

A Progress Report
by
The Committee on Marriage and Family
The Committee on Evangelization
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Introduction

In July 1999 we gave you an *introductory report* on Catholic Men's Ministries in which we began to describe and reflect upon the emergence of local groups and ministries responding to the "growing hunger for God among Catholic men". We called men's ministries a "welcome development" within the Church. We urged greater involvement and proactive support by clergy as well as communication and leadership formation by the lay leaders. We pledged that our Committees would stay in touch with the phenomenon, play a role in forming the leadership, and keep you informed of what we learn and what is taking place.¹

Now, a few years later, we bring you this *progress report* about the growth and strengthening and maturing of Catholic men's ministries. Our report is brief because we are planning a longer publication later this year. Just as our 1999 *introductory report* was based on a two-day consultation the previous year, this *progress report* is derived from a three-day leadership symposium we hosted in December 4-7, 2001 for the leaders of diocesan, regional, and national men's ministry groups. Both reports, then, use gatherings of lay leaders and bishops to provide a limited window through we can view a larger movement among Catholic men.

This report picks up where the first one ended and describes why the 2001 symposium was convened, what took place during it, and what was accomplished as a result of it.

A starting point: the need for leadership formation in the Catholic tradition

When bishop members of our Committees first met with men's leaders in 1998 we heard a clear message. The men asked for guidance, teaching, and other resources to ensure their programs would have a strong Catholic identity. And, in our dialogue at that same meeting, we identified some areas or issues to which we thought the leaders should give attention in their programming, namely:

- *Inclusivity: welcoming men of different races and cultures, socioeconomic status, age group, etc. as well as being able to draw upon different Catholic spiritual traditions within a single, integrated ministry to men;*

- *Relationships with women: understanding the meaning of equality and mutuality as well as appreciating the gifts of women and being able to relate to women with respect and genuine collaboration;*
- *Attending to the world of work: helping men to integrate their faith with daily life in the workplace and to address specific situations therein from the standpoint of Catholic belief and teaching;*
- *The use of Scripture: understanding the place of the Bible in God's revelation and the proper use of it as a teacher and guide for Christian living.*

Accordingly, we made the starting point of our second gathering with men's leaders topics drawn from the above list with the explicit intent to offer leadership formation. We proposed to do exactly what had been requested by the men themselves, that is, to offer guidance and formation by the bishops " particularly on those key topics " in order to influence local programs to continue developing within the Catholic tradition.

The leadership symposium: a rich conversation

At the symposium on December 4-7, 2001 two bishops from each of the sponsoring committees gathered with thirty-seven leaders of men's ministries from across the country. We invited an additional five men to be presenters and to participate in the symposium. Four staff members from the committees brought the total symposium group to fifty.

The program consisted of an opening talk in the context of Evening Prayer, five thematic presentations followed by discussion in small groups, a special presentation from representatives of the National Resource Center for Catholic Men, and a final session in which concluding statements were approved. Daily prayer, the Eucharist, and time for conversation and socializing were also on the schedule.

The opening presentation by Bishop Carl K. Moeddel and the five thematic presentations will be published in one volume later this year by the [USCCB Publishing Office](#). Material from the discussion groups following each presentation will be included in the publication as questions for thought, suggested activities, implications, etc.

The symposium presentations were entitled:

History, Foundations, and Future Hopes for Catholic Men's Ministries
[Bishop Carl K. Moeddel](#)

Major Building Blocks in Scripture for Men's Spirituality
Rev. Lawrence Boadt, CSP

Men in Marriage and Family Life

Dr. James Healy

Men with Other Men: Building an Inclusive Ministry

[*Bishop Gabino Zavala*](#)

Catholic Men as Disciples in the Workplace

Mr. James Nolan

Catholic Men Transforming the World

[*Bishop Michael W. Warfel*](#)

We have included as an *addendum* to this report some information shared by the National Resource Center for Catholic Men that was shared at the symposium and that is available on the NRCCM website (www.nrccm.org). Several leaders who were present at our first consultation in 1997 took the initiative to organize the Resource Center and to hire a director for it. The organization, though still in its infancy, is making a welcome attempt to respond to what local leaders have asked for, namely, resources to use in their groups, networking and training for leaders themselves.

The final session of the symposium drew together material the participants had created and presented some of it for a vote of approval by consensus. In the course of the program the men had been asked to submit written responses to two questions:

- *what is your hope for Catholic men's ministry?*
- *what initiatives should be taken to realize that hope?*

Their responses were compiled into a single document representing a "vision statement". It was discussed, amended, and affirmed at the conclusion of the symposium.

A new point of departure for Catholic men's ministries

The vision statement, reprinted below, represents an important accomplishment of the symposium. It is a statement of identity and mission for Catholic men's ministries. It expresses for the first time the collective aspirations and commitments of a cross-section of Catholic men's leaders. It suggests some standards against which present efforts can measure themselves. It offers a blueprint to those seeking to develop a ministry with Catholic men. It offers a challenge to men's leaders and to their pastors. The statement follows:

Vision Statement for Catholic Men's Ministry

We propose and commit to a vision of Catholic men's ministry that:

- Fosters a spirituality in men that is Christ-centered and that moves men toward:
 - *ongoing conversion of oneself and the transformation of society*
 - *brotherhood and friendship in Christ*
 - *service in charity and justice*
 - *reconciliation*
 - *a Christian impact in the workplace*
 - *a loving relationship of mutuality with women*
 - *a consciousness of the history from which patriarchy has evolved*

- Provides ongoing faith formation, for both leaders and participants, enabling them to share their personal encounters with Christ;
- Nurtures the growth of Catholic identity in men in their many roles, e.g., son, father, husband, worker, disciple, minister, etc.;
- Encourages men to take responsibility for their faith formation;
- Incorporates diverse and inclusive Catholic spiritual traditions, expressions, and practices that are sensitive to the ethnic and racial mix of Catholic men;
- Takes into consideration spiritual needs and experiences that are particular to men.
- In order to accomplish this vision the following general initiatives are needed:
 1. Involvement and support by bishops and pastors to encourage men's ministry and form its leadership;
 2. Structures for dialogue and networking among all leaders in Catholic men's ministry;
 3. Identification of existing resources and development of new ones for use in Catholic men's ministry at all levels;
 4. Development of small groups for men at local levels, e.g., parish, region.

Concluding thought

We have called this report a *progress report* with good reason. We have now held two national meetings with leaders of Catholic men's ministries and, over the course of three years, have observed:

- an increase in the number of leaders and programs; 17 leaders came to the first meeting and 37 participated in the second one;
- greater racial and cultural diversity among leaders at the second meeting;
- more published resources for small groups that are specifically Catholic in content and intent;
- an emphasis on providing catechesis for men beyond an initial call to conversion;
- the placing of Eucharist and the Sacrament of Reconciliation at the center of annual, large-scale events that often draw thousands of men.

In the Future...

The Committees on Marriage and Family and on Evangelization will continue to be attentive to Catholic men's ministries as they develop across the country. We invite bishops to share with our staff information about local needs, programs and resources so we might become better informed and become a conduit for communication among dioceses and groups.

We will communicate the substance of this progress report to the leaders who attended the December 2001 symposium and urge them to give serious attention to the vision statement created there.

Finally, by the end of 2002 we plan to publish in one volume the symposium presentations, discussion questions, suggested follow-up activities, and the vision statement. It will be available from USCCB Publishing.

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