

MENS FELLOWSHIP

A HISTORY

The story of the Catholic Men's Fellowship began when certain men separately experienced the power of a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. They were drawn into the need for fellowship with each other to share the experience and to go deeper. In the spring of 1986, the Catholic Men's Fellowship of Greater Cincinnati was established by Fr. Ken Sommer, Kevin Lynch, Tom Young and Declan O'Sullivan, to promote the growth of Christian fellowship to fellow Catholics. It is appropriate to acknowledge the debt owed to non-catholic Christians who participated in the original meetings. After much prayer and reflection, it was decided to direct the fellowship ministry to men only and to promote the ministry to fellow Catholics.

Led by Kevin Lynch and Gus McPhie, a group of men from the Fellowship sponsored a successful one-day evangelical Fire Rally in the fall of 1988. However, promotion of annual conferences dedicated specifically to male spirituality and the promotion of fellowship did not begin until the fall of 1995. Encouraged by the success of the Promise Keepers stadium rallies the Catholic Men's Fellowship decided to sponsor a similar type event but one more specific to the Catholic tradition. The first such event occurred in the parish hall of St. Gertrude in Cincinnati in the presence of 500 men. The enthusiasm for the Lord was palpable and as a result many fellowship groups sprang up spontaneously.

It inspired the leadership to continue to sponsor the mass Answer the Call conferences on an annual basis. Over 50,000 men have attended conferences in Cincinnati since 1995.

PRINCIPLES OF FELLOWSHIP GROUPS

“The Sharing is the Teaching, The Teaching is the Sharing”

Fellowship in groups is a bottom up rather than a top down experience. Fellowship does not depend upon structure or authority. It does not require the presence of a priest or minister in the role of teacher or spiritual director. The learning comes from the sharing of life experiences in the presence of Jesus and the light of the Gospels.

In sharing our story with others and in listening to the experiences of others, we come to know more fully who we are. The fellowship setting does not provide answers to problems it facilitates giving them over to Jesus Christ for resolution. The fellowship process helps us to focus more intently on the events of life and to see God's plan in everything. We come to realize through sharing that nothing is a coincidence.

“Your Weakness is your Strength”

In the fellowship setting we share our failures as well as our victories. We thank the Lord for our success and we ask Him to help us in overcoming difficulties. Many men have come to know Jesus out of an experience of failure – in acknowledging our inability to cope with circumstances on the basis of our own abilities. A significant conversion experience born out of desperation is an occurrence in the lives of many men. To acknowledge human limitation and dependence upon God for everything in life is the beginning of wisdom and the start of a new creation – to be born again into abundant life.

“Your Crisis is Your Gift”

God uses all things for the good. (Romans 8:28) The education of a young man is a process in which talents are identified and developed. A personality is formed, a healthy ego grows and a measure of self-reliance is nurtured. However, if this process takes place in the absence of any significant relationship with God a “mid-life crisis” is likely to occur. For many men this crisis can be converted into a life-changing moment by giving it over to the Lord. The fellowship groups are familiar with the experience and can help men struggling with the problem to find the solution in the gift of freedom that Christ purchased for us on the cross.

“ALL GROWTH OCCURS IN RELATIONSHIP”

Step 1 Relationship with God-Spiritual Life

A defining slogan of the Catholic Men's Fellowship is that “all growth occurs in relationships”. To attain the rewards of the abundant life it is necessary to communicate in truth with someone else – to become vulnerable to another. The most important of these relationships is union with God.

Step 2 Relationship with Family - Family Life

For most men the primary relationship in life is with spouse and family. It is to them that we owe primary concern and love.

Step 3 Work/Community - Secular Life

Finally, we grow and become more like Christ in the level of commitment we make to the vocation from which we make a living and to our passion for community service.

What is This Men's Group?

It's a gathering of men who get together to discuss their lives in light of their Catholic faith and to share their faith and experiences through friendship, prayer, and fraternity.

Why join a Parish Men's Group?

Most men who have attended a men's group quickly discover the benefits they offer. Men participating in such groups cultivate friendships among their fellow parishioners, have fun, and learn from one another how to be a better husband, father, son, brother and employee, Christian man, and Catholic parishioner.

Starting a Catholic Men's Fellowship Parish Group

- **The group is not about numbers**
- **Contact your pastor**
 1. Meet with him to watch the 9-minute Parish Men's Group video. (The video is available from the Catholic Men's Fellowship of Diocese of Youngstown).
 2. Let him know this isn't something he has to add to his schedule.
 3. The men in the parish will run the men's group ministry. (It would be great if he would speak at the first meeting)
- **Invite Catholic men in the parish to attend a meeting on starting a "Parish Catholic Men's Fellowship Group"**
 1. Meet on a Saturday morning or another day.
 2. Use the Sunday Church bulletin and pulpit announcement for inviting men to join the new group.
 3. If you want to start small consider personal invitations.
- **At the first meeting**
 1. Have donuts and coffee and socialize for a short time.
 2. Show the 9 minute video.
 3. Try and get a sense of what their interests are.
 4. Have copies of a short outline of what is and the purpose of the Catholic Men's Fellowship Group.
 5. Mention the many kinds of excellent Catholic men's group resources that are available (Signposts is an excellent source for meetings).
 6. Schedule the next meeting and discuss any questions the men may have.
 7. Create a simple mission statement and goals.
 8. Discuss where, when, how often you'll meet and the time.

The following is from Fr. Larry Richard's book "Be A Man!"

"Those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh." (Romans 8:5) What are the things of the flesh? They are money, power, and position. These things are all passing. Then Romans says, "To set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace. For the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God: it does not submit to God's law, indeed it cannot; and those who are of the flesh cannot please God." (Romans 8:6-8)

To become a member of the Catholic Men's Fellowship and/or start a Parish Catholic Men's Fellowship Group in your parish complete the following form and mail to:

**Catholic Men's Fellowship
of Youngstown
8224 B Maramont Dr.
Youngstown, Ohio 44512
330-782-8621**

Please Print

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____

Zip _____ Phone # _____

Email _____

Parish _____

Start a Parish CMF Group

Membership

Catholic Men's

Fellowship



Diocese of

Youngstown