



SEVEN

Solidarity: **The Global Dimension of Discipleship** *Engaging the world outside our immediate community*

Objective: CFM members will recognize that Christians share concerns and responsibilities with people in other countries and cultures and discover that the Christian Family Movement has members all over the world.

Summary: The "new evangelization" includes a global dimension, extending beyond the Church community to seek to transform secular society with the Gospel. In this meeting, CFM members will observe the world situation more closely, judge how a Christian can collaborate with others who are different from them and take action to make God's love present.

GATHER

Ideas: Ask members to bring to the meeting an item or picture that represents another culture. Serve snacks that are typical of a culture different from yours.

OPENING PRAYER

GOD of love and mercy, you call us to be your people,
you gift us with your abundant grace.
Make us a holy people, radiating the fullness of your love.
Form us into a community, a people who care,

expressing your compassion.

Remind us day after day of our baptismal call to serve,
with joy and courage.

Teach us how to grow in wisdom and grace and joy
in your presence.

Through Jesus and in your Spirit, we make this prayer. Amen.

- Introduction, *Called and Gifted for the Third*

Millennium

REPORT ON ACTIONS

Take time to report on how you engaged in action as a result of the last meeting. It is encouraging to hear what others are doing and prompts us to put our faith into practice more intentionally.

SCRIPTURE REFLECTION

A reading from the letter of Paul to the Colossians (1: 3-8).

This reading shows how the mission of Christ was not just a one-man show. We learn that Paul is working with Timothy, Epaphras, and other brothers and sisters in Colossae to spread the gospel. Paul gives thanks for the Christian communities he has visited in many countries. St. Paul's mission extended to the far-flung Roman empire, "the whole world", accompanied by faithful coworkers like Timothy. This reading is a snapshot of the international reach of the apostles' ministry to all, Jew and Greek, slaves and free persons.

“Paul, an Apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, and Timothy our brother, to the holy ones and faithful brothers and sisters in Christ in Colossae: grace to you and peace from God our Father. We always give thanks to God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, when we pray for you, for we have heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and the love that you have for all the holy ones because of the hope reserved for you in heaven. Of this you have already heard through the word of truth, the Gospel, that has come to you. Just as in the whole world it is bearing fruit and growing, so also among you, from the day you heard it and came to know the grace

of God in truth, as you learned it from Epaphras, our beloved fellow slave, who is a trustworthy minister of Christ on your behalf and who also told us of your love in the Spirit.”

1. The early Christians spread the Gospel far and wide, to many different lands and cultures. What would you imagine were some of their challenges in mission? How does this compare to today’s challenges? **Learning and communicating in a new language; sharing the food and lodging of people from other cultures; experiencing hardship of travel; opposition from governments and from religious leaders in the new places. Missionaries today have similar challenges.**
2. What does it mean to you when he refers to Epaphras as “fellow slave?” **Paul considered himself a "slave" of Christ, in that he was of total service to Christ and could not get [yet?] abandon his calling. His chains were those of love, not steel. Epaphras was Paul’s representative at Colossae where he was a leader the church there (Colossians 1:7). Epaphras was probably with Paul under his house arrest in Rome, as he is described as a "fellow prisoner" (Philemon 1:23). Paul speaks of him as a colleague, bound to Christ for the good of the young Church.**
3. Within your family, are there comparisons to the challenges the Apostles had spreading Christianity? **Differences in religious belief and practice among family members can cause conflicts; we may be living far from family members and reliant on new friends to be our companions in faith.**

SOCIAL INQUIRY

These readings show how Christians are called to go out into society as witnesses to Christ and not to hide from the challenges they will encounter there. In their document, *Called and Gifted for the Third Millennium* (1995) the U.S. Catholic Bishops describe

how the laity can live out their baptismal call in temporal society. It was issued on the Thirtieth Anniversary of the Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity from Pope Paul VI (1965) and the Fifteenth Anniversary of their document, *Called and Gifted* (1980).

“The laity are called to participate in a ‘new evangelization.’ This means sharing the good news of Jesus personally through the witness of our lives. Moreover, the new evangelization is ‘directed not only to persons but also to entire portions of populations in the variety of their situations, surroundings and cultures.’ Its purpose is to challenge, through the power of the Gospel, those values, judgements, patterns of behavior, sources of inspiration, and models of life that are inconsistent with the word of God and the plan of salvation and to affirm the ways God is working in the world today. . . .

“Small church communities offer an important and unique means of formation for the new evangelization. They strengthen their members to persevere in their faith and mission, providing both inspiration and practical support. To be involved in the new evangelization, however, requires that members of such communities be as ready for engagement with the world outside their community as they are for deepening their relationships within it. If the small community is to be a true expression of the mystery of the Church, then it must be ‘a communion of God's people living out the mission of Jesus Christ in the power of the Spirit.’”

- U.S. Bishops, *Called and Gifted for the Third Millennium*
<http://www.usccb.org/about/laity-marriage-family-life-and-youth/laity/called-and-gifted-for-the-third-millennium.cfm>

We are called to be peacemakers, to grow in friendship and charity with all people, another way of saying we are called to solidarity. We live in an increasingly interconnected world, linked by communications technology and economic partnerships. The Church has members in every nation, each with their own cultures,

languages, and civic authorities. All are united in Christ: No longer Jew or Greek, slave or free person, male or female. Because we are one in God's eyes, each of us must seek greater understanding and awareness of our neighbors.

"A comprehensive demographic study of more than 200 countries finds that there are 2.18 billion Christians of all ages around the world, representing nearly a third of the estimated 2010 global population of 6.9 billion. Christians are also geographically widespread – so far-flung, in fact, that no single continent or region can indisputably claim to be the center of global Christianity.... Today, only about a quarter of all Christians live in Europe (26%). A plurality – more than a third – now are in the Americas (37%). About one in every four Christians lives in sub-Saharan Africa (24%), and about one-in-eight is found in Asia and the Pacific (13%) ...About half are Catholic. Protestants, broadly defined, make up 37%. Orthodox Christians comprise 12% of Christians worldwide."

<http://www.pewforum.org/2011/12/19/global-christianity-exec/>

The Christian Family Movement is found in over 40 countries, united in the practice of the Observe, Judge, Act method of discipleship. Our Movement teaches us to bring the light of the Gospel into society wherever we can have an impact. As the Catechism puts it (no. 1941), "International solidarity is a requirement of the moral order; world peace depends in part upon this."

CFM-USA is a member of the International Confederation of Christian Family Movements, which has associated movements in more than 45 countries. In 1989, the ICCFM became a Non-Governmental Organization of the United Nations with special consultative status, using that platform to witnessing to Christian ethics in the public square.

[The United Nations Relationship to the Church](#)

Since 1989, the ICCFM has been a Non-Governmental Organization of the United Nations with special consultative status, using that platform to witnessing to Christian ethics in the public square. Although the Church and the United Nations do not agree on many important issues (especially related to population control), the Church chooses to maintain relationships with the UN for the benefit of the common good. The priorities of the Holy See for 2017 were similar to key UN goals – among them, the quest for peace, assisting migrants and refugees, and nuclear disarmament.

Ever since 1964, when it was informally accepted to the United Nations General Assembly, the Holy See* has had a permanent seat at international discussions and used its observer status to go on record about matters of peace and human dignity. “We consider the United Nations not only important but in itself very useful for humanity,” Archbishop Bernardito Auza, Apostolic Nuncio and Permanent Observer of the Holy See to the United Nations, told UN News (7 February 2017). He went on to say: “The Holy See, the Catholic Church itself, appreciates and considers the United Nations a very important institution for all the nations to come together and discuss problems and even enjoy together what is common.”

*The Holy See is a nearly 2,000-year old term that refers to the international sovereignty of the Pope, or leader of the Roman Catholic Church. The Holy See is the only religious entity represented among the 193 UN Member States.

Source: UN News Center, “Diplomacy of the conscience – The Holy See at the United Nations.”

http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=56121#.Wk_M4qinGUk

The UN has identified 17 Sustainable Development Goals that address the needs of people in both developed and developing countries, emphasizing that no one should be left behind. Broad and ambitious in scope, the Agenda addresses the three dimensions

of sustainable development: social, economic and environmental, as well as important aspects related to peace, justice and effective institutions.

<http://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/blog/2015/12/sustainable-development-goals-kick-off-with-start-of-new-year/>

From our own experience, **OBSERVE:**

1. What do you think of when you think of a “small church community?” Besides CFM, what other small Christian communities are in your parish? Bible studies, men's and women's groups, cultural groups, Teams of Our Lady, St. Vincent DePaul Society, Marriage Encounter circles, rosary groups, Taizé prayer groups, grief support groups
2. What are current needs in your local community that a small church community could address?
Isolation of elderly, loneliness, hunger, injustice, prisoners, military families during deployment, addictions, ignorance about other cultures and religions, environmental problems and pollution, unemployment, mental illness
3. Explore how your CFM group and the other groups in your parish community can network effectively with CFM-USA. Co-sponsor helping projects; research and create a directory of contact information for helping agencies and programs in neighborhood churches, dioceses, and local government.
4. Identify a church agency that helps the poor in other countries. Visit their website and learn their projects and methods. Catholic Relief Services <https://www.crs.org/>; Lutheran World Relief <https://lwr.org/>; Mennonite Disaster Service <https://www.mds.mennonite.net/>

In the light of Christ's teachings, **JUDGE:**

1. What benefits/problems do you see in collaborating with secular agencies to help the poor and people in need?
This takes discernment. Secular agencies may be involved in activities that are not consistent with Church teaching. Christians need to know what their faith teaches and be able to express it respectfully to those who do not share our faith. Before offering to collaborate, research the other agency's goals and practices carefully on their website and by talking to trusted sources. Check with pastors or diocesan leaders to find out if other Christian groups have successfully worked with this agency. Sometimes collaboration is not possible, but very often a joint project can be arranged that respects everyone's consciences. Christians need to clearly express their beliefs and values at the start of the collaborative projects they undertake.

A good article on this: "8 Reasons Churches Should Partner with Secular Groups." <https://www.christianitytoday.com/karl-vaters/2017/march/8-reasons-churches-partner-secular-community-groups.html?start=3>

2. How can membership in small church communities, like CFM, help us in our ability to help where/when needed?
Small groups allow people to discover and contribute their unique talents. Communication and execution of a plan is easier with a small group. Families with young children can find a way to participate, since other members of the group can assist them.
3. Besides donating funds to church and secular agencies, how can our families be actively involved in helping others and building peace in the world?
Working together with other members of the local community promotes friendship and understanding. Children meet the children of their neighbors and learn about our common values.

Based on our discussion, **ACT:**

1. As a group, identify a pressing need in your community. Research the current providers of services to that 'need' and report back on a possible plan the CFM group could take to help the service providers and/or create awareness in the community. Good sources of information are your county government website and your state Department of Human Services website. - Civic agencies offer opportunities for volunteers to help families. For instance, the State of Maryland organizes and promotes a "Day to Serve"
<http://governor.maryland.gov/blog/day-to-serve-were-all-in-this-together/> Local Catholic Charities Agencies and Diocesan Social Justice Agencies, Groups that work with Migrants and groups that work with the incarcerated are also good groups to work with.
2. Visit www.iccfm.org and explore how CFM is working for solidarity and family life on one other continent. Report to the group what you learned. The ICCFM Leadership Team visited many countries during their 2013-2019 term and helped CFM groups get started using study materials in Spanish and English. See photos here.
<http://www.iccfm.org/index.php/missionary-visits>
3. Learn more about the Sustainable Development Goals of the UN on the United Nations website.
<https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/sdgs> In 2017, the ICCFM representative to the UN reported on how ICCFM is working toward these goals.
 - Goal 4: Quality Education: We work hard in training in Human and Christian Values with 120,000 nuclear families, 5,000 single-parent families, 30,000 youth and adolescents. Graduating approximately 60,000 from formation programs every 4 years.

- Goal 5: Gender Equality: We are working on Women's Empowerment by integrating a training program for single-parent families where women are head of the household, to date we have 5,000 families in such groups around the world.
- Goal 16: Peace, Justice and strong institutions: The objectives of the training itineraries for families, young people and adolescents of the movements in their formative content promote the experience of peace, justice, respect and equality.

A short presentation of the ICCFM 2017 report may be found here <http://www.iccfm.org/index.php/missionary-visits>

4. Email a member of a Christian Family Movement in another country and ask them to tell you what CFM is doing there. Contact information can be found for continental presidents at www.iccfm.org. You might discover a pen pal.
5. Discuss and plan a time to hold the Family and Community meeting, “The Hunger Banquet,” found in this program guide on Page 59. The purpose of the “banquet” is to make very real the vast differences in the way the world’s resources are presently distributed.

Additional action ideas: Attend an ethnic festival in your town; Sponsor an international food night at your church; visit a cultural center; invite a representative of a church aid agency, like Catholic Relief Services, to speak; help with local refugee resettlement or migrant services

- CFM in Action: See short reports on outreach-type actions on the CFM website <https://www.cfm.org/outreach>
- CFM in India help at local orphanage. ACT Newsletter April 2017. https://d3n8a8pro7vhmx.cloudfront.net/cfmusa/pages/116/attachments/original/1490186081/ACT_April_2017.pdf?1490186081

- [Philippine CFM takes action for life](https://www.philstar.com/opinion/2017/05/11/1699144/movement-all-seasons)
<https://www.philstar.com/opinion/2017/05/11/1699144/movement-all-seasons>

TAKE CFM HOME

1. Chose a country your family would like to learn more about.
2. Research about the country together. What was the most interesting thing you learned? What surprised you the most?
3. How are that nation and its people like our own? How are they different?

LOOK AHEAD TO THE NEXT MEETING

Take a look at the Observes for the next meeting to see what needs to be done in preparation.

Date _____ Time _____ Place _____

1. Phone or email host if you cannot attend.
2. Look ahead at the Observe questions for the next meeting.
3. Who could you invite to join our group?

If children have come to the meeting with their parents, gather them to join you in the closing prayer.

CLOSING PRAYER

God of all peoples, open our eyes to the needs of all our brothers and sisters. Open our hearts to care and open our minds to find creative ways to be in solidarity with them. Bless the Christian Family Movement to continue to form our members to see ourselves as part of a global reality and to be alert to opportunities to take action as your disciples in this world. Amen.

And let us pray the Prayer for the Christian Family Movement (found on Page 80).

WORKS CITED

U.S. Catholic Bishops, *Called and Gifted for the Third Millennium*, Washington, DC, 1995.

<http://www.usccb.org/about/laity-marriage-family-life-and-youth/laity/called-and-gifted-for-the-third-millennium.cfm>