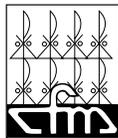


MARRIAGE MAKES A DIFFERENCE



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OUTLINE OF A CFM MEETING

CFM groups meet in homes. The group members take turns hosting the meeting. If this is impossible for reason of the size of members' homes or geographical distances involved, groups sometimes meet at church.

Gather

This part of the meeting is a chance to reconnect and build community.

OPENING PRAYER

The meeting should begin with a prayer. Each program chapter begins with a prayer suggestion. Spontaneous prayer is also often used. Leaders may wish to add music or make use of other prayer resources.

Report on actions

By reflecting on its actions, the group will achieve a deeper understanding of the problem and all its implications. Further action may be called for.

Scripture Reflection

The meeting proceeds to a reading from the Bible. Questions are suggested for exploring the meaning of the Word in daily life.

SOCIAL INQUIRY

The social inquiry is a term for the Observe-Judge-Act process, basic to CFM's approach to Christian living.

Observe

First, get the facts. Sometimes opinions are facts, but at this stage of the meeting members should refrain from expressing their opinions. Try to filter your own points of view and simply report, like any good objective news reporter. Bring facts and information from current media and local organizations into the Observe section.

Judge

Observe answers the question, "What is the situation?" The Judge part of the Social Inquiry answers the question, "How can we make it a Christian experience and reality?" Recognize what steps you and your group can take to effect Christian change in the situations you have observed and reported on.

Act

The best kind of action is one that grows from the group's observations and their decisions to change or develop a situation. Suggestions in this book are ideas, not directives. Formation-through-action is the essence of CFM. The founders of the movement believed that persons are shaped by their experiences.

Look Ahead to the Next Meeting

Confirm the date and location of the next meeting. What advance work should be done? What particular Observe tasks should be assigned? Be sure to contact your host if you are unable to attend or need directions.

CLOSING PRAYER

A prayer is suggested or the group can intercede for special intentions.

SOCIAL TIME

A short social time with simple refreshments helps members know and understand one another better and builds the group's community.

THREE

United to Serve Others

Gather

OPENING PRAYER

Lord Jesus, you are the light of the world. You let your light shine through your warm, compassionate love for humanity. Help us to manifest your love as we express our love toward one another. We ask this, Lord, in your name. Amen.

Scripture Reflection

On the third day there was a wedding in Cana of Galilee, and the mother of Jesus was there. Jesus and his disciples had also been invited to the wedding. When the wine gave out, the mother of Jesus said to him, "They have no wine."

And Jesus said to her, "Woman, what concern is that to you and to me? My hour has not yet come."

His mother said to the servants, "Do whatever he tells you." Now standing there were six stone water-jars for the Jewish rites of purification, each holding twenty or thirty gallons. Jesus said to them, "Fill the jars with water." And they filled them up to the brim. He said to them, "Now draw some out, and take it to the chief steward."

So they took it. When the steward tasted the water that had become wine, and did not know where it came from (though the servants

who had drawn the water knew), the steward called the bridegroom and said to him, “Everyone serves the good wine first, and then the inferior wine after the guests have become drunk. But you have kept the good wine until now.” Jesus did this, the first of his signs, in Cana of Galilee, and revealed his glory; and his disciples believed in him.

John 2: 1-11

- Why is it so important for weddings to be among the largest celebrations we host as people?
- Tell about an experience you had at a wedding that was a particular sign of God’s love for you.
- What part of the wedding ceremony means the most to you and why?

SOCIAL INQUIRY

In his first encyclical message, “God is Love,” Pope Benedict XVI reminds married couples of their responsibility to reveal God’s love to society. Married couples are a special example to all Christians of this responsibility: “Anyone who needs me, and whom I can help, is my neighbor. The concept of ‘neighbor’ is now universalized, yet it remains concrete. Despite being extended to all mankind, it is not reduced to a generic, abstract and undemanding expression of love, but calls for my own practical commitment here and now.” (15)

What is the public face of your marriage? When people see you as a couple, do they see qualities that they wish they had? Does your relationship remind them that true love is possible? Can young couples point to you and say, “I want to be like them”?

Most of us will be quick to say that our marriage is not perfect. Our lives declare that perfection is not a

requirement. Mother Teresa told us, “God doesn’t require us to succeed; he only requires that you try.” We can rely on God to fill up what is lacking in each of us, and we rely on our vows to one another. We work at being married, in the ordinary course of life. That is all that can be asked of any married couple.

Cardinal Joseph Cardijn said: “[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.”

Observe

1. Identify some active couples in church and civic life in your town. 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. What barriers to service outside the family have you observed in the married people with whom you have worked as a volunteer. How are singles sometimes more available to engage in service?

Judge

1. How does marriage serve family, church and society?
2. Cardijn says that the marriage vocation is apostolic and missionary. What does this imply about the necessity of service?
3. What are the challenges for a married person in living a life of service to one's neighbor if that includes "Anyone who needs me?"
4. How do you experience the grace of God to help you live your vocation (married or single)?

Act

1. If you are married, be aware of the public face of your marriage. Do you use negative humor, cutting comments, or take your spouse for granted? Look for ways to treat your spouse with more kindness and respect, both when alone and in public.
2. Contact your church or civic leaders and ask them to support marriage enrichment education.
3. Evaluate how you share home responsibilities and look for ways that you can serve in your parish.
4. Share the blessing of your home and family with others. Invite guests to your home for an evening of food, fellowship and fun.

CLOSING PRAYER:

Gracious God, we pledge to renew our efforts to serve you in our families, our church and society. May we always be aware of our responsibility to care for those who need us because we are all children of one Father. We pray now, as Jesus taught us, ("Our Father...).

Christian Family Movement

When families join the Christian Family Movement, they become part of the national lay movement that is CFM-USA. The mission of the Christian Family Movement is to promote Christ-centered marriage and family life, to help individuals and their families to live the Christian faith in everyday life, and to improve society through actions of love, service, education and example. If we accept this mission, we will support it with our time, talent, and money.

Membership entitles a family to receive a social inquiry book and a subscription to ACT, the national newsletter, and supports the development of the Christian Family Movement.

The Community of CFM

People group together by accident, choice or design, but community is more than this. Members are open to one another, united in mutual respect (even when they disagree), and are willing to be honest about how they think and feel. As people get to know each other, trust and openness seem to develop around a fellow member in need or for a neighborhood concern. As you work together to answer a need, community forms. Community learns how to laugh at foibles, takes time to relax, play, recreate its humanity, and evaluate its needs and direction.

CFMers look upon one another as good friends and allies. They look to CFM as a source of continuing education, lively support and regular encouragement.

CFM: More than 60 Years Promoting Family Life

From its beginnings, CFM has been a grassroots movement with action for justice always at its heart. Today's groups have adapted to the times but bear a strong

resemblance to those that launched the movement in the 1940s.

CFM has members in many countries worldwide, all of which cooperate as the International Confederation of Christian Family Movement, ICCFM.

When the US Catholic Bishops designated the 1980s as the “Decade of the Family,” CFM quickly stepped up to address the diverse needs of families. In addition to its annual program, special books were also published for the widowed, divorced and separated, teens, families in crisis, and middle-years families.

In 1987, CFM contributed to a consultation with the US bishops in preparation for the synod in Rome on the Vocation and Mission of the Laity in the Church and in the World. CFM also provided input to the US bishops’ 1994 pastoral, Follow the Way of Love. The next year, CFM launched “Taking the Time to Make a Difference,” a syndicated column repeatedly honored by the Catholic Press Association.

The National Association of Catholic Family Life Ministers presented CFM with its special-recognition award in 1993 for enhancing the quality of life for families. Three years later, CFM was one of the founding members of the Families Against Violence Advocacy Network, and in 1999 received FAVAN’s Circles of Peace Award.

In that same year, CFM celebrated 50 years of forming families through action with a gala jubilee celebration at Notre Dame University, and the Hillenbrand Institute awarded CFM its prestigious Salt and Light Award.

CFM is listed in the US Catholic Bishops’ Directory of Lay Movements, Organizations, and Professional Associations, and we maintain a cordial and productive relationship with

the staff of the bishops’ Secretariat for Laity, Marriage, Family Life and Youth. CFM presidents served as advisors to the committee from 2002-2005.

CFM is an active participant in the USCCB National Pastoral Initiative on Marriage, which began in 2005. CFM is a collaborating organization working toward the achievement by 2012 of the goals affecting marriage and family life set forth by the USCCB Priority Plan.

How CFM Is Supported

From the original CFM groups sixty years ago, CFM has grown into both a national and an international movement. At first, the movement’s expenses were borne by the founders. As the movement grew through the commitment and involvement of thousands of couples, the logistics of servicing and coordinating the larger numbers of people exceeded the volunteer contributions of time and money.

Thus, a national office is absolutely necessary to coordinate and serve the needs of CFM over a vast geographical area. Such an office needs grass-roots support to continue to function.

The major source of financial support comes from the annual paid memberships of CFMers. Many generous volunteers donate additional time, talent and treasure to make CFM available throughout the US and the world. Monetary donations are always welcome.

For more information about CFM, contact the national office at PO Box 925, Evansville, IN 47706, phone: (812) 962-5508, www.cfm.org, e-mail: office@cfm.org.

National Newsletter

Groups share their actions through ACT, the national newsletter of the Christian Family Movement, by sending information to the editor, act-editor@cfm.org or mail to PO Box 925, Evansville, IN 47706-0925. Photos of groups in action are always a plus.

ACT gives pertinent information about the family: sociological, theological, and psychological.

ACT tells you what Christian families are doing.

ACT keeps you in contact with Christian families throughout the country and around the world.

ACT will tell you about current CFM programs and family life resources.

Help for Group Leaders

CFM publishes *A Guide for Leaders*. This book can be ordered from the Christian Family Movement, PO Box 925, Evansville, IN 47706-0925, 812-962-5508, office@cfm.org. Usually, one couple in each group accepts the challenge of leading a group, though groups sometimes rotate leadership. Please contact the national office for answers to specific questions about organizing CFM in your parish.

Group Members

Names: _____

Address: _____

City/State/Zip: _____

Phone: _____

E-Mail: _____

Names: _____

Address: _____

City/State/Zip: _____

Phone: _____

E-Mail: _____

Names: _____

Address: _____

City/State/Zip: _____

Phone: _____

E-Mail: _____

Names: _____

Address: _____

City/State/Zip: _____

Phone: _____

E-Mail: _____

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.

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