

# **FELLOWSHIP GROUPS**

**THE CATHOLIC MEN'S FELLOWSHIP  
OF GREATER CINCINNATI**

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### **VISION**

We are committed men, principally Catholic, who recognize our need for God's help. We gather in Christ's presence in an atmosphere of trust, equality and anonymity to share personal feelings and experiences. We unconditionally accept one another and prayerfully support one another

### **MISSION**

We feel encouraged by the Holy Spirit to share ourselves

### **JOHN 10:10**

I have come so that you may have life, and have it abundantly

### **LEARNED TRUTHS (TRADITIONS / SLOGANS)**

- **All growth occurs in relationship**
- **The teaching is the sharing**
- **Your crisis is your gift**
- Your weakness is your strength
- Alienation is the curse of modern man / Hell is existential loneliness
- You become whom you let love you
- Pain is your friend, not your enemy
- Your nobody till somebody loves you

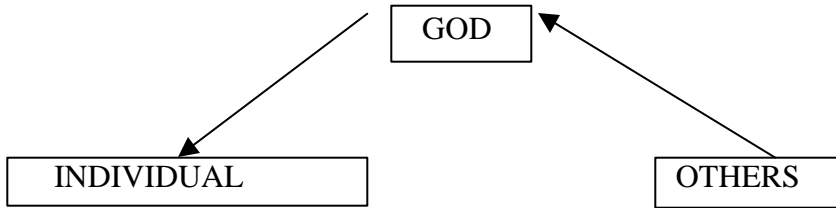
### **MEETING PURPOSE**

- **To help men establish and nurture a personal relationship with Jesus Christ.**
- **To share personal feelings and experiences with other men in an atmosphere of trust and confidence**
- **To create an atmosphere in which men will freely acknowledge their dependence on God in life's successes and failures**
- To facilitate the discovery and development of the spiritual life. To go deep.
- To encourage men to construct a more intimate relationship with family and friends. All growth occurs in relationship
- To encourage men to grow and experience the joy of living fully to become all they were meant to be by the Creator. "I have come so you may have life, and have it abundantly." – John 10:10
- To create a "**safe place**" where all of the above can occur

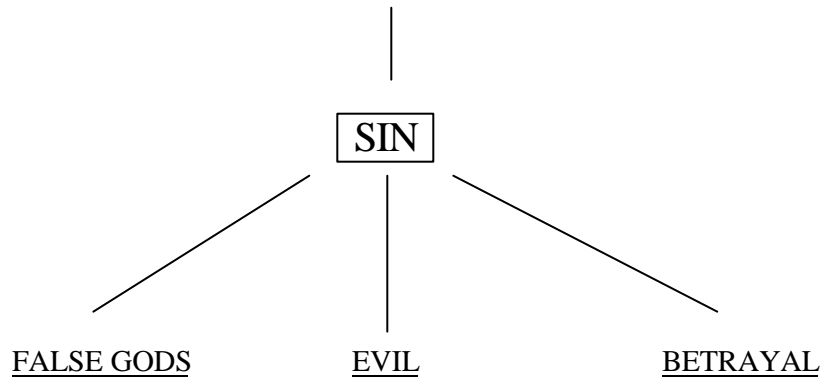
# THE CALL TO HOLINESS

(Fr. Ken Sommer)

## GROWTH IN RELATIONSHIPS

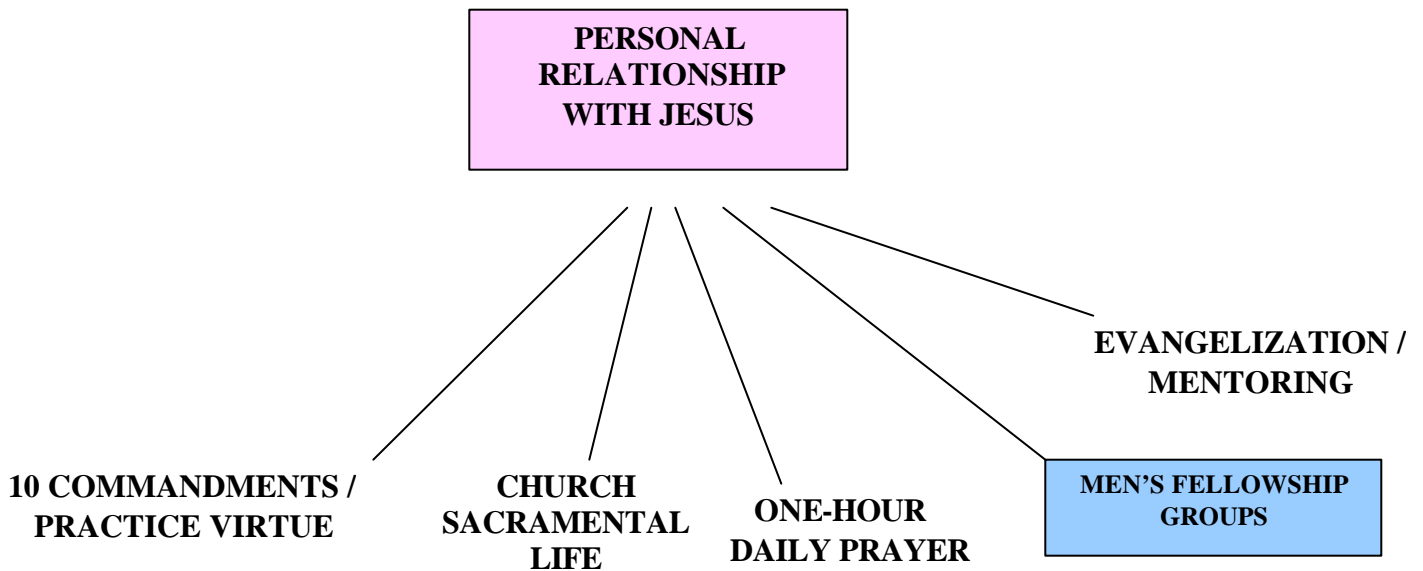


## OBSTACLES TO RELATIONSHIPS



## AIDS TO RELATIONSHIPS

JESUS CHRIST THE REDEEMER



## CATHOLIC MEN'S FELLOWSHIP GROUPS

A Catholic Men's Fellowship Group is a group of Catholic men that meet and pursue the MISSION and VISION together to come to the ABUNDANT life.

It is men **ministering** to men in Fellowship  
It is a group of men that **pray** together, but it is not just a prayer group  
It is a group of men of **faith**, but it is not just a faith group  
It offers **social interaction**, but it is not just a social group  
It studies the **Bible**, but it is not a just Bible study group  
It offers **support**, but it is not just a support group  
It **discusses** various issues, but it is not just a discussion group  
It is aware of **religious issues**, but it is not just a religious action group  
It considers **social issues**, but it is not just a social action group

## TYPES OF FELLOWSHIP GROUPS

### GENERAL FELLOWSHIP GROUP

Men minister to men  
Often parish or multi-parish based  
Unlimited size  
Open meetings  
  
Easy to enter  
  
Members may also belong to a small group  
Comfortable for a first experience  
  
Comfortable for limited participation  
  
Lower level of accountability  
Less intimacy  
Core group required  
Core group may be a small group  
  
A resource: "Signposts"

### SMALL FELLOWSHIP GROUP

Men minister to men  
Lesser parish affiliation  
Appx 8 member maximum size  
Meetings generally limited to members  
  
Dynamics affected by addition or exit of members  
  
Members may also belong to a general group  
Members often have experience in a general group  
High level participation by all members needed  
High level of accountability  
Greater intimacy  
Entire group is often the core group  
May be a core group for a general group  
  
A resource: "Brothers"

## STARTING A GROUP

- Pray for discernment and guidance
- Be clear about the reasons for starting a group, as well as the purpose, vision and mission
- Enlist help from the Catholic Men's Fellowship
- Form a core group, involve men interested in starting a fellowship group
- Attend other fellowship group meetings
- Enlist the help of members of other fellowship groups in starting the group and with the first meetings
- Coordinate efforts with the pastor and parish staff if affiliated with a parish – present a plan
- Link with other parish groups when helpful – Holy Name, boosters, Renew, Christ Renewals, Cursillo, KofC, Life in the Spirit, etc.
- Link meetings with events of interest to men
- Plan initial meeting
- Set time and place for initial meeting
- Invite men – **personally**, letters, phone calls, e-mail
- Announce in parish bulletin, pulpit, newsletters, posters
- Explain and discuss The Call to Holiness, truths and purpose at early meetings
- Consider studying The Call to Holiness in the initial (six) meetings
- Move toward firm and consistent meeting time and place

## THE MEETING

### TIME

- Consistent date, easy to plan, determine and remember (example: first and third Saturday of each month)
- Consistent and firm start time as well as end time.

### LOCATION

- Consistent and firm location, easy to find
- Can accommodate the meeting needs, space, set up
- Provide a suitable environment

### SET UP

- A chair for Jesus
- Be aware of “ritual” space, organize in a circle
- Provide coffee, drinks, snacks and refills in a convenient place

### FORMATS

- One possible format. Fellowship, coffee, and pastry; song(s); prayer, adoration, contrition, thanksgiving, petition; scripture, introduction and sharing of topic (planned in core group), personal sharing, closing prayer – flexible and open to the Spirit
- One possible format. Pray, share a selected a topic from “Signposts” (men bring copies)
- A group should work on developing the best format for that group.

## GUIDELINES

(rules & regs)

- Create a “**safe place**”
- Everything said in the group stays in the group and is held in **strict confidence** – a safe place
- Have designated facilitators, planned in core group. Spread over as many men as possible
- All members and their sharing are of equal value, no gurus. The teaching is the sharing; the sharing is the teaching.
- Discussion of public figures and issues should be discouraged. Not a debating session.
- Discussion of church figures and issues should be discouraged
- Personal counseling during the meeting should be avoided. A similar personal experience can be shared. Additional help and support can be provided outside the meeting.
- Do not try to provide counseling when professional counseling is needed.
- Sensitive and difficult disclosures and sharing can be followed taking time out to pray.
- Recognize and follow traditions as they develop
- Be sensitive to the movements of the Spirit and flexible to follow the movement of the Spirit.
- Start and stop on time

## CORE GROUPS

- Essential to start and maintain a group
- Takes ownership of the group
- Often made up of men initially interested in starting the group
- Open to all members, all are encouraged to participate
- Not gurus, non-hierarchical
- Maintains focus
- Keepers of the vision and mission
- Plans activities outside meetings
- Plans meetings directly or insures planning is in place
- Arranges for meeting place and time
- Provides contact point for questions about the fellowship group

## PLANNING

- Plan each meeting, but with the flexibility to allow the Holy Spirit to move, be responsive and able to adjust to individual's needs.
- Spread out planning over core group and any interested men.
- Invite men suggesting meeting topics to help plan the meeting for that topic
- Determine meeting topic. Should be consistent with previous meeting topics and close any open issues from a previous meeting.
- Select and prepare supporting scripture and catechism references
- Establish and follow a consistent and predictable format
- Be mindful of the Guidelines (rules & regs)
- Designate facilitators for the meeting. Spread song, prayer, scripture, topic and other functions over as many as possible.
- Designate men to set up the room, provide coffee, and bring snacks
- Use personal witnessing and testimonies in meetings
- Books, magazines, published articles, audio & video tapes or excerpts can be used as discussion topics
- Keep brief notes on each meeting

## MAINTAINING A GROUP

- **Go deep**; continue to grow in relationship with each other and God
- Develop a vision and mission for the group
- Maintain focus, avoid involvement in activities not related to the purpose – these activities can be pursued outside the group
- Be mindful of what a fellowship group is and is not
- Continue to plan each meeting
- Be mindful of the Guidelines (rules & regs), especially confidentiality
- Expand expectations
- Go beyond meetings that are just presentations
- Draw men into core group functions
- Be aware of the stages of community – Scott Peck's pseudocommunity, chaos, emptiness, community
- Promote and form smaller faith groups as necessary
- Celebrate Mass together, perhaps at Christmas or Easter
- Plan a reconciliation service
- Attend a retreat together
- Present "The Call to Holiness" at meetings or at a retreat
- Involve wives and families in programs, possibility fifth Saturdays
- Develop internal communications. E-mail meeting reminders. Organize a prayer chain
- Invite guests to witness or share
- Develop facilitator and group leadership skills within the group
- Recognize and follow traditions as they develop