

Moving Forward with Men's Groups

*A Guide to Starting or Strengthening
a Catholic Men's Group*



CATHOLIC MEN'S FELLOWSHIP of MARYLAND

Equipping Men for the Mission of the Catholic Church

www.catholicmensfellowship.com

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Prayer, Evangelization and Starting a Men's Group

What is Prayer?

Prayer is “a vital and personal relationship with the living and true God” which flows from believing in (Creed), celebrating (Liturgy), and living (Conformed to Christ) the great mystery of our Faith.

- Catechism of the Catholic Church, #2558.

What is Evangelization?

Evangelization is the “proclamation of Christ by word and the testimony of life ...accomplished in the ordinary circumstances of the world.”

- Catechism of the Catholic Church, #905.

Why start or strengthen a Men's Group?

Nothing helps men grow as disciples of Jesus Christ like meeting with other Catholic men for friendship, learning, and support. If there's already a vibrant men's group in your parish that fits what you're looking for - join it. If not, consider starting one or strengthening one. God is moving in great ways among men in the Archdiocese of Baltimore - be part of it.

How do I start or strengthen a Men's Group? Practical ideas:

1. **Don't do it alone.** Find another one or two men in your parish to discern together.
2. Read “Essentials for Starting a Catholic Men's Group.”
3. Use the “4 P's” as a guide.
4. Learn about the men's ministries in this booklet (as examples) and contact their leaders.
5. Browse the “Men's Group Toolbox” for ideas.
6. Stop by the Men's Group Table.
7. Visit the vendors.

Essentials for Starting a Catholic Men's Group

The 4 P's to a Successful Men's Group.

Whatever type of men's group the Holy Spirit is calling you to start or strengthen, follow these essentials:

Prayer. Ask your pastor, your parish's intercessory prayer group, and other men to join you in prayer to discern what the Holy Spirit is calling men in your parish to be and to do. Spend time in Eucharistic Adoration.

Purpose. Solicit input from other men & your pastor; gain consensus. Consider ideas on the next 3 pages: an application-oriented study group to learn the Faith and grow in holiness & virtue (St. Andrew Fisher of Men Bible & Catechism Study), an informal group focused on community & catechesis (Beer & Barron), foster the spiritual growth of the Knights of Columbus. Leverage these sources in the Men's Group Toolbox.

Pastor Support. Share your ideas with your Pastor. Gain his support for you & your team to start. Do not ask your pastor to launch the group - this is your role. Continue in prayer, cooperate with the Holy Spirit, and move forward.

Personal Invitation. With your pastor's blessing, promote and launch the group. Most effective method: personally invite men in your parish whom you know and those you see at Mass "Act as if the bulletin does not exist."

Ideas. Promote community among men. Have unstructured social time over food & drink. Have ground rules for confidentiality. Read & reflect on the upcoming Sunday readings (lectio divina). Pray with & for one another. Invite other men to the group - frequently. Grow.

"Iron sharpens iron, and one man sharpens another."

- Proverbs 27:17

St. Andrew, Fisher of Men.

Men's Bible & Catechism Study.

Mission: To help men grow as disciples of Jesus Christ by deepening their personal relationship with Him in the Catholic faith and growing in holiness, virtue, servant leadership, and evangelization.

Motto: Be who God meant you to be, and you will set the world on fire." - St. Catherine of Sienna

Goals:

Grow in holiness and virtue through prayer, Word, and Sacrament.

(John 15:7-8; Romans 12:1-2).

Grow in love for God, our wives and children, and neighbor through study of the Bible, Catechism, and the saints.

(Luke 24:32; Galatians 2:20).

Grow in servant leadership and evangelization for our families, Church, workplace, and society.

(Ephesians 5:25; 6:4; Matthew 28:19-20).

Support one another in Christ, to run with perseverance the race that is set before us.

(Hebrews 12:1-2; Proverbs 27:17).

Patron Saints:

St. Andrew, Fisher of Men. As seeker, follower & evangelizer, Andrew represents men at all stages of spiritual growth, whom we welcome. (John 1:35-42)

St. Joseph, devoted husband and father. Lovingly and courageously provided for, protected, and served his family with integrity, strength, faith, and humility.

Guiding Principles:

The Interior Life of Grace. We are called to grow in Christ from the inside out: to be men of prayer, Word, & sacrament who respond to the prompting of the Holy Spirit.

Integrity. We strive to align our thoughts, desires, words, & actions to our faith, in the way we live our personal and public lives, through ongoing personal conversion.

Transparency and Trust. We honestly & confidentially share our struggles & triumphs as men, placing confidence in Jesus Christ as Redeemer of our lives.

Humble Obedience. We desire to form our faith & consciences from Scripture and the authoritative, trustworthy teaching of the Roman Catholic Church.

Beer & Barron - A Recipe

Background: Beer & Barron is a group of laymen from Annapolis-area parishes (primarily St. Andrew by the Bay and St. John the Evangelist). We hope you'll find the principles below thought-provoking, perhaps even useful in your own parish contexts. Also, consider this an open invitation to check out B&B for yourself.

1. Keep the threshold low. The main purpose is community. True doctrine is essential, but catechesis will be informal, perhaps incidental or incomplete. We can't do it all, and we mustn't let perfection become the enemy of the good.

a. **Meet in homes.** People relax better, open up more freely and connect faster than in a "neutral"/institutional setting.

b. **Everyone loves good food & drink.** Tasty snacks and beverages help people open up to each other and help them make the time to come back.

c. **Anyone can watch a video.** Catechesis is not scholarship. There's no homework.

d. **"Once is better than never."** There is no minimum attendance.

2. Simple is sustainable. A lot of our core group are busy family men. Elaborate logistics would quickly burn us out. But simple also takes faith.

a. Minimalist format: 30-40 min of unstructured socializing, group prayer, watch a 10-to 30-min Fr. Barron video, discuss for an hour or two, close with group prayer, those who must leave while those can stay and chat to exhaustion.

b. Coordinate by email. We've been using a gmail account.

c. There is no host roster. Some of us never host. Some host all the time. We solicit 1 host < 7 days prior to a meeting.

3. "Undomesticated" Catholic content. Videos should be unabashedly focused on the core Truths (e.g., Incarnation, Trinity, Real Presence, etc.). That's why we like Fr. Barron: good production quality, plus core dogmas winsomely and fully presented.

4. Frequency = familiarity. To build trust and community, we meet every other week.

5. Critical mass = six; quorum = 2. To start a group, you need a core group of 6 men committed to meeting for 3 months. In summer, when attendance dips, commit to keep the flame alive, even if that means two guys meeting up.

6. Organic growth (friends invite friends). Men invite others in their personal network. Imitate Francis (trust the Anchor). If you follow personal networks, the group will be a grab-bag: Catholics and non-Catholics of all stripes, men at all levels of spiritual maturity and doctrinal fluency. Some will be well catechized, others clueless. They'll need to hear themselves voice their doubt and disbelief – have it heard with patience and good humor, be accompanied skillfully through it – in order to move past it. Keep the long view, and give the Spirit time to work, the Truth time to sink in. No single meeting is the point – the point is sustained dialogue, sustained relationship.

7. Work within practical constraints. If we knew a lot of alcoholics, we'd ditch the beer. If we had a lot of single dads, we'd want to look at childcare, etc.

8. Ownership is leadership. At the start, you need a strong figurehead, a single voice, but this is a fragile model prone to bottle-neck growth. Allow others to pick up the ball.



Knights of Columbus – the Spiritual Side

St. Andrew by the Bay, Council #11552

At St. Andrew by the Bay, we promote the spiritual growth of our Knights by co-sponsoring spiritual/social events with other men's ministries:

"Beer & Barron," "Beer & Bible Study," and an evening Holy Hour for Men followed by food, drink, & fellowship. We co-sponsor with them the annual "Gathering of Men" BBQ the weekend after the Catholic Men's Fellowship Conference.

We are a fraternal organization, a band of brothers, a network of men in communities around the world dedicated to doing good in the service of God and our neighbor.

Principles of the Knights of Columbus:

1. Charity. "Love thy neighbor as thyself" ...food for the poor, help for the needy, mothers who choose life for their babies. Our faith in God compels us to action.
2. Unity. None of us is as good as all of us. We stick together & support one another.
3. Fraternity. We take care of our sick and disabled members and their families.
4. Patriotism. We are devoted to God and country, and believe in standing up for both, in public & private.

Some of the things we do at St. Andrew's:

- Church. Serve as Eucharistic Ministers, ushers, and lectors. Set-up Parish Hall for events, manage parking at Christmas/Easter masses, fundraise (St. Patrick's Day Party) for the Pre-school. Chili cook-off. Mardi Gras. Annapolis by Starlight.
- Community. Recognize local heroes (Community Service Awards) at Mass who receive state-wide recognition as Fireman and EMT of the Year. Support Homeless Shelter, Habitat for Humanity, and St. Andrew's Harvest.
- K of C Council. Social activities for Council members and families, including with our other men's ministries. Sponsor a child in Columbia (via Unbound). Pray for the un-born, the sick, and the distressed in the K of C community.
- Family. Established and fundraise (annual golf tournament) for the Joey Sudo Memorial Fund to financially support families with children who have cancer. Keep Christ in Christmas Poster contest. Breakfast with Santa.
- Pro-Life. Support the March for Life in Washington D.C. (pay for the parish bus). Tootsie Roll campaign.
- Youth. Support our parish-sponsored Boy Scout Troop, the annual soccer shoot-out, and the free-throw basketball shoot-out.



...the New Evangelization as a Way of Life

“3-in-1” is a parish-wide evangelization initiative launched at St. Andrew by-the-Bay in Annapolis where over 300 parishioners participated. That’s 900 people reached for Christ in one year. More importantly, over 300 people are more comfortable sharing their faith in Christ as a natural part of their lives. Here’s an overview:

What is 3-in-1? Named in honor of the Trinity, 3-in-1 encourages and equips you to talk with 3 people over the course of 1 year: to share with them your faith and love of Christ, invite them to Mass or a parish/ministry event, or ask them to consider the Catholic Church or come back to it.

Why? To help Catholics make sharing their faith & inviting others a natural part of their lives. Many of us know relatives, friends, neighbors, and co-workers who’ve left the Catholic faith or are searching for meaning in their lives. Unfortunately, many of us are uncomfortable talking about the Faith - maybe because we haven’t seen others do it, we fear rejection, or don’t know how to respond to questions or concerns about Catholicism.

How? Rooted in prayer and personal invitation, 3-in-1 helps us become more comfortable with the idea of reaching out to others, and includes a Kick-Off Event and optional workshops and small group support.

You don’t have to be a theologian to evangelize. From the beginning, the laity evangelized with the apostles (Acts 8:1-4), and for the last 40 years our popes have been urgently calling us to a New Evangelization. 3-in-1 “helps Catholics help Catholics” overcome anxieties and embrace the mission of the New Evangelization for ourselves, our families, and our communities. When a person experiences the rewards of sharing the Faith and inviting others, it will naturally become a part of his or her life. 3-in-1 is not about a “program” or “numbers,” but is a means to an end: Catholics sharing the joy of the Gospel with those they know and love in their own comfortable style with their own personality.

Those who sign-up for 3-in-1 commit to three things:

Pray for yourself and those you may share with or invite.

Invite or share with 3 people over the course of 1 year.

Participate in the 3-in-1 Kick-Off.

The 3-in-1 Kickoff event equips parishioners with simple and practical ways to share their faith, and includes large & small group discussions about hopes, concerns, and apprehensions. Optional future workshops and parish activities flow from this event.

“

The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few” – Jesus (Matt 9:37)

Contact Jim Bors, jbors1@verizon.net for a full promotion & implementation package.

Men's Group Toolbox

Ideas for Men's Groups:

- St. Andrew Fisher of Men Bible & Catechism Study (previous pages)
- Beer & Barron (previous pages)
- Knights of Columbus - the Spiritual Side (previous pages)
- That Man is You. <http://www.paradisusdei.org/index.php/programs/tmiy/>
- Christ life. Evangelization resources. <http://www.christlife.org/>
- The King's Men. <http://thekingsmen.org/>
- "3-in-1"...the New Evangelization as a Way of Life (parish-wide; previous pages)

Resources:

- Sunday Readings and Commentary.
Contact Jeffrey S. J. Allan [sancte_bruno@verizon.net] to receive weekly email.
- Lighthouse Catholic Media has CDs , DVDs and books.
<http://www.lighthousecatholicmedia.org/>
use promo code 101362. CMF of MD gets a donation from Lighthouse
- Symbol on
<http://www.symboloncatholic.org/>
- Faith Formation Program on DVD and/or the internet
For more information contact Charlie Hawkins chawkins316@gmail.com
- Hearts Afire: Parish-based Programs from the Marian Fathers of the Immaculate Con-ception. HAPP® is a bold and fresh approach to small group, parish-based, faith re-newal programs.
 - 33 Days to Morning Glory. A retreat leading to the Consecration to Jesus Through Mary
 - Consoling the Heart of Jesus gives us an awareness of God's infinite mercy and how we can give Him joy, showing us the way to console His heart by accepting His love and trusting in Him completely.
<http://www.allheartsafire.org/>
For more information contact Charlie Hawkins, chawkins316@gmail.com.
- Word Among Us Press
[Signposts: How To Be A Catholic Man In The World](#)
[The Joy of the Gospel: Evangelii Gaudium](#)
- Fr. Barron's DVD's, Workbooks, Study Kits, Online Videos
<http://www.wordonfire.org/> - Resources
Use above for Beer & Barron (previous pages)

A Call to Prayer and Evangelization

...to start or strengthen a men's group

Prayer. I commit to active prayer and asking others to pray for the light of the Holy Spirit among the men in our parish, to discern how God is calling men to draw closer to Him through each other.

Evangelization. Following a period of prayer, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit & the direction of my pastor, I commit to taking the next steps that may lead to starting or strengthening a men's group in my parish, using the 4P's (see page 3 as a guide.)

Signature

Date

**I would like to be connected to other men in the
Archdiocese of Baltimore who are also making this commitment
or are leading men's groups.**

Name (print): _____

email: _____ **phone:** _____

**After prayerful consideration: sign, TEAR-OUT
& place this Commitment Sheet in the Offertory Basket during Mass**