



DIOCESAN MINISTRY MANUAL

**STARTING, GROWING, SUSTAINING
MINISTRY TO MEN IN A DIOCESE**

COMPILED BY CATHOLIC MEN'S LEADERSHIP ALLIANCE

**Starting, Growing, Sustaining
Ministry to Men in a Diocese
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Catholic Men's Leadership Alliance

The Catholic Men's Leadership Alliance is made up of thousands of Catholic men across North America. The Core Value for CMLA is that every Catholic man should have the opportunity to develop fully in the vocation(s) God has destined for his life – for family, community, church and the world.

Mission: To equip Catholic clergy and lay leaders to better evangelize, instruct and disciple Catholic men to a deeper relationship with Christ.

Vision: That every diocese in America has a vibrant ministry to men.

The work with men is about preparing them for the for spiritual battle – equipping them to “fight the good fight” for family, church and nation.

**Strengthen the Man
Strengthen the Family**

**Strengthen the Family
Strengthen the Church**

**Strengthen the Church
Fix Society**

Services and products provided to Diocesan and Dynamic Men's Group Leaders:

- Identifying, developing and teaching cutting edge strategies helping to shape leaders who are developing small groups, providing formation opportunities, and other resources that establishes CMLA as the go-to resource in dioceses across the country
- Implementing unifying strategies for collaboration among men's group leaders and men's groups; including access to best known practices and providing mentoring assistance
- Supplies a process to strengthen diocesan men's conferences, providing guidance and assistance for new and established conference programs – each with a goal of multiplying men's groups throughout the local diocese.
- Maintaining a website portal for CMLA members to help build their ministry to men

The Why of Ministry to Men

Why are we here? There is a battle raging all around us. Our Church is under attack! Our families are under attack! Don't think this is true? Let's look at the stats:

For every 10 men in the average parish:

9 will have kids who leave the church

8 will not find their jobs satisfying

6 will pay only the monthly minimum on their credit cards

5 (some studies say 7 or more) have a major problem with pornography

4 will get divorced affecting over 1 million children each year

Only 1 will consistently follow the church's teachings rather than the world's

All 10 will struggle with work and family life balance

In our society many, if not most of our cultural problems – divorce, abortion, juvenile crime, fatherlessness – can be traced back to the failure of a man. Ironically, it is a man who got up in the morning hoping to succeed.

The signs are all around us. We live in a country where every third child is born out of wedlock; where twenty-four million kids do not live with their biological fathers; where half of all marriages end in divorce. We can read the statistics and just blow by them. Or we can consider what they mean for our country and our Church. Wouldn't you agree that there must be something systemically wrong with a culture that allows these things to happen?

Fatherlessness is a rampant and well-documented problem in our society. Only a third of all children will live with both of their biological parents through the age of eighteen. Half of all children in broken homes have not seen their father in over a year. Children who come from fatherless homes are five times more likely to live in poverty, have emotional problems and repeat a grade.

Yet, these are all symptoms of deeper systemic issues. Treating symptoms is necessary and good, but you cannot cure a disease by treating symptoms. So, while there are many sociological and psychological studies to explain why we have so many problems, the "root" problem – the systemic problem – is that we have not properly disciplined our men. The only way to solve systemic problems is with systemic solutions.

It is time for men to be warriors in this battle and STAND UP for our Church and STEP UP for our families.

The Church is in dire need of men to become saints. We are called to live lives of holiness and to make disciples of our wives, children, and others. It is not a journey for us to go on alone, it is a journey for us to go on together.

We often hear the statistics of how the Church is in decline today. Certainly, the numbers of priests and religious have declined over the last few decades especially in the Western Church; however, in other parts of the world the Church is in growth mode with converts to the Faith.

It is our belief that the Church will be re-energized when Catholic Men decide and take action to become saints just as our Lord, Jesus Christ, invites us to become. Christ's model for making saints and transforming the world was simple and yet powerfully effective.

The What of Ministry to Men

Christ's model for making saints and transforming the world was simple and yet powerfully effective.

You may be asking, "What is that model?" It is the model of fellowship, it is the model of spiritual growth, it is the model of accountability. This was the model of the early Church. The model that Christ founded was men's groups. That's right, Jesus gathered a few ordinary, flawed, very human men who had only a desire to seek God. The fruit born from this original small group of men changed the world.

Jesus invites each one of us on that same journey today. We are called to be changed into men of holiness, men of action, and men who lead our troubled world into a place of understanding, mercy and peace.

In order to make this happen, it is imperative that we understand a few things that all men really need, to achieve holiness, understanding mercy and peace. These things are:

1. Vision and Mission - Something to give their lives to - I want my life to matter
2. Relationships - Someone to share their lives with (wife, children, family, friends)
3. A System- Some way to accomplish mission and relationships and how to keep them in balance.

If you think about it, Jesus provided guidance for these three things. Vision: "I will build MY Church"; Mission: "Go Make Disciples"; Relationships: "Love one another as I have loved you." A System: Scripture, Apostles, Disciples, clergy and laity each with specific roles and responsibilities.

The mission of ministry to men is to make disciples through a process of fellowship, spiritual growth and accountability.

Many will ask, we already have a men's group, what is different about this, why start another. Some will comment this seems like competition for our existing group. It is important for us to understand the difference, prepared to provide a clear and concise response.

Before responding, we might ask them what is the main thing the existing group does. The reply most often will be that they do a lot work for the parish and community like pancake breakfast, landscaping, fund raisers, blood drives, etc. These are great contributions to the parish. While some groups may have elements of fellowship and spirituality, their focus is activities. These groups are often referred to as the men's ministry in the parish.

The focus of ministry to men is to make disciples through a method of fellowship, spiritual growth and accountability. It encourages men to grow in their faith, to know and encounter the heart of Jesus and follow Him as a disciple. Frequently, we hear the parish needs more workers. Does the parish need more workers, or does it need more to serve in ministry? Workers often participate out of a sense of obligation or a friend asking them to come along; over time they get tired, overwhelmed, caught up in things of the world and ask, why am I doing this. Not having a compelling reason, other than maybe

guilt, they give up and quit. Others in the ministry wonder what happened, shrug their shoulders and move on. The man who dropped out is left to drift on his own.

Disciples understand why they are participating in ministry; they are servants. They desire to follow Jesus, mimic Him and respond to His call. This desire informs their decisions and guides their actions.

Ministry to Men is a band of brothers encouraging men to join them on a lifelong journey, walking with them as they follow the path of Jesus. These brothers know each other personally encouraging and supporting each other when one begins to drift from the path of discipleship.

Disciples as they follow Jesus, seek ways to serve Him, His Church, His flock. Disciples freely fill and fuel the ministries in the parish.

The next time you are asked why we need another men's group or the comment this sounds like competition for our organization, share the difference between a worker and disciple. Ask if they need more workers or want more disciples.

The purpose of this manual is to inform you so that you can put into practice the steps to lead men to Christ.

Some steps are necessary to be effective in drawing men closer; these steps fall under a heading we call discipleship. Other steps are necessary to be efficient in managing the business of outreach. To help meet men where they are and provide opportunities that will help them along the path. We will group these steps into a framework.

For your Ministry to Men to reach every man it takes both Discipleship and a Framework. Discipleship is the one on one process of relationship building ... of loving one another. A suitable framework is needed to plan and build an approach that will find and reach out to every man.

It is important to recognize that our current approach is perfectly designed to produce the results we are currently getting. If your ministry is vibrant and growing, then keep doing what you are doing. But if it is not vibrant or if things are shrinking, then it is time to make changes from what is happening today.

Today many men are feeling lost and confused, unfulfilled and empty. Men need Christ and as Christians each one of us is called to "Go Make Disciples."

Discerning Your Call

The question is “How do I fulfill my purpose or be part of the mission to ‘Go Make Disciples’?”

There is a simple but not easy four-part way to do just that.

1. God has blessed you with gifts talents and skills, those gifts are part of how He wants to use you. Ask yourself, Am I using my gifts to Go Make Disciples?
2. Every man has a story. Your life story has been the training camp for whatever God is calling you to. Am I using my story to help make other Disciples?
3. In the quiet, God will whisper to you and tell you how and where he wants you to help. Are you listening to God for His direction?
4. It is helpful to find a spiritual director or mentor to help you discern the path that God wants you to follow. Do I have a spiritual coach or mentor to help me discern my path?

Before we are called to go and make disciples, we are called to become disciples of Jesus. A disciple is defined as someone:

Called: means to live in Christ. Because you are here, we will check that complete!

Formed: is to live like Christ. Because you are here, we will check that as well.

Sent: is to live for Christ. **Are you ready? To Intentionally lead others to Him?**

A simple formula- Called, Formed, Sent. We will be exploring this in future modules.

Questions for Discussion:

- How would you summarize your purpose or mission in life?
- How are you fulfilling this purpose?
- How have you grown to better appreciate the relationships in your life?
- Do you feel called to help lead other men to Christ?
- What are your gifts, talents and skills that can be used to help guide other men to a relationship with Christ?
- Are you ready to launch or improve a fellowship of Catholic men in your diocese?

Every member and potential future member should discern their call to and role in the ministry.

The Paths of Diocesan Ministry Overview

The origins and experience of diocesan ministry to men across the country are quite varied.

Some were started by men with the experience of men's fellowship in their parish inviting men from surrounding parishes to join them. These men in turn started fellowship groups in their parishes and the seeds of fellowship spread to more parishes. In some cases, this was the plan from the beginning, in others it grew organically. In both, it became an organized effort to reach men across the diocese.

Others with the experience of attending a men's event in other areas wanted to bring a similar experience to their diocese. Some were parish based with invitations to the surrounding parishes. Others began with a broader reach, regionally or diocesan wide.

The experience and effectiveness of these ministries have varied. Some are growing, reaching more men in each succeeding year, others are stagnant with virtually the same men participating year after year and some have ceased to exist.

From these experiences, before detailing the two usual paths to start a ministry, parish fellowships (Dynamic Men's Groups) and events, the next section – the leadership team – defines the foundational elements necessary for a vibrant, sustainable ministry to men.

Leadership Team Introduction

The investment of time, energy and especially prayer you make now in the formation and development of the leadership team will determine the effects and outcomes of your ministry in the future. It is relatively easy to start an activity, launch into action; it takes prayer, focused effort and time to establish a solid foundation for a sustainable, growing diocesan wide ministry.

Men tend to overestimate what can be accomplished in a year and underestimate what can be accomplished in ten years.

The perspective of the manual is that there is no current diocesan wide ministry. For existing ministries, use the manual to evaluate the current state of the ministry and identify ways to strengthen and grow it.

You may be one of two or three men thinking of starting a diocesan ministry or part of a group seeking ways to strengthen an existing ministry. Each man should thoroughly understand the why for ministry to men and its importance, then through discussion determine whether there is agreement to continue to go forward. No one should assume another's commitment. It may take 12 months to form a solid leadership team, don't rush it, pray, follow the process and be open to the guidance of the Spirit.

The following Leadership Team sections layout the framework for establishing a strong team for a vibrant, sustainable ministry to men. The sections include:

- How to build the team for sustainability
- Forming the team spiritually in fellowship
- Forming the mission and vision to guide the ministry in the future
- Leadership structure to fulfill the mission of the ministry
- Growing the team to reach more men

We prayerfully encourage you not to skip or shortchange any of the steps. It is tempting to grab a few ideas and run with them - don't. The sequence of these steps was developed from the learned experience of men who have been in diocesan wide ministry for more than 15 years.

It is important to recognize that your current approach is perfectly designed to produce the results you are getting. If your objective is to produce better results, it is time to change the process.

Building the Leadership Team

The Leadership Team Section identifies four tiers of leadership with respective roles and responsibilities. Briefly these are:

- Core Team – establishes the mission and vision and plans the future of the ministry
- Steering Team – executes the plans and operations of the ministry
- Deanery Leads – conduct the outreach and maintain relationships with parish leaders
- Parish Leaders – start and grow ministry to men in the parish

The health of the leadership team is critical. Without a solid leadership team, the ministry will falter or fall apart. Most diocesan fellowships with weak ministries produce poor results because the core team is poorly staffed, or they focus only on running events and other activities. The core team needs to look after the ministry to men, not just events. The delineation of responsibilities allows the core team to maintain focus on strategic planning and advancement of the mission.

The core team is the foundation upon which your ministry will be built. The strength of the team will determine the future of your ministry. In this section we'll focus on building the core team.

Leadership teams are often built one man at a time. The core team should seek out like minded men and do not start a full diocesan wide ministry until they have a committed team.

Leadership is the foundation of an effective disciple-making ministry. Nothing else you do will make any long-term difference without effective leadership. Without committed, involved leaders, it all falls apart. The core team envisions, focuses, organizes, communicates, encourages, equips, perseveres, and celebrates. A ministry built on any other foundation simply will not work.

Foundations for Men's Ministry That Don't Work

Some leaders have tried to build their ministry to men on *emotion*. Reading the statistics presented earlier can energize a leader to want to make a difference! But emotion is not faith. Emotion will only carry you through a disappointment or two, and in men's ministry it doesn't take long to experience a lot of disappointment. Plus, guys can be put off by passion when it's not expressed in a healthy way. It can come off as, well, a little weird. No one wants to follow weird.

There are four stages that many ministry leaders go through. Without a strong system to develop the core team and other leaders, you will always end up in the 4th stage. Here are the four stages:

1. Infatuation
2. Overwhelmed
3. Disillusionment
4. Burnout

These stages will be discussed in detail in the following section, be aware of them as you continue reading this section.

Some ministries try to build their ministry on *obligation*. They find a few well-spoken guys who show up for everything and then convince them that ministry to men is very important. A little guilt works well here. Just remind potential leaders that God calls us all to serve the kingdom and you know just the place for them. Your plan for the men in your parish and community is simple: They just need to understand what the Church teaches and then do it. Attend Mass faithfully, come to the men's events, help out on work days, and raise well-behaved children.

As crazy as this sounds, many ministries are built on the foundation of one slightly overzealous man who wants to tell everyone else what to do. If that's you, please stop!

A Word of Caution

How long does it take for leaders to implement a successful ministry to men? It takes a long time. Even Google, arguably one of the speediest success stories in corporate history, took over four years just to go live online. There really are no shortcuts. A "shortcut" takes years to develop.

Scholarly research indicates that, as a rule of thumb, about two-thirds of all program implementations fail. How does it happen? Here are a few reasons:

- Leaders think they can wing it.
- They don't put in the time required.
- They underestimate how long it takes to make a disciple.
- They underestimate how long it takes to get a program going.
- They underestimate the resistance to change they encounter.
- They are not equipped.
- They don't get training because they think, "This should be pretty easy. How hard could it be?"

Research seems to indicate that unless a leader devotes at least five—and more likely ten—years to an initiative, success is unlikely. So, unless you are willing to devote ten or more years to building a men's program, it would be better for the Catholic men's movement if you didn't start. These are serious times that require serious leaders willing to devote serious effort for a serious length of time.

If you are in the game for the long haul, the leadership structure described in a later section is what you should consider.

Your ministry to men will become whatever your core and leadership team becomes.

Encourage each leader to live his life in such a way that others can tell he has been "with Jesus" (see Acts 4:13). As a team, encourage the men to become to each other what they want their diocese to become. That will create a model so attractive that other men will want to be part of it.

It is hard work to build your leadership team. It is very easy to tear it apart. If your ministry is

effectively discipling men, your team will be attacked by the Enemy. That's why it's so important that each member of your leadership team be accountable to other godly men. Every man needs someone who can look him in the eye and tell when something doesn't seem right.

In the initial stage of building the core team members should meet weekly, or at least bi-weekly, for fellowship and spiritual growth while adding additional members to the team. With new members being added, continuing to meet weekly or bi-weekly will aid in developing accountability and unity of purpose. With a solid core of 5 to 7 men begin the process of developing the mission and vision of the ministry as described in a later section. Also, during this phase begin to discuss potential members for the steering team, the next tier of the leadership team.

With a solid core and purpose identified in the mission and vision statements, you're ready to begin exploring how you will launch the ministry. The Paths for Diocesan Wide Ministry section will aid you in this process.

Yes, the time period, 6 to 12 months, for these initial phases may seem like a long time to wait before launching your ministry. This is especially so if you thought, before reading the manual, that you were ready to jump into action. Review the pitfalls above, learned from experience over decades in ministry to men. What you invest now will pay dividends in the future. Or skip investing now at the risk of a weak or failed ministry.

Continue to meet regularly, at least monthly, with the primary purpose of building fellowship, formation, accountability and planning the future of the ministry.

Reflecting the Men You Want to Reach

Your men's ministry will become whatever your leadership team becomes. In other words, your leadership team should *look* like the guys you are trying to reach. If you want to reach men of different ethnic backgrounds and generations, your leadership team needs to be diverse.

Everyone on your leadership team does not have to have the same level of spiritual responsibility or authority. Some members can play more of an implementation role while you are mentoring them for leadership. So, if you want to reach men at various levels of spiritual maturity, you might want to invite some guys at various places on their spiritual journey.

Involving Others and Staying Fresh

Finally, don't turn your core team into an "operations" or event committee. Your core team should be a prayer and strategic planning team, not a "doing" team. If you are planning an event the leader who is responsible for the event should not be doing tasks. Rather, this is an

opportunity to recruit men to do these various tasks so they can begin to catch the vision.

We can't reiterate this point too strongly. If your leadership team is doing all the work, you can either disband now or wait a few years for it to fall apart. You may want to go ahead and make a tee time for Saturday because your ministry with men will not last unless you are constantly expanding the circle of men who believe in the vision.

Recruiting is hard work! It is often easier to just do it yourself. **DON'T...DON'T...DON'T!!** If you want your ministry to last, constantly give away the work of the ministry to men who may become your future leaders. A straightforward method for recruiting new members is outlined in the Growing Your Team section.

One question we often hear is, "How big should my leadership team be?" You might be tempted to decide by thinking through potential areas of responsibility: a small-groups coordinator, a big-events coordinator, a retreat coordinator, and so on. Sounds well-coordinated doesn't it? But this approach is dangerous.

Men's leaders often tell us they are exhausted. It doesn't take long to discover they are trying to do small groups and a retreat and a softball team and a bus to a men's conference and an outreach event and on and on. Why? Because they think that's what men's ministries are "supposed" to do.

This brings about two problems: First, they're burning themselves out. Second, nobody else wants to join the leadership team because they see how much work it is.

"The size of our ministry determines the size of our leadership team" is hazardous thinking. Instead, look at it this way: *"The size of our leadership team determines the size of our ministry."* God has placed certain men in your diocese with the desire to reach and disciple men. But for the most of them it's not some vague calling; it's specific. Some feel passionate about getting guys to go to men's conferences, some are into small groups, etc. Your ministry should flow out of the passions of your leadership team. If you don't have a guy who's passionate about wilderness retreats, then don't have a retreat. Believe it or not, "Thou shalt take thy men into the wilderness to retreat" is not actually in the Bible.

The men God has given you are not assets to accomplish the tasks set forth in your strategic plan. They are leaders. Their passions are wonderful clues to what God would have you do for the men of your diocese. If you allow them to pursue their calling, they will be more engaged, your ministry will be more effective, and, best of all, more leaders will be attracted. Your ministry will grow naturally and in God's own time.

An excellent resource for the formation of the Core Team in the initial phases and for new members is the study guide which accompanies Bishop Olmsted's Apostolic Exhortation, "Into The Breach", published by the Knights of Columbus along with the videos on the Knights' website.

For existing diocesan ministries use this and the following sections to evaluate the current state of your ministry and its effectiveness. Consider the following:

- Do you have a core team of 5-7 committed men?
 - Does it have a distinct role of spirituality, unity of purpose, accountability and strategic planning or is it mainly activity driven?
- Do you have a clear mission and vision?
 - Are they expressed in concise statements?
 - Are they used in your planning and decision-making process?
- Do the members of your team have distinct roles and responsibilities, or do you operate as catch as catch can?
- Is there accountability among the members for the mission and to each other?

The evaluation, clarification of the structure, roles, mission/vision and realignment may take six to nine months. Don't rush the process. What you do in the present determines the future of the ministry.

Leadership Team Formation

There are four stages that many ministry leaders go through. Without a strong system to develop leaders, you will always end up in the 4th stage. Here are the 4 stages:

1. Infatuation: You feel called to the ministry and are on fire to make a difference in the lives of other men. You make the mistake of doing almost everything yourself and not investing time to build a team. This is often because of the great sin of man: the sin of the ego. EGO stands for Edging God Out. In this stage, it is important for you to ask others to join you, like Jesus did in the call of the disciples. Ask God these questions: "Where am I in your way? Where do I need to decrease so that you can increase?" Lead like Jesus, by inviting others to join you and invest the time to form them into disciples and leaders.
2. Overwhelmed: If you continue trying to do it all, it is easy to get overwhelmed and many important things will not get done. This happens most by focusing on the tactics, duties and the details and not on the discipling of men. This is a danger zone. Involvement decreases and so does enthusiasm. This is the time when a spiritual director or accountability partner can help you find direction.
3. Disillusionment: You are now spiraling out of control. You feel like a victim. There is resentment for the lack of help and lack of results and lack of support. The "love" for the ministry is gone and questions abound if this is the right thing for you.
4. Burnout: You begin to feel like you have no other life and question everything, including God and whether you were ever really called. You leave the ministry and the group could fall apart.

All of this is preventable if we simply follow the perfect example of Jesus and invest in the discipling and development of a strong team of leaders. Our call to holiness is not a call to autonomy. It is a call to cling to Jesus like Peter did when he was sinking. This is hard to do with all the winds and storms of life that are blowing around us. How do we do this? Here are a few steps:

1. We first need to start with prayer. We must become men of intense prayer. Pray one hour every day. Start small and add to it daily. How do you find the time? Here is the reality! We always have enough time for the things we are passionate about. How do we have the time to play golf for three hours or watch six hours of NFL football on Sunday? Be passionate about prayer.
2. Be fed on a regular basis by the Eucharist. Don't just be a Sunday Catholic, make this a regular part of your week, starting with one other day and if possible, build to a daily practice.
3. Be passionate about the Sacraments. They are the source and summit of life. They are life giving and life sustaining. It is important on our road to holiness to especially take advantage of the sacrament of reconciliation. We need to live a life that is in the light of Christ and not in the shadows of the darkness of the world.
4. Lead an examined life! Be a man of great humility. Don't fall victim to the sin of the ego.
5. Find an accountability partner who has the courage to call you out when you are off track.

We are called to make disciples, leaving no man behind. To do this we need to constantly be developing leaders. Your ministry to men will become whatever your leadership becomes. Encourage each leader to

live his life in such a way that others can tell he has been “with Jesus” (see Acts 4:13). Encourage the team to become to each other what they want the ministry to be by practicing the five spiritual steps above. That will create a model so attractive that other men will want to be part of it. We must become the live demonstration here on earth of what is happening in heaven, so that any time anyone wants to know what is happening in heaven all they must do is check with us.

Engage a priest or deacon with a passion for Ministry to Men as spiritual director for the ministry

The spiritual director of your leadership team should be a man of prayer. A priest or a Deacon would be a wise choice. Before we answer the question “Why have a spiritual director for your leadership team?” we should define what it is we expect from the spiritual director. The spiritual director is not a coach. He is not the team leader. He should not do the heavy lifting for the leadership team. The function of the spiritual director is to keep the leadership team on course.

The spiritual director's purpose is to keep the men on course, a course that leads them through the cross to the resurrection to the mission to go forth and make disciples of all nations. The spiritual director's purpose is to keep the team focused on the course laid out by the bishop of the diocese. The spiritual director prevents the team from remaking the church in their own image.

The suggested duties of the spiritual director are to communicate with the men on a regular basis. This can be done in person, at a physical meeting or via a zoom or other web-based meeting method or even by email or text. The purpose of the interaction of the spiritual director with the men is primarily to give encouragement and guidance from a spiritual perspective, and to guide the team to work toward the overall goals of the diocese as laid out by the bishop of the diocese.

Where possible the spiritual director should celebrate the sacraments with the men on the leadership team on a regular basis particularly the sacraments of reconciliation and the Eucharist. Periodically the spiritual director should set time aside for an evening or day of recollection on a quarterly or at least a semi-annual basis. He should encourage the men in the celebration of adoration of the blessed sacrament, the holy rosary, the Divine Mercy and devotion to Mary and the male Saints of the church on a regular basis.

The spiritual director should celebrate with the men of the leadership team milestones in the ministry. They may be such things as their first event planned and executed or on completion of an event such as a conference for men in the Parish or the Diocese. The level of involvement of the spiritual director must be governed by the amount of time he has available to interact with the leadership team. The spiritual director does not have to provide individual spiritual direction for each member of the team individually. The role of the spiritual director is to guide the entire team toward the goal. However, the purpose here is to serve as a guideline not as an absolute.

Mission and Vision

A Compelling Reason for Men to Get and Stay Involved

If you stopped a man in your parish on Sunday morning and asked why he was there, what would he say? You'd probably hear answers like, "Coming to Mass is the right thing to do"; "I want to make sure my family comes to Mass"; "I like to worship"; or, "I like the homilies." A particularly transparent man might say, "My wife wants me to come, and I don't want to make her mad."

What about some of the men who are more involved? If you asked an usher why he served, how would he answer? How about a man who helps park cars? Who sings in the choir? Leads a men's small group? Works with the middle school youth group?

Too often men go to Mass without any real sense of purpose. They participate in activities because they are supposed to, or because someone asks them to, but they don't really know why they are involved. Most of them have never been given a compelling reason why the Church should be a priority in their lives. They have never heard—in language they can relate to—that joining Christ in transforming the world is the adventure their hearts have always longed for.

For No Apparent Reason

What if we said, "Tap your foot for ten minutes and we'll give you \$10,000"? Almost any man would be willing to do that. Why? Because he understands the goal he is trying to accomplish.

Many men in parishes are "tapping their feet" with no idea why. They may continue to be engaged for a while, but eventually they'll get tired, bored, and discouraged. And then their spiritual lives will begin to grow cold, wither, and die.

These men know down deep inside that they were made for something more.

The Power of Mission and Vision

The first step in building the right strategy is to formulate your mission and vision. God desires for the ministry to reach men with the gospel of Christ and help them grow to maturity. In the Great Commission (see Matthew 28:18–20), Jesus calls us to make disciples by sharing his message. In Ephesians 4:11–13, Paul teaches that God gives some people special abilities to equip others for works of service. Leaders, then, are called to disciple and equip people so they can do the actual work of the ministry and mature to become all God is calling them to be.

Mission

The mission is a clear identification of why your ministry exists, it defines the purpose of the ministry. It serves an internal and external purpose. For current team members it identifies the reason why they are participating in the ministry. For the core team it provides focus for strategic planning and initiatives. Externally, it provides your intended audience, potential leaders, fellowship members and supporters of the ministry with a clear understanding of the ministry's purpose. The mission distinguishes it from other ministries.

The following steps can help develop your mission.

- As a core team discuss what is the current state of men in the Church and in society
- Discuss the consequences of this current state of men
- Have each man give his opinion as to what is lacking in men's lives that contributes to this condition; without discussion of individual responses, list the responses on poster sheets or white board
- Ask each man what the ministry could offer men to help them gain what is lacking, listing each response

Next discuss the responses to the question of what is lacking in men's lives, giving the men the opportunity to share the reasons for their thoughts and to ask questions for understanding. The objective is to identify the one or two main reasons for the current state of men, in other words, the root cause. The mission should address the root cause not the symptoms. This should not be done by majority vote or dominance of one man, the objective is complete agreement of the team; if not complete, a strong consensus may allow you to move forward. Remember this will be a foundational piece of the *why* for the ministry and will guide future planning and decisions.

Next discuss the responses to what the ministry could offer men.

The mission should be distilled into a clear, concise statement of one, two at most, sentences. It should not describe how you intend to conduct the ministry (activities), nor a list of objectives. These are things the core team will decide as the ministry develops, responding to new opportunities, changing circumstances and available resources. It should be easy to remember and communicate.

A word of caution, if there is not agreement among the members it is best to pause to examine the present composition of the team, doing so in prayer with the guidance of the Spirit. Dissension within the team will undermine unity of purpose in advancing the mission of the ministry. Men will act at cross purposes to the detriment of the team and mission. We recall the adage "A man convinced against his will is of the same opinion still."

Vision

Vision is a look forward beyond current activities and circumstances. A clear vision crystallizes our desire for what we want the ministry to be in the future. It prompts thought of the potential of the ministry. It is a target which draws the team forward rather than becoming complacent with the status quo. A vision statement is an expression of the desired future state of the ministry.

Jesus said go and make disciples of all nations. Most of us are not called to be missionaries in foreign countries. So, to whom are we called to make disciples? Think of the men at Mass on Sunday, also the men we don't see on Sunday: how many men of the parish do not have a personal relationship with Jesus? How many men, who may have a relationship with Jesus, are walking alone on the journey? We don't have to go far from home to find the men we are to disciple. Multiply the number by the number of parishes in your surrounding area, and number of parishes in the diocese. How many of these men do you desire to reach and affect through the ministry?

When considering these questions don't hamper your thinking by trying to assign dates for completion. This is what you envision the ministry to be sometime in the future. If we stay true to the mission, do what is called for in the present, pray and plan for the future, it will happen in God's time. Remember, men tend to overestimate what can be accomplished in one year and underestimate what can be accomplished in ten.

A written vision statement sets the direction for the ministry, serving as a guide for future decisions. With the members of the operations team responsible for the planned activities of the next 12 months, the core team is planning the next steps to advance the mission of the ministry. Without forward planning the ministry becomes stagnant. The vision statement energizes the team members, they know where the ministry is headed. Being a part of the adventure stirs men's passions. It will be the guide for future leaders, a reminder this is God's ministry not ours; we are the disciples carrying out the mission of Jesus to which we have been called.

The vision statement communicates to your external audience this is a vibrant ministry with a defined direction for the future. It entices others to learn more and consider collaboration. Very importantly, it attracts potential leaders to join the adventure of discipling men.

Write a statement of one, two at most, sentence(s) that identifies the future direction of the ministry, a concise statement is easy to remember and communicate. People more readily grasp an energized theme than a detailed description. Do not include the how or dates.

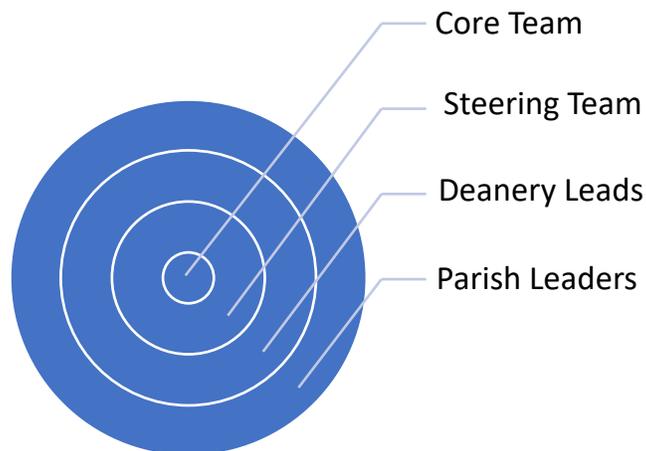
Try it out with others for their reaction and fine tune it if necessary.

Leadership Structure

The leadership structure which has proven most effective consists of four leadership tiers:

- Core Team
- Steering Team
- Deanery Leads
- Parish Leaders

Visualize this model as four concentric circles. The inner circle is the Core Team, a prayer, strategic planning and keeper of the vision team. The next circle is the Steering, the operations team planning and executing elements of the strategic plan. The third circle is the Deanery Leads who identify leaders in the parishes, providing training and on-going support to them for their parish ministry. The outer circle is Parish Leaders who start and continue to grow ministry to men in their parish.



Before digging into the elements of the structure let's consider the condition of existing ministries. Many leadership teams fall into one of four following descriptions.

1. 6 to 12 men with a loose structure without defined roles or responsibilities
2. 4 to 6 men, akin to a committee, planning and staging an annual conference
3. 1 or 2 men doing most of the advance work for a conference, enlisting volunteers for tasks
4. A team with varying degrees of structure, planning, and men assigned certain responsibilities over the year

Many of these groups, especially the first three, do not have a clearly defined mission and vision for the ministry, or corresponding concise statement for each. Nor is there a core group responsible for strategic planning or evaluation of the effectiveness and progress of the ministry. Some groups have all members participate in planning and decision-making attempting to reach a consensus. While this allows all to participate and express their opinion often it can be a circular discussion resulting in no decision. The ministry continues the status quo.

Without a defined purpose – mission, and clear direction – vision, these ministries drift from year to year asking why aren't we getting better results or making any progress. Some make adjustments for the next conference - better quality posters or better snacks during breaks - but do not address the root cause of the condition of the ministry.

Most do not have an objective and plan for attracting, recruiting and adding more members. The risk is members experience the four stages of leadership described in the formation section – enthusiasm, overwhelmed, disillusionment and burnout. There are many instances around the country of a team shrinking to 2 or 3 men, and when one dropped out that was the end of the ministry. Remember that failed ministries are inoculations against the start of future ministries.

For members of existing ministries, it is important to address some questions.

- Are you satisfied with current state of the ministry? If yes, continue what you are doing expecting the same results.
- Considering the pitfalls which contribute to a weak or stagnant ministry, which conditions currently exist in your ministry?
 - Absence of a solid core team with 6 or more committed men
 - No clearly defined mission or vision
 - Taking spiritual growth for granted, rather than encouraging it?
 - No objective or plan for continually growing the team
 - No defined roles for all members of the team

Having identified the areas for improvement, address them in the order above. Don't try to fix all areas at once. Develop a plan how you will proceed with a timeline for completion. This creates accountability for each step and an end objective to the process. The size and vibrancy of the diocesan ministry depends on the foundation on which it is built.

For new ministries, use this process to develop your ministry. Evaluate the strength of the core team and address any weakness before moving to the next step.

Do not be overwhelmed by the scope of the leadership structure below. The evaluation, clarification of the mission/vision and realignment may take six to nine months. Don't rush the process. What you do in the present determines the future of the ministry.

We strongly encourage all to read the experience of the Central Texas Fellowship of Catholic Men in Appendix 1. It is a case study of diocesan ministry with an enthusiastic start, growing in the initial years then it began declining. It identified the areas of weakness, developed a comprehensive plan and is now growing exponentially, surpassing previous highs for the ministry.

Begin with the end in mind; the priority is to form a solid, unified core team. A clearly defined mission/vision will help in answering the “what, how and next steps” questions. The initial objective is to establish a solid core to develop a sustainable, dynamic diocesan ministry to men. Just as individual men are in spiritual battle the fellowship is engaged in spiritual warfare. The evil one will attack a ministry, and its leaders, who are striving to bring all men to Christ.

Core Team – 5-6 committed men with a passion for Ministry to Men

Roles:

- Formation of the mission and vision
- Participate in future planning of the ministry in alignment with the mission and vision
- Oversee implementation of the strategic plan
- Constantly look for areas where ministry can improve
- Evaluate the annual performance of the ministry
- Evaluate the performance of events and programming
- Represent the diversity of the diocese
- Approve programs and events to be offered by the ministry
- Foster and maintain communications with diocesan officials and Bishop
- Recruit members for all levels of the team

Steering Team – 6 to 8 committed men with a passion for Ministry to Men. Reaching this number will happen over time with diligent recruiting of new members.

The following are potential roles for the steering team members. Specific roles will vary depending on the plans and size of the ministry. These are offered as a means of identifying the distinction of responsibilities between the core team and other tiers of the team.

Roles:

- Accountability to the Core Team and each other
- Planning and execution of the strategic initiatives of the Ministry
- Oversee the marketing and evangelization efforts
- Maintain the ministry website and content
- Plan and execute events authorized by the core team i.e. conferences, men’s mass
- Identify and select programs that will be sponsored and shared across the ministry
- Maintain an accurate portfolio of programs and support material to promote awareness across parishes and the diocese
- Coordinate Deanery Leads activity including mentoring and evaluating effectiveness
- Develop training programs for Deanery Leads and parish leaders, evaluating their effectiveness
- Assist Deanery Leads and parish leaders with introducing and launching parish programs
- Assist with information meetings for parish leaders
- Ensure that over time ministry to men will be offered to every parish in the diocese

- Conduct ongoing recruiting of new members for all levels of the team

Deanery Leads – Ratio of one man for four Parishes in a Deanery

Growth of the Team will take time and will depend on the strength of the Steering Team

Roles:

- Lead the ministry within the Deanery
- Develop personal relationships with parish leaders by first building trust
- Identify and reach out to priests, deacons, and laymen to identify and launch men's ministries within the deanery
- Meet regularly with parish leaders to enable parish program growth
- Encourage, support, coach parish leaders in the formation, growth, and sustainability of Dynamic Men's Groups (DMGs)
- Ensure cross parish awareness of available programs
- Identify potential Dynamic Men's Group opportunities
- Report monthly to steering team coordinator on the status of DMGs and new opportunities
- Share best practices and experiences of DMGs with Steering Team and peers for development of diocesan training and initiatives
- Coordinate promotion of diocesan ministry events with parish leaders
- Recruit and mentor deanery partner and successor

Parish Leaders

Roles:

- Lead the diocesan ministry within the Parish
- Maintains an excellent relationship with Pastor, Parish Staff, Knights of Columbus, as well as leaders of other ministries impacting men
- Report to the Deanery Lead on Parish membership and program participation
- Identify new programs or needs for parish
- Ensure parish awareness of available programs
- Ensure small group leads are well prepared to fulfill their respective roles
- Maintain accurate membership and program information
- Meet regularly with leaders of small groups to ensure parish program growth
- Lead parish outreach and regularly invite men to join
- Lead promotion of diocesan ministry events and activities within the parish
- Prospective Deanery Leads

Grow Your Team to Grow Your Ministry

In the Building Your Team section we discussed the risk of leadership fatigue, burn out and drop out if only a few men are doing all the work. Remember, if your core team is doing all the work, you can either disband now or wait a few years for it to fall apart. Also, living in a fallen world means leaders may be taken out of the game by events beyond their control. Family illness, job transfer or other circumstances may prevent a man from continuing on your team. Your ministry will not last unless you are constantly expanding the circle of men who believe in the vision.

Every time a men's ministry fails, it is like a little inoculation. Just like a flu shot keeps the flu virus from being able to live in your body, the diocese or parish becomes more and more resistant to a sustainable men's ministry. The next leader who wants to build a men's ministry encounters increased resistance. After three or four such failed attempts, the parish's antibodies are fully developed and impenetrable. Men's ministry gets the reputation of "a loser." The priest has decided, "That will never work here." Actually it will, but a made-up mind is almost impossible to change.

The size of your leadership team determines the size of your ministry.

THE "ARTT" OF RECRUITING LEADERS

Recruiting leaders is a process. Here is a nice way to remember how this plays out in relationships: Appointment-Relationship-Trust-Task, or ARTT. How does this work?

Appointment

Create value for leaders by getting the *appointment*. The first time we saw our future wives, most of us didn't walk up and say, "Would you like to get married?" Instead, we asked for the appointment: a date for Friday night. So, don't set your sights on a man and ask him to join your leadership team. Instead, ask for the appointment.

"Hey John, I'd really like to get your feedback about our Ministry to Men. How would you like to get together for coffee one morning?"

The value for John is that you are asking him for feedback. If he really is a potential leader, he'll be happy to meet with you.

Relationship

During your appointment, start building a *relationship*. Tell him about your involvement and why it is important to you. Listen to his heart. *But don't ask him to make a commitment to anything!* Be satisfied with becoming his friend.

Trust

After you share your passion for ministry to men, be ready with a right next step. If he is indifferent, ask him how you can pray for him. If he is too busy to be more involved, offer to pray for him and ask him to pray for you and the men. If he is interested in going further, ask him to come to your next leadership team meeting as a guest. He can sit in and hear what's going on. Then you can meet again and talk about it.

By offering a next step that is appropriate to his level of interest and availability, you show him that you are interested in helping him fulfill God's mission for his life, not your mission for his life. *Trust* begins to develop.

Task

Trust is the key to actually doing something together. Once he shows an ongoing interest, then you can offer him a *task*—either through asking him to pray, or to explore getting involved. Don't rush this process or you will scare away your potential leaders.

DOUBLE THE SIZE OF YOUR LEADERSHIP TEAM....

If there is one common complaint about leaders, it is this: There are not enough of them. So, here's an easy way to double the size of your leadership team.

Let's say you have four committed men on your leadership team. Make a covenant with each other to take one man to coffee or lunch each month and share why discipling men is important to you. Follow this process for a year. Assuming each of you misses a month here or there, you will have conversations with at least forty men.

Your passion will not mean much to many of these men. Others will be glad for you but too busy to get involved themselves. But if just two out of every ten men express an interest in sitting in on a meeting (that means eight of your forty men), and half of those decide to get involved, you will have doubled the size of your leadership team in just a year!

...OR CUT YOUR LEADERSHIP TEAM IN HALF

It is hard work to build your leadership team. It is very easy to tear it apart. If your ministry is effectively discipling men, your leadership team will be attacked by the Enemy. That's why it's so important that each member of your leadership team be accountable to other godly

men. Every man needs someone who can look him in the eye and tell when something doesn't seem right.

But the quickest way to cut your leadership team in half is this: Try to sculpt a man into a better leader. It's a mistake to try chiseling away the ungodly parts of a man so that only the good stuff is left. It very rarely works that way.

Leaders need to be cultivated. Cultivation is an agricultural term. You cultivate a crop by choosing good seeds, preparing the soil, fertilizing it, and watering it regularly. Then you reap the harvest.

Leaders need to be polished, not chiseled. You polish leaders by encouraging them, not criticizing, and by affirming them, not correcting. Make sure your leaders have plenty of opportunities to be exposed to the love of Christ. If you want a better leader, help him become a better disciple.

Many times, you might think it is a good idea to "light a fire" under people. That is just plain wrong. The idea is to find people already on fire and just pour some gasoline on them.

THE HIGH CALLING OF LEADERSHIP

It is a high calling to be a part of a team of men who desire to disciple men. Our prayer is that God will use your team to raise-up scores, hundreds, or even thousands of men who would be valiant warriors for Christ's kingdom.

The Paths for Diocesan Wide Ministry to Men

The primary paths for starting ministry to men in a diocese are Dynamic Men's Groups (parish fellowships) and events such as conferences or a men's mass. Each path provides opportunities and challenges. They are not mutually exclusive, there is synergy between the two.

Before choosing one of the options it is important to evaluate the current circumstances from which you are starting. Questions to ask include:

Step 1: As a core team thoroughly discuss the opportunities and challenges of each path.

Dynamic Men's Groups (DMGs)

Opportunities	Challenges
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Engages men in weekly fellowship with other men in the parish• Forms ongoing discipling process 52 weeks a year• Reaches more men in the parish, not just those who attend an event• Broadens the base of support for diocesan wide ministry• Cultivates potential leaders for diocesan wide ministry• Less immediate resources (manpower, financial) are required than for an event	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Priest's approval is required, endorsement is better, enthusiastic support is best• Identifying potential leaders and supporting in the formation of the leadership team• Assisting in the launch of the group• Maintaining monthly personal contact with the leadership team with support and guidance for the vibrancy of the group. DMGs are the base for growth of diocesan wide ministry

Events (Conferences, Men's Mass)

Opportunities	Challenges
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Bring a large number together from across the diocese or deanery• Stir the hearts of men across the diocese, some men will consider starting a DMG in their parish• Identification of current and potential parish leaders for follow-up contact• Recognition by a wide range of people and groups• Sense of accomplishment for the leadership team	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Bishop approval is required, endorsement is better, enthusiastic support is best• Leadership and support team of proportionate size to the planned event• Significant advance planning of at least a year• Financial resources for advance expenses and contingency for revenue shortfall• Enlisting support of diocesan officials - Dir. of Evangelization, Vicar for Priests, Diaconate Dir.• Execution of planned follow-up after the event

Step 2: As a core team discuss the following questions.

- How does each path align with the mission and vision?
- What resources are required for each option?

Step 3:

- What internal resources are currently available?
 - What is the depth and breadth of your leadership team?
 - What are the talents, gifts and availability of each member of the leadership team?
- What current external resources are available?
 - Do you have entrée to the bishop and other diocesan officials, i.e. Directors of Evangelization and Family Life?
 - Do you have the potential for referrals to priests and deacons in the diocese?
 - What is your relationship with leaders in other parishes? How many, how strong?
 - What is the strength of relationship with other ministries, i.e. Knights of Columbus, ACTS, Cursillo?

Devote a separate meeting for each step. Pray for openness and guidance of the Spirit; seek unity of the team. If the team is not unified, pause the process and pray as the team continues to discern.

If your desire is to grow an existing diocesan ministry, it is important to follow the above steps.

Remember, the depth of your leadership team determines the height of your ministry.

Events

Staging a conference is hard work - planning should start at least a year in advance. Before committing to this path have the team dive into the CMLA Conference Manual to understand the actions required and timing of each from the time the decision is made through the day of the event and follow up. With deeper understanding of the requirements, the team should again consider the questions in steps 2&3 above before a final decision.

The bishop's approval is required for a diocesan wide conference. Before getting too deep into the planning of the nuts and bolts, secure the bishop's approval. See Appendix 2 for an excellent method to approach the bishop and Appendix 3 to start building your diocesan network of resources.

Deacon Vince Eberling's words of wisdom from more than a decade of experience with Ministry to Men

For a first conference I would recommend two years planning to ensure a successful conference. You may ask "why wait such a long time to hold the first conference?" Simple - during that time you have to build what we call a parish leaders network and that's a little more difficult than what it might sound.

Dioceses throughout the country are structured differently. You may have groups of parishes gathered into something that is called a Deanery. You may have parishes that are gathered into something called Clusters. These clusters or deaneries are further divided into parishes. In my own archdiocese there are 104 parishes and they are contained within 10 deaneries. A deanery may have 5 to 10 parishes. The ideal is a parish leader in each parish. His job is to ensure that the information about your men's conference is disseminated to all the men in his parish and get them excited about the idea.

It is a next to impossible job to keep up with 100 parish leaders, therefore it is important to have deanery leads in place. Frequent communication with the deanery and parish leaders is crucial. The parish leaders and the deanery leads must be excited about the men's conference and transmit that excitement to the men in their parishes. How important is this step? If you do not have a parish leader in each parish and deanery lead in each deanery, you will have a low turnout for your first conference. Your successive conferences will continue to decrease in numbers rather than to increase and eventually you will have to stop having Men's conferences.

As I've traveled around and spoken to different groups of men in different dioceses in different states one thing is common in all of the ones who succeed and have high numbers turn out for their men's conferences - the ones who have the parish leader network system in place and sustain it. The ones who experience decreasing numbers and eventually fail are the ones that either have no parish leader network or have not continued to maintain it. I know this to be a fact because it happened in my diocese.

So how do you identify a potential deanery or parish leader? There are several ways. Depending on your diocese. You may have men's organizations within deaneries and parishes. One of the most extensive in most dioceses is the Knights of Columbus. Others maybe the Cursillo movement, ACTS, Marriage Encounter, Men's club, Emmaus groups, Paradisus Dei. Explore mutual benefits among all groups. Occasionally you may experience territorial concerns between groups. Your Ministry to Men is trying to unite the men in your parish and diocese - not become another competitor.

Remember there is no one organization that can meet all the needs of men. Find other Dioceses who have had experience in starting Ministry to Men in parishes and diocese that began with parish activities for men and grew into men's conferences (events) that lead to men's groups (capture) and then to ongoing conversion (sustainability). Repeat cycle with new event; new capture and overall sustainability.

Step by Step

Gather leadership

Pray

Seek council

Start small (Parish or Deanery)

Plan event

Execute event

Capture participants (small groups/DMGs)

Sustain disciple forming through to future events

Repeat cycles

Deacon Vince amplifies a critical element of event planning: parish leaders are the catalyst for men to attend the event. The initial planning should include an initiative to personally reach parish leaders. Identifying these leaders and cultivating a relationship will take time. Strong relationships will boost event attendance and be the base of forming Dynamic Men's Groups afterward, thus providing men the opportunity to draw ever closer to Christ.

The number of parishes reached will depend on the number of men dedicated to the outreach. In the leadership structure, this would be the role of the deanery lead. If presently there are no men in this role, or just a few, this is an excellent opportunity to invite others to join the ministry for the outreach without the other responsibilities of the deanery lead.

There are many men with the talents and passion for networking and developing relationships. This is an introductory step for them to experience the mission of the ministry. Some of these will catch the vision and desire to do more to advance the mission.

This team should not be involved in planning or executing the advance duties of the event. The responsibilities of this role do not end on the day of the event. As Deacon Vince points out, the strength of these relationships and of DMGs will fuel the attendance of future conferences. Nurturing these relationships should be ongoing to grow the ministry. The positive experience of the parish leaders will generate referrals to men in other parishes.

Dynamic Men's Groups

Jesus calls each man to go make disciples. Establishing Dynamic Men's Groups (DMG) is how we can respond to His call.

Conversion and transformation is an ongoing process. Consider your personal spiritual experience: it is not a one and done, it is an ongoing, lifelong journey. In DMGs men experience fellowship with a call to conversion and transformation. On the journey with other men they develop accountability with their brothers supporting and encouraging them on the way.

All men want to give and live their lives for something greater than themselves. A call to mission that will make a difference for their families, Church and society. The DMG is the structure which sustains the mission of conversion, transformation and discipleship.

In responding to Jesus' call to make disciples, there is also a benefit to diocesan wide Ministry to Men. Men from DMGs register early, bring friends and are a source of volunteers for events. They are the

primary source of future leaders who will expand the reach of Ministry to Men across the diocese and sustain it for the future.

Begin with the DMG in your parish. Is it vibrant and growing?

If not, examine and implement the changes necessary to be a model for other groups. We can't give what we don't have.

Use the Parish in a Box Manual to evaluate and identify ways to strengthen your group.

Then offer your support and experience to other groups in your area. Invite men from surrounding parishes to participate in your group and encourage them to start, with your support, a DMG in their parish.

How to Launch DMGs

A major risk to avoid is a plan to start an aggressive number DMGs without first evaluating the depth of your leadership team. The objective should not be how many groups can we start in the next year. The question to ask is, with current resources how many can be established with a strong base for sustainability and growth. Merely starting a group does not ensure accomplishing your mission of bringing more men to Christ and forming disciples. There are hundreds, if not thousands, of examples across the country of groups that started with a flourish – a hundred men attending in the early weeks that gradually dwindled to 10 to 20 that stagnated or faded away completely.

The mission of DMGs is conversion of heart and mind, transformation and discipleship. This is not accomplished in a year or two “program” - discipleship is a lifelong journey. It is critical in starting your diocesan ministry to take the long view. Men tend overestimate what can be accomplished in a year and underestimate what can be accomplished in ten years.

First identify how many men in your leadership team have experience of a year or more as part of a vibrant growing fellowship. How many have the talents and gifts to form personal relationships with potential parish leaders to support and coach them to build a strong core team, before attempting to launch a DMG.

This leader should remain in regular contact, attending the fellowship gathering, meeting monthly with the core team to help identify weaknesses and opportunities to strengthen the ministry for decades to come. This man must be able and willing to dedicate 4 to 6 hours per month for 18 to 24 months. This is in addition to weekly participation in his parish DMG and role within the diocesan ministry. Yes, it is a big commitment but critical. If one does not understand the commitment in advance, it can lead to disillusionment, burn out and drop out. The man, his family, the DMG and the diocesan ministry all suffer.

Review the four tiers of the Leadership model. Do you have the enough men to serve in the first three tiers? Parish outreach and support is the role of the Deanery Lead. In the beginning, it can be members of the steering team who launch this effort.

We strongly recommend this not be done by the core team. If there is no one at the steering team level, make it the priority to recruit members for this team. As a team study and implement the process, in Growing the Team section, to attract new members for your steering and deanery lead teams. It is a

mistake to think it is easier to do it yourself. Over time core team members may feel this is their primary responsibility to the detriment of the diocesan ministry mission/vision and planning.

There are two strategies for starting DMGs. The first is to approach a lay leader and/or priest in a specific parish(s). The second: schedule a deanery meeting with leaders and priests for an information meeting. The right approach for your ministry will be based on the depth, experience and talents of the team. Success will not be measured by the number started but rather how many are vibrant and growing after two years.

See Appendix 1 for a case study in how this played out in an actual group.

The health of DMGs can be a great asset or potential threat. Men in spirited groups will tell friends and encourage them to start a group in their parish, priests see the difference in the men and tell brother priests. These groups grow future leaders and volunteers for diocesan ministry events. As word spreads, diocesan officials will be more open to providing support.

Stagnant and defunct groups have the opposite effect. Men from these groups tell friends it's not worth the effort, priests are unlikely to provide a positive reference to fellow priests. Your ministry loses a source of future leaders and the potential of support from the diocese is lessened.

Energized groups add momentum to the ministry, the opposite drain the energy of the leadership.

Consider what the reputation of the ministry will be in three to five years. Will it be recognized for the impact it is having on men and how this is positively affecting families and the Church? Or will it be viewed as a group that started with a lot of enthusiasm but had little effect nor follow through?

Plan your approach for meeting with a man or priest who is interested in starting a group in his parish. First build a personal relationship before overwhelming him with why you think it would be great for the men of the parish. Seek first to understand, ask what he is thinking of and what is the motivation. Build trust before explaining what's involved and how to get started. When trust is built men are open to suggestions, coaching and mentoring.

People don't care how much we know, until they know how much we care.

Appendix 1

Central Texas Fellowship of Catholic Men Experience

In the early 2000s men from about five parishes in the Waco Deanery began meeting weekly for fellowship. In time a few of the fellows received a call to reach men across the Austin Diocese. A plan to help start men's fellowships in all parishes was developed and a meeting scheduled with the Bishop. The Bishop approved and endorsed the plan encouraging priests and lay leaders to attend the launch meeting. More than 25 parishes were represented at the launch meeting following of which approximately 20 started weekly men's fellowship groups.

The leaders formed a board to be comprised of a representative of each deanery in the Diocese and ethnic group. Responsibilities included maintaining contact with existing parish groups and starting new groups along with planning and executing Diocesan wide events.

In 2009 the Fellowship sponsored the first annual Men's Mass with the Bishop. In 2013 the Fellowship sponsored the first conference. The leaders of the parish groups were the primary network for promoting both events.

Conference attendance for the third conference was 800 plus, then dropped to 600 the next two years. In examining the causes for the drop in attendance, board focus and decreasing support of parish leaders were identified.

With two annual events came the responsibility of planning, advance preparation and duties the day of the event. Board attention had gradually shifted from strategic planning and initiatives to activity and tasks related to the two annual events. Attrition also impacted the board as resignations due to family or work issues and fatigue, without being replaced, reduced the number of members.

Another factor affecting conference attendance was the decreasing support from parish leaders in promoting the conference. The personal connection between board and the parishes had waned over time. Some parish leaders had moved on to other things and new relationships were not established. It was also discovered that some of the groups the founders had assisted in starting were no longer meeting or had dwindled to just 10 or 12 men. In some instances, current leaders did not recognize any connection between their parish group and the Diocesan Fellowship. These were situations the board had been unaware of.

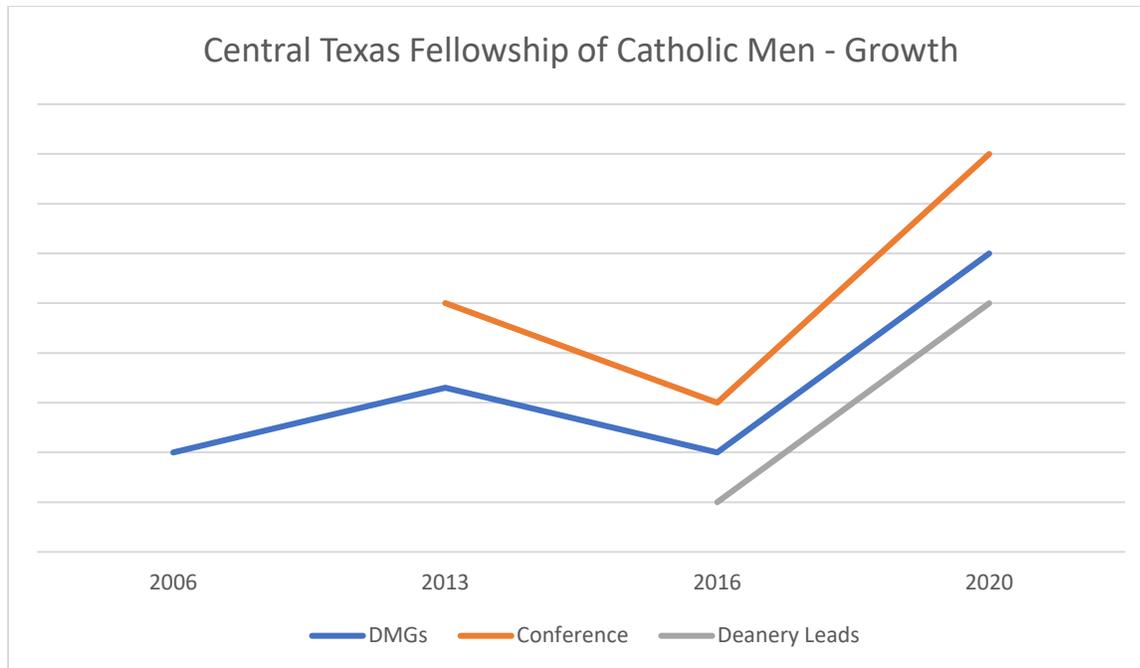
Considering these findings, the board began the active recruitment of new members, a shift of focus to strategic planning and mission advancement along with initiating a program to establish and build a personal relationship between the diocesan fellowship and parish fellowship groups.

Committees which include non-board members were formed to address key areas of diocesan fellowship.

- Provide DMG resources, such as best practices, programming
- Event planning and execution
- Communications and marketing
- Finance

To build personal relationships with the parish groups the leadership team established the role of Deanery Leads who are responsible for maintaining regular contact with the parish leaders in their area. The leads are non-board members working with four parishes in their area. They provide support and guidance to existing DMG leaders in growing the group and assist parishes starting a DMG. This began with two men and now includes 13 Deanery Leads working with 42 existing groups and assisting in starting 5 new groups with active contacts in 29 additional parishes.

Results



Findings

- Direct correlation between number of vibrant DMGs and conference attendance
- Increased attendance generated more potential parish leaders
- Importance of Core Team focus on mission and advancement
- Essential to continually grow the Leadership Team
- Depth of the Leadership Team determines the height of the Ministry

Appendix 2

Plan for Securing Bishop's Approval

Planning how to approach the bishop is critical to increase the probability of approval.

Areas to consider include:

- What are the bishop's priorities?
- How does the planned conference align with his priorities?
- What is the planned date of the conference?
- Are you prepared to answer the questions likely to be asked?
 - How much will this cost the diocese?
 - What diocesan (staff) resources will this require?
 - How will this benefit the people of the diocese?
 - How would this advance the mission of the diocese?

Read the Diocesan Pastoral Plan for insight into the diocesan priorities and initiatives. Identify how the ministry's mission supports these initiatives and priorities.

Consider your current relationship with the bishop, will he readily agree to a meeting? If not, who are the allies – priests, deacons, diocesan officials who could assist in setting the appointment?

Clearly communicating the "why" for a men's conference is critical.

- What is the current state of Catholic men?
- How does this affect families, the Church, society?
- How will the conference impact men?
- How will this make a difference in men's spiritual lives, families, the Church, society?

Gaining the bishop's and allies approval, and preferably endorsement, are the first steps - enthusiastic support is the best result. A well-planned approach will enhance the probability of achieving this outcome.

The key element of driving attendance is often overlooked at this stage of the planning process. Experience has shown the most effective method for growing attendance is personal invitation, one man saying to another, "I'm really looking forward to the conference, I'd like you to come with me." This is time to build your network of allies in the diocesan office and across the diocese. Appendix 3 identifies potential allies for your network.

Appendix 3

External Resources

A network of allies is an important element of diocesan ministry, whether just starting or growing an existing ministry. Allies are those who believe in the mission of the of the ministry and are willing to provide support in a variety of ways. Some will help promote events and activities, others may volunteer for specific tasks, some may be the source of referrals to key people you want to or should meet. You will find these allies in lay ministries and the diocesan offices.

Lay Ministries

The following are examples of the ministries which may be present in your diocese:

Knights of Columbus
Cursillo
ACTS Ministries
Emmaus Groups
Marriage Encounter
Men's Clubs

The Knights of Columbus are active in all states, others may vary in different regions of the country. Research which ones and similar ministries are active in your diocese. Learn the mission, objective, and structure of the organization to understand the similarities and differences between the ministry and your ministry. Meet with the leaders to build a relationship and explore the mutual benefits of collaboration between the ministries.

Diocesan Officials

Director of Evangelization
Director of Family Life
Vicar of Priest
Director of the Diaconate
The Priest Dean for the deaneries or districts in the diocese
Director for Black Catholics and Hispanic Ministries
Director for Young Adults

Depending on the diocese, some of the above may be part of another office such as evangelization.

Research and preparation in advance of the meeting will facilitate the exploration of the benefits of collaboration.

Appendix 4

Bibliography/Recommended Reading

Into the Breach: Apostolic Exhortation, Bishop Thomas J. Olmstead, 2015

No Man Left Behind Catholic Edition; 2017, Beacon Press

Forming Intentional Disciples; Sherry A. Weddell, 2012, Our Sunday Visitor

Making Missionary Disciples: Curtis Martin, 2018, FOCUS