

THE CHRISTIAN FAMILY MOVEMENT



An October 1961 report to Bishop Wright from the Pittsburgh Christian Family Movement lists among its many fine works an entry that's puzzling for its time: "leading Mass responses in parishes." What could this have meant then, prior to Vatican II when laity did not actively participate in the old form of the Mass? Today we cannot know for certain, but a few things we

may reliably venture: if members of this lay apostolate were able to "lead Mass responses" – whatever that action was in a Tridentine liturgy – it speaks to the great reputation and respect for this worthy apostolate and to the engaged nature of the people who served their parishes in it.

Engagement is a hallmark of the Christian Family Movement. The apostolate is a whole family ministry, based on the simple, patent premise that entire families serving and following Christ's teachings together will powerfully bring about change for the common good. Member families meet each month or more in one another's homes, for discussion and to plan some just action urged by Gospel values. The movement is mostly parish-based, but groups can also be neighborhood-based.

"[T]alking and playing and praying together builds a little Christian community within the parish," said Lauri Przybysz in a 1985 newsletter put out by the former diocesan Office of Family Life. Ms. Przybysz is a long-time CFM member and former Pittsburgher, who now serves as the Executive Director of the CFM USA National Office. "Community strengthens, not only the families, but the whole Church as well," she wrote in that same edition of the Family Times Newsletter.

The CFM in Pittsburgh formed in the spring of 1954, patterned after the same movements that emerged in Chicago and South Bend in the early 1940's. By the time of the 1961 report, 45 groups of 285 couples were active in 21 parishes. Always serving in close relationship with diocesan leadership, it is customary for local chapter leaders to report annually to their bishop, and also to speak at regional diocesan meetings.

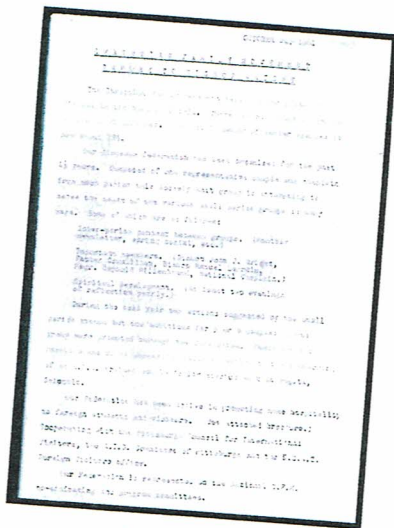
CFM groups are "very grass roots and very connected to the Church" says Ms. Przybysz. Meetings follow the jocist social inquiry approach that integrates a method to "observe, judge and plan actions" to effect positive change. The methodology is a unifying feature of the movement, particularly strong in Latin American CFM groups, and also "one that Pope Francis is steeped in" she says.

Some of the past works of local CFM groups have been helping to re-settle refugees, coordinating hospitality for foreign students and visitors, and sponsoring ecumenical discussions.

As children age and families change, member couples may move on from the movement to serve the Church in other apostolates. "CFM launches people," observed Ms. Przybysz. Noting her experience in Pittsburgh, she remarked, members "didn't quit (lay ministry), but took action in other ways, and grew to be active lay

Catholics."

Over the years there have been efforts to expand the apostolate here. In the early nineties, in his role as Secretary for Social Concerns, Rev. (now Bishop) Paul Bradley met with CFM leaders to grow new groups in more parishes. In a 1992 letter endorsing CFM to his fellow priests, Father Bradley wrote "[the]"movement has always impressed me as a wonderful way to help renew and revitalize family life in our parishes."



Today Ms. Przybysz agrees. "When people encounter the CFM, their response is 'this is just what we needed.' It's easy to start in a parish. It doesn't take money or a facility" and, she notes, "we welcome mixed-church families." Ms. Przybysz acknowledges there are challenges for starting local CFM groups in our busy culture. "It's a struggle for modern families to make a regular commitment," she says, and admits that finding leadership is not always easy – but it's vital for the movement to thrive. "It takes a dedicated couple to shepherd it along," she says.

In Pittsburgh, one of those couples is Sam and Juliette Tirone of St. Philip Parish in Crafton. The Tirones also serve on the national board of CFM and invite those interested in becoming involved to contact them at (412) 458-5052 or to visit the CFM website at www.cfm.org.

From the Christian Family Movement prayer: "Through good example and prayer, may our homes become what you desire them to be: true domestic churches, temples of your glory, and schools of humanity, ushering in the reign of God. Amen."

Church helps families 'settle in'

By PATRICIA BARTO

The Catholic Church focuses on the needs of refugees and immigrants with the annual celebration of National Migration Week, which runs from Jan. 5-10. Theme for the seventh annual observance will be "The Family in the Process of Migration."

In a special letter issued for the observance, Bishop Anthony J. Berlicovich explained that the priority the Church places on family life "includes special pastoral care for families of immigrants, refugees and other people on the move. For those who are separated from spouses, parents, children or brothers and sisters, the Church strives to educate, support and advocate appropriate legislation in order to protect and promote the rights of families."

Families of newcomers have the same rights and needs as all families, particularly in terms of social assistance, health care and education of the children. "In that spirit," the bishop added, "I call upon all pastors and other pastoral workers to be close to the families of newcomers so that they will not suffer the consequences of their isolation and displacement."

Also, the U.S. Catholic Conference's department of migration and refugee services currently is focusing on the plight of illegal aliens in this country. The office recently published a report detailing who will qualify for legalization under the new immigration reform law passed in October by Congress. This law will allow numerous illegal aliens to apply for legal status.

The report recommends the illegal aliens seek advice on their eligibility before approaching federal immigration officials.

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The newest Amer-Asian family to arrive in the diocese came in mid-December through the sponsorship of the Christian Family Movement here. From left in the family's Oakland apartment are: Doi Thi Xuan Ngoc, Linda Mackey of CFM, Doi Xuan Vu, Doi Xuan Tam, Doi Van Chao, Doi Truong Sen, Tran Thi Ho, An Ho DeMarco of Doi, and Tran Thi Ngoc Thuy. — Photo by John C. Keenan