

CATHOLIC MEN'S FELLOWSHIP
Of
GREATER CINCINNATI

ANALYSIS AND GOALS

MARCH 2007

WHAT TRUTHS HAVE WE DISCOVERED?

- **“All growth occurs in a personal relationship with Jesus Christ.”**
It is only in a more intimate association with Jesus Christ that we can overcome our sinful nature that prevents us from becoming all that we were meant to be by the Creator.

- **We cannot do the good that we know to do without God's grace.**
We cannot earn God's love. We are burdened by the debilitating power of Original Sin – Adam's claim to be equal to God – that is transmitted from generation to generation. We cannot overcome the inherent attraction of concupiscence (sin), which resulted from Adam's rejection of God's friendship, on our own.

- We have come to know that **“Our Weakness is Our Strength”**. It is through the experience of failure and catastrophe, resulting either from our own actions or the experience of illness, misfortune and death, that men are most likely to surrender to God's will.

- We believe that men are more likely to respond to an invitation to attend a conference or parish fellowship meeting when experiencing difficulties in life. Personal invitation is best. Because many of the men in the CMF have overcome similar anxieties and stresses by surrendering to Jesus Christ, they have the **ability to evangelize on a peer-to-peer basis.**

- We have come to know that **fellowship is a critical ingredient** in sustaining a relationship with Jesus Christ. Having surrendered to God's will or being disposed to doing His Will, men will reap the rewards of the relationship with Jesus Christ by sharing the experience with other men. Our charism is the ministry of "**Men Ministering to Men.**"
- The Fellowship Meeting is a valuable contemporary vehicle available to the Church in its mission of promoting God's Kingdom on earth. **It is lay directed and it uses the sharing of experience, in the light of the Gospel, to reveal God's Will to the participants.** It complements the "top down" teaching of the Church with the practical lessons learned in daily existence.
- The style of the fellowship meeting addresses the particular male obstacles to intimacy with Jesus Christ and with each other. It recognizes the **false gods of possession, power, position and financial wellbeing** to which the male psyche is particularly prone.
- The Catholic Men's **Fellowship is a way of life** that informs and influences all aspect of a man's life. An active member in the movement increases his knowledge and devotion to the Catholic Church; he becomes a better spouse, father and brother to his family; he achieves higher levels of influence in his profession and he affects the moral climate where ever he goes.

HOW HAS THE FELLOWSHIP CONCEPT DEVELOPED?

- The Catholic Men's fellowship has developed as a **Lay Movement of the Church subject to the Magisterium of the Church**. It is not affiliated with any funded, official program of the Archdiocese of Cincinnati. It is entirely independent in designing and executing programs to promote fellowship to Catholic men.
- The Catholic Men's Fellowship in Cincinnati has more than 20 year's of hands-on experience experimenting with various fellowship meeting formats. The process of '**men ministering to men**' developed slowly through trial and error in literally thousands of meetings until a definitive style evolved that is widely followed today.
- The Principals, Guidelines and Format of meetings are described in the fellowship booklet the "**Call to Holiness**". It is based upon the series of talk and retreat topics of one of our founders, Fr. Ken Sommer. It is a presentation that uncompromisingly confronts the challenges that men face in today's world and equally uncompromisingly presents Jesus Christ as the answer. It brutally peels back the layers of wishful thinking that the world has invented in order to perpetuate the notion that we are master of our own destiny and hence in no need to call on the Lord for help.
- We believe the meeting itself, through the confidential sharing it encourages, **is a value in itself**. Each meeting stands on its own and a successful one sends the participants away full of zeal for the works on the Lord in his home, at work and in his Church community.

- The meetings are not prayer/petition sessions, although they have some of that. They are not charismatic gatherings, although praise is incorporated. They are not instructional periods in Church teaching, although it is likely that the sharing will be instructional. No gurus or teachers are required. They are not bible study discussions, although Scripture is a key element. They are not group therapy sessions although the exchange of life experience is a healing agent. The slogan “**The Sharing is the Teaching and the Teaching is the Sharing**” best describes the essential meeting characteristic.
- Although the fellowship meeting does not require the presence of a teacher it does require **leadership**. Each meeting requires one participant who has experience in the CMF meeting format. Ideally the parish group or affinity group has two members who are prepared to conduct a meeting. Prior deliberation is needed in order to select a suitable meeting topic and the meeting leader should be prepared to lead the sharing with personal anecdotes, preferably taken from recent events of his life.
- The fellowship meeting format is basically a **peer-to-peer meeting** that in its sharing format has elements of the most successful lay Catholic initiatives of the past 50 years, namely, **Cursillo, Marriage Encounter and Christ Renews His Parish**. CMF provides for ongoing interaction to an extent unavailable in the others. The confidential, honest exchanges of the fellowship meeting parallel some of the characteristics of **AA**.

WHAT HAS BEEN ACCOMPLISHED TO DATE?

National Status

The Catholic Men's Fellowship of Greater Cincinnati is recognized as the founding organization of the Catholic Men's Fellowship Movement in the U.S.

Conferences and Fellowship Groups

13 successful Annual Conferences have been held that have attracted over 70,000 men and 200 parish fellowship groups are in existence. The management and conduct of the conferences have received the highest level of praise and approval. The financial results of the conferences and some fund raising have permitted the funding of the CMF Central office up to the present.

Organization

The CMF is governed by a Board of Directors currently consisting of members 14 members that meet 4 times a year and set policy for the promotion of the fellowship. The officers are elected by the Board and serve for a period of one year.

The Cincinnati fellowship has conducted 13 successful Men's Conferences, designed to highlight the need for a personal relationship with Jesus Christ and to promote parish fellowship meetings to attendees. Over 70,000 men parish based fellowship groups in existence in the Archdiocese of Cincinnati, the Dioceses of Covington and Lexington.

There are two sub-committees of the Board of the CMF designed to supervise and develop the principal activities of the organization, namely, Conference and Fellowship Groups.

Executive Director

A part time Executive Director acts as a (1) network coordinator of all the 200 plus affiliated fellowship groups, (2) manages the promotion, selling and execution of the Annual Conference (3) conducts seminars and workshops on how to start, develop and sustain fellowship groups (4) acts as contact person with fellowship organizations throughout the country, including the National Fellowship of Catholic Men.

40 Cities

Over 40 cities throughout the country have adopted the idea of a large annual conference to promote the fellowship concept and to highlight the vital presence of the Catholic Church in their communities. The nationwide conferences widely imitate the successful Cincinnati formula.

Regional Activity

The CMF has directly assisted regional organizations in Cleveland OH and Memphis TN is organizing conferences and promoting fellowship groups in their areas.

Promotion

The Cincinnati CMF has a **Website** designed to broadcast its purposes and programs, including conferences, seminars and parish fellowship meetings.

The CMF publishes a **Handbook called the “Call to Holiness”**, which is used to train fellowship leaders in the theological and psychological background to the ministry. The Executive Director has some articles and training aids to help guide Parish Conference Leaders and Parish Fellowship Leaders in the work of evangelization at the grass roots level.