



The Christian Family Movement

OUR MARRIAGE... A SPIRITUAL JOURNEY: COVENANTAL LOVE, SACRAMENTAL SIGN

PART 1 OF 4

Note to Group Leaders and Members

In addition to the online printouts of these four chapters, each member in the group will need a small, bound notebook. During the meetings and in preparation for the meetings, entries will be made in them. The notebooks should be brought to each of the four meetings.

A week before each of the scheduled meetings, each member is asked to take a look at the Observe section for the upcoming meeting and record in their notebooks the observations requested. ATTENTION: The first notebook reflection should be completed before any of the scheduled meetings take place.

For part of each meeting, the group will break into couples, allowing time and space to share and discuss privately. It would be helpful to hold meetings in a place where this is possible.

Opening Prayer

O God, you have promised to care for your people and never abandon us. We ask your blessing on each couple gathered here. You have joined these spouses in the covenant of holy marriage. May husband and wife learn from your loving faithfulness and so grow together in harmony with sympathy, compassion, humility, honesty, respect and unfailing love.

We pray for all married people and all those contemplating marriage that the promises they make will lead to a joyful life and witness to your love.

Jesus, we trust in you. Amen.

Scripture Reflection

"I will make you exceedingly fruitful; and I will make nations of you, and kings shall come from you. I will establish my covenant between me and you, and your offspring after you throughout their generations, for an everlasting covenant, to be God to you and to your offspring after you. And I will give to you, and to your offspring after you, the land where you are now an alien, all the land of Canaan, for a perpetual holding; and I will be their God."

God said to Abraham, "As for you, you shall keep my covenant, you and your offspring after you throughout their generations. This is my covenant, which you shall keep, between me and you and your offspring after you: Every male among you shall be circumcised."

—Genesis 17:6-10

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THE CHRISTIAN FAMILY MOVEMENT:

- ◆ OVER 60 YEARS OF STRENGTHENING MARRIAGES AND FAMILIES
- ◆ PROVIDING FAMILY RELEVANT PROGRAM MATERIALS
- ◆ HELPING OUR MEMBERS TO PUT THEIR FAITH INTO ACTION

Scripture Reflection (continued)

And I will take you for my wife forever; I will take you for my wife in righteousness and in justice, in steadfast love, and in mercy. I will take you for my wife in faithfulness; and you shall know the LORD.

—Hosea 2:19-20

At that time, says the LORD, I will be the God of all the families of Israel, and they shall be my people.

Thus says the LORD:

The people who survived the sword found grace in the wilderness; when Israel sought for rest, the LORD appeared to him from far away. I have loved you with an everlasting love; therefore I have continued my faithfulness to you.

—Jeremiah 31:1-3

1. What are the characteristics of God's covenantal love?
2. How are these characteristics reflected in Christian marriage?

Social Inquiry

In the Bible, God makes a covenant, a solemn promise of partnership, with the people of Israel. Christians recognize that this covenant is reflected in the permanent and loving relationship between a man and a woman in marriage. In the alliance God made with them, Israel was the weaker partner, continually wandering away and pursuing false gods. They got distracted from their relationship with God and focused on comfort or power or wealth. They built and lost whole kingdoms in the course of their journey of faith. God continually brought Israel back to himself, forgiving and teaching the people how to keep their part of the covenant.

Every marriage is a legal contract, but Christian marriage goes far beyond that. It is a covenant for life-long, exclusive, fruitful love between a man and a woman. In business, a contract articulates what goods are to be exchanged and engages the services of people for a specified time period. The marital covenant is a sacred promise between God and a man and a woman, who freely consent to the agreement until the death of one of the spouses.

Most Christians revere marriage as a sacred

union. The Catholic Church teaches that marriage is also a sacrament, a visible sign of God's presence and activity in the world. In Catholic tradition, the mutual self-giving of the couple is a mirror of Christ's love for the church. At the same time, Christ's love for the church is a model for the loving relationship that should exist between husband and wife.

In sacramental marriage, the couple's relationship has a mystical dimension, signifying the union of Christ and the church. It is a vocation entered into freely and honestly by both parties. Sacramental marriage gives spouses the grace to love each other with the love with which Christ loves his church. The grace of the sacrament thus perfects the human love of the spouses, strengthens their indissoluble unity, and sanctifies them on the way to eternal life (Catechism of the Catholic Church, #1661).

Sacramental marriage has three essential characteristics: It is life-long, it is faithful and it is open to children. As a sacrament, marriage reflects the Paschal Mystery, taking its inner meaning from the life, death and resurrection of Jesus. Like Jesus, the spouses in sacramental marriage "die" to self and "rise" to selfless service to one another, their children, their extended family, and beyond the doors of their

Our Method: Observe-Judge-Act

Observe

"Get the facts." At this stage of the meeting, members should refrain from expressing their opinions about facts. Try to simply report, like any good objective newspaper reporter.

Judge

For CFMers, to judge is not to find another person sinful or holy; it is rather to compare how things are with how things should be, in accord with Gospel values. This comparison requires objective observation of how things are as well as a sincere effort to determine the teachings of Jesus.

Act

If the group judges through prayer, reflection, and observation that things are not as they should be, then ways to bring about a change will come forth from the group. Actions listed here are suggestions. The best actions come from the group.

Social Inquiry (cont.)

home into society.

The covenant of Christian marriage touches the very mystery of the couple and the love that motivates them. It joins them in a unique type of life-long compact that reflects God's love for his chosen people and Christ's sacrificial love for his Bride, the church. Once entered into with full awareness and proper disposition, this nuptial covenant cannot be dissolved. This disturbs many people in contemporary society, who live in a culture of impermanence.

Today's Christian husbands and wives are called into a partnership of equal dignity and

value. "Follow the Way of Love," the U.S. Bishops' pastoral letter to families (1994), calls couples to honor the different gifts and abilities each brings to the marriage. "True equality, understood as mutuality, is not measuring out tasks (who prepares the meals, who supervises homework, and so forth) or maintaining an orderly schedule. It thrives at a much deeper level where the power of the Spirit resides. Here, the grace of the vowed life not only makes the shedding of willfulness possible, but also leads to a joyful willingness."

Observe (Notebook Reflection)

Before the meeting, write answers to the following questions in your notebook. Report on those that you are comfortable sharing.

Ask two other couples and yourselves the following questions and note responses in your notebook:

1. How does a marital covenant differ from a simple promise between two people? Bring an example of a contract to the meeting. Compare the contract's features with the concept of covenant described above.
2. What married couple has inspired you? Identify some characteristics of their marriage.
3. Ask two people: What hampers married couples from being a convincing sign of God's love today?
4. Research how the media portrays male-female relationships before and within marriage. Bring examples to share.

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Judge

For CFMers, to judge is not to find another person sinful or holy; it is rather to compare how things are with how things should be, in accord with Gospel values. This comparison requires objective observation of how things are as well as a sincere effort to determine the teachings of Jesus.

Act

If the group judges through prayer, reflection, and observation that things are not as they should be, then ways to bring about a change will come forth from the group. Actions listed here are suggestions. The best actions come from the group.

Judge

1. Compare the media portrayal of marriage you uncovered in Observe #4 to covenant marriage.
2. How can married couples live as a sign of God's love, forgiveness and joy?
3. In what ways can marriages based on a covenantal relationship strengthen society?
4. How can the give and take of marriage lead a person to a deeper relationship with God?
5. How do you experience the grace of God to help you live your vocation?
6. Why is it sometimes difficult for couples to keep their covenantal promises?
7. What qualities do people need to bring to marriage for success?

Act

1. Visit www.foryourmarriage.org and review the articles and other resources there. Encourage others to visit it, too. The site features public-service announcements promoting the idea that couples should do something for their marriage each day. Ask your local TV and radio stations to use them.
2. Recall your marriage vows and discuss with your spouse how your understanding may have changed since the day you were married. The Catholic vows are: I (...), take you (...) to be my wife/husband. I promise to be true to you in good times and in bad, in sickness and in health. I will love you and honor you all the days of my life.
3. Nurture your marriage by participating in a marriage enrichment program such as a Covenant Weekend (see www.cfm.org) or Marriage Encounter, or plan your own time away together.
4. Sponsor an event for married couples at your parish. Engage a speaker on the topic of covenant love.
5. Talk about your marriage with your children: Watch the wedding video or look at the photos. Explain why commitment is so important to a happy, successful marriage. Discuss how your understanding of your marital covenant has changed and deepened over the years.
6. Watch The Humanum Series <http://humanum.it/en/videos/>, six 15 minute videos underlining the beauty and importance of marriage in the world. If you have teenagers, consider sharing the viewing and discussion with them.

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“BE DOERS OF THE WORD, AND NOT MERELY HEARERS.”
 JAMES 1:22

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 Christian Family Movement

Look ahead to the next meeting

Look ahead to the next meeting.

Date _____

Time _____

Place _____

- Phone or e-mail host if you cannot attend
- Look ahead to the Observes for Private Reflection in the next chapter. **Individuals are asked to set aside 30 minutes of reflection time in preparation for the next meeting.**
- Who could we invite to join our group?

Closing Prayer

Lord, you graced the wedding feast at Cana and taught the value of married love. Help us to be Christians convinced of the importance not only of our own marriages but of the renewal of the institution of marriage in our society. Make us effective witnesses to your truth and love. We ask this in union with your human parents, Mary and Joseph. Amen.

What makes CFM different from other small faith communities and study groups?

CFM is peer ministry. Lay men and women invite their friends to join them in a faith building and family enriching experience.

CFM involves the whole family. Adults plan ways to include their children in the actions and social events they organize at their monthly meetings.

An International Movement —CFM members become part of a network of families all over the world who are living their faith in action.

A Shared Mission —CFM teaches members to see themselves as a vital part of the Body of Christ, engaging them in the mission of Jesus.

A Shared Method —CFM is an experience of faith formation that connects families and teaches them how to Observe their lives and society, Judge how Christians should respond, and then put their faith into practice.

Action. Action sets a CFM group apart from a study group. A CFM meeting should result in a change in our way of living, or it is an empty exercise. CFM groups are meant to form people through actions that result from the social inquiry and discussions.



OUR MARRIAGE... A SPIRITUAL JOURNEY: COUPLE'S SPIRITUALITY

Light a candle before the prayer.

Opening Prayer

Generous Father, who pours out your blessings upon us, we pause now to call to mind how you have blessed us through our spouse and through the sacrament of marriage.

(pause for private reflection)

Lord, Our God,
You have called us to share a life with our spouse, to be a sign of your love in the world. Help us to recognize your presence in our marriage and to call upon you for the grace needed to be faithful to our calling. Empower us to joyfully live out our married life as our vocation. Give us the generosity to forgive past hurts and the courage to be vulnerable to each other. As we seek to deepen the spirituality of our marriage, may we grow ever closer together in your love.

Through Jesus Christ Our Lord. Amen.

Report on Actions

The Observe, Judge, Act method helps Christians to put their faith into action in everyday life. What Action have you taken as a result of your last CFM meeting?

Scripture Reflection

So we have known and believe the love that God has for us. God is love, and those who abide in love abide in God, and God abides in them. Love has been perfected among us in this: that we may have boldness on the day of judgement, because as he is, so are we in this world. There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear; for fear has to do with punishment, and whoever fears has not reached perfection in love. We love because he first loved us.

- 1 John 4:16-19

- Tell about a person or experience that has shown you the love God has for you.
- How do we grow toward perfection in love?
- How does this scripture passage relate to marriage? Your marriage?

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Social Inquiry

“Jesus creates a new possibility for us, a vision of marriage based on his covenant with the Church, a marriage based on abiding permanence, chastity, and mercy. We can see how this sacramental marriage integrates with the whole of Christian life, for cultivating the virtues of love, interior freedom, fidelity, mercy, and forgiveness is a lifelong project which builds upon habits of prayer, participation in the Sacraments, and familiarity with the story of God’s covenant. The Lord knows that no marriage displays all the virtues all the time, but in his mercy, he gives us Penance and Eucharist so that we might grow in our capacity to love as Jesus does. Orienting our lives this way demands sacrifice, but in the end, this life is beautiful. Jesus is the path of truth and joy.”

Archdiocese of Philadelphia and the Pontifical Council for the Family
Love is Our Mission: The Family Fully Alive

“Matrimony is [a] work of everyday; I could say a craftwork, a goldsmith’s work, because the husband has the task to make his wife more woman, and the wife has the task to make her husband more man. To grow also in humanity, as man and as woman. And this is done between you. It is called growing together. This doesn’t come from the air! The Lord blesses it, but it comes from your hands, from your attitudes, from your way of living, from your way of loving one another. Make yourselves grow! Always act so that the other grows.”

Pope Francis
Address “Dialogue with Engaged Couples,” Feb 14, 2014

“Each of you probably knows the other better than anyone else on this earth, but there still needs to be that area where both of you are seeking to discover deeper parts of each of yourselves. Without that sense of discovery, and the awareness that there is more to learn about ourselves, life becomes stale and marriage dull. From the perspective of spirituality we can say that God is experienced whenever we encounter the deeper mystery about ourselves and the world.”

Anthony Garascia
Rekindle the Passion While Raising Your Kids

“Too often, however, spirituality and religious practices do not coincide. Many people today, for example, are aware of and comfortable with their spirituality but, at the same time, search for a religious practice that is suitable and relevant to their spirituality. There are also those people who participate in a well-defined religious practice but find it somehow disconnected from their spirituality.”

Kathleen Finley
The Seeker’s Guide to Building a Christian Marriage

Observe

For Private Reflection

Before the meeting take 30 minutes to reflect and write your answers to the following questions in your notebook. You need share only those answers that you wish to share during the meeting. Share your reflections with your spouse before the meeting.

- How was religion “practiced” in the home where you grew up?
- At what times in your life have you been closest to God?
- At what times in your marriage have you as a couple been closest to God?
- What is your spiritual life like today?
- What is your marital spiritual life like today?
- What factors enhance/threaten your spiritual development?
- In what ways are you satisfied with your present spiritual growth? With your marriage's?

In the Meeting

1. If you feel comfortable, share briefly about your spiritual journey from your answers to the questions above.
2. What practice or attitude has helped you to grow spiritually as an individual?
3. Share a practice or attitude that has helped you to grow spiritually as a couple.
4. What difficulties can couples encounter when trying to deepen their marital spirituality?

Judge

1. How has faith influenced your marriage?
2. What seems to be the plan that God has for marriage? Your marriage?
3. How can spouses help each other to grow in holiness?
4. What changes in prayer practice or attitude could bring you closer together with your spouse?

Act

1. Make a personal time-line from your birth to the present. On it place the key spiritual experiences of your life. Share with your partner.
2. Set aside 20 minutes a day for one week to make the *Busy Couple's Retreat* together; a 7 days online retreat with Bishop Paul Loverde: <http://www.arlingtondiocese.org/couplesretreat/index.aspx>
3. Between now and the next meeting, commit to read scripture together regularly. Try the Psalms or the Sunday Mass readings. Daily scripture readings can be found at <http://www.usccb.org/bible/readings>
4. Pray together daily for your marriage and for all marriages.
5. Add a time for personal thanksgiving and petition to your mealtime prayer.

For Further Reading

- ◆ Chris Stravitsch, "How to Pray with Your Spouse: Four Simple Steps," foryourmarriage.org,
- ◆ <http://www.foryourmarriage.org/how-to-pray-with-your-spouse-four-simple-steps/>
- ◆ Tim and Sue Muldoon, *Six Sacred Rules for Families: A Spirituality for the Home*, Ave Maria Press, 2013.
- ◆ Fr. Leo Patalinghug, *Spicing Up Married Life: Satisfying Couples' Hunger for True Love*, Leo McWatkins Films, 2012.
- ◆ Pederson, Mary Jo, *For Better, For Worse, For God: Exploring the Holy Mystery of Marriage*, Loyola Press, Chicago, 2008.



Announcements for the next meeting

Look ahead to the next meeting. *Pay particular attention to the Observes.*

Date: _____

Time: _____

Location: _____

1. Phone or e-mail host if you cannot attend
2. Look ahead to the Observe section for the next meeting. Observes #1 and 2 will require some inquiry before the meeting.
3. Who could we invite to join our group?

Our Logo Communicates Our Mission

The CFM logo shows the holy family in silhouette behind a modern family. The family is an active agent of evangelization, participating in the mission of Jesus. With the model of the holy family to guide them, the CFM family is moving forth to bring the message and the love of Christ to a changing world. Father, mother, sons and daughters are Christian emissaries to the world.

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CFM FAMILIES
AROUND THE COUNTRY
WOULD BE INSPIRED
TO HEAR HOW YOUR
GROUP IS PUTTING
FAITH INTO ACTION.
LIKE US ON [FACEBOOK](#)
AND SHARE YOUR
PHOTOS AND ACTION
IDEAS.

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Closing Prayer

Play quiet, reflective music.

Each couple, find a quiet spot and pray together. Respect one another's privacy.

Some suggestions:

- ◆ Pray together spontaneously for a few minutes. Concentrate on the ways that God has blessed you today. Or
- ◆ Take a few minutes to share with each other your hopes, concerns and prayer intentions for today. Close by praying the Our Father together.
- ◆ Hold hands in silence for a few moments and reflect on God's blessings. Read Psalm 33 aloud together (alternate stanzas). Text below (New American Standard Bible).

Praise to the Creator and Preserver
Sing for joy in the LORD, O you righteous ones;

Praise is becoming to the upright.
Give thanks to the LORD with the lyre;
Sing praises to Him with a harp of ten strings.

Sing to Him a new song;
Play skillfully with a shout of joy.
For the word of the LORD is upright,
And all His work is done in faithfulness.
He loves righteousness and justice;
The earth is full of the loving kindness of the LORD.

By the word of the LORD the heavens were made,

And by the breath of His mouth all their host.

He gathers the waters of the sea together as a heap;

He lays up the deeps in storehouses.

Let all the earth fear the LORD;

Let all the inhabitants of the world stand in awe of Him.

For He spoke, and it was done;

He commanded, and it stood fast.

The LORD nullifies the counsel of the nations;

He frustrates the plans of the peoples.

The counsel of the LORD stands forever,

The plans of His heart from generation to generation.

Blessed is the nation whose God is the LORD,

The people whom He has chosen for His own inheritance.

The LORD looks from heaven;

He sees all the sons of men;

From His dwelling place He looks out

On all the inhabitants of the earth,

He who fashions the hearts of them all,

He who understands all their works.

The king is not saved by a mighty army;

A warrior is not delivered by great strength.

A horse is a false hope for victory;

Nor does it deliver anyone by its great strength.

Behold, the eye of the LORD is on those who fear Him,

On those who hope for His lovingkindness,

To deliver their soul from death

And to keep them alive in famine.

Our soul waits for the LORD;

He is our help and our shield.

For our heart rejoices in Him,

Because we trust in His holy name.

Let Your lovingkindness, O LORD, be upon us,

According as we have hoped in You.



OUR MARRIAGE... A SPIRITUAL JOURNEY: CHILDREN AND PARENTS GROW TOGETHER

Opening Prayer

O God, you gave us the Holy Family as a perfect model of marriage and parenting lived in faith and obedience to your will. Help us to be examples of faith and obedience in our families and in our world. Guide us in our mission of passing our faith on to our children. Open their hearts so that the seed of faith planted at their baptism may grow. Strengthen our young people as they grow in their knowledge of Jesus and their openness to your call. Increase the love and faithfulness of all marriages. We ask this through Jesus Christ. Amen.

Report on Actions

The Observe, Judge, Act method helps Christians to put their faith into action in everyday life. What Action have you taken as a result of your last CFM meeting?

Scripture Reflection

Now, every year his parents went to Jerusalem for the festival of the Passover. And when he was 12 years old, they went up as usual for the festival. When the festival was ended and they started to return, the boy Jesus stayed behind in Jerusalem, but his parents did not know it. Assuming that he was in the group of travelers, they went a day's journey. Then they started to look for him among their relatives and friends. When they did not find him, they returned to Jerusalem to search for him. After three days they found him in the temple, sitting among the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions. And all who heard him were amazed at his understanding and his answers.

When his parents saw him they were astonished; and his mother said to him, "Child, why have you treated us like this? Look, your father and I have been searching for you in great anxiety."

He said to them, "Why were you searching for me? Did you not know that I must be in my Father's house?"

But they did not understand what he said to them. Then he went down with them and came to Nazareth and was obedient to them. His mother treasured all of these things in her heart.

- Luke 2:41-51

- What elements of the life of the Holy Family are revealed in this story?
- How can you relate to Mary and Joseph as you see them parenting Jesus in this story?

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Social Inquiry

Christian marriage is transformative—of the spouses and of those whose lives they touch. As they work together to succeed in their marriage, the couple is an example of God's unconditional love for the world. A marriage preparation program, *Today and All the Days of Your Life* (Liguori Publications, 2002), reminds engaged couples, "How we love each other, sacrifice for one another, forgive each other and respect each other, makes a difference to those around us." In the sacrament of matrimony, the spouses have the potential to "put flesh on God," allowing others to experience Jesus' love by witnessing their sacramental love.

In his 1994 "Letter to Families" Pope John Paul II wrote: "In God's plan, the family is in many ways the first school of how to be human." He referred to the family unit as the "domestic church," echoing ancient church teachings that the family is the most fundamental building block of the church. In fact, St. John Chrysostom called the family the most basic unit of the church way back in the fourth century! When we marry and baptize our children, we pledge publicly to teach and model for

our children the most basic Christian values—love, forgiveness, human dignity, obedience, and charity. Quite a responsibility! Parents are called to embrace the responsibilities that come with having children, trusting that God will provide the grace that they need. In this, parents will discover true joy.

Caring for children brings with it the opportunity for parents to discover God working in their own lives. In his 1981 exhortation on the family, "Familiaris Consortio," Pope John Paul II talks about the educational exchange between parent and child and how children contribute to the sanctification of their parents. He challenges parents and children alike to recognize how they can help one another grow in holiness, help that is truly "ministry." Parents' ministry acts "as a service to the human and Christian well-being of their children, and in particular as a service aimed at helping them acquire a truly responsible freedom." At the same time, parents should "maintain a living awareness of the 'gift' they continually receive from their children" (#21 and #26).

Ideas for Meetings Including Children

Your CFM gathering is another opportunity to pass on your faith! Borrow a children's film about Jesus' life or the life of a saint and then have the children share what they have learned before you close the meeting. Or, provide simple rosary kits, or make placemats with the "Prayer Before Meals" on one side and the "Prayer After Meals" on the other. Before you close the meeting, have the children show off their contribution to your domestic church. If the children are old enough, include them in the closing prayer.

Observe

Before the meeting, write answers to the following questions in your notebook. Report on those that you are comfortable sharing.

1. Ask two people: What types of changes often occur in the relationship of spouses when children enter the family?
2. Ask yourself and another person: What do you see as the joys and challenges of parenting?
3. List some examples of how parents teach and model basic Christian values for their children. What are some ways that children teach their par-ents?
4. What kind of support for parenting is offered in your church or community (classes, hotlines, support groups, books, etc.)?

Judge

1. How did having a child change your under-standing of yourself as an individual and a spouse? How has it helped you grow as a person?
2. What discouragements have you faced as a parent? How did this affect your relationship with your spouse? With God?
3. What would help parents fulfill their mission of teaching and modeling the Christian faith to their children? How can the Christian community respond to this need?
4. How can passing on your faith to your children help parents to grow spiritually? How can shared faith experiences bring families closer together?
5. How can deepening the spirituality of your marital relationship strengthen your parenting?

Act

1. Recommit to weekly church attendance as a family. Or add family attendance to a weekday liturgy, reconciliation, adoration, recitation of the rosary, Litany of the Saints or another spiritual practice to your regular prayer life.
2. Make a point to spend time talking to your children about how God is working in your life. Help your child recognize how God is working in his or her life, too.
3. Work together on an idea generated by Judge #3.
4. As a group action your CFM group could host a marriage and parenting workshop for interested parish couples. *Wisdom and Grace for Marriage and Parenting* is a 5 meeting marriage and parenting enrichment program available from CFM. <http://cfm.org/programs.html>
5. Arrange a "mutual appreciation dinner," either at home or on the town, celebrating the gifts and talents of each person that builds up your family. Recognize at least one good quality of each person present. This could be expanded to include another family that your children know well. Include your children in the planning of the appreciation and recognition of the other children and adults.

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Observe

"Get the facts." At this stage of the meeting, members should refrain from expressing their opinions about facts. Try to simply report, like any good objective newspaper reporter.

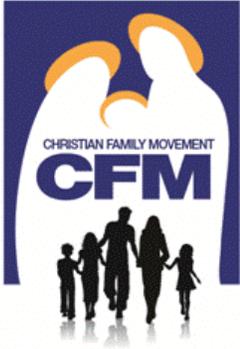
Judge

For CFMers, to judge is not to find another person sinful or holy; it is rather to compare how things are with how things should be, in accord with Gospel values.

Act

If the group judges through prayer, reflection, and observation that things are not as they should be, then ways to bring about a change will come forth from the group. Actions listed here are suggestions. The best actions come from the group.

THE CHRISTIAN FAMILY MOVEMENT



THE MISSION OF CFM

- ◆ To promote Christ-centered marriage and family life.
- ◆ To help individuals and their families to live the Christian faith in everyday life.
- ◆ To improve society through actions of love, service, education and example.

“BE DOERS OF THE WORD, AND NOT MERELY HEARERS.”
JAMES 1:22

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Christian Family Movement

Announcements for the next meeting

Look ahead to the next meeting. *Make assignments for Observe #4.*

Date: _____

Time: _____

Location: _____

- Since the next meeting is the last in this CFM Mini-Series, leaders should distribute a list of recommended CFM materials the group could use to continue their CFM experience. The list of other CFM programs is found at www.cfm.org
- Phone or e-mail host if you cannot attend

Closing Prayer

If children are present, they should stand or sit with their parents as everyone prays together.

Blessed are you, O Lord and Father,
For sending your Son, Jesus,
To become part of the human family,
To share our joys and struggles,
And to show us the power of love.

Protect and watch over our families,
So that, with your help,
We may become, day by day,
a more perfect expression of the church in our homes.
We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Joseph Cardinal Cardijn (1882-1967) developed the See-Judge-Act method upon which the CFM method of Observe-Judge-Act is based. Cardinal Cardijn, a Belgian priest, felt compelled to help the young people of his time who were forced to leave school to work in corrupt conditions in the factories. He founded the Young Christian Workers movement in the early 20th century, to help young workers find the answers to their problems and to bridge what he saw as an “abyss” between the working class and the Church. The Cardijn Community International is seeking canonization of Cardinal Cardijn. More details of his life can be found at www.josephcardijn.com.





OUR MARRIAGE... A SPIRITUAL JOURNEY: UNITED TO SERVE OTHERS

Meeting Host: Please make pens/pencils available for the Observe section.

Opening Prayer

(adapted from the opening prayer for a Catholic wedding)

Leader: O God, who in creating the human race
willed that man and wife should be one,
you have joined in a bond of inseparable love these your servants
who have been united in the covenant of Marriage.
As you make their love fruitful,
may they become, by your grace, witnesses to charity itself.
Through Jesus Christ our Lord.

All: Amen.

Report on Actions

*The Observe, Judge, Act method helps Christians to put their faith into
action in everyday life. What Action have you taken as a result of your last
CFM meeting?*

Scripture Reflection

"You are the salt of the earth; but if salt has lost its taste, how can its saltiness be restored? It is no longer good for anything, but is thrown out and trampled under foot.

"You are the light of the world. A city built on a hill cannot be hid. No one after lighting a lamp puts it under the bushel basket, but on the lamp stand, and it gives light to all in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father in heaven."

- Matthew 5:13-16

Build houses to dwell in; plant gardens, and eat their fruits. Take wives and beget sons and daughters; find wives for your sons and give your daughters husbands, so that they may bear sons and daughters. There you must increase in number, and not decrease. Promote the welfare of the city to which I have exiled you; pray for it to the Lord, for upon its welfare depends your own.

- Jeremiah 29:5-7

- When has the good example of another person brought you light?
- How is your family's welfare dependent on the health of society?

ABOUT THIS SERIES:

Our Marriage... A Spiritual Journey is a four-meeting miniseries which focuses on the spiritual journey of the couple from making vows and understanding the concept of covenant, to couple spirituality, to extending your spirituality to your children, to sharing the love you have to others outside the immediate family.

OUR PROGRAMS ARE WRITTEN BY CFM VOLUNTEERS FROM AROUND THE COUNTRY. DO YOU HAVE A TALENT FOR WRITING OR EDITING THAT YOU WOULD LIKE TO SHARE WITH CFM? CONTACT DIRECTOR@CFM.ORG



THE CHRISTIAN FAMILY MOVEMENT:

- ◆ OVER 60 YEARS OF STRENGTHENING MARRIAGES AND FAMILIES
- ◆ PROVIDING FAMILY RELEVANT PROGRAM MATERIALS
- ◆ HELPING OUR MEMBERS TO PUT THEIR FAITH INTO ACTION

Social Inquiry

Marriage is a community of love in which husband and wife have the opportunity to love each other but also to share that love with those around them. Each couple has unique gifts and talents within their relationship. These gifts and talents are a way for them to reach out to those who need their love.

"... (I)f we do become so caught up with ourselves that we lose sight of those outside of us we may well find our relationship collapsing from its own weight. That commitment to something beyond ourselves may be to our families, or to better marriages for others or to social justice. But we are convinced that the ultimate paradox of marriage enrichment is that it comes most fully as we move beyond seeking it."

Gary and Kay Aitchison
Past President's CFM-USA and ICCFM

"Pope Francis is calling Christian spouses to be the kind of teachers that contemporary people listen to, teachers who teach by their witness, and thereby uphold the truth and display its persuasiveness in their openness to life, in the warmth of their mutual love and in the readiness of their hospitality, as oases of love and mercy in a culture so often marked by cynicism, hardheartedness, and discouragement."

Archdiocese of Philadelphia and the Pontifical Council for the Family
Love is Our Mission: The Family Fully Alive

"[Husband and wife] are consecrated by God as they were consecrated by their baptism and their confirmation, and as the priest is consecrated when he is ordained. Marriage, the sacrament, consecrates the husband and wife for the ministry which they have to exercise in the church, and in view of the mission which they must exercise in the church.... Marriage is really a call from God, it is not caprice or passion, but a vocation and a call from God, just as there is a vocation to the priesthood. It is a divine vocation; it is holy and it makes holy, it is apostolic and missionary."

Cardinal Joseph Cardijn
Founder, Young Christian Workers

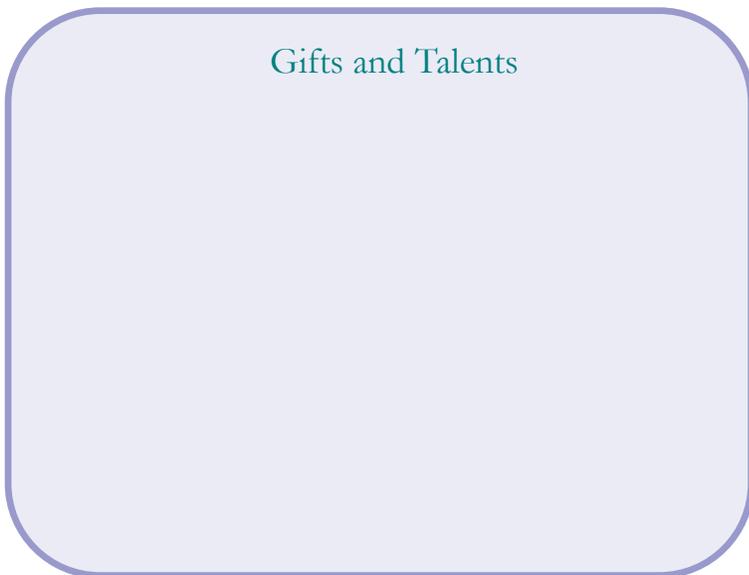
Observe

For Personal Reflection

Before moving onto the discussion, take a few minutes to answer the following questions in the space provided.

1. What are your gifts and talents?
2. What are your partner's gifts and talents?
3. What are your special couple gifts and talents?
4. What are the gifts and talents of your CFM group?

Gifts and Talents



Observe (continued)

During the meeting

1. Identify some active couples in church and civic life in your community. What unique contributions do married couples make to your parish? To your community?
2. Think of couples you know who work together to serve others. How does marriage impact the types of service they do and how they approach and accomplish tasks?
3. Share some of your observations from your inventory of gifts and talents above.

Each of these should be assigned to a couple before the meeting. Complete your observation before the meeting and report during the meeting:

- Ask an engaged couple: What are the needs of couples preparing for marriage?
- Ask a newly married couple: What does a newly married couple need from the community?
- Ask a married couple: In what ways do married couples need help with their marriages?
- Ask a divorced, never married or widowed person: What does a person in your state of life need from the community?
- Ask a person in pastoral ministry: Where do you see the greatest need for love?

Judge

1. Cardijn says that the marriage vocation is apostolic and missionary. What does this imply about the necessity of service?
2. What are some unique aspects to the service of a married couple? How does it differ from the service of someone who is not married?
3. How can you best use your couple gifts and talents to reach out to those in need? How will you as a couple reach out to others?
4. How can we best use our group talents to reach out to those in need? How will we as a group reach out to others in our families, neighborhood church and community?
5. How does marriage serve family, church and society?

Act

As a Couple:

1. Look for and take advantage of opportunities where you can personally witness to the benefits of Christian marriage.
2. Choose a way that you can serve in your parish or community **alongside your spouse**.
3. Share the blessing of your marriage and family with others. Invite a single person, dating couple, or lonely person to your home to share in a family meal and fellowship.
4. Choose another action.

As a Group:

1. Choose one of the following or plan your own group action.
2. Plan and sponsor a marriage enrichment program in your church. CFM has multiple marriage enrichment programs available. Contact the national office.
3. Get involved with the pre-marriage education program in your church.
4. Plan a group service project that involves the whole family: packaging meals for the homeless shelter, yard work for an elderly parishioner, visiting shut ins, etc.
5. Plan and host a family friendly event for your parish or community.
6. Act in response to one of the needs identified in Observe #3.

Registration & Choosing your next CFM Program

One way that CFM accomplishes its mission is by providing meeting guides (program books) to its members for use in their small groups. **These guides are provided as a benefit of membership.** Other benefits include the bi-monthly ACT e-newsletter and supplementary electronic meetings on the CFM website. Program books may not be purchased without membership, since CFM is not a bookseller.

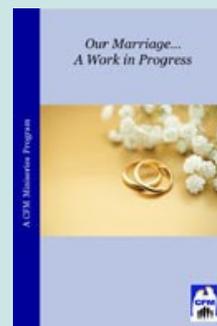
We invite you to join the Christian Family Movement

If you haven't already, please take the time to register your group. Registration ensures that you receive our national newsletter and remain connected to the national movement.

To register: Send completed registration forms (page 20), or a list of members and their email addresses, along with all donations to the CFM-USA national office (P.O. Box 540550, Omaha, NE 68154).

Other CFM Programs

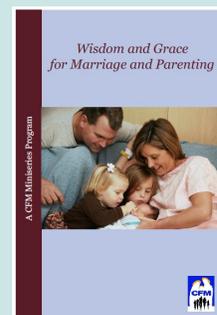
Our Marriage: A Work in Progress



For Happier Families 8 meetings, hardcopy



Wisdom and Grace for Marriage and Parenting 5 meetings, pdf format



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Closing Prayer

"How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news, who proclaim peace, who bring good tidings, who proclaim salvation..."

- Isaiah 52:7

Lord Jesus,

Help us to listen for your call.

When we hear what you ask of us,

May we respond, "Yes!"

Bless our marriage and our family.

Bless our desire to be like you.

May we never be afraid to humble ourselves in service of our brothers and sisters.

May our homes be dwellings of peace,

And may we never tire of doing good.

Amen.

Prayer for the Christian Family Movement

Holy Trinity, you are a family.

We believe you wish our families to reflect your heavenly community.

Jesus has called us to family ministry, and asked his heavenly Father not to take us from the world, but to deliver us from evil.

And so we pray for the Christian Family Movement, that present members may grow in grace and that new families may join us.

Through good example and prayer, may our homes become that which you desire them to be: true domestic churches, temples of your glory, and schools of humanity, ushering in the reign of God.

Amen.

Thank you for sharing our mission!

For today & for the future

If CFM has enriched your family, help to keep CFM strong & growing for today's families and for future generations.

You are CFM

Most of the work of the movement is done by individual members who absorb their own expenses. Donations from members and supporters cover the administrative costs of a small national office, outreach to new families, and advertising to make our mission and programs known to new members, pastors, and family life ministers.

Help another family

Your donation enables us to make our materials available to new or struggling families at reduced or no cost. It also supports CFM around the world.

Send to:

CFM National Office
P.O. Box 540550
Omaha, NE 68154

Donations are tax deductible.
Give online at www.cfm.org

Part 1

[Catechism of the Catholic Church](#). United States Catholic Conference – Liberia Editrice Vaticana, 1994.
United States Conference of Catholic Bishops. "[Follow the Way of Love](#)." 1994.

Part 2

Archdiocese of Philadelphia and the Pontifical Council for the Family. *Love is Our Mission: The Family Fully Alive, A preparatory catechesis for the World Meeting of Families*. 67. Our Sunday Visitor, Philadelphia, 2014.

Finley, Kathleen. *The Seeker's Guide to Building a Christian Marriage*. Loyola Press, 2000.

Garascia, Anthony. *Rekindle the Passion While Raising Your Kids*. Sorin Books, Notre Dame, IN, 2001.

Loverde, Bishop Paul S. Address "Busy Couples Retreat Day 6." *Busy Couples Retreat*. Arlington. Feb. 2015. Address. <http://www.arlingtondiocese.org/couplesretreat/index.aspx>

Pope Francis. Address "Dialogue with Engaged Couples," Saint Peter's Square. Feb 14, 2014.

Part 3

Archdiocese of St. Louis. *Today and All the Days of Your Life*. Ligouri Publications, 2002.

Chrysostom, Saint John. *On Marriage and Family Life*. Reprint. Crestwood, NY: St Vladimirs Seminary Press, 1986.

Pope John Paul II. "Familiaris Consortio." 1981.

Pope John Paul II. "Letter to Families." 1994.

Part 4

Archdiocese of Philadelphia and the Pontifical Council for the Family. *Love is Our Mission: The Family Fully Alive, A preparatory catechesis for the World Meeting of Families*. 186. Our Sunday Visitor, Philadelphia, 2014.

Cardijn, Joseph. Second talk of the series *Person, Family and Education*, 1950. <http://www.josephcardijn.com/the-family> Accessed 03.25.2015.



Christian Family Movement

PO Box 540550
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director@cfm.org

As a member of CFM, you will receive a copy of a CFM program guide, a copy of the bi-monthly ACT e-newsletter, and other helpful marriage and parenting emails as requested below.

Donation Levels

Suggested donation is \$40 per year.

Your membership donation supports an international ministry to families.

Additional donations are appreciated to help support our efforts to reach out to new families.

Membership Type and Donation

- Active Member, \$40 suggested donation
- Sponsoring Member, \$80 suggested donation
- New Member (first year), \$10 suggested donation
- My Donation Amount _____

All donations are appreciated and are tax deductible. CFM is a 501(c)(3) organization.

PLEASE PRINT CLEARLY

Note for Returning Members: If your information has not changed in the last year, you may fill out only Name(s), Parish and Email Addresses.

Name(s), First and Last	Parish	New Member? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No If yes, please complete all shaded boxes.
Preferred Family E-mail	Alternate E-mail	Phone (with Area Code) (_____) _____ - _____
Address	His religion	His occupation
City, State, Zip	Her religion	Her occupation
<input type="checkbox"/> Married: _____ (Anniversary year) <input type="checkbox"/> Single <input type="checkbox"/> Widowed <input type="checkbox"/> Divorced	Number of Children _____ List the year of birth for children under 18: _____	

New and Returning Members: Please fill out all sections below.

All members receive ACT, our newsletter sent via email 6 times/year. Would you also like to receive? <input type="checkbox"/> Marriage Moments <input type="checkbox"/> Parenting Pointers <input type="checkbox"/> Neither, thank you Both are short, weekly emails.	Program book: <input type="checkbox"/> I received a book already <input type="checkbox"/> I need a book-please send: _____ (Book Title) <input type="checkbox"/> Do not send book	Please check all that apply: <input type="checkbox"/> I lead a CFM group. <input type="checkbox"/> I coordinate multiple CFM groups. <input type="checkbox"/> I am the primary contact for CFM at my parish. <input type="checkbox"/> I am a Deacon. <input type="checkbox"/> I am a parish staff member. <input type="checkbox"/> I work for the Diocese/Archdiocese.
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Please sign here



Checklist & Online Resources for Group Leaders

www.cfm.org



☐ Invite Families to Register

We recommend that you distribute membership forms at your first meeting.

To keep families connected to the Movement, we need their contact information. Please invite and encourage families to fill out a membership form, available to print or complete online.

<http://cfm.org/join.html#mbrform>

All members receive our bi-monthly **ACT e-newsletter** and can choose to also receive weekly marriage and parenting enrichment ideas. Subscribe: <http://cfm.org/join.html#mm>

☐ Select Program Materials



A variety of family-relevant programs ranging from 3 to 10 meetings in length are available. New programs are added every year.

For a full listing, see

<http://cfm.org/programs.html#annual>

Programs are a benefit of membership. All members may request one free hardcopy program book per year. Member may also request additional digital programs from the national office.

☐ Request Donations

CFM relies totally on the support of its members and friends, whose donations cover the cost of a small national office, outreach to new families, and advertising to make our mission and programs known. Your donation enables us to make our materials available to new or struggling families at reduced or no cost. It also supports CFM around the world. CFM also depends on the generosity of those who donate their time and talents to the mission of CFM.

Suggested donation is \$40 per family or \$10 for new families. Donate by mail or [online](#).

Donations to CFM are tax deductible.

Promotional Materials

Sample bulletin announcements, flyers, promotional prayer cards, and more ideas are available to help you spread CFM in your parish. See Materials and Resources > [Share CFM with Others](#) and [Promotional Materials](#) on our website.

Group Action is Important

CFM action groups differ from other faith sharing groups. Visit our [FAQ](#) page, to learn how we're unique. Contact the national office if you need ideas for group actions.

More Help on our [Leaders](#) page:

- [Tips for better meetings](#)
- [Building group cohesion](#)
- [Mentoring new groups](#)
- [Including children at meetings](#)
- [Keeping your members connected to worldwide CFM](#)



We want to help!

Contact the national office with any concerns or questions. We can connect you with other CFM groups in your area.

800-581-9824

director@cfm.org



About CFM

CFM-USA is part of an international movement of over 80,000 families. Our mission is to promote Christ-centered marriage and family life and to help members put faith into action through works of love, service, education and example. To learn more about our mission, method (Observe-Judge-Act), and history, please visit our [About](#) page.

Like us on [facebook](#).

Share how your group is putting faith into action. Christian Family Movement - USA