love goes beyond what justice can ensure.” (GS78)</p> <p>“The best way to fulfill one’s obligations of justice and love is to contribute to the common good according to one’s means and needs of others, even to the point of fostering and helping public and private organizations devoted to bettering the conditions of life.” (GS30)</p>	<p>“CFC wants to help restore the beauty and life of God’s creation. Thus we are planting trees, doing garbage segregation and recycling, waging war on waste, supporting pro-environment legislation, simplifying our lifestyle.” (Padilla:2003, p.37)</p>

The Church sees the preservation of the integrity of creation emanating from the achievement of justice and peace in the world. Justice is the true and unmistakable fruit of ministering to the spiritual and secular welfare of man. This ministering cannot happen without love that is genuinely felt—one that seeks to give without expecting any return. In the same manner, peace is attained when people feel contentment borne by their needs being met resulting to a humane and decent life. The whole work of the CFC movement is anchored in its mission at preserving, safeguarding, and developing God’s creation. The movement makes real the rhetoric reserved by many people who pay lip service to the idea of responsibility towards fellowmen. As stated by the leaders of the CFC themselves, since their motivation is love and their response to the “great commissioning” of Jesus to His disciples it is not difficult to achieve results and to continue in the work.

### Part 3

#### SYNTHESIS: COUPLES FOR CHRIST MODEL FOR INTEGRAL EVANGELIZATION

The Couples for Christ (CFC) movement in its vision, mission and ministries concretely addresses the concerns presented by the Second Vatican Council through its conciliar document *Gaudium et Spes*.

Specific in its concerns at achieving integral evangelization are the upliftment of human dignity, the call for family renewal, ecumenical collaboration, the challenge for lay leadership and responsibility, building the church for the poor, human solidarity.

Concretely, the process by which the CFC movement works for Integral Evangelization may be described as follows:

The process starts with family renewal. Individual couples are made to recognize and experience the love of God through Jesus' words, works and the different stories of conversion of people whose lives were healed and saved. This is done through the Christian Life Program. (CLP) The CLP is a seminar consisting of 13 weekly sessions. About 5 to 6 couples are grouped together to form a household to be led by a household couple. This is to create a support group that meets once a week to pray and share life experiences enabling them to continue their spiritual formation.

As the couples (husband and wife) renew their love and commitment to God and to each other they are now made instruments to pass on God's grace to their children and other members of the family. Thus, the CFC created different family ministries to cater to the unique needs of the other members of the family in their different life stages, so that they too will experience the love of God.

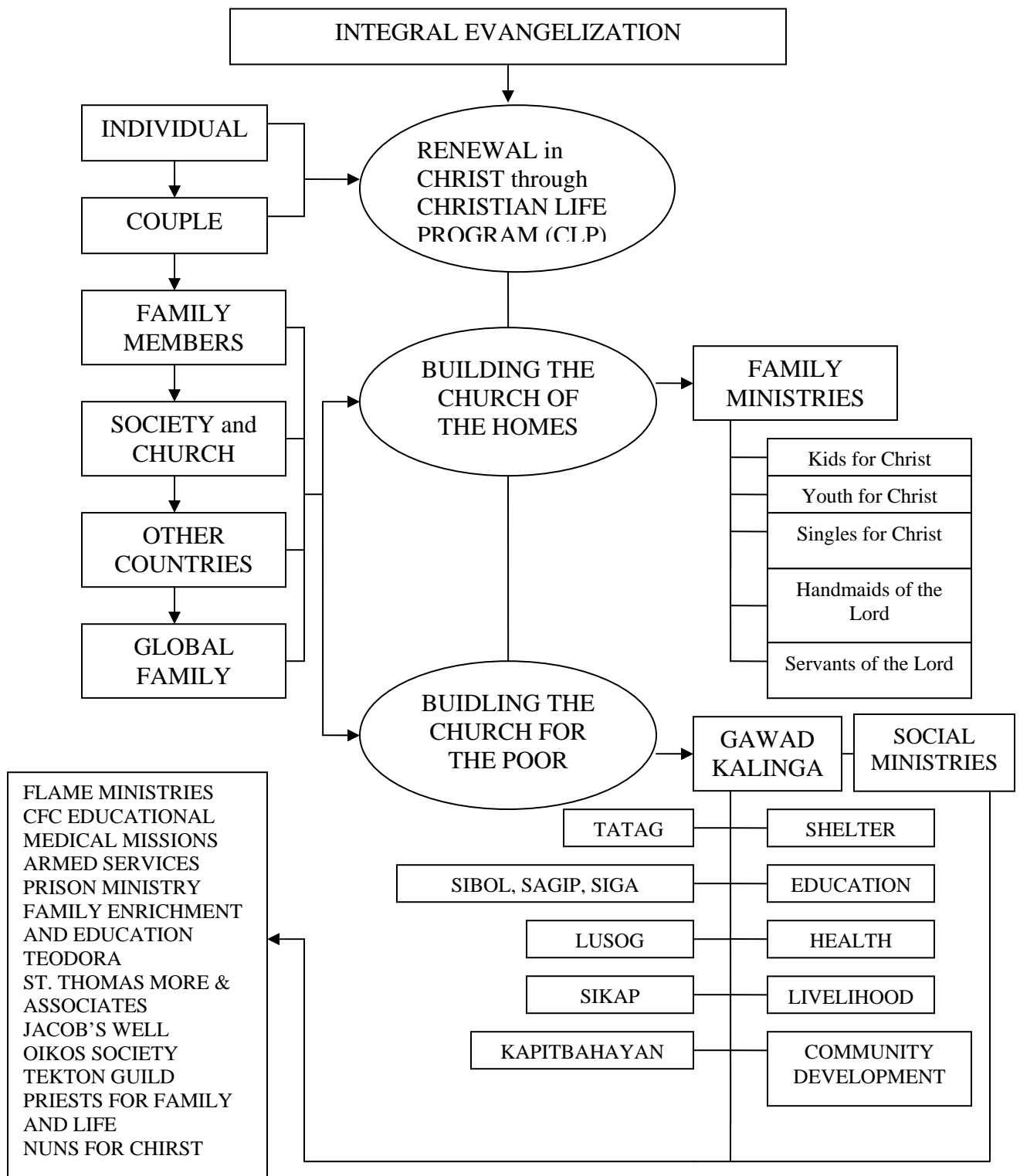
Renewing the family, which is the basic unit of society, is essential in the work for integral evangelization and renewal. In this aspect, the Couples for Christ movement is fully in line with the direction, teachings and priorities of the Church. The different renewed families now share the "good news" to other members of society---doing a rapid, massive and global evangelization.

Genuine renewal of self must be reflected in action. Experiencing the love of God must enable a person to manifest a life of gratitude, commitment and service to others. CFC through their GAWAD KALINGA (GK) program which is the integrative ministry of their Social Ministries provides its members the opportunity to live out a life of gratitude, commitment and service to the poorest of the poor. The GK program provides a wholistic, integrative and sustainable approach which is tried, tested and replicable. Truly, the vision-mission and ministry of Couples for Christ is fully in line with the direction, priorities and teachings of the Church--- a task emanating from the very mission of Jesus inspired by the Holy Spirit and willed by God.

There exists a successful lay organization in the Couples for Christ Movement. It is a movement that may be considered successful because it concretely addresses the concerns brought forward by *Gadium et Spes* while bringing forth positive results. It may not be wrong to conclude that the success that the movement experiences is due to its

adherence to the call for integral evangelization and the commitment of its members to be workers for social justice.

The question on whether the success of the movement can be replicated depends on whether there is equal commitment in people in other parts of the world to the building of the Church of the Home and the Church of the Poor. The mechanisms for a full functioning and successful organization have already been laid out by the Couples for Christ Movement. All other similar groups of lay people all over the world need to do is commit to the cause and take to heart the “anointing” that emanates from the great commissioning of Jesus of all believers.



MODEL DIAGRAM

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