

## **Fraternal Groups: Men in Christ Supporting One Another (Part I)**

This is the first of a two-part presentation on participating in and understanding the benefits, dynamics and blessings of fraternal groups. We have a strong sense, perhaps even prophetic, that this element in the life of our parish he wished to have developed. There are many undiscovered graces that are awaiting us as we join ourselves to one another in this way.

### **Vision:**

- We are called to pursue holiness and our brothers can help
- We are called to Godly manhood in Christ and our brothers can help
- We are called to spiritual leadership as husbands, fathers, and spiritual fathers to others in the Church and our brothers can help
- We are called to develop meaningful and character-building relationships with others and our brothers can help
- We are invited to establish long term relationships of genuine friendship in Christ and our brothers often become our best friends
- As St. Peter exhorts, “Love the brotherhood” a gift that is to be restored

### **Spirituality:**

Men’s groups are meant to be environments where we can express our love for God and commitment to Christ openly and joyfully in an atmosphere of mutual trust. As Scriptures teach us, *“And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him” (Col 3:17)*

Fraternal Groups are not primarily groups for studying Scriptures per se, nor are they groups exclusively for venting our problems, not group therapy. Fraternal groups are designed to help one another

apply all the truths of the gospel and to build one another in that pursuit.

Fraternal groups are not social cliques for men, but rather environments where we can be strengthened for the purpose of living out the mission of the Church and in particular of the parish. We wish to love one another well so that we can love others better.

As men in fraternal groups, *we are not ashamed to pray*. We pray commonly in our groups, we may intercede for others and, as is appropriate we can pray over one another for strength, guidance, blessing, protection and renewal.

We understand that men's groups gathering for fraternal love and support is nothing more and nothing less than a healthy expression of our discipleship as disciples of Christ.

### **General Format for a men's group:**

#### **Part 1**

- To always begin with prayer.
- One man can prepare the session.
- It can be spontaneous, or structured around some psalms with scriptures to read and meditate upon.
- It can be a combination of vocal and rote prayer.
- If there is a guitarist or one who sings well, there can be hymns and songs.
- Ten-fifteen minutes is the norm.

#### **Part 2**

- In some kind of orderly way, each brother is given time to share personally.
- Areas of his personal life can be elements of the sharing (not all at once).

- **Examples are: Prayer life, experience with the Scriptures, overall spiritual state, relationship with wife, children, finances, with work, extended family etc.**
- **Depending on the size of the group, it may take a couple of sessions for all to share personally.**
- **Pastoral exception: If a man has a special need to present a problem or difficulty, he ought to receive as a priority the time and attention needed.**
- **In general, with a heart to see our brothers grow and overcome obstacles in their walk with Christ, each brother is encouraged to listen carefully to the other seeking insight, inspiration for the brother who has shared. One's own personal testimony of how he has overcome or faced a difficulty in the Lord and found victory, help and solace can be of great value.**

### **Part 3**

- **Besides personal sharing, there are often some general topics for the group to discuss that are agreed upon by the group. The themes can vary a great deal. However, it ought to have genuine relevance to our growth in Christ, wisdom in doing service/ministry to others, or education in the challenges facing Christians in the world today.**
- **In these circumstances, the brothers should be given time to offer wisdom from life experience or spiritual wisdom acquired in their walk with the Lord.**

### **Comments on the practice of sharing our lives with each other:**

- **Without genuine personal sharing our groups will have no depth.**
- **Seeking wisdom and counsel from our brothers implies a measure of accountability.**
- **All our counsel is fraternal, and we are not under an obedience relationship; our only obedience should be to the truth and**

wisdom of the Lord, which some might just come to us through our brothers. After all, we are to be channels of grace for each other. ***“Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another in all wisdom” (Col 3: 16).***

### **The importance of ending our meetings on time:**

- It is important to be diligent about ending our meeting time when we have said.
- It shows respect to all the men present.
- Nobody is discouraged from coming because they can't count on ending on time so as to meet other commitments.
- Most things can wait for the next meeting.

**Next week we will discuss:**

**The key commitments for a stable group, size of groups and how we wish to get started**