



International Confederation of Christian Family Movements



LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT COUPLE

September 15, 2006

Dear CFM Members,

May, June, July, August—our travels have spanned four months, and we are filled with a confident expectation that the CFM is moving towards a revival as we anticipate the 2007 ICCFM World Assembly in Fatima, Portugal. The 2004 ICCFM World Assembly set the theme of renewal, proclaiming the family as artisans of an evolving society, with the creative energy to transform itself as it faces the future.

In National and Continental conferences throughout the world, the CFM has reiterated this theme of renovation, to insure its relevance when the family as a fundamental human institution is gravely threatened. We see signs of a resurgent and transformed CFM

- in the growth of basic ecclesial communities and similar family movements
- in the greater commitment of CFM members to social action
- in the increasing number of FIRES encounters
- in the gentle persistence of senior CFM members to bequeath the CFM to the youth who have not yet learned to appreciate it
- in inter-religious activities of the CFM in non-Christian countries—and finally,
- in our continuing joint endeavors to assure the endurance of the CFM through these problematic times.

Below is an account of our CFM travels the past four months, to share with you CFM happenings throughout the world. The articles serve as a supplementary Newsletter, now that LINK-LAZO has become an Annual Review. On the other hand, we have not received enough news and pictures to complete our Annual Review which should cover Summer 2006 – Summer 2007, a record to keep in our archives. Last year's LINK-LAZO Annual Review came out in October. We target the same date for this year, but we can only make our target if you send your contribution, especially news and pictures of national, regional and international conferences.

We are attaching the registration form and the updated schedule of the 2007 ICCFM World Assembly in Fatima. They will also be posted on the website—in fact, they will already be on the website even before you start reading this letter because ICCFM Webmaster Andy Pozdol is a man of instant action! We really hope to see all of you in Fatima. We pray daily to our Lady of Fatima that she will intercede for us, that we will have the time and the money, so that we can also make this occasion a pilgrimage to her shrine.



International Confederation of Christian Family Movements



There will be ICCFM presidential elections at this Assembly, so please consider potential nominees. The ICCFM Constitutions states that nominations should be made at least six months before the World Assembly, but you can nominate now. We will also send another reminder.

Please join us in congratulating CFM Philippines and CFM India on their Golden Jubilee Celebration which will be held simultaneously on October 21-23, 2006!

Lastly, allow us to share a concluding thought. Sometimes we get discouraged when we feel that our prayers and efforts for family evangelization seem to bear little fruit, but be assured that God knows what is in our hearts and answers all our prayers in His time. Let us keep moving forward in our CFM work for families, starting with our own. Let us persevere in prayer and action, and, in instances when we are powerless to act, then let us pray more!

**Love and prayers,
Nop and Elma**

May 26-28, Hungary

FIRES-CFM Hungary celebrated its Tenth Jubilee with over 250 participants, including some from Ukraine, under the dynamic yet unassuming leadership of Balazs and Krisztina Menesi. Tony and Lily Gauci, ICCFM Representatives to the UN and the Vatican, attended as special visitors, but another important guest, FIRES Chaplain Fr. Donnon Murray, was in the USA for the Golden Anniversary of his ordination. The Jubilee program was developed very effectively, with theme speakers followed by personal testimonies, so participants not only gained ideas but also saw how they were put into practice. Themes were derived from the Bible, and Msgr. Laszlo Biro's interpretation of "You are the salt of the earth," was very inspiring to the CFM members. Finally, deserving special mention, the excellence of Hungarian musicians and artists was clearly demonstrated in the nightly entertainment programs.

June 13-15, Malaysia

We went to Johor, Malaysia with CFM Chaplain Father Bunsong Hongthong and other Thai CFM members, to participate in Johor's Basic Ecclesial Communities experience, as BEC and CFM Thailand comprise the same group of Catholics. To our surprise, there was a big picture of about 50 people attending a CFM meeting, taken several decades ago, at the Johor Conference Center. Thus we learned that Johor used to have a very strong CFM.



International Confederation of Christian Family Movements



The BEC has four core functions: Formation, Integrated Human Development and Inter-religious Dialogue—identical to CFM's prayer and action! We attended BEC meetings in different homes, basically the same as CFM meetings. The BEC is administered by religious sisters, who are happy to affiliate BEC with the ICCFM and participate in international meetings. We do not have the present resources to actively promote the CFM in Johor, but its family mission is alive in the BEC, and the BEC will attend CFM Asia's next Continental Conference as affiliate members.

June 15-18, Singapore

The 7th Asian Continental Conference of Christian Family Movements on the theme "The Challenge of Being Family in Asia is a Joyful Mission" was attended by nine countries from two continents, Asia and Oceania. Past CFM Singapore leaders Dennis and Fanny Chua and Mark and Theresa Tan combined efforts with present National Presidents Francis and Julia Mane and their corresponding teams, working together with singing Chaplain Father Andre Christophe, organized one of most-widely attended CFM Asian Conferences in recent times. Among the special guests were CFM Asia Presidents Mel and Emma Ricafrente and CFM Australia Presidents Les and Carmeline Sammut.

The conference workshops were a remarkable success, thanks to well prepared, stimulating discussion questions. In past international conferences, language had been a problem for Thai participants, but putting the Thais together in their own workshop groups was an effective strategy which led to enthusiastic discussions. Furthermore, taking the participants to a parish church for the Closing Liturgy was a fitting end to the Conference, especially for foreign delegates who appreciated the opportunity to attend a regular Sunday Mass among Singaporean Catholics. We strongly believe that this Conference will bring about a renewal to the Asian family movements because of the shared experience and the new contacts made with many countries. Recently CFM Asia has been undergoing a decline, but with all the members inspiring and encouraging each other during this Conference, there has grown a will to work harder and to trust that the time has come for a CFM Asia renewal—in God's most holy will!

June 29-July 2, Colombia

Because of its numbers and distances, CFM Latin America holds not only National and Continental meetings but also zonal meetings of six countries. These zonal meetings (Encuentro Zonal or EZO) are initiated by the Continental Presidents, using a participatory process to define and communicate plans, policies and objectives for the next two years. We attended the EZO in Colombia, led by Latin America Presidents Jorge and Rosalinda Carrillo, with the support of Zonal Presidents Luis and Martha Pinilla and host country Presidents Rafael and Marlene



International Confederation of Christian Family Movements



Rodriguez, and Bucaramanga leaders Carlos and Yolanda Jurado, who were also our host couple and who showered us unstintingly love and hospitality all during our stay.

Presidents Jorge and Rosie conducted a very dynamic encounter on the theme, “The CFM Confronting Family Disintegration,” which provoked serious thought but also offered hope in the power of vision, enhanced by impressive power-point presentations. It was an intense process that made the encounter a real growth experience rather than just a meeting, with a very clear goal of a desired structural change for CFM Latin America. There was active involvement of the youth with delegates from all parts of Colombia and other Zone 2 countries. Facilitating the meetings from morning till night was arduous work for Jorge and Rosie, and they were assisted by Continental Vice-Presidents Raul and Cecilia Ortega. ICCFM Vice-Presidents William and Esilda Cheng and Continental Chaplain Father Juan Marcos Granados provided moral support with their constant presence. Although getting a visa to Colombia was very difficult, the problems we had became insignificant when compared to the joy and fruitfulness of our experience in seeing CFM Latin America in the best of its activities!

July 5-9, Spain

The 5th CFM European Congress on the theme, “25 Years of Familiaris Consortio” held at Cheste, Spain, under the leadership of National Presidents Enrique and Teresa Alonso, stimulated serious discussions on the European family situation, especially with the alarming facts provided by ICCFM Chaplain Monsignor Charles Vella. The participants examined the discouraging realities about the family in Europe and pondered on how they can make things better.

Special participants at the meeting were Past ICCFM Presidents Jose and Margarita Pich, CFM Europe Presidents George and M’Louise Sammut, CFM Europe Chaplain Father Joseph Mizzi, ICCFM Representatives to the UN and the Vatican Tony and Lily Gauci, 2007 ICCFM World Assembly Chair Couple Antonio and Maria Celeste Moniz of Portugal, and CFM Philippines Presidents Roger and Leonora Panlasigui, who represented CFM Asia Presidents Mel and Emma Ricafrente. Although we were not able to convene a full ICCFM Executive Secretariat Meeting, we made progress in finalizing most of the schedule of the 2007 World Assembly in Fatima.

On another aspect, this European Congress was unique because its participants also attended the V World Meeting of Families (WMF) in Valencia. A year ago the Vatican announced that the WMF would be held in Valencia, at the same time that the CFM European Congress was scheduled in Granada, creating a problem for MFC Spain. However, Presidents Enrique and Teresa Alonso decided to place their trust in God and planned the European Congress around the WMF, and they



International Confederation of Christian Family Movements



decided correctly, indeed! Praying with His Holiness Pope Benedict XVI together with two million people is a rare opportunity that not everyone can experience in a lifetime.

We ourselves could not be at the European Congress all the time as we were invited to make a presentation at the Pastoral-Theological Congress of the WMF as Presidents of the ICCFM. However, at the times that we did attend, we could feel the renewed fervor of the European Congress participants, especially the MFC Spain members, who were naturally the majority, in the way they responded to the speakers and actively participated in the workshops.

Conclusion

We thank God that through our participation in these Summer 2006 CFM Conferences and the V World Meeting of Families, He has answered our prayers to help us lead a more dedicated and a more effective CFM, a renewed CFM that will promote family spirituality and social justice with greater vigor in these secular modern times when the institution of the family must be protected with vigilance because it is in grave danger.