

PASTORAL FORMATION FRAMEWORK

The attached framework basically describes the manner by which formation will be implemented in Couples for Christ Foundation for Family and Life (CFC-FFL) on the member to the top leaders of the community. As illustrated in the diagram, there are three entities involved: first is the PERSON (member or leader), second is the HOUSEHOLD HEAD, and the last is the PFO (Pastoral Formation Office). The arrows reflect transactions, flowing either in one direction or both.

On the upper left-hand side of the illustration, the input to the person is stated in outline form. The input is therefore a teaching or activity which has both content and process. Content-wise, the details of the teaching/activity should have the following: *Knowledge, Attitude, and Skills.*

Knowledge pertains to information about:

1. Self, the personhood of individual as a result of his humanity and his “being created in the image and likeness of God;”
2. Christ, as described by the Gospels both in his humanity and divinity; and
3. Catholic Doctrine, as explained by the Catechism of the Catholic Church.

Attitude covers the seven core values which were revisited and explained in the recently concluded vision-and-mission exercise of the core group of the community. These core values should appear, although not all at the same time, in the teachings/activities since these values act as guideposts to every community member’s behavior and beliefs.

Skills refer to particular competencies that are necessary in self-direction, assessment, relationship building, conflict management, and spiritual growth. One of the more important skills is communication, specifically listening and empathy as well as transactional techniques for better understanding and minimization of conflict. The other is reflection, or the ability to see oneself objectively and assess one’s behavior vis-à-vis the core values which the community wants to live out. The last is discernment, or the process of distinguishing the Lord’s will from that of one’s own voice, the devil’s, or the world’s. It is a necessary tool in spiritual warfare and spiritual direction.

The output of giving teachings and conducting activities for the community is Christian character, which is found on the upper right-hand side of the diagram (or to the right of the PERSON). Christian character has three facets, namely, *Human Maturity* which is the psycho-social growth of the person, *Spiritual Maturity* which is essentially the fruit of the Holy Spirit, and *Apostolic Maturity* which is faith translated into word and action as the means to evangelization.

The product of formation therefore is a whole person who is not only psychologically stable but who is also able to relate well to his family, the other members

of community, and the rest of society. His spirituality is manifested in his demeanor as he exhibits traits known as the fruit of the Spirit, i.e., joy, kindness, peace, etc. Lastly, the PERSON is able to express his faith through preaching or simply witnessing and is able to do apostolic work such as helping the poor, advocating a pro-life stance, participating actively in the parish, and working for social justice.

Dynamics

Based on how a person lives out his Christianity in community, the HOUSEHOLD HEAD makes a general assessment of the PERSON. The PERSON'S behavior gives the HOUSEHOLD HEAD an idea on where the PERSON is at in his Christian Character. The behavior (positive or negative) is given as feedback to the member. The PERSON in turn makes his own self-assessment and determines where he is at in his Christian Character. He likewise gives feedback to the community through his HOUSEHOLD HEAD on how the teachings or activities helped (or did not help) him grow. The HOUSEHOLD HEAD then gives feedback to the PFO on what the members are saying about the teachings and activities. The PFO makes the necessary adjustments as a result. The cycle continues.

Basic Formation and the “Open University”

Every member will have to go through a basic formation program. Every leader, likewise, will also have to go through some basic training based on the level that he is serving in, apart from the required formation track for being a member. Based on what used to be implemented in the PFO, this basic formation for the member would have been the Christian Life Program, Covenant Orientation, Financial Stewardship, and Evangelism Training. And for the leader such as the household head, he would have had the Household Leaders Training Module.

The experience from this kind of pastoral system has led to queries from members like this, “I have listened to all the teachings and gone through all the formation courses, what next?” It makes the formation program look like a school curriculum which has a beginning and an end. There was also no parameter to measure progress by.

To address this particular concern, the PFO will create an “Open University” where certain courses will be offered throughout the year on a first-come-first-serve basis or a “blocked-off reservation” scheme depending on the requirements of an area. The teaching or seminars conducted may be in-house or sourced outside where some minimal fee will be charged for administrative expenses. The pastoral formation framework now allows the PERSON to determine where he needs to grow and with his HOUSEHOLD HEAD discern which course to take to address his particular need. On a larger scale, the need may be seen as chapter-wide (or bigger) and thus bring leaders to block off of a course on a group basis.

As a PERSON grows in community, he has within his reach a gamut of courses to choose from so that what he takes is relevant to his particular situation. The presumption is that he has gone through the basic formation course that is required for his particular level. It is also necessary that he is in touch with his HOUSEHOLD HEAD who continually acts as a sounding board for his growth areas and as a co-discerner in the PERSON'S journey with the Lord.