



The Family LifeLine

Bulletin of the Family Life Society, Archdiocese of Singapore

We Have a New President!

FLL catches up with Mr. Bernard Yu, who takes over from Fr. Charles Sim SJ as President of Family Life Society.

Tell us a bit about yourself.

I was born and raised in Hong Kong in a family where my mom is Catholic and dad is not. I first came to Singapore in 1995 due to relocation of my job. At that time I was just married for a year and my wife was also very enthusiastic about the move to a new country. Both of us gradually felt that Singapore was a better place to raise a family and we became citizens here in 1999. Now we have four lovely girls all born here and we call it our home here. I am currently a parishioner of St. Ignatius Church and am involved teaching catechism to secondary students.

How did you come on board FLS?

Fr. Charles Sim, whom I met in church, asked me if I could join

the EXCO of FLS and as such, I have been the treasurer and secretary of the EXCO between 2006 and 2008. During my tenure at FLS EXCO, I was also the head of a global business in Standard Chartered Bank here. My frequent traveling out of Singapore and away from my family prompted me to think about what is really important in my life. After careful deliberation and discussion with my family, I made the decision to leave the bank and retire early in 2008. It was also during that time that Fr. Charles was stepping down to pursue further studies. I was asked to consider having more involvement with FLS on a day to day basis. I discerned this over a silent retreat and accepted the invitation. My appointment as President was confirmed by the Archbishop before the Chinese New Year.

What plans do you have for FLS?

I think FLS has established itself in many areas, namely in counseling and in the formation of young people through our talks and workshops in many schools and parishes. FLS is in fact a leading service provider of the School Family Education programme supported by the MCYS and we currently have over a dozen schools and growing. While we have done well in a few areas, the spectrum of Family Life ministry is a very broad one and there are many gaps that we still need to fill. For example, the ageing demographics of Singapore probably call for programmes to address the needs of ageing families. The Census conducted last year suggested there is a fall

off in church participation of the young adult group and we believe that families with young working couples probably need to be strengthened and supported better too.

What I think FLS needs to do is to work more effectively with volunteer groups by empowering and supporting them so that the mission is accomplished jointly.

Pregnancy Crisis Service and Counseling in Parish are examples where FLS successfully integrate volunteer run services as its programs. The working model is that we provide logistics, administrative and marketing support to the volunteer group so that they can realise their passion through an executable program managed by FLS. If we can be an efficient logistics or project manager in more and more of



these "joint ventures" with volunteer groups, I think we can create a "win-win" situation.

The challenges for FLS or many other charities are similar. We need to ensure that our programmes and services remain relevant to our target community. We need to work closer and coordinate better with our many affiliates and church organisations so that we can function as one holistic mission. Last and certainly not least, we need to ensure good governance and accountability to all our stakeholders and regulators.

Thank You!

I am Having Difficulties Communicating with my Spouse... A Short Story *By Nick Chui*

The door opens and a slightly anxious and sullen faced middle aged couple walks into the counselor's room.

"Good morning Mr. & Mrs Tan, hope you did not have much difficulty finding the way here," said the counselor as cheerily as possible.

"No problem at all" said Mrs Tan. Her husband offered a weak smile.

As they settled into their seats, the counselor, to break the ice and to find out a little bit more about Mr and Mrs Tan got the conversation going.

"If you could share, any one of you could start first, how you hope this session could help."

"Well its like this", Mrs Tan was quick to reply. I am having problems communicating with him. It's really not the same anymore. Lately, whenever he comes home, he doesn't talk. He buries himself either in the newspapers or watches television. It's the same after dinner, when I ask him what's wrong; he will insist that he is being disturbed. Yes he goes and helps out in the house, washes the dishes and hangs the laundry. Yet every time I try to talk to him and ask him how he is all I get is stony silence

or non committal answers. The only time he talks is to point out critically to me the small things which are not in order around the house. "Why did you forget to off the light?" "Why are the children not asleep when it is 10pm already?" "Don't they know that they are supposed to refill the icebox in the refrigerator with water after use; if not there would be no ice for dinner?" It's been ongoing for some months now. The past few weeks, its getting worst and frankly, I am feeling very flustered and helpless.

The counselor nodded her head empathetically. From her training and experience, she knew that silence itself speaks volumes. Also, it was unlikely that the "cold war" which Mr. Tan seems to be engaging in was a sudden occurrence. Probably a series of cumulative factors. Mr Tan has been silent all this while, its time to engage him.

"Thank you Mrs Tan for sharing your thoughts. Maybe we can hear from Mr. Tan, what do you hope to get out of this session..."

Mr. Tan, who was folding his arms while listening to his wife decided to unfold his arms ever so slightly. With a sigh, Mr. Tan offered "well, actually I came here just to please my wife. She

thinks that counseling will help so I came."

Silence again.

Not giving up, the counselor seized on the positive remark offered by Mr. Tan amid the series of non committals...

"Well Mrs. Tan, Mr Tan said that he came to this session to please you. How does what he say make you feel?"

"Well that's a nice thing to say", exclaimed Mrs Tan. "Why don't you say more of these things at home? Instead you clam up, sigh and keep to yourself or criticize me about the endless small details about the lights, the switches the fridge and so on."

"Well, why are you always so concerned with me saying nice things?" interrupted Mr. Tan. Surely it is more important to do things than to simply say them...

The session went on for almost an hour. Many issues were brought up. Worries about the children, problems at work, difficulties in understanding why one partner is doing what they are doing, even accusations of being unreasonable.

"Too many things to work through in just one hour", thought the counselor to herself, "would

probably need further sessions but at least they are hearing each other out."

An idea came to her.

"Thank you for sharing so much with me," said the counselor in a sincere voice. "It seems to me throughout the session we have together that you care for each other but do have certain issues to work through. Can I suggest a small piece of "homework" before we meet each other again in subsequent sessions? What do you think of the idea that, when you get home, you think of something which you will do throughout the week to make your spouse happy?"

Mr. and Mrs Tan were slightly surprised by this suggestion. "No harm giving it a try", said Mrs Tan. Mr. Tan nodded his head too.

As they left the counseling room to head back home, Mr & Mrs Tan tentatively held each others hands. It lasted for a while before the knowledge that there were still things to work at caused them to slowly release their grip.

The journey home was mostly silent. Each lost in their own thoughts, thinking and praying to the Lord for wisdom to help them see the something that will make their partner happy.

The above short story is an imaginative re-telling of realistic couple situations seen by our counselors on a regular basis. Any resemblance to any couple living or dead is purely coincidental.

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