

Forming a Catholic Men's Fellowship Group



COMMISSION FOR MEN



HANDBOOK

FORMING A CATHOLIC MEN'S FELLOWSHIP GROUP COMMISSION FOR MEN – DIOCESE OF ALLENTOWN

INTRODUCTION

The Commission for Men serves under the direction of the Diocese of Allentown Secretariat for Catholic Life and Evangelization. We seek to serve the church in the mission of evangelization, providing opportunities for spiritual growth and renewal of their faith and relationship with Jesus and each other to become the man “God intended us to be.” Our annual Men’s Conference is the seed bed to reignite our faith inspiring us to action in forming parish men's groups.

VISION

To see more men respond to Jesus’ call to “Discipleship” by living out our Baptismal call to Mission and ongoing conversion and transformation. To establish an environment where a “continuity of faith” is generationally passed down to men.

MISSION/ PURPOSE

- To support, encourage and foster Men’s Spirituality
- To help and assist men to form parish men’s groups that would gather regularly
- To help men grow in faith that along with their wives they can “model” a vibrant Catholic faith in their family and marriages.
- To invite and welcome all men to be strengthened through God’s word and Sacrament.
- To provide approved resources for discussion topics for group gatherings
- To assist in the forming and training of facilitators of new groups.

FORMING A MEN'S GROUP

*"For where two or three gather in my name, there am I with them."
Mt 18:29*

Most men who have attended a Men's Conference quickly discover the spiritual benefits of gathering with other men, cultivate friendships among fellow parishioners, have fun, and learn from one another how to be a better husband father and employee. Men say that this experience has helped them to better cope with the stresses they encounter. Parish groups that focus on the core purpose of why they gather, to be strengthened in our relationship with Jesus, find new life.

A THREE STEP PROCESS FOR STARTING A GROUP

1. Contact your Pastor for permission and a room to meet. Let him know that this is not something that he has to add to his already busy workload.
2. Invite Catholic men to attend a first meeting to have a short period of fellowship, have someone give a testimony, if possible someone who attended a conference or has been part of a men's group. Discuss and decide when and how often they want to meet. Post announcements in Sunday bulletin.
3. Pray for the guidance of the Holy Spirit to direct your efforts, trust in the divine providence and be committed.

SUGGESTED FORMAT

- Welcome everyone and introduce new attendees
- Open with a prayer to the Holy Spirit
- Short Reading from Scripture, Psalm, Proverbs or New Testament
- Introduce the Topic
- Sharing on question for reflection, discussion on the topic (only 20 mins)
- Prayer of Petitions
- Closing Prayer

Note: Prior to beginning allow time for fellowship and keep time to 1 hour 15 minutes. Start on time. Finish on time. Review keys for good facilitation.

SUGGESTIONS FOR FORMING MEN'S GROUPS

A Men's Group can be an important place for men to gather, share their faith and support one another. The group gathers on a regular basis through the perspective of the Catholic faith and share experiences through prayer and fellowship. The Diocese of Allentown Secretariat of Catholic Life and Evangelization has books and DVD series that other Men's groups have found to be helpful resources. Members of the Commission for Men can assist you in forming a group. Contact information can be found below.

SUGGESTED GROUP RESOURCES

Copies of the following are available to borrow through the Diocese of Allentown – 610-289-8900 ext. 2024.

- **Crossing the Goal** – 30 min. DVD series on various topics
- **Be A Man**- video series of talks given by Father Larry Richards
- **Spiritual Workout** - book with discussion questions by Danny Abramowicz, former NFL all-pro wide receiver.
- **Signposts** – How to be a Catholic Man in the World Today – book with discussion questions
- **National Catholic Men's Fellowship** – 17 Resources that can be found at www.nfcmusa.org
- **Magnetic Christianity** – by Gus Lloyd - 11 Attributes for reflection and discussion.

FACILITATION SKILLS

An important initial step is identifying one or two men who will serve as leaders and facilitate the meetings.

A facilitator helps the participants of a group to stay focused on the task at hand. Guiding the group through a program and holding the group accountable are the primary tasks of a facilitator.

Group members bring a range of experiences and stories, all of which the facilitator must respect. Every person is in a different place on the spiritual journey toward God. The dynamic of the group should respect where people are, and move them forward on that journey.

The role of the facilitator is not to provide answers to personal faith questions. Nor is it to teach, preach, judge, or counsel. A good facilitator listens attentively, encourages others, and creates a comfortable environment.

A good facilitator keeps the peace.

KEYS FOR GOOD FACILITATION

- Be familiar with the materials for the sessions before the session begins.
- Start and end on time.
- Begin with introductions.
- Create a “safe place” by stressing the confidentiality of the group.
- Stay on the subject at hand: don’t get off-base.
- Keep things moving. If the discussion lags, move on to the next question.
- Keep an eye on the clock.
- Don’t allow one person to dominate. Kindly interrupt, if necessary.
- Try to draw out quieter members of the group without putting them on the spot or making them feel pressured.
- Do not comment on each participant’s answers to the discussion questions.
- Follow sensitive and difficult disclosures and sharing with taking time out to pray.
- Do not fear silence. Be sensitive to the movement of the Holy Spirit and flexible to follow that movement.

THINGS TO AVOID IN FACILITATING GROUP DISCUSSIONS

- Debate moderation
- Personal counseling
- Problem-solving
- Becoming a guru

TASKS FOR OTHER MEMBERS OF THE GROUP

Ask some men to help publicize meetings and invite other men to join the group. Some men could be asked to help with set-up, clean-up and hospitality.

GENERAL GUIDELINES

1. Agree on a discussion group leader (facilitator). The facilitator helps people who talk too little to talk more and those who talk a lot, well, talk less! The facilitator helps maintain the prayer group's focus and maintain a positive atmosphere.
2. **Open with Prayer.** The prayer may be the Lord's Prayer, a worshipful song, or any other type of prayer. The emphasis should be on inviting God to enliven the discussion with the Holy Spirit, after all, the whole point is to encounter the living God and allow him to transform and inspire you!
3. **Lead discussions in a positive way.** Smile and be attentive to each other. Encourage each other to know the Lord more deeply and embrace his plan for our life. Be sure to provide time for each person to speak.
4. **Keep the Focus on Jesus and the Holy Spirit.** The focus is on practically applying God's word in your life, not in deep theological enquiry. Focus on how to appropriate God's grace in your life rather than subtle theological questions.

When challenging questions come up, appoint someone from the group to ask your pastor or consult the Catechism of the Catholic Church.

5. **Maintain Candor and Confidentiality.** Discussing your relationship with God involves our personal life and feelings, as does discussing how to more fully embrace God's plan for our lives.
6. **Pray for one another.** Close each prayer group with each person offering a prayer request, for which the group then prays silently for fifteen seconds. Close with either the Lord's Prayer or a Hail Mary. Pray for each other's requests at least one time during the week.
7. **Start and finish promptly.** People may linger afterwards or all agree to continue the discussion, but people should always be free to leave at the agreed upon time.

*The above suggestions are taken from DISCIPLESHIP FOR CATHOLIC MEN
by Peter Ziolkowski ©2007*

For additional information:

Visit the website for the Commission for Men at www.cmfdia.org

Contact the Commission for Men at the Diocese of Allentown
Secretariat for Catholic Life and Evangelization at
cmf@allentowndioocese.org or 610-289-8900, ext. 2028