

# Ten Tips for More Effective Catholic Men's Ministries

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## **1. A men's ministry should start with a vision and goals that men can be passionate about.**

This is true whether the ministry is a national or regional Catholic Men's Fellowship (CMF), conference, or parish level.

### **National Level**

*"We See Catholic Men, Linked as Brothers in Jesus Christ, and Called to Bring Him to Others!"*

"Provide every Catholic man in the United States the opportunity to experience conversion, transformation, and mobilization for mission through conferences, parish-based men's groups, leadership formation, and high quality Catholic men's resources."

"The goal of the National Fellowship of Catholic Men is to have Catholic men's conferences in all of the 200 Dioceses in the United States, to have men's fellowship groups in each of the 19,000 U.S. Parishes, and to provide support and resources to help bring all of this about."

### **Regional Level**

"To reach all Catholic men in our diocese with a faith-building and life-changing presentation of key aspects of our Catholic faith and life, and then equip them through parish-based men's groups to be spiritual leaders for their families, church, work, and community."

### **Jesus Commission/Vision/Goal to the Apostles**

"All power in Heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go, therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, teaching them all I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, until the end of the ages." (Mt 28:19-20)

And Jesus said to them, "Thus it is written that the Messiah would suffer and rise from the dead on the third day and that repentance, for the forgiveness of sins, would be preached in his name to all the nations, beginning from Jerusalem." (Luke 24: 46-47)

## 2. Follow-up commitments to men's groups after a men's conference

It is important to get men to commit to something specific and simple during the conference (or other events).

- a. It takes an enormous amount of resources and energy to stage a successful men's conference, or any successful men's event.
- b. We know that most of the men attending a men's conference will be inspired and will experience some kind of emotional or spiritual high.
- c. Yet, if these men do nothing following the conference, it will be difficult for them to maintain the ground they have gained.
- d. In light of this, why is it that we often put too little thought or effort into developing a specific plan for capturing the momentum from the conference?
- e. It is critical to provide men attending the conference, especially those not already part of a men's group, with the right next step. If we don't, it's like turning on the heat during winter and then leaving the doors and windows open.
- f. When men leave a men's conference, they should have already committed to the next step.
  - Present the opportunity during the conference and get men to sign up at the conference.
  - The commitment should be a one-time, short-term commitment to something that seems "doable," for example, a 6 week follow-up discussion group using a workbook on one of the themes from the conference.
  - Connect them with a person who will follow up and invite them to the men's meeting (remember personal invitations are the most effective). At the end of six weeks they will have an opportunity to "re-up" for another clearly defined commitment.

**Note:** Man in the Mirror, an evangelical men's ministry that uses this approach, has a 70% sign-up rate at their men's conferences. This is considerably higher than Catholic men's conferences (some follow-up commitments are as low as 10%).

### **3. Recognize that there are different types of men your ministry is trying to reach.**

Catholic men can be at different levels of spiritual growth. These include:

1. Unchurched
2. Fallen away Catholic
3. Cultural/nominal Catholic
4. Spiritually mature Catholic
5. Catholic leader or potential (emerging) leader

As you plan a conference, start up a men's group, or choose a men's group resource, you should consider the types of men you are trying to reach.

The first of the three types of men may not be attracted or touched by something they feel is too "deep" for them. They will want something with wide appeal and with, perhaps, not too long a commitment (i.e., a shorter time commitment). Also, unless men see a value or benefit to their personal lives, they will not be attracted to a men's ministry event. Finally, keep in mind that there are two other types of men who may fall into any of the above categories: Seeker/Hungry men and Hurting men.

### **4. Have a process for moving men along in their spiritual growth.**

The NFCM has described three stages of growth for Catholic men:

1. Conversion
2. Transformation
3. Mobilization for mission

Men from the different categories mentioned above will start at different points in this process.

### **5. Train men to lead other men.**

This includes training them to "go and make disciples," that is helping me to live out their faith through Christian character formation, service, evangelization, etc.

This includes creating a team of men whose responsibility is to foster through teachings, seminars, and parish events the work of evangelization of men.

### **6. Make full use of the three key strands of men's ministry leadership.**

1. The Bishop
2. A Primary Leader
3. A Leadership Team

There are three key strands of leadership in a parish-based men's ministry:

1. The Pastor
2. A Primary Leader
3. A Leadership Team

This includes creating a Pastoral Leadership Team that would be responsible together for the planning of Conferences and the development of local Catholic Men's ministry in the area.

Don't try to coordinate a men's conference or start a men's ministry if you are a parish staff member, or a solitary lay leader, until you have the active involvement of a lay leadership team and the clergy. A men's conference without a "Band of Brothers" and an involved clergy willing to use the event as an outreach to other men, almost guarantees a smaller event attended by the faithful few.

### **7. Utilize the power of a personal invitation.**

Whether you are trying to get men to come to a conference, attend a parish-based event, or participate in a men's group, men respond best to a personal invitation. Consider complementing the personal invitation with a simple piece of literature describing the conference or men's group, for example, a business card (which are inexpensive to produce). Don't be afraid to have an aggressive campaign where parishioners invite their friends, neighbors, and fellow parishioners.

### **8. Don't underestimate the draw of sporting events in men's lives.**

When scheduling the date for a conference or other men's events, pay attention to local, state and national sport's calendars, especially football. This includes high school, college and professional sports schedules.

### **9. Make a parish men's ministry be all-inclusive.**

Your men's ministry should include all men who are involved in some type of parish ministry, not just those who are part of a men's group.

This will allow the men's ministry leadership team to develop an organized effort to reach out to and impact a greater number of men in the parish through different events and activities, in addition to inviting men to join a men's group (e.g., monthly men's breakfast, yearly banquet for men in parish ministries, etc.)

### **10. To sustain a vibrant men's ministry at any level, the men involved have to be experiencing transformation.**

This means that their life is being impacted and changed for the better in some significant way (e.g., prayer life, family life, work life, etc.). This transformation will occur as men minister to other men and support one another in prayer, through parish-based men's groups.