



# Christian Family Movement

## All About CFM

### CFM Speaks for the Family

When the U.S. Catholic bishops designated the 1980s as the “Decade of the Family,” CFM quickly stepped up to the plate 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 U.S. 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 U.S. 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 in 1993 with its special-recognition award 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.

From the beginning, 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.

### The Community of CFM

Community is more than getting together in a group. The members of a community are open to one another and united in mutual respect even when they disagree. They are willing to be honest about how they think and feel. As people get to know one another, trust grows among them. There is a willingness to pull together for a fellow-member in need or a concern in the neighborhood. If you can work together to answer that call, then community is developing.

A community learns how to laugh at its troubles, takes time to relax, play, pray, re-create its humanity, evaluate its needs and its unique direction. Many families each year find community in Christian Family Movement. CFM is a network of family-support groups that have sprung up throughout the country.

The CFM group consists of five to seven families with the adults meeting two evenings a month in each other’s homes. Through the use of CFM’s many different programs, members discuss what they have observed in their own family or community, judge what they have seen in the light of Jesus’ teaching, and then act to change things for the better.

Through use of the Observe-Judge-Act technique, developed by Cardinal Joseph Cardijn with the Young Christian Workers in Belgium, many CFM families have become involved in helping others in such ministries as foster-parenting, prison ministry, refugee sponsorship, religious education, and couple counseling.

## **Standing on the shoulders of dedicated Catholic leaders...**

What became Christian Family Movement has its origins in two groups that emerged, almost simultaneously, in the early 1940s — one in South Bend, Ind., and one just two hours west in Chicago.

Burnie Bauer had been a member of the first Catholic Action group started by Holy Cross Father Louis Putz at Notre Dame University. After leaving Notre Dame in 1940 and marrying, Burnie formed a Young Christian Students group. Subsequently, he and his wife, Helene, expanded this group to include couples. They applied the Observe-Judge-Act model to the common problems of young married couples trying to live out their Christianity in the United States.

In February 1942, a group of seven men, including Pat Crowley, began meeting in a Chicago law office, arguing and theorizing about the role of the layman in the church. This group, too, used the Observe-Judge-Act model and in time began discussing issues relating to marriage, as well. In 1943, they sponsored a day of reflection for married couples, which was the genesis of the Cana Conference. At about the same time, their wives formed their own group, and from the women's group sprang the Pre-Cana Conference.

When Burnie and Helene Bauer met Pat and Patty Crowley at the Cana Conference in August 1948, the nucleus of the Christian Family Movement was formed.

## **Spreading the Word**

In June 1949, 59 delegates, representing the Movement in 11 different cities, met for the first national seminar in Chicago. By this time, CFM had begun publishing ACT, had established contact with similar groups in other cities, and had earned official church recognition. Pat and Patty Crowley were elected executive secretary couple and served as leaders of CFM for nearly two decades. Within a year, more than 2,500 copies of the first CFM program, *For Happier Families*, were distributed. CFM had become a national movement.

CFM spread quickly across the country in the 1950s and went on to generate new ideas and new organizations during the 1960s. The first was the Foundation for International Cooperation. FIC placed foreign students in homes and continues today to sponsor family tours to other countries. The second, the Christian Family Mission Vacation, enabled families to help the impoverished for two weeks each summer. In 1966, the International Confederation of Christian Family Movements was founded to coordinate CFM in some 50 countries. Two years later, U.S. CFM members invited members from Spain to introduce Marriage Encounter to the United States.

CFM members continued to reach out in action. In 1975, they wrote and tested a family-oriented, drug-awareness program published by the Department of Health, Education and Welfare. The next year, they helped formulate the U.S. bishops' Call to Action document on the family. In 1979 and 1980, CFM became involved in the White House Conference on Families, presenting eight position papers to the conference. ICCFM then provided input to Pope John Paul II's synod on the family in 1980.

## **Outline of a CFM Meeting**

### **Gather and Report on Actions**

Group members report on the progress of CFM actions taken individually, as a family and by the group. This is the appropriate time to describe needs that have come to the attention of the members.

## **Opening Prayer**

The group always begins with a prayer, read or sung, prepared or spontaneous.

## **Scripture Reflection**

Quiet reflection and discussion help group members to step away from the ordinary pressures and distractions of the day and to focus on the issues of the meeting from a Christian perspective.

## **Social Inquiry**

Quotations, facts and statistics — drawn mainly from the writings and observations of experts and advocates — add perspective to the issue under discussion.

## **Observe**

Here members “get the facts.” At this stage of the meeting, members refrain from expressing their opinions about facts. They try to filter out their own points of view and simply report, like any good objective reporter for a newspaper. The knowledge and experience of group members are valuable, but the group must go beyond its own members to gather facts from the larger world and report them objectively. The chance to editorialize comes later.

## **Judge**

In Christian Family Movement, to “judge” is not to find another person sinful or holy. It is rather the comparison of how things are with how things should be, in accord with Gospel values. To make such a comparison requires objective observation of how things are, as well as a sincere effort to determine the teachings of Jesus. And if the group discovers — 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.

## **Act**

One of the goals of CFM is to improve society through actions of love, service, education and example. Actions listed in the book are merely suggestions. The best actions proceed from what the group has observed and judged in the meeting. It may be directed toward improving family-life relationships or toward the community and beyond.

## **Preparation for the Next Meeting**

Set the time and the place. Preview the Observe questions to see if specific assignments are required.

## **Closing Prayer**

The meeting concludes with a prayer, either the one suggested in the chapter or another chosen by the group or the discussion leaders.

## **Social Time**

The meeting ends with a short social time. Sharing simple and inexpensive refreshments helps members to get to know one another better and to build community.

## How CFM Is Supported

From its original group more than half a century ago, Christian Family Movement has grown into both a national and an international movement. The Movement has benefited during this time from the commitment of countless leaders who have donated innumerable hours of service and generously absorbed many of the expenses of running the Movement. A conservative estimate of the value of yearly contributions by the national board to the Movement is \$50,000. However, the logistics of servicing and coordinating the activities of the movement exceed reasonable expectations of volunteer contributions of time and money.

Without the efforts of the national CFM office to coordinate and serve the needs of members across the United States, the Movement would quickly falter. Expenses of the Movement are around \$56,000 a year. This amount covers salaries, postage, other office expenses, and production expenses for annual program books and ACT, the newsletter of CFM. As the source of 75 per cent of the income of the Movement, annual paid memberships from CFM members across the country are the lifeblood of CFM's continued success.

Please help our efforts to promote Christ-centered marriage and family life by paying annual dues promptly and by inviting new members to join the Christian Family Movement. Your membership contribution is tax-deductible.