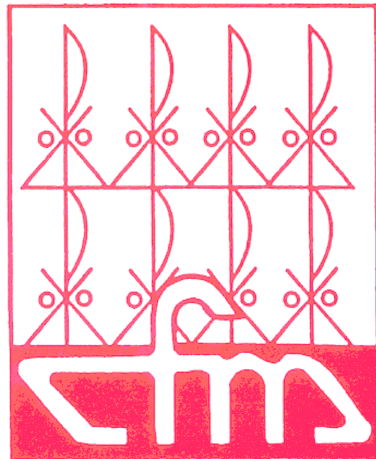


*Christian Family Movement
A Guide for Leaders*



*Christian
Family
Movement*

A family is our first community and most basic way, in which the Lord gathers us, forms us and acts in the world. The early church expressed this truth by calling the Christian family a domestic church or church of the home.

As Christian families, you not only belong to the church, but your daily life is a true expression of church.

Your domestic church is not complete by itself, of course. It should be united with and supported by parishes and other communities within the larger church. Christ has called you and joined you to himself in and through the sacraments. Therefore, you share in one and the same mission that he gives to the whole church.

Follow the Way of Love 1994
U.S. Bishops Message to Families

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*About the
Christian Family Movement*

***Be doers of the word, and not merely hearers
James 1:22***

The Church speaks clearly of the duties of family members to one another that build a radiant faith. But the Church doesn't stop there; it also speaks of the relationship between families and the larger culture, the duty of service, working for the common good, welcoming strangers, and giving voice to the Christian conscience. That is the message; you are the messenger.

*Address of Bishop Anthony M. Pilla
To the Christian Family Movement
August 5, 1995*

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.

March 10, 2002

A Brief History of CFM

A new movement . . . organized by lay men and women working together . . . to explore and deepen their faith . . . to live a family-style spirituality in a highly practical way . . . This was an extraordinary development in the American Catholic Church of the 1940s.

Almost simultaneously in the early 1940s in South Bend, Indiana, and Chicago, Illinois, small groups of lay people began meeting using a format first developed in Europe. This format, which we know today as the Social Inquiry Method (Observe, Judge, and Act) had been developed a decade earlier by a Belgian priest, Canon Joseph Cardijn, when he organized the Young Christian Worker movement. Now adapted through the CFM for use by couples, this process spread across the United States over the next twenty years to touch the lives of a generation of American Catholics and provide a new sense of energy and commitment as the Catholic Church began to implement the decisions of Vatican II.

When Burnie and Helene Bauer began meeting with other young couples using the method of inquiry he had learned as a member of Catholic Action at Notre Dame, they could not have imagined how many others would one day share in this same experience. As Pat Crowley began meeting in his law office with six other young men using Cardijn's method, they could not even imagine including their wives in this discussion, but one day he and his wife, Patty, would lead an international organization which would help families become closer and lead more Christian lives.

In 1949, fifty nine delegates representing small family faith cells from 11 different cities, met for the first national seminar, and the Christian Family Movement was born. It became the first national Catholic lay organization.

During the 1950's CFM grew rapidly in parishes across the country. The Social Inquiry Method of Observe, Judge and Act was finely tuned, addressing issues that related to Christian families. Christian families were formed by their actions.

In the sixties, CFM was vital in bringing forth new ideas and new organizations such as Foundation for International Cooperation, FIC (places foreign students in homes and sponsors family tours of other countries) and

Christian Family Mission Vacation (enables entire families to help the impoverished for two weeks every summer). In 1966 International Confederation of Christian Family Movements (ICCFM) began bringing families of 50 nations closer together to discuss world issues. Marriage Encounter was introduced in 1968 at a national CFM convention. Over the course of the decade, CFM helped form and train married couples in marriage ministry and social justice.

CFMers in the 1970's continued to play a major role in lay ministries. They helped formulate the U.S. Bishops *Call to Action* document on family and led National Marriage Encounter and the National Council of Churches in sponsoring the first national family life seminar. In 1979, CFM presented eight position papers involved in the White House Conference on Families and in 1980, along with ICCFM, the Movement gave input into Pope John Paul II's Synod on the Family.

Through out the last two decades, CFM has continued to focus on family, at home, in our neighborhood, in our parish, our communities and the world. Additionally annual inquiry books began to include meetings for widowed, divorced and separated, teens along with families in crisis and middle years families. In 1993, the National Association of Family Life Minister presented CFM with its special recognition award for being a leader in family ministry.

CFM has advised the United States Bishops regarding numerous documents on family life. They include the 1993 pastoral, *Follow the Way of Love*; the pastoral reflection, *Strengthening the Bond of Peace: a Pastoral Reflection on Women in the Church*; *Always Our Children: A Pastoral Message to Parents of Homosexual Children and Suggestions to Pastoral Ministers*; and *Everyday Christianity* in 1998.

CFM continues its ministry to families by including family meetings and by developing modular programs in response to the needs of the Church. These include *Everyday Christianity: a Parish Program* and a set of meetings *Creating Circles of Peace Church Kit* produced for the *Families Against Violence Advocacy Network*.

Why CFM?

The Christian Family Movement is a parish and neighborhood network of small groups. A typical CFM group consists of five to seven families with the parents meeting one or two evenings a month in one another's homes. They follow special programming that focuses on topics of importance to their marriages, families, church and community. Families benefit in at least six ways.

First, CFM provides a Christian community in which individuals, marriages and families are supported and grow. Parents interact with other parents who have similar morals and values. Families socialize together and develop an extended family connection. This interaction between families helps to build a strong family support system.

Second, this experience helps husbands and wives spend time together and develop common interests. Various aspects of the program enhance the couple relationship. Experience shows that CFM is a non-threatening environment for inter-faith marriages.

Thirdly, CFM enriches families. Much of what is discussed in the small group meetings of parents is carried back into the family. Parents learn how to be better parents and how to build happier families.

Fourth, CFM challenges participants to be seven-day-a-week Christians. It helps individuals and families apply the gospels to their everyday life. CFM nurtures spiritual growth and provides Christian formation for the entire family.

Fifth, CFM builds self-confidence because it challenges individuals to develop their gifts and talents. It is a catalyst for creating parish and community leaders.

Sixth, CFM increases social consciousness. It helps families to be aware of the problems in their families, neighborhoods and community. CFM encourages them to dialogue and make changes.

The CFM Meeting Format

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

Report on Actions – (5 -10 minutes) Group members report on the progress of CFM actions taken individually, as a family, or by the group. This is the appropriate time to describe needs, in your family, parish or community that have come to the attention of the members.

Scripture Reflection – (15 -20 minute discussion) Quiet reflection and discussion about the scripture helps group members to step away from the ordinary pressure and distractions of the day and begin to focus on the issues of the meeting from a Christian perspective.

Social Inquiry – (60 -90 minutes) Church documents, contemporary writings of experts and advocates, set up the topic and add perspective to the issue under discussion. The Social Inquiry includes the **Observe** and **Judge** and **Act** part of the meeting. **Observe**, **Judge** and **Act** are the basic elements of CFM.

Observe – Gather information from your community or from your own personal experience. Often facts can be opinions of others too. One Observe question might be to poll two neighbors about a topic. At this stage of the meeting, members should refrain from expressing their opinions about facts. They should try to filter out their own points of view and simply report. 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.

The importance of this section of the meeting cannot be over-emphasized. Unless the group conscientiously reports objective facts during the discussion, the meeting will not proceed on a practical level.

Judge – In light of Christ's teachings, judge. In the **Judge** part of the meeting, the group decides by discussion whether the situation or topic is in line what Christ would want us to do. The group should try to refer only to the information brought out by the Observe questions.

Act - to make a difference. The best action comes from the group as a result of the discussion. Actions in the meetings are just suggestions. An Action

may be done as an individual, a couple, a family, a small group, or a parish. The key is to take something away from the meeting and resolve to do something to live out the Gospel teachings in your every day life.

Look ahead to the next meeting – Set the time and place. Preview the **Observe** section to see if specific assignments are required.

Prayer – The meeting concludes with a prayer. The program book usually has a suggested prayer or another may be chosen by the group or the discussion leaders. Other suitable prayers are located on the inside covers of most inquiry books. Alternatively, a member of the group might lead a spontaneous prayer praising God, thanking Him for His blessings, and asking Him to grant special petitions that group members might have.

Social Time – A short social with simple and inexpensive refreshments helps members to know and understand one another better and builds community.

Leadership Structure

Leadership roles give the movement the structure necessary to make CFM continue to function effectively. These roles are:

- **Action Group Leaders** effectively manage meetings to help guide the members to **Observe**, to **Judge**, and finally to **Act**. This is only accomplished if the group leaders are prepared, positive and encouraging throughout each meeting. They must be good listeners and need to allow each member of the group sufficient time to be heard.
- **Federation Leaders** are responsible for communicating with the parish staff and the various groups in a parish regarding CFM activities. Additionally they invite new CFM Members to join, organize the CFM action groups, recruit group leaders, and keep members informed of group actions and special events. Some federation leaders work with more than one parish. May also be called parish leader or parish contact.
- A **Chaplain** serves to assist in the formation of the members in their faith and challenges the group to grow in spiritual depth. The chaplain should be a clergyman, member of a religious order, or trained lay person or couple. All action groups are encouraged to have a chaplain.
- **The National Board of Directors** is responsible for leading, planning, directing and coordinating activities for the movement. There are two board meetings each year and one additional meeting for the service team (officers). The board includes the following:
 1. Presidents
 2. Vice Presidents
 3. Secretaries
 4. Treasurers
 5. Executive Directors
 6. Past Presidents
 7. Act Editor
 8. Meetings and Convention Chair
 9. Program Chair (oversees development of annual program books)
 10. National Chaplain
 11. Webmaster
 12. North American Representative to the ICCFM

*Creating A New
CFM Community*

13 Steps to Starting CFM

1. Find two or three interested couples or persons (perhaps the parish family life committee) to work with you.
2. Make a time to meet with the pastor to discuss CFM and your plans to introduce CFM to the parish. It is very important that you do all you can to inform your pastor and his staff about your activities. Enlist their support in promoting CFM. Invite them to monthly meetings, social action projects, and special family events. Ask your chaplain to preside over special occasions of prayer, such as an evening of reflection or family rosary. These occasions give the staff an opportunity to see how CFM is flourishing.
3. Set the time and place for an information night. Publicize through the church bulletin.
4. Plan an information night. Get a CFM start up packet from the national office. Order posters and registration forms to hand out and a copy of the new CFM program book to show. Library copies of additional program books may be requested from the national office. Ask someone experienced with CFM to speak. See www.cfm.org or e-mail director@cfm.org for assistance.
5. Send letters signed by the pastor to target groups. Set up a telephone committee to contact target groups and invite them to the information night.

Some Target groups to invite to an information night at your parish might include:

Newly married couples	Interfaith families
Baptism parents	Sacramental preparation parents
Preschool parents	Marriage enrichment groups
School parents	Middle years couples and empty nesters
Parents of teens	Church renewal groups
Single-parent families	Bible study groups
New comers	

Remember – Nothing works better than a personal invitation to join CFM.

6. Create and display CFM information posters in prominent locations in the parish.

7. Arrange for the pastor or family life minister to speak at all weekend services about the need to support family life and the values of CFM.
8. Consider offering child care in your parish center so interested couples might meet other couples and see the value of CFM.
9. Plan for the information night to be informal, relaxing and hospitable. Choose a comfortable meeting place and arrange for a welcoming committee. Have name tags and an icebreaker planned. Provide and serve of light refreshments.
10. Sample meetings are available from the National Office or on the CFM website. Having new couples participate in a sample meeting, might be a good way for interested couples to learn more about CFM.
11. Following the sample meeting or introductory presentation, ask the people at this meeting to join CFM by filling out a registration, getting information about the ages of their children and setting a date and a place for the first meeting. If there are those who are still not sure, suggest they purchase the introduction book "Taking Time to Make A Difference," and have them meet with veteran leaders for a six week trial period before actually joining.
12. Call all persons who were invited but did not attend.
13. E-mail or phone the National Office of CFM to answer any questions.

Sample Letter of Invitation

Dear _____,

The purpose of this letter is to extend to you an invitation to come to a meeting. It is not just another meeting, but one that I think you will find valuable and the beginning of a very positive change in your life and the life of your family.

We are anxious to start a Christian Family Movement group here at -----
----- . I have discussed this with ----- and ----- and they are willing to head up this effort. We feel that CFM can provide a structure in our parish for improving family life and we would like you to be a part of this renewal.

CFM is a simple structure to help individuals and their families live the Christian life. The materials focus on topics of faith, family, and community life which are very down to earth. The enclosed brochure gives more information about the program. I realize that you and all the other people I am inviting to this meeting are busy people, but I believe that CFM would be a welcome and valuable addition to your life.

Please join us (date) (time) (place.) We will have an opportunity to ask questions about how simple it will be to make this a part of our parish. Please give it some thought, and let me know whether or not you are coming. I think it will be worth it.

Sincerely,

Fr. -----

Reasons to Join CFM

- To do something meaningful as a couple—a night out without the children.
- To meet and get to know others in your parish.
- To interact with adults facing similar situations.
- To improve the quality of your family life.
- To gain insights in parenting.
- To grow in holiness as a family.
- To help teach Christian values to your children.
- To form a small community to substitute for distant relatives.
- To have an opportunity for service to your church and community.
- To participate in adult reflection and discussion.
- To create a network of friends who are role models for your children.
- To examine and strengthen your faith.
- To have support for goals and ideals in marriage.
- To make a difference in the community.
- To participate in fun, family activities.

Sample Bulletin Announcements

WHAT IS CFM?

The Christian Family Movement is comprised of small groups of five to eight couples or individuals who want a place to share values, faith and a place to experience Jesus in their lives and the lives of their family.

CFM is a family support system that develops Christ-centered families. CFM calls forth both individuals and family gifts and moves families to make a difference in their world.

CFM is hosting a family potluck dinner and information night on (date) and (location).

CFM OFFERS FRIENDSHIP AND SUPPORT FOR TODAY'S BUSY FAMILY

Families, faith and fun, that is what the Christian Family Movement is all about. Through prayer, discussion and action that families grow in their faith as spouses, parents and as families provide support and friendship to one another. We Observe the world around us. Judge in light of Christ's teachings, and Act according to what the Gospel calls us to do. Families learn to live their faith in their every day lives, at home, in our communities and in the market place. If you want to learn more, consider attending a CFM information night on (date), at (location).

Take the time to make a difference in your marriage, your family and your community.

OBSERVE- JUDGE- ACT in CFM

Members of the Christian family Movement are asked to OBSERVE a situation from daily life. They JUDGE whether or not it needs to be changes based on Gospel values. If so, they ACT to make a difference. They undertake a simple action that will help to change the situation; that will bring persons and the world closer to what Christ wants. By this process, they change themselves. They grow in love and understanding of God's world. CFM is a way of life that develops everyday Christians.

Join CFMers after _____ for coffee and donuts and learn more about how you and your family can take the time to make a difference in your world.

A Short CFM Presentation

I am here today to invite you to attend a meeting you will find valuable and the beginning of a positive change in your life and the life of your family.

Today's families find themselves in a challenging environment. Some manage to survive and grow, others live on the edge, and others just don't make it. We need something to help us improve our odds.

In our increasingly mobile world, many families have been severed from their roots and located miles from their extended family where they must deal with the effects of isolation. Economic factors make it necessary, in a majority of households, for both parents to work outside the home and time is scarce. Our competitive society encourages self-improvement and individual pursuits that often take each member of the family in a different direction. TV, work and outside activities compete for family time. Many families find it impossible to make space, in their busy day, for even one family meal. In some homes family time simply does not exist. For most families there is just not enough time in the day, and the family ends up getting leftover time.

With all of the stresses and pressures of our fast paced lives it takes a real efforts to build a strong, happy, united family. Many families are so caught up in the rat race that they don't know how to get off the merry-go-round.

I am here to tell you that there is a group within the church, which helps families to deal with the stresses of our fast-paced, ever changing world. This special group, the Christian Family movement, is a family life development organization that reaches out to affirm and support families. It helps them live their Christian values and pass these values on to their children.

CFM is a parish and neighborhood network. It brings parents together in small groups, where they get to know one another and then focus on topics of importance to their marriages, families, church and community. Through CFM programming and interaction, families take a look at their family life and learn to set priorities, creating a more Christ-centered family life.

CFM provides a community in which individuals, marriages and families are supported and grow. Parents interact with other parents who have similar morals and values. They support and affirm one another. Families have fun with other families and develop an extended family connection. This interaction between

families helps to build a strong family support system. CFM makes a difference – family to family.

Involvement in CFM enriches families. Much of what is discussed in the parents' small group meetings is carried back into the family. Parents learn how to be better parents and how to build happier families. Families learn how to establish priorities. CFM does not prevent all problems in family life, but helps families to better cope with the inevitable stresses.

Pope John Paul II has spoken of the family as a domestic church. CFM helps families to live a family spirituality that is unique to them and based on the Gospel.

In CFM, families reach out to others in service and action. The CFM program uses a format that encourages groups, individuals and families to share their gifts and talents with those in need. CFM creates an awareness so that families learn to recognize and seek solutions to problems in their homes and neighborhoods.

Today's families reflect the fast changing world in which we live. They include blended families and both one and two-parent families. Every family is important and all families are welcome in CFM.

Today's families must sink strong roots to survive the winds of change. Every family needs a support system. Families are the basis of society and our society is only as healthy, or unhealthy, as our families. Families need to be enriched, stimulated and nurtured to grow strong and healthy. CFM can provide a supportive community that can make a difference.

There will be a meeting of interested persons at (place, date, time).

CFM presents an opportunity for your family to be supported, nurtured and enriched. We would like to invite you to explore the possibilities that CFM has to offer.

*Leading a CFM
Community*

Parish Organization

A typical parish might have 2 or more action groups made up of 5 -7 couple or individuals. Elect or appoint a team to guide CFM activities.

- Federation Leader to promote CFM in the parish, develop a calendar of events for the year, attend parish scheduling meetings, assign members to groups, develop a roster of members for ever family and maintain contact with the national office.
- Treasurer to collect membership fees and handle funds for group activities.
- Communication Coordinator to develop a newsletter or e-mail list so members can stay informed of special events and announcements like births and parishioners in need.
- Chaplain to guide the group spiritually and preside at prayer events.

A vital CFM parish group meets at least once a month using their program book. Other types of activities round out the calendar and provide an opportunity to build friendships among members. These activities should develop over time in a way that suits the needs of the group. A sample parish CFM calendar from a fully developed CFM group might look like this :

August	Plan a kick-off event. Order program books, registration forms, promote the date in the church bulletin and arrange for refreshments.
September	Host kick-off. Organize groups and mail in registrations.
October	Plan Fall family fun event, for example, a hay ride.
November	Do an outreach activity, for example, Gift Baskets for Thanksgiving.
December	Plan an Advent event and holiday outreach.
January	Organize a family activity, for example, sledding and hot chocolate
February	Host a marriage enrichment evening.
March	Hold a Seder meal for CFM families.
April	Participate in a service project, such as, community clean up.
May	Host a game table at a parish picnic.
June	Family prayer service, followed by potluck picnic and planning for next year.
Summer	Stay connected at a family pool party event.

Successful CFM Meeting Strategies

When hosting and leading an effective CFM meeting, we suggest the following:

- Send notices to all members with a reminder of the date, time and place and follow up!!!
- Invite your chaplain to attend.
- Arrange seating that allows everyone to see each other.
- Use name tags and introduce any newcomers to the group.
- Be a warm and inviting host.
- Start promptly.
- Light a candle during the meeting to signify Christ's presence.
- Call on participants to read as the meeting progresses.
- During the discussion be sure to:
 - Be a good listener.
 - Affirm members.
 - Give everyone a chance to speak.
 - Respect everyone's opinion.
 - Let there be a lull in discussion so shy that people might have a time to think.
 - Keep to the topic as much as possible.
- Remind members of the group to report facts in the Observe section of the meeting.
- Reserve opinions for the questions in the Judge section.
- Summarize the discussion to help form an Action.
- Decide upon an action based on the discussion
- Read ahead to the Observe section for the next meeting and assign any special tasks.
- Encourage members to bring news articles that might enhance discussion at the next meeting.
- Make announcements before the closing prayer and refreshments.
- Enjoy fellowship over light refreshments
- If a couple is unable to attend a meeting, inform them of the next meeting date and location.

The Spirit of Action

Action is defined as the love of Christ through love of others. This is what sets a CFM group apart from a study group. A meeting which does not result in a change in our way of living is an empty exercise. CFM groups are called “Action” groups and not discussion groups because they are meant to form people through the action that results from the social inquiry and discussion.

There are many forums for action. The home, neighborhood, parish, and community provide opportunities for action. In addition, actions can be of various types: charitable (service or contribution to a charity), spiritual (hosting an evening of reflection), educational (sponsoring an effective parenting workshop), or political (spearheading a tax change for education). These are just a few examples. Actions should flow from the meeting.

When you plan for actions, think on several levels. Actions can be done by an individual, by a couple, by a family, as a small group, or by a large group or a parish.

These actions could be performed as a family:

- Make soup for a local soup kitchen.
- Volunteer to drive an elderly parishioner to Church liturgies.
- Host an exchange student.
- Become an Emergency foster care provider for small children.
- Write letters to Congress in support of life and family issues.
- Cancel your Saturday evening plans and have a Family Game Night.
- Invite an elderly neighbor to your home for a holiday dinner.

These actions could be performed as a group with CFM leadership :

- Organize a clean up of a local park or public area.
- Plan a Seder Meal for your parish.
- Volunteer to help with your parish coffee and donut hospitality.
- Collect personal hygiene kits for a homeless shelter.
- Organize an “Undie Sunday Day” by collecting new underwear to be donated to a local shelter.
- Plan a Baby Shower for a Crisis Pregnancy Center.

Here are some ways to find some simple ideas for actions

- Read your local newspaper, paying special attention to articles about community needs.
- Identify and learn about local charities and service agencies who minister to needy families.
- Contact them and find out what type of volunteer support they need and ways CFM can assist them.

These are some organizations that use volunteers:

Habitat for Humanity
Literacy programs
Food Banks
Free Medical clinics
Meals on Wheels

Big Brothers, Big Sisters
Crisis Pregnancy Centers
Women and Family shelters
Salvation Army

Building Community

Fun is an important part of family life, especially in community. Planning for fun is part of CFM. Interaction with your family & other CFM families help promote love, improved communication, friendship and community. Here are some examples of group activities that CFMers across the country have planned,

Games night
Family bowling
Laser tag
CFM picnic
Apple picking
Bonfire and hotdog roast

Hay rides
Pool parties
Nature hikes
Sledding
Road rally
Visit places of pilgrimage

Planned large group and family functions such as service projects, potlucks, picnics and family retreat days will give all members a time to re-connect and build the faith community that they all desire. CFM is about families, faith in action and fun.

Prayer

Prayer is an integral part of a CFM meeting. Opening and closing prayers are part of the formal schedule. Many of the readings in the book can be prayers if the group approaches them with an awareness that God can communicate to us through them. Many groups regularly pray for the concerns of their members and prayer can help us cope when a group is faced with unexpected difficulty or tragedy.

Prayer serves four functions in a CFM meeting:

First, praying together helps the members of the group grow closer together and it makes it easier to share feelings

Second, the opening prayer can set the stage for the meeting by introducing the topic and inviting Jesus to be part of the discussion.

Third, prayer can help the group deal with difficulties facing the group or individuals

Fourth, the experience of group prayer can help individual members and couples grow in their own prayer life.

Types of prayer for use at CFM meetings

Spontaneous Prayer: This type of prayer allows the leader or member of the group to make up the prayer on a specific topic. Often the prayer will begin with praising God, giving thanks and then petitioning God for the needs of the group, or guidance and wisdom in discussing the topic. Group members may add to the prayer. This type of prayer often takes place at the close of a meeting pulling some thoughts from the topic.

Written Prayer: Written prayers are an important source of prayers and are part of our Catholic traditions. The Lord's Prayer is a written prayer. A scripture reading or song is also an example of written prayer. The host of meeting may have a favorite prayer that would enhance the meeting. The opening and closing prayers in the program book are only suggestions, so introducing optional written prayers is encouraged.

Meditation: Meditation is defined differently in different faith traditions. The Catholic tradition generally uses this term for imagining yourself in a biblical event and gaining insight from your involvement. The rosary is a form of meditation. The object of meditative prayer is threefold: to reflect upon mysteries of faith; to seek out what God's plan is for each of us, and to discern best how we might serve Him. Groups may introduce meditative prayer by listening to a spiritual song to focus thoughts and feelings. A prayer candle can be used to help center the group.

Planning for Growth

It is recommended that groups make an effort to expand continually. Typical expansion methods are these:

- Inviting a guest to a meeting
- Having a summer picnic and inviting prospective members
- Starting a new group using one of the CFM introductory books

The optimal size for a CFM group is five to seven families. While there are larger and smaller groups around the country, this size works best for discussion and community building. As a group attracts new members the leaders are faced with a dilemma: When should we form another group? This discussion usually begins as the group approaches 10 to 12 families.

There are many reasons for this. Many homes do not have a room large enough to accommodate 17-20 adults for meetings. It is difficult for everyone to contribute to the discussion with such a large number of participants. Activities which include children can become unwieldy. Attendance can usually fall off because members no longer feel their presence will be missed.

Deciding how to divide the members between the two new groups can be difficult. Sometimes groups prepare for an eventual split by going through a transition period. The large group meets at one house, but divides into two groups for discussion. The large group socializes together when the meeting is over.

When the time for the division comes, the parish leaders will need someone to step forward to act as leader of the new group. Meeting leadership can be shared, but someone will need to be responsible for coordinating a schedule for the group. The new group can be formed randomly by drawing names out of a hat, or members can assign themselves based on availability by meeting day or time. It is best if the group reaches consensus about how the division is done, but it is important that it happen for the long-term health of the group.

Annual Reorganization

One of the most important jobs of the parish CFM leader is to organize groups for the coming year. Most CFM groups have a kickoff in late summer or early fall when the new annual program book is available. A smaller CFM community would discuss plans for the year at this time. A more developed CFM community would have a calendar ready for distribution at this event.

The Christian Family Movement is not meant to be a club, but a movement which leads to growth. As the word movement implies, groups should be ever-changing. By regrouping and mixing new members with more experienced members, all will grow in faith and understanding and remain focused on the mission of CFM.

Publicize the kickoff event in many ways: in the bulletin, by poster, pulpit invitation, e-mail, and by word of mouth. An invitation to CFM should be extended to the community at large, but word of mouth is the most effective way to invite new members.

When a parish has several CFM groups it is recommended that groups reorganize each year. Experience shows that groups tend to turn inward if they are not revitalized by new members frequently. A wise CFM leader will schedule a few larger group functions to help members stay connected and ease concern about losing friendships that have been made. Service projects and social events which involve all CFM groups in a church community can serve this function.

Leaders can restructure groups using various methods. Here are some examples:

- Names are placed in a hat and then drawn out to form new groups randomly.
- Members assign themselves based on availability by meeting day or time.
- Parish leaders assign groups based on family life stage or affinity grouping. (Bear in mind that a group that is diverse can be as rewarding as a group that is closely matched in interests.)

When a CFM community expands, communication becomes very important. A simple newsletter can help the several groups stay connected. It is not necessary for such a publication to be elaborate. Group meeting dates, plans for small and large activities, and community news can be listed depending on the needs of the group. The newsletter can be distributed by mail and/or transmitted electronically, as needed.

*Developing Leadership
for Growth*

Leadership and CFM

The Christian Family Movement is a unique organization. Its goal is to bring people together to form a faith-filled Christian community guided by love of family, love of Church and service to others. CFM leadership is a different kind of leadership in that the task of a CFM leader is to create a climate in which this Christian love can take root and grow in families and in small faith community. Leadership is an act of faith, and it is often through prayerful discernment that members come to answer the call to serve God by serving others.

A leader is a person who brings people together to reach a common goal. Some prospective leaders may have leadership experience because of jobs or community involvement. Other possible leaders may be suggested by a pastor or parish staff person. Still others may have skills and talents, but are waiting to be invited to share these skills in leadership roles. The key to developing new leadership is to encourage a shared responsibility for the needs of the action group. When people work together for a common goal, they are more willing to take additional steps to further the common interests and goals that the group shares.

The goal of the CFM leader is to form communities that will improve their marriage, family and community and their knowledge and understanding of their faith by joining with other families of faith to form a community. It is all about building up the Kingdom of God, one family at a time.

The function of CFM leaders is to give members of an action group opportunity to serve the group. By enabling members to fulfill key roles in guiding the others members, a leader serves more as a guide than a director. Mentoring a new couple every year is another way to pass on leadership roles, a little bit at a time. Working in teams also allows newcomers to learn how CFM works from shared experiences with long time members. In the end, an effective leader helps prepare a group to lead itself.

One of the most important aspects of effective leadership is to know how to give praise and appreciation for a job well done. There are little steps that lead to bigger steps when it comes to leadership. Even the little steps deserve praise and recognition. When someone in the group volunteers to help, they will be more willing to help again if they feel that their efforts were of value. Phone calls, notes, and emails messages are easy ways to show appreciation.

Little Steps to Leadership

Encourage shared responsibility in the group by asking help for small tasks.

- Ask for a volunteer to organize support for other families in the form of meal deliveries following births, deaths, and other life events.
- Invite couples to plan a special prayer or song for a specific meeting or family event.
- Assign members to bring news clippings related to the next meeting.
- Invite a member to organize a prayer chain in time of need.
- Ask for assistance in planning refreshments for a community service project.

Bigger Steps to Leadership

Individuals who have succeeded at small leadership roles can be asked to take on larger tasks. Here are some examples of assignments that train individuals for assuming a larger role in your parish organization:

- Contact a local food bank and arrange for delivery of holiday meals or gift baskets collected by the group.
- Plan the kick-off potluck or picnic for all parish members to get acquainted.
- Help organize a family day of service and prayer.
- Co-ordinate group communication by newsletter or email network.
- Serve as treasurer for the action group.
- Compile the CFM directory of names, addresses, phone numbers and email addresses of members.
- Serve as chairman of a CFM Seder meal or holiday party.
- Volunteer to be the business leader of the group by keeping track of the meeting and service dates for the group.
- Attend a CFM conference or national meeting.

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