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## The Organization and Development of the Christian Family Movement

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THE ORGANIZATION AND DEVELOPMENT  
OF THE CHRISTIAN FAMILY  
MOVEMENT

by

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A Thesis Submitted to the Faculty of the Graduate School  
of Loyola University in Partial Fulfillment of  
the Requirements for the Degree of  
Master of Social and Industrial  
Relations

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## PREFACE

The present subject was chosen to acquaint more Christian people with this recent plan for the sanctification of family life--to show the remarkable zeal of the founders of the movement and its successful growth since 1947. Because of the youth of the movement a more detailed parish study could not be made at this time. In observing the apparent increased fervor among the parishioners, it would be difficult to ascribe specific improvements to the Christian Family Movement until its recognition has been maintained for a considerable duration.

The writer is deeply grateful to Mr. and Mrs. Patrick Crowley and the other members of the Christian Family Movement who contributed their time and necessary documents. Sincere thanks are also expressed to Ralph A. Gallagher, S.J., for his patient assistance.

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

The state measures its true strength by the stability of family life among its citizenry. For the family is the social cell. No nation can be greater than its families. In vain does the world that disregards the injunction of God loosen family ties and break up family life and then look to state schools to produce good citizens. At its best the school is only a strong aid to the home. Good citizens must first be good persons.<sup>1</sup>

The previous statement made by the United States' Bishops evaluates the importance the family has on the entire nation. Yet we hear and read reports from everywhere, and our own personal observation suggests that the home life of our nation is growing continually weaker. The "ancient" concept of the family functioning as a social unit is held and observed by too few "conservative" Catholic families. The "laissez-faire" attitude toward Christian morality and the sacred functions of marriage are sometimes accepted today by some of our best-educated Catholic couples, who are embarrassed by the inability of Holy Mother, the Church, to keep up with the times.

It is evident, [then], that the prevalence of divorce is an indication of an unsound society. The esteem in which marriage is held furnishes an index of a people's morality; a lowering of the

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1 Statement of U.S. Bishops on the Christian Family, Cleveland Catholic Universe Bulletin, November, 1949, 1.

general estimate is a symptom of moral decline. The lax views prevalent in America regarding the holiness of marriage and the sacredness of the family and the home bear evidence to a low standard of social morality that may well cause grave apprehension regarding the security of the nation and the preservation of our national life.

The family is the foundation of the State; the strength and purity of its constituent families. And since the family takes its rise from the union of husband and wife, the sanctity of marriage and of marital relation is of primary importance for the welfare of the nation. It cannot be gainsaid that divorce destroys the home, and the home is the base and foundation of the State.

And not only this, but with the degradation of marriage, 'public authority, individual rights and even the institutions on which liberty depends, must inevitably weaken.' Hence the importance of measures and movements which aim at checking the spread of divorce. We must stop divorce or ruin the nation, which cannot continue to exist if its foundations are allowed to crumble and fall.<sup>2</sup>

The Supreme Court of the United States reiterates strongly the previous statements by declaring that "marriage is an institution in the maintenance of which in its purity the public is deeply interested, for it is the foundation of the family and of society without which there would be neither civilization nor progress; therefore any trend or system or law that attacks this institution condemns itself as the enemy of public and personal welfare."<sup>3</sup>

Divorce and easy living have always been a menace to society and the nation as a whole. All of the great powers of early civilization--

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2 Rev. W.P. Sullivan, "Divorce and Remarriage," International Truth Society, Brooklyn, New York, --, 2-3.

3 Statement of the U.S. Supreme Court cited in Charles Hugo Doyle, Sins of Parents, Tarrytown, New York, 1951, 25.

Rome, Greece, Persia--had their downfall first in the home, after which the nation itself was defeated. Perhaps our best example of real Christian homes existed in the Middle Ages under the guild system, when the Catholic Church set forth a "compact theory of marriage and the family." The "compact theory" included the teachings of the early Fathers of the Catholic Church on the holiness of marriage, the indissolubility of the marriage bond, and the obligation of maintaining absolute fidelity for both husband and wife.<sup>4</sup>

Today, instead of providing an atmosphere of sanctity, love, security, and cooperation, the modern home often encourages laxity, disrespect, and selfishness, all of which result in discord and instability. In some instances the sacramental nature of matrimony is not given its proper significance from the outset. As a consequence, when difficulties arise in the home with which the couple feels unable to cope, the first solution considered is separation or divorce. Personal happiness is given priority over the individual's responsibility to God and society. When the personal happiness fails, divorce is the logical climax.<sup>5</sup> Presently, all states make possible absolute divorce, that is, the termination of the marriage contract with the right of both to remarry.

The divorce rate has increased in alarming numbers in recent years. We will quote just some of the available statistics:

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4 Mihanovich, Schnepf, Thomas, Marriage and the Family, Milwaukee, 1952, 413.

5 John Kane, Marriage and the Family: A Catholic Approach, New York, 1952, 50.

In 1867, the first year in which divorce statistics were collected for the nation, there were an estimated 9,937 divorces, in 1948 the estimate was 485,000. In 1945 there was a ratio of one divorce for almost every three marriages in that year. If the present rate continues, it is estimated that in the not too distant future there could be one divorce for every marriage.<sup>6</sup>

A recent publication concludes that:

In our country the rate of increase is even more alarming [than in European countries]. From 1870 to 1900 the number of divorces per 100,000 married population jumped from 81 to 200—an increase of approximately 150 per cent. Forty years ago about one out of every twelve marriages celebrated in the United States terminated in divorce. Today about one in every six comes to a similar tragic end.

Thus the census bureau announced on March 25, 1942, that the 1940 divorce rate was the highest in history—264,000 divorces, or 'better than one for every six marriages performed.' That figure represents an increase of more than 200,000 over the 60,934 decrees granted in 1901 . . . .<sup>7</sup>

Another author affirms:

Americans were naturally shocked in September, 1946, when the Federal Security Agency released estimates on the number of marriages and divorces for the period 1887 to 1945. Back in 1887, there was only one divorce in every 17.3 marriages; in the year 1945, there were 485,000 divorces and 1,612,992 marriages, or about one divorce for every three marriages . . . . With the exception of Egypt, and possibly Russia, the United States has today the highest divorce rate in the world . . . . From 1900 to 1940, divorces increased by 374 per cent, marriages by 128 per cent, and population by only 73 per cent . . . . The change in the rate of divorce from 0.5 per 1,000 population in 1887 to 2.7 per cent per 1,000 population in 1949, is perhaps the most significant single statistic indicating the developments in the family over a sixty-two year period.<sup>8</sup>

6 Ibid., 51.

7 John O'Brien, God in the Home, New York: The Paulist Press, 1943.

8 Mihanovich, Marriage and the Family, 325-26.



The following appeared in a Miami paper:

Divorces exceeded marriage licenses by 333 in Dade County (Miami) the first half of 1950. Even so, Cupid made a better comparative showing than a year earlier. In the first half of 1945, divorces totaled 3,145 and marriages 2,677—an excess of 468 for the former. Through June this year (1952), 3,214 divorces were issued and 2,881 marriage licenses.<sup>9</sup>

And, finally, we read that "last year, in this country, there were 500,000 divorces."<sup>10</sup> We know that if all family disorganization, i.e., annulments, separations, and desertion were included in the divorce rate, it would be considerably higher.

What about the children of these broken homes and unhappy marriages? What do they suffer because of the selfishness of their parents? Fortunately, the highest divorce rate is among childless couples. Paul Jacobson found that "the divorce rate for couples with children was 8.8 per 1,000 couples . . . . The rate for childless couples was almost double the rate for families with children."<sup>11</sup>

Nevertheless, there are still many who do feel the ill effects of divorce. Mihanovich estimates that ". . . there are at present approximately 1,500,000 children eighteen years of age and younger whose homes have been disrupted by divorce."<sup>12</sup>

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9 Doyle, Sins of Parents, xiii (Preface).

10 Rev. Thomas Hosty, "Thinking of Getting Married?" The Voice of St. Jude, XVIII, June, 1952, 9.

11 Kane, Marriage and the Family, 239.

12 Mihanovich, Marriage and the Family, 345.

These are the defenseless victims who are being deprived of proper parental care and direction. "Various studies indicate that much delinquent behavior in children, such as incorrigibility, running away from home, truancy, and stealing can be attributed to broken homes."<sup>13</sup>

Judge McNaff of Fort Wayne states: "A great majority of the delinquent boys and girls who appear in juvenile court come from homes that have been broken principally by separation, desertion, or divorce. Therein lie some of the greatest tragedies of life."<sup>14</sup>

Whether the parents are physically or psychologically separated, statistics indicate that the children suffer. "A two-year study of New York criminal records reveals that 47 per cent of those convicted of major crimes come from disrupted families."<sup>15</sup> Most of the children of these broken or unstable homes suffer from a loss of security. "Such children may have their conceptions of family life so distorted that they are unable to adjust themselves adequately when the time comes for them to marry."<sup>16</sup>

The growth of selfishness and the decline of religious values have made couples more self-centered and less child-centered. Catholics believe that the chief purpose of marriage is the propagation of the human race, and yet, some Catholics are unwilling to accept the responsibilities of married life. The birth of a child, which was formerly regarded as a

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13 Ibid., 346.

14 Statement quoted by Charles H. Doyle, Canal Is Forever, New York, 1949, 214.

15 Ibid., 215.

16 Mihanovich, Marriage and the Family, 345-46.

blessing from God, is now often prefaced by feelings of displeasure, financial worry, and even regret. However, there are couples who desire one child, but one child only. The reason usually given by parents to justify their action is that they are able to give one child so many more advantages than they would if there were more children. Often this is not actually so because such a condition is harmful to the personality of the child as well as to society.<sup>17</sup> Probably a more truthful reason is that the parents do not have to make as many sacrifices with only one child.

In spite of the high birth rate of 1947, the trend has been toward smaller families in the United States. This trend began to appear as early as 1790. "Today there are more households consisting of two persons than of any other number."<sup>18</sup>

All experts agree that by the year 2000 A.D., about 50 years from now, as a result of the declining birth rate there will be a proportionate decline of the population of the United States. For the time being, that is, from 1946 to 2000 A.D., our population will increase numerically, but at a slower rate . . . .<sup>19</sup>

Society makes demands on the family but does little to encourage large ones. The high cost of living, especially in urban areas, the small home or apartment house, superintendents who frown at the sight of a child, plus the added "necessities" of our present-day culture, all contribute to the success of the Planned Parenthood Federation of America.

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17 Raoul Plus, Christ in the Home, New York, 1951, 68.

18 Mihanovich, Marriage and the Family, 437.

19 Clement S. Mihanovich, "Whither Birth Control?" St. Louis, Missouri: The Queen's Work, 1947, 12.

Today " . . . a baby is 'budgeted' much the same as an electric refrigerator, a radio and an automobile. Significantly with the modern couple each of these commodities generally has priority over a baby."<sup>20</sup>

The teaching of the Catholic Church on the indissolubility of marriage helps many couples reduce their marital difficulties.

In his study of urban counties in which a high average divorce rate prevailed, Cannon found that Dubuque County, an urban county, had a divorce rate of 1.27 per 1,000 persons as contrasted with Polk County, another urban county, which had a divorce rate of 6.22. Cannon explained that the difference was due to the influence of the Catholic Church in Dubuque County.<sup>21</sup>

In view of this, however, it is evident that the high divorce statistics include our Catholic couples and affect a number of our unstable Catholic families. The great frequency of divorce and remarriage in our country plus the indifference, or even approval, with which it is received is bound to influence our future parents. They are in constant danger of absorbing a "worldly and contractual" attitude toward marriage and losing their early ideas regarding the sanctity and stability of that Sacrament.<sup>22</sup> "If divorce were seriously and generally opposed, young persons would be impelled to think through the matter of matrimony more seriously."<sup>23</sup>

Similarly, Catholics adhere to the faulty theories of the birth controllers, who work intently to further their cause. It would be absurd

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20 Kane, Marriage and the Family, 50.

21 Doyle, Cana Is Forever, 205

22 Sullivan, "Divorce and Remarriage," 8.

23 Kane, Marriage and the Family, 250.

to pretend that no Catholics practice birth control or contraception. The findings of Kane indicate, however, that Catholics engage in these practices less frequently than non-Catholics.<sup>24</sup> Still, birth control is forbidden for all because it is a violation of the natural law, but particularly for Catholics, who know the correct teaching on the subject.

"The problem for Catholic families lies not so much in the correct answers as in the application of these answers in their daily lives."<sup>25</sup> In the following chapters we will present the history and method of the Christian Family Movement along with some of the actions reported by the various groups. The chief source used by the author for this information was the newspaper, Act, which is the official publication of the Christian Family Movement. Personal interviews provided the writer with necessary details, and approximately ten of these were conducted with leaders and members of the movement in Illinois and Michigan. Private records and files of the movement, preserved at the home of Mr. and Mrs. Crowley, were also accessible to the writer.

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24 Ibid., 214.

25 Ibid., 71.

## CHAPTER II

### ORGANIZATION OF THE CHRISTIAN FAMILY MOVEMENT

It was in 1942 that the seeds of the Christian Family Movement were first planted. Mr. and Mrs. Patrick Crowley, pioneers in CFM,<sup>1</sup> became aware of the need for apostolic work within the family itself. For several years previous to this they had participated in the spiritual and social activities of their parish and had believed they were doing all they could to make theirs a holy and happy marriage. Mr. Crowley had discussed the present-day problems confronting the family with his business associates, and together they sought to discover a practical role for the family in the parish apostolate. They met with Monsignor Reynold Hillenbrand, prominent in Catholic Action, and decided to meet regularly in order to solve the difficulties encountered in their home lives.<sup>2</sup>

After a few months the wives of these men formed similar groups and the two met every week, though separately. Later they found that this was not the most effective method.

We wondered about the possibility of husbands and wives meeting together [the Crowleys explained]. We began to realize that we

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1 Wherever used in this thesis the letters "CFM" will refer to the Christian Family Movement.

2 Adolph Schalk, "Christian Family Movement," The Voice of St. Jude, Chicago, XVIII, June, 1952, 6.

couldn't get very far with husbands and wives in separate groups. We were a family movement with only half of the family present at meetings. When we started meeting together, it touched off a very important point which is the secret to a great many of the problems that we are faced with--namely that to keep family unity, the family must do a great many things together. When we began to meet together, instead of separately, we found that just that one change in our procedure was a big contribution toward the unity in our own families. Now husbands and wives meditate on the New Testament and the liturgy together, and together apply the teachings they learn to their everyday problems. As a result, they just naturally grow closer together. As this unity grows, it is spread throughout the parish. The important thing, also, is that we learn to work on a local basis.<sup>3</sup>

The groups united and reorganized along parochial lines. Thus, in 1947, the Christian Family Movement was born. Concurrently, a similar movement was developing in New York and South Bend, Indiana.<sup>4</sup> The various groups adopted the procedure of the Young Christian Workers, i.e., OBSERVE, JUDGE, ACT, which is developed during the inquiry section of their meetings.

The aims of the Christian Family Movement are expressed in the manual, For Happier Families, a guidebook for all members:

To make Christ the center of the individual family, your family and mine,

To help the families of our community, our state, our nation to the joy of a Christian way of life--through love, through service, through example, through education, through organized action, and, where necessary, through legislation.<sup>5</sup>

Christian Family Action, then is intended to be an effective way of answering the bishops' request for organized efforts to make the home

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3 Ibid., 7.

4 Rev. Gerard Weber, CFM Chaplain's Manual, Chicago, 1952, 7.

5 For Happier Families, Chicago: CFM Publication, 1950, 1

more Christian. The Christian Family Movement seeks to fulfill this need by endeavoring "to promote the Christian way of life in the family, in the families of the community, and in the institutions affecting the family by serving, educating, and representing the family."<sup>6</sup>

The first objective of CFM, however, is the training of its members. By constantly performing small acts of service, and by working zealously to effect a change in one's environment, the members bring about a gradual training-through-action. Since it is a work of reformation, its success or failure will depend on the sincerity of its members.

In the words of Mr. Crowley:

The Christian Family Movement schools its couples in the practical consequences of our religion's teachings on social justice . . . . In the family, the neighborhood and nation, the realization of the enormous importance of every person is the only hope to counteract the divisive effect of discrimination, exploitation and isolation that seem to threaten the family, community and the world.<sup>7</sup>

The Christian Family Movement is intended to help the people of a community solve their problems and to aid the priest in the parish. It is essentially a parish movement which assists the priest in discovering and solving the problems that make Christian living difficult. Since many of the major issues in society can be related to the family, then the family has an obligation and an opportunity to do something about them. Parents, as leaders of the family, are in a better position to investigate whether

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6 Ibid., 17.

7 Schalk, "Christian Family Movement," Voice of St. Jude, XVIII,



they are problems of the school, the gang at the corner, the tavern, or any others arising from their common life and environment.<sup>8</sup>

Bishop Leo Pursley, at the 1951 Convention at Notre Dame, told CFM members that theirs was "a movement with the emphasis not so much upon an organization as upon an action . . . which . . . reaffirms the position of the father as the head of the family."<sup>9</sup> He commended them for their neighborliness, their integration of both the natural and supernatural elements of marriage, their vision and courage, and their technique.

As we mentioned before the method of CFM is the Inquiry method, OBSERVE, JUDGE, ACT. This is applied to some phase of family living and utilized in a small group of six to eight couples who meet regularly every two weeks. This basic group of the movement is called a section. The members of the section consist of married couples who are willing to influence others. They should be from the same parish or neighborhood and should fall into the same general age group, who have common family problems. They should be the ordinary people of the parish possessing a good will and a quality of leadership.

The first step in starting a section is to obtain the permission of the pastor of the parish and ask him to appoint a chaplain for the group. Although the entire meeting is handled by the family members themselves, a chaplain is usually present to aid and instruct. If the chaplain is unfamiliar with CFM, it was suggested by the committee members to wait until

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<sup>8</sup> For Happier Families, 6.

<sup>9</sup> Chicago Act, Fall, 1951, 1.

the section is running smoothly before inviting the priest to the meeting.<sup>10</sup> The group should also contact the Federation in their city if one exists.

Basic to the movement is the necessity of studying the New Testament and living, as much as possible, the liturgical life of the Church. The couples are encouraged to attend weekly Mass frequently, to understand better the teachings of the Church, to foster a desire and a love for spiritual rather than secular reading, and to take a more active participation in the liturgical functions of the parish.<sup>11</sup>

After the preliminary arrangements are completed, a permanent leader is ordinarily chosen. It is important that one couple accept the responsibility for the group. Before each section meeting the couple holds a preparatory meeting with the chaplain. The chaplain guides the couples in the development of their spiritual lives and helps them to base their actions on Christian principles.

All section meetings follow a definite pattern. The meeting begins with a prayer in common, usually the invocation to the Holy Ghost. This is followed by the reading of the minutes, brief in content, and any necessary announcements. For the next fifteen minutes the couples engage in the Gospel study and discussion. This is usually prepared by a different couple each week. The couples are encouraged to draw at least one practical conclusion each week. The Gospel study lays the groundwork for contemplation

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10 Chicago Act, Fall, 1951, 3.

11 Schalk, "Christian Family Movement," Voice of St. Jude, XVIII, 8.

and meditation.

The couples then spend fifteen minutes on the liturgy. Whereas, the Gospel study presents the historical Christ, knowledge and practice of the liturgy presents Christ as He lives in the world today, in His Mystical Body, in the Mass and the Sacraments.<sup>12</sup> "Most families try to follow the liturgy of the Church year, starting with the making of the Advent wreath for their own families and for other groups."<sup>13</sup>

The next fifteen minutes of the meeting are devoted to what is termed "Personal Report." During this period the couples report on their actions which resulted from the Gospel and liturgy study of the previous meeting. They mention specific acts of individual services performed for others. Through the personal report the couples assist each other by suggestion and example.

The remaining forty-five minutes of the meeting are spent on the most important phase--the Inquiry. As one couple explained, "The Inquiry technique is a natural technique in which we OBSERVE with our eyes and ears, use our knowledge of Christ's teaching to EVALUATE the observation, and then ACT on the conclusions reached."<sup>14</sup> To illustrate these terms: at the meeting each couple reports on observations made on some phase of family, civic, or economic life as it affects other families in the community,

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12 For Happier Families, 6.

13 Chicago Act, Fall, 1951, 6

14 Chicago Act, Fall, 1951, 6

i.e., specific problems of teen-agers, social prejudice, etc; the group then judges each particular situation in the light of Christian principles; and, finally, they decide on a definite action to take so that the problem might be worked out. The action should be simple, practical, positive, prudent, and should be based on the result of the observations and the judgment. The section head is responsible to see that an action is decided upon at each meeting. This action usually takes place before the following meeting.<sup>15</sup>

CFM has a special yearly Inquiry Program which is one of study and action. The booklet itself is prepared by the Coordinating Committee and represents the thoughts and suggestions of CFM couples. The Coordinating Committee is usually composed of one couple from each city having at least one CFM section. The committee has been meeting twice a year, once in January and once at the annual convention. The latest CFM Inquiry contains topics for twenty-six weekly meetings starting with July, 1953, and continuing until June, 1954. The booklet includes a general outline for each of the twenty-six meetings with appropriate excerpts from the Gospel and specific questions on the passages and the liturgy. The Social Inquiry is composed of a separate issue to be considered at each meeting, this year's theme dealing with social responsibility and education. Methods are suggested for the observation and judgment technique, but the action is left to the ingenuity of the individual member. Some of the important inquiries

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15 For Happier Families, 8-10.

for the year 1953-1954 include a discussion of: Old Age, Race, Labor, Housing, Sex Education, Television, and Catholic Children in Public Schools.<sup>16</sup> In each inquiry CFM places great emphasis on recognizing the dignity of the human person.

A parish may have any number of CFM groups but the groups themselves must be small, that is, no more than six or eight couples. The committee believes that this is a major factor in the success of CFM. The theme of the whole program should be personal and non-professional, thereby enabling each individual member to have a voice in the meeting and a feeling of importance. The meetings are conducted in such a way as to provide active participation by every couple. The chaplain and the leader do not give a talk or lecture. In fact, the chaplain does not speak at all during the meeting. At the conclusion, however, he may comment briefly if he wishes. The leader directs the discussion so that each couple may express his views on any question that arises. He does not enter into the argument or debate, nor even express his opinion on the matter at hand. The final action decided upon, then, is not something previously determined by the chaplain and the leader, but it is the immediate conclusion of the group based on their observation and judgment.<sup>17</sup>

When a section has been in successful operation for some time the next step is to start action groups to extend the influence of CFM on families in the parish. Action groups consist of five or six couples who

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16 CFM Annual Inquiry, Chicago, May, 1953, (Index).

17 Chicago Act, Fall, 1951, 4.

follow the same procedure as the section and who receive their direction from a section couple. The action group works on the same problems and helps the section members. The eventual aim is for each couple to have a spirited action group. In order to keep pace with the section group it is more effective for the action groups to meet every other week. When this is impossible, once a month is sufficient.<sup>18</sup>

As soon as Christian Family Action has become large enough to have two sections in a city or region, a Federation is formed. The members maintain that this is an important step toward unity and the strength needed to make CFM effective. As the Federation grows officers are chosen together with a Federation chaplain. The special functions of a Federation are to formulate inquiries and plan special activities, e.g., days of recollection, retreats, or Cana Conferences.<sup>19</sup>

In considering the relationship between Cana and the Christian Family Movement, it is necessary, first, to distinguish between the two. Cana endeavors to help couples make their homes more Christian, while the aim of CFM is to create a community where Christian living is possible by removing obstacles. Through Cana Conferences, couples learn the principles; in CFM these principles are put into practical use. Thus, CFM picks up where Cana leaves off. The Pre-Cana Conference was begun as a practical solution to help engaged couples make a better preparation for marriage. Many CFM groups start as a result of Cana Conferences and, correspondingly,

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18 For Happier Families, 10-11.

19 Ibid., 12-16.

a number of Cans Conferences are perpetuated through CFM.

The growth of CFM is evident through their convention reports.

In 1948 there were three or four groups in the Chicago area and about twenty-five couples. In 1949, CFM held its first annual meeting at Childerly Farm in Wheeling, Illinois. Delegates from more than a dozen cities assembled to exchange ideas and experiences and to work toward more effective organization and techniques.<sup>20</sup> A plan for inter-Federation cooperation was worked out through the creation of a Coordinating Committee. From this meeting, Act was proposed as the official publication of CFM.

The second general convention was held in June, 1950, at St. Procopius College in Lisle, Illinois, with more than forty-five couples present. Members and officers of CFM groups in various cities, some as far away as Rhode Island, met for inspiration and further points on technique.<sup>21</sup> The principal addresses were given by Bishop McNamara of Joliet, former chaplain of CFM, and Monsignor Reynold Hillenbrand. The name "Christian Family Movement" was adopted and its purpose agreed upon. Specific problems were suggested for consideration during the following year.

CFM groups convened at Notre Dame in South Bend, Indiana, from June 30 to July 2, 1951. Bishop Leo Pursley, Auxiliary Bishop of Fort Wayne, spoke to almost one hundred couples, representing CFM units of nineteen cities in twelve states. It was reported that there were approximately 119 groups located in thirty-nine cities. In Chicago alone there were fifty

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20 Chicago Act, May 15, 1949, 1.

21 Chicago Act, June 26, 1950, 1.

parish groups comprising about seven hundred couples. It was noted that sections were starting in southern India and Puerto Rico.<sup>22</sup>

Notre Dame was again host to CFM in 1952. There were 150 couples present, fifty of them from Chicago. Delegates from other midwestern states were represented as were California, Oregon, Oklahoma, and Connecticut. Fifty priests attended a special session for chaplains. Bishop Waters of Raleigh, North Carolina, gave the banquet address; and at another session, Don Phillips, professor at Hillsdale College in Michigan, stressed the importance of the individual in the group.<sup>23</sup> The expansion of CFM was evident at this time with groups in eighty cities, including some in Canada, and 3,500 individual names on CFM's mailing list.

A more significant growth was evident at the 1953 Notre Dame Convention. Seventy priests and more than 250 couples assembled for their largest meeting. Noteworthy among those present were priest observers from India, China, Belgium, and Viet Nam. Auxiliary Bishop Loras T. Lane of Dubuque recognized the movement as a "vital element in the Church," and encouraged its expansion.<sup>24</sup> Monsignor Hillenbrand, in his address, emphasized the importance of intensive spirituality among the members of CFM.<sup>25</sup>

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22 Chicago Act, Fall, 1951, 1.

23 CFM Newsletter, July, 1952.

24 Statement of Bishop Lane, address given at Notre Dame, June, 1953.

25 Statement of Monsignor Hillenbrand, address given at Notre Dame, June, 1953. (Summaries of the previous addresses are printed in the Convention publication of Act, July, 1953.)



At the present time there are groups in 160 cities in the United States and twenty-one cities abroad, including Canada, Japan, England, the Philippines, Uruguay, Argentina, Denmark, and Germany. Although the exact number of couples is unknown, the mailing list of CFM includes the names of approximately five thousand couples. In Chicago alone, where the movement originated, there are, at the present time, approximately two thousand couples in about one hundred parishes.<sup>26</sup> This represents a growth of about one hundred per cent in one year for the movement as a whole.

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<sup>26</sup> Annual Report of CFM Coordinating Committee, July, 1952 to June, 1953.

## CHAPTER III

### CFM IN THE LIGHT OF THE PAPAL ENCYCLICALS

Before considering some of the achievements of the Christian Family Movement, let us first reflect on the basic philosophy behind the movement. What is the motivating factor which prompts hundreds of couples to seek and welcome opportunities to help a neighbor in any situation? Why has the growth of the movement been so tremendous these past few years when the spirit of individualism and selfishness is prevalent? What attraction or what promise does this simple program of family action hold for our Catholic parents? The answer to each question is fundamentally the same. Before entering into any kind of Catholic activity the proper motive is necessary, and these people find that motive in their relationship to Christ and His Mystical Body. To learn and to understand the doctrine of the Mystical Body of Christ is a primary requisite for CFM members.

When Christ lived on earth He taught and He ruled and He sanctified, and that is what He wants His Church to do. That is what the members of CFM aim to do as part of their work in this larger body of Christ. The doctrine of the Mystical Body comes to us from Christ and St. Paul and it is further explained by our Holy Father in the encyclical, Mystici Corporis Christi. Here we are told that the Church is a Body and Christ is the Head of the Body. As a body it must have unity and the members must work together

for the good of the whole. Members do not live for themselves alone, but, on the contrary, become mutually dependent, each one having a definite function to perform. Baptism makes all members with Christ.<sup>1</sup>

The Church is called the Mystical Body of Christ to distinguish it from His physical Body that was born of Mary. In this Body parents, god-parents, and all who assist the hierarchy in Catholic Action, occupy an honorable position. But sinners, as well as saintly persons, dwell within the Mystical Body. Only schism, heresy, or apostasy excludes a member, but other sins do not. As our Holy Father expresses it:

Christ did not wish to exclude sinners from His Church. If there are some ailing members in the Mystical Body, that should not lessen our love for the Church. It should rather move our charity to pray for them, and aid them as far as we can to regain their position as healthy, that is, holy members of the Body.<sup>2</sup>

Through His death on the cross, Christ increased the great treasury of graces which He pours out upon His members, adding new life and nourishment to His Mystical Body. The greatest source of grace for the members comes with sharing in the Eucharist Sacrifice and the Sacrifice of the Mass. "And by the Eucharist, all members are fed and nourished at the same table, and are brought into union with each other and with the Divine Head, in a divinely wonderful way."<sup>3</sup> The unity, thus achieved, is the keynote of the Mystical Body, which prompts men to perform good works and urge others to do

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1 Pope Pius XII, Mystici Corporis Christi, trans. Gerald Treacy, S.J., New York, 1944, 5.

2 Ibid., 17.

3 Ibid., 6.

the same. Because of the Communion of Saints, no good act is done, nor virtue practiced without benefiting all of the members.

In the Church Christ loves all the members of the human race, "for He shed His Blood to reconcile all men to God."<sup>4</sup> If we love God and Christ, His Divine Son, we will love our fellowmen; for in this way, we are fulfilling the Divine Commandment of charity: to love God and to love man for God and Christ, Who saved all men. That is why St. John says: "If any man say 'I love God' and hates his brother, he is a liar . . . ."<sup>5</sup> That is why we must imitate the all-bracing love of Christ, excluding no one, regardless of religion, race, or national descent.

"So the salvation of many depends upon the prayers and penances of the Mystical Body, the Supreme Pontiff, the bishops, priests, the faithful, and especially the fathers and mothers of families."<sup>6</sup> To them is given the most important task of educating and protecting their children from the dangers that threaten them today.

An analogy is often made between the family and the Mystical Body. The father is the head of the family with God-given authority, as Christ is the Head of the Church. He is the ruler who sets the ideals and the attitudes and the teaching of the family. He is the support of the family, not only economically, but in every sense of the word.

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4 Ibid., 24.

5 John 4, 20.

6 Pius XII, Mystici Corporis Christi, 12.

And, just as out of the love between Christ and His Church new members are born into the Mystical Body at the baptismal font, so out of the love between husband and wife, new members are born into the family. Not members merely of the human race, but, what is far more important, small members in Christ's Mystical Body.<sup>7</sup>

The mother may be called the heart of the home as the Holy Ghost is the love which dwells within the Mystical Body. The heart is not inferior to, but rather in cooperation with, the head. And the heart and the head of the family should no more be separated than the heart and the head of a human body.

The preceding belief is not one which would find favor and approval in most secular societies today. We are told of an incident which took place in one of the Chicago divorce courts where a judge was hearing a case involving the usual domestic quarrels. At the end of the hearing he concluded that, in the house, the woman is the absolute and final authority. The most distressing thing about the judge's statement is that so many thousands of people agree with him and base their own married life on a similar philosophy.<sup>8</sup> However, according to St. Paul and the Holy Fathers, we know that whether it is in the house or in the office, or in the social, political, or economic life of the family, wives must be subject to their husbands and husbands must love their wives as Christ loves the Church.

The family, then, should be especially interested in serving Christ and His members, for the family, in a lesser degree, shares the same

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7 Rita Strubbe, "The Family and the Mystical Body," How Families Work for Christ, Chicago, 1951, 12.

8 Ibid., 10

characteristics of the Church, the Mystical Body of Christ. The husband and wife continually teach each other and through this teaching they must strive to attain their mutual salvation. The parents, too, have a full-time job of forming their children into adult, Christian personalities, ready to perform functions as members of this cooperative Body.

Their teaching includes every word that is spoken, everything that is worn in the home, all the entertainment that parents allow for the children or for themselves, every bit of printed matter. Teaching likewise includes all the attitudes of the parents which children pick up so easily--attitudes on the neighborhood, on social and economic questions, toward the pastor and his parish organizations, toward Ember Day fasts and keeping Holy Days holy. All these things go to make up the real education of a Christian.<sup>9</sup>

If the family is to reflect the life of the Mystical Body, then family prayer must be emphasized--family devotions, family Mass and Communion, family participation in the liturgy. The family must worship as one body as does the Church itself. The family members must grow holier and sanctify each other. The family cannot stop with its own members but it must extend to its neighbors, its parish, its community, and to families all over the world.

It is this apostolic leadership of families which the members of the Christian Family Movement encourage and promote. The couples are trained to think in terms of the entire Church, to realize that the Mystical Body is not made up of members of one parish alone, nor one race alone, but of people throughout the world. By reading the papal encyclicals and spiritual books they are frequently reminded of the dignity of each human person.

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9 Ibid., 13.

They feel that if a man is worth redeeming, he is important enough to share and to contribute.

The importance of the work of the laity in the parish is recognized more and more by the members of the clergy. Previously many pastors felt that if the laity was given too big a voice in parish affairs, there would be a return to lay trusteeship. Now, according to Father Weber, the opposite has been found true and priests are beginning to understand that the inactivity of the laity is impeding the growth of the Church. Secularism permeates the movies, the press, the schools, political life, industry and professions, even the home itself, and, consequently, these institutions are "deforming instead of forming Christians."<sup>10</sup>

The clergy alone cannot restore these things to Christ, for the press, the entertainment world, the industries and professions, and the family are not the proper field of the clergy. Priests can enunciate the principles which apply but the actual work of reforming these institutions must be done by those who participate in them.<sup>11</sup>

The Catholic laity of today, therefore, occupy a much more important place in the Church than they have for centuries as the last five Popes have never tired pointing out. Actually it is the place they have always occupied. The doctrine of the Mystical Body makes it clear that there is a division of responsibility, and that in this work and this responsibility the laity have a very definite and peculiarly indispensable share.<sup>12</sup>

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10 Rev. Gerard P. Weber, CFM Chaplain's Manual, Chicago, 1952, 5.

11 Ibid., 5.

12 Ibid., 6.

The Christian Family Movement is endeavoring to carry out this mission of restoring families to Christ and reforming the institutions which affect the family. By their organization of small groups within the parish, each member has an opportunity to assume responsibility, to bring his will as well as his intellect into the training process. They wish to share with their neighbor the spirit they have developed within the group—the spirit of mutual aid, of discussing and solving their own problems, the spirit of Christian brotherhood. As Monsignor O'Grady expressed it after attending one of their meetings:

. . . They were struggling with problems. They were trying different methods of reaching their neighbors. They were always on the lookout for opportunities for serving their neighbors in the hour of need. They were also interested in securing assistance from neighbors in their efforts. . . .

Practically all the families present were low-income families. People have asked me whether they did not show feelings of insecurity. On the contrary, I think they showed evidence of strength and courage and a feeling of security gathered from the common bond of brotherhood that had grown up among them and which they were interested in getting others to share.

This group represented one of the closest approaches to the practices of the first Christians that I have ever seen.<sup>13</sup>

CFM members do not concentrate solely on the doctrine of the Mystical Body but also investigate and study other important messages of Christ's Vicar. For the first twelve meetings a new group reads and discusses lengthy passages from the encyclical, Mystici Corporis Christi. After the first six months, however, the liturgy section of the meeting is

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<sup>13</sup> Msgr. John O'Grady, "Cooperative Family Relationships," The Catholic Charities Review, Washington, XXXVI, January, 1952, 1-2.



devoted to a discussion of the Mass, using Mediator Dei, as a text. This year, especially, CFM couples will give more attention to the meaning and the value of the Mass in reorganizing their own lives as well as the life of the parish. Since the liturgy must be a part of family life, CFM groups have undertaken projects directly connected with the liturgy. As we mentioned before, groups have promoted the use of the Advent wreath. Some couples have started the practice of having "house blessings" instead of "house warnings." In some parishes Masses are sung and recited by the faithful because CFM members have requested this.<sup>14</sup>

Because the Church is interested in the social welfare of Her members, so is the Christian Family Movement. Leo XIII, Pius XI, and our present Holy Father have shown an interest and an insight into vital social problems and have given us the principles necessary to alleviate these problems. The Church is not satisfied with a society which places obstacles in the way of the salvation of souls, and for this reason we find the Popes treating such issues as housing, labor relations, property, and wealth. Upon investigation of these letters and messages CFM members discover that the Church advocates the development of labor unions, the establishment of better labor relations, a wider distribution of private property, and that more stress be placed on the individual person rather than the "economic man." The principles of social justice and social charity are explained

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14 Dennis Geaney, O.S.A., "The Christian Family Movement and the Liturgy," Amen, VIII, May, 1953, 17.

along with the reciprocal rights and duties of the employer and the employee.

CFM, then, is striving to bridge the chasm between the Church and the neighborhood—to bring the social teachings of the Church into the community through Inquiries. With the emphasis this year upon Social Responsibility, they will be concerned with Family Spending, Family Credit, Security, Old Age, Minority Groups, Housing, Immigration, and Attitudes Toward Labor Unions. They will learn about and take action in relation to these vast and complex problems whose impact on family life is so great.<sup>15</sup>

At the Coordinating Committee meeting in January, 1953, when the Inquiry program was being planned, Monsignor Reynold Hillenbrand said:

We must, in a humble attitude, learn what our Blessed Lord has to teach us about working life, about industrial life, about economic life, because nothing is alien to the Mystical Body in human life. There are many clear and definite answers that the Church has given to the economic problem, answers which we, until now, may never have heard but which we should know in order to be fully equipped apostles doing the job that Christ asks of us.<sup>16</sup>

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15 CFM Annual Inquiry, Chicago, May, 1953, (Introduction).

16 Statement of Msgr. Hillenbrand quoted in CFM Annual Inquiry, (Introduction).

## CHAPTER IV

### RESULTS IN PARISHES WHERE CFM OPERATES

Using the designated inquiries at CFM meetings throughout the year and motivated by the philosophy just considered, members endeavor to choose practical, beneficial actions which will bind the community, as well as the family and parish, into a closely-knit unit. Since the inquiries are the same for all groups, so too, many of the resulting actions are similar. We will consider only a small portion of the reported actions of the various groups.

In an effort to discover some of these actions and to exchange ideas among members, the Coordinating Committee sent out a questionnaire preceding the 1953 Convention at Notre Dame. Among the queries included were those regarding the number of parish sections, the number of couples in each section, and the number of action groups per section. Finally, the couples were requested to list some of the actions resulting from their inquiries along with the influence exerted either on the members or by them. From the results of this questionnaire a booklet was prepared and distributed to the attending couples at the annual convention.

As we mentioned before the subject for this year's inquiries is Social Responsibility, and every OBSERVATION, JUDGMENT, and ACTION will follow that general theme. Each couple will observe the fundamental social attitudes

or philosophies which prevail in their community. They will seek to discover the basic problems in the community which make Christian living difficult and then attempt to solve these problems in a Christian way.

Generally speaking, the main problem is the secularism and individualism which have permeated the life of the family, the parish, the community. A New York couple reported previously on two fundamental problems discovered from an inquiry on Social Responsibility. The first was that the Christian family people were unaware of their dignity as Christians, and secondly, that they were unaware of their function as members of a unit of society. To illustrate this accusation the couple claimed that though they had lived next door to the same people for twelve years, they didn't even know their names; they didn't know the people upstairs, not even their children knew each other, etc.<sup>1</sup>

In Milwaukee a couple reports that the neighborhood's immediate problem is the pressure on the people who have more than two or three children. As one of the parishioners remarked about a CFM member who is the father of six children: "He will have a lot to answer for when he gets to Heaven for making his wife have all those children."<sup>2</sup>

Probably one of the most widely-felt actions in Chicago was the initiation of the Pre-Cana and Cana Conferences by CFM. Reverend John Delaney held "Days of Renewal" in some of the city parishes and, with the proper impetus given by CFM members, there grew the regular pre-Cana and

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1 Chicago Aot, August, 1949, 2.

2 Ibid., 2-4.

Cana Conferences.<sup>3</sup>

The only Scout Troop for blind girls in the state of Illinois, and one of the very few in the entire country, was sponsored by the Chicago Federation of CFM. Eight totally blind girls in widely scattered sections of Chicago were able to enjoy weekly Girl Scout activities because CFM has agreed to officially sponsor the group and to guarantee the chauffeuring of the group between their homes and their meeting place. One housewife had dreaded this act of service, for she anticipated a feeling of anguish because of the girls' handicap. However, after she found that they were so happy and so well adjusted to their blindness, it became a joyful experience for her and one which evoked from her prayers of pure thankfulness for God's blessings. This project was later allocated to the Lion's Club, leaving CFM workers free to undertake another enterprise.<sup>4</sup>

Often CFM sections organize Boy and Girl Scout troops in a parish and supply the scouts with the necessary equipment. Such was the endeavor of a Chicago group who, in order to raise money for the troop, held a card party in the parish which was financially profitable. The success of this fund-raising action indicated that the parents were behind the Boy Scout movement, so an additional troop for younger boys was formed.<sup>5</sup>

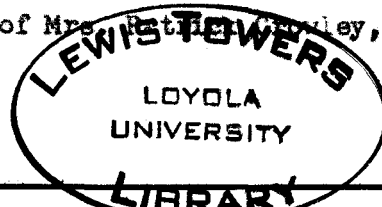
Fifteen CFM couples in Southwest Chicago report on some of their

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3 Statement of Mrs. Patrick Crowley, personal interview.

4 Chicago Act, June, 1950, 1. Statement of Mrs. Patrick Crowley, personal interview.

5 Ibid., 2.



efforts during a year's time. The couples live in a community which consists chiefly of a veteran's project and is located two to three miles from the nearest Catholic Church. The families are in the same age bracket; most of them have small children; they are not wealthy; and they depend entirely upon each other for many things, especially recreation.

The Christian Family Movement there is an outgrowth of a Cana Conference attended by a few couples who later formed a Cana Caucus. After a year or so this Cana group evolved into a CFM section which now has four strong action groups.

Roughly, one-third of the population of this community are Catholic. Until CFM arranged to have a confessor come out on Friday evenings, going to Confession was very difficult because of poor transportation facilities. Now the men in the group have constructed a confessional.

Catholic school attendance by these children increased from sixty-four to 125 in one year. How much of this can be attributed to the special efforts of the CFM group can only be estimated, however. One woman in particular was most discouraged by the cost of outfitting her three little girls in uniforms. CFM called the rectory and worked out a plan whereby the mother paid for them gradually as her budget permitted.<sup>6</sup>

The following incident was related in the October issue of America last year:

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6 Chicago Act, January, 1951, 1.

The most striking story of lay apostolic work which has come our way recently concerns a Catholic's Protestant wife who became a member of a New York parish group in the Christian Family Movement. The couples in the group had chosen for their social action the return to Sunday Mass of fallen-away Catholics.

The Protestant wife set her sights on eighteen Catholic families in a housing project near her home, none of whom went to Church. Within a week she brought three couples to the priest to have their marriages straightened out. Within three weeks she had succeeded in bringing all eighteen families back to attendance at Mass, and had enrolled five couples in the CFM.<sup>7</sup>

South Bend couples have inaugurated a program which solves the Sunday morning baby-sitting problem and increases Mass attendance as well. It is a "play church" for youngsters from two to six years of age, and it grew out of an inquiry on "Religious Training in the Home." Every Sunday "church" is held in a miniature set-up in the basement. The children vest each other, take turns as altar boys, act as sacristans and ushers. The altar, vestments, altar vessels, benches are all reduced in size so that they can be easily handled by the children. Names of the vestments are taught them as well as some parts of the Mass, prayers and hymns. They learn the proper way to genuflect and how to bless themselves. Bible story concludes the "church hour," and each child is given a mimeographed picture from the story to color at home. In this way he carries the influence of the Sunday school into his home.<sup>8</sup>

Conquering racial prejudice and breaking down deeply-rooted biased viewpoints is a major effort of all CFM groups. In South Bend a

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7 "Lay Apostolate Month," America, XC, October 17, 1953, 59.

8 Chicago Act, February, 1949, 4.

CFM man has been eating lunch regularly in the plant cafeteria with a man who is otherwise shunned by his fellow workers because of his race.<sup>9</sup>

In New Orleans a group welcomed a Negro family into a neighborhood where Negroes ordinarily would not be received.<sup>10</sup> An Indiana group had a similar opportunity with a Negro girl who had come there from the Bahamas. When a couple visited her and observed her sincere gratitude, they realized how necessary it is for Catholics to understand their duty as members of the Mystical Body of Christ. The girl said that this was the first time during her three year stay in the United States that any Catholic person had ever spoken to her, let alone make her feel welcome in the parish.<sup>11</sup>

A Christian Family group in San Antonio is making a serious study of racial segregation. With the consent of the archbishop of the diocese, the group investigated the racial policies of Catholic schools in that area. They found that, despite Southern traditions, more than forty Negroes are enrolled in three Catholic colleges in San Antonio. However, they also discovered instances where Negro families must send their children fifteen miles to grade school while they pass "White" schools only a few blocks from their home. A digest of their techniques and findings was turned over to the diocesan authorities along with an assurance that their group would be

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9 Chicago Act, December, 1949, 4.

10 Report of New Orleans, Louisiana, CFM Convention Folder.

11 Report of Connersville, Indiana, CFM Convention Folder.



ready to assist in the solution of this problem in whatever capacity specified.<sup>12</sup>

In cooperation with the local Council of Catholic Women, this same group has printed a leaflet entitled, "These Are Bad Words." It contains such words as "nigger," "kike," "polack," etc. It further affirms that:

. . . hate of 'minority groups' most often begins in the home. There it is usually communicated by the parents and other adults to the children in rather off-hand, almost subconscious ways: a word, a gesture, an attitude here and there. In such a manner is formed the child's personality; it learns contrary to Christ's teachings.<sup>13</sup>

Another enterprise of the San Antonio couples last year dealt with the subject of birth control. The group studied the activities of the Planned Parenthood Association Center in their city, a majority of whose clients are Catholic, together with their copious literature in both English and Spanish. The obvious lack of Catholic counter-propaganda prompted the group to contact a Catholic publisher. They supplied the publisher with a full set of PPA literature and received assurance that it would be fully answered in forthcoming Catholic pamphlets. In addition each couple in the group has undertaken to examine one specific argument advanced by the PPA and to provide a clear, concise, documented reply.<sup>14</sup>

One action arising from inquiries during the past year in Houston was an investigation of religious facilities provided for inmates of the

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12 Chicago Act, May, 1953, 1.

13 Cited in leaflet, "These Are Bad Words." Publication of the San Antonio Archdiocesan Council of Catholic Women.

14 Report of San Antonio, Texas, June, 1953, CFM Convention Folder.

county jail. From their observation they learned that the Sacrifice of the Mass was rarely made available to Catholics and that only on the fifth Sunday of any month in a year were Catholic services allotted. Those in charge of the jail's administration expressed a willingness to comply but explained that they are pressed for time, help, and space. However, a new county jail is being built which will provide room for the desired religious services.<sup>15</sup>

A group in Fond du Lac, Wisconsin, had a discussion on Catholic education. One of the chief obstacles to Catholic college education is the high cost. As a result of this meeting the group wrote to several Catholic colleges to obtain information on available scholarships. A list of these scholarships was compiled and distributed to high school students.<sup>16</sup>

The Oklahoma CFM is sponsoring through its action groups a state-wide campaign to locate and help the priests contact the children who attend public school so that they may be given the necessary religious instructions. As a follow-up program the educational lessons, prepared by the parish sisters, are provided for the families in need of them. CFM groups then volunteer to check on their progress.<sup>17</sup>

In working on the inquiry, "Religious Education in the Home," a CFM section in Wilmette realized that it would be difficult to secure information from parents in the neighborhood on that particular subject.

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15 Report of Houston, Texas, June, 1953, CFM Convention Folder.

16 Chicago Act, March, 1952, 3.

17 Report of Oklahoma, June, 1953, CFM Convention Folder.

From the principal of the parish school they learned that a surprisingly large number of children who enter school are unable to bless themselves or say the basic prayers of the Church. The group decided, with the pastor's help and approval, to list the names of those parents who have children around the age of three. These parents will receive an instruction pamphlet, along with a note from the pastor suggesting that the child is old enough to learn the Sign of the Cross and the Hail Mary.<sup>18</sup>

With "Neighborhood Responsibility" as a theme, a group in Evanston found themselves in the midst of an investigation into children's safety in movie theaters. Results of the first week's observations indicated that the neighbors generally felt no responsibility for the children of the neighborhood. Movies, which make up a large part of the children's entertainment, were judged hazardous for younger children because of the possibility of fires, molestation, and vandalism. All theater managers interviewed hesitated to call misbehavior problems serious and discouraged additional supervision. However, the police lieutenant indicated a different situation. He mentioned cases of molestation and suggested there were many more unreported. He expressed a willingness to cooperate completely with any civic endeavor. Action decided upon, then, was to determine the need as revealed by the parents themselves, and act in accordance.<sup>19</sup>

A couple on Chicago's West Side wrote of an action illustrating

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18 Chicago Act, March, 1952, 3.

19 Chicago Act, May, 1949, 1, 4.

their efforts to create a spirit of neighborliness. They had lived in the building three months and were not acquainted with their neighbors, so they decided to have a "get-together" in their apartment a few days before Christmas. Twenty-three invitations were dropped at the doorways of the other apartments, and from these there were fifteen answers and three regrets. The couple reports:

We never counted the guests since we were too busy introducing and serving. Evidently they had a good time because many of them were still in the apartment at 10:30, although we had marked the invitations, 7:30 to 9:30. Other parties and get-togethers have resulted with the effect of binding us together as a potential working unit. Now conducting the observations have become easy and we are no longer viewed with suspicion.<sup>20</sup>

CFM members in Providence, Rhode Island, list three actions on vital issues. To ease the housing problem in their area they made contacts with Providence lumber yards for building materials at reduced prices for use in the cooperative housing project. The Federal Housing Authority offered its assistance.

For mothers who have no one to care for their children during an illness, operation, or maternity case, this same group set up a "family assistance." The CFM furnishes volunteer women who manage the household and care for the children during the period of hospitalization and convalescence.

As a partial solution to the leisure time problems of workingmen's families, the Providence group leased a fifty-three acre wooded area with

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<sup>20</sup> Ibid., 3.

fields which will be developed into a family camp.<sup>21</sup>

After reading in Act of a revolving fund established to enable a man to make the down payment on a small house, another group reported on an action which took place some time ago. A family with a large number of children was dispossessed and had no place to go, so this group loaned the father of the family enough money without interest to make a down payment on a house. Then members of the group helped paint the house and get it in order. The family involved was not Catholic.<sup>22</sup>

A twenty-seven bed hospital to serve the needs of a community of seventeen thousand colored people is the object of attention by a CFM group which had also enlisted the aid of all other North Shore Chicago sections. To raise funds for this hospital, which depends primarily on its meager share of Community Chest contributions for support, a benefit lecture was held, providing a boost in its financial status. CFM people are also donating their services at the hospital as Nurses' Aids or in some other capacity.<sup>23</sup>

Many groups regularly collect magazines from their members and distribute them to nearby hospitals. Others report that they visit a mental institution in their vicinity, either to offer assistance or encouragement to the patients. Closely connected with this type of action is one reported

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21 Chicago Act, February, 1949, 4.

22 Chicago Act, June, 1950, 1.

23 Ibid.

by a Fond du Lac group. The subject of a recent inquiry was the problem of loneliness in families, particularly among aged people. The resulting action was visiting the lonely, inviting them to their homes, and trying to interest them in parish activities.<sup>24</sup>

While living in a housing project CFM members in Detroit have found a number of families who need the basic necessities--food, clothing, and sympathy. Since they themselves did not have an abundance of material goods, this group decided that if they couldn't afford to give, they could at least share. They have collected clothing and distributed it to many needy persons. As a result of their example they report that others in the neighborhood have caught the idea and are lending a helping hand.<sup>25</sup> Another example of a group giving assistance where it is needed is in San Antonio, where, for the past two years, they have been supporting a leper in leprosarium.<sup>26</sup>

CFM groups in Manhattan are working on numerous projects. Books have been collected for the Philippines, men's clothing for Friendship House, reading material and puzzles for the Veteran's Hospital.

In conjunction with the general inquiry theme, "Economics of the Family," the Manhattan section has been successful in obtaining the services of a pediatrician for a housing development neighborhood. The important

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24 Chicago Act, December, 1951, 4.

25 Ibid., 1.

26 Chicago Act, March, 1952, 3.

feature of the plan is that the pediatrician's fees will be geared to the number of children in the family, instead of the full fee for each child treated. Furthermore, it is a project in which the whole neighborhood may benefit. Another medical service is the securing of a low flat-rate for obstetrical care for CFM families and other families among their contacts. One specialist has agreed to take the initial step of reducing his fees.<sup>27</sup>

A Home Management Service is in operation in Chicago where the problem of homemaking and managing small children is a serious one while mothers are in the hospital or otherwise incapacitated. The CFM section advertised for practical nurses and experienced homemakers and now have a list of capable women who are available for such work at a price which is under the neighborhood rate.<sup>28</sup> In one parish a group volunteered to care for a non-Catholic woman dying of cancer, who wasn't financially able to employ a nurse. One CFM woman stayed with the patient until her husband returned from work in the evening, while another would prepare and bring in the evening meal. This service continued until the woman's death several months later.<sup>29</sup>

In discussing the Parable of the Good Samaritan, a North Dakota couple reported that in the outskirts of town, a widow, mother of three small children, was forced to carry all her water for drinking and washing because

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27 Chicago Act, May, 1951, 4.

28 Chicago Act, June, 1950, 2.

29 Statement of CFM members, personal interview.

her well had become contaminated. The group took as their gospel action the testing and cleaning of the woman's well. The men in the group went to her home on a Friday evening immediately after work. By the time it was dark, the cleaning job was completed.<sup>30</sup>

A similar type of neighborly action occurred in Willow Run, Michigan, where the couples resided in a transient housing section. Recently, one of the nearby apartments had been demolished by fire, leaving the family almost destitute. CFM couples provided bedding and other necessary assistance.<sup>31</sup>

One group in Huntington, Indiana, conducted an action in helping a member who was stricken with polio. With the funds secured by sponsoring a pancake supper, the group purchased an automatic heating plant for the family and installed it in the home.<sup>32</sup>

By sending a CARE package to Germany a CFM section learned of the plight of a particular family who sent their gratitude. The U.S. Army confirmed the real desperation of this family, consisting of a widow and her three children. The section adopted the family and continued to send clothing and shoes regularly. Sometime later they learned that the mother had died, leaving the children in the care of an uncle who is supporting his own family and an aged mother. Only recently released from a Russian

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30 Chicago Act, July, 1952, 2.

31 Ibid.

32 Report of Huntington, Indiana, June, 1953, CFM Convention Folder.



work camp, the uncle now earns enough for bare subsistence for his enlarged family.<sup>33</sup>

A group on the North side of Chicago, with the cooperation of the local newspaper editor, compiled the names and addresses of all the service men in the community. A copy of the local newspaper is mailed to them as soon as it is published. The CFM group handle the mechanics of the mailing process, while civic leaders in the community help defray mailing costs.<sup>34</sup>

Through the efforts of CFM, combined with the effectiveness of a noted priest-lecturer, South Bend now has a school for mentally retarded children which has received state-wide prominence. The priest delivered a lecture on what could and should be done to further the development of the retarded child, while CFM secured the cooperation of several local groups. Now many of the civic clubs either pay the teacher's salary or provide the needed space. At the school there are forty-seven pupils and a long waiting list. The school follows an academic program which is fitted to the needs of each child. Also included in the curriculum are such activities as piano lessons, knitting, art work, and ceramics.<sup>35</sup> The same group have requested their congressmen to amend the "Physically Handicapped Children's Education Act of 1950" to include the two million mentally retarded children

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33 Chicago Act, October, 1950, 1.

34 Chicago Act, March, 1952, 3.

35 Chicago Act, May, 1951, 3.

in this country in its coverage.<sup>36</sup>

Vocational counseling has evolved as the action from the unemployment inquiry in one CFM section. As a starter an expert in career counseling was asked to speak to all interested parents and grammar school, high school, and college graduates. Further development of vocational guidance is contemplated on some kind of a parish basis. CFM members believe that the experience and talent of parishioners in various professions and fields of business could be utilized to inform the youth of the parish of comparative job possibilities, prerequisites, and the advantages and disadvantages of the different occupations.<sup>37</sup>

Teen-age recreation is a growing concern to CFM parents as it is to the rest of the nation. From an inquiry on recreation CFM members in Chicago found that their local park was not being used. The "Dukes," a gang of teen-agers had marked off the sidewalk in the park as "Duke territory." Adults and youngsters alike feared these neighborhood terrorists. Most families solved the problem simply by keeping their children away from the park, but CFM members decided upon a positive action. Realizing that they couldn't lick the situation alone, a committee of six contacted representatives of other groups in the community—two other Catholic Churches, seven Protestant churches, the PTA's, and the neighborhood improvement

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36 Report of South Bend, Indiana, June, 1953, CFM Convention Folder.

37 Chicago Act, October, 1950, 4.

associations. As a result a permanent organization was formed with a CFM member as chairman. The council won adequate police protection, compelling the "Dukes" to disperse and making the area safe once more. The park district has installed better lighting and repaired the drinking fountain and tennis courts. The council plans to continue even after the park is in condition as a recreation center.<sup>38</sup>

In another Chicago parish a similar action, which started with a simple resolution to repair shower room facilities in the school gym, resulted in a permanent recreational program. A part-time coach and volunteer supervisors now make the gym available to older boys once during the week and to grammar school boys on Saturdays. Previously, because of lack of supervision, the gym was seldom used and youthful exuberance overflowed into acts of vandalism. With the present program the group reports that disciplinary problems have almost disappeared.<sup>39</sup>

Nearly every parish priest is faced with the difficulty of keeping Catholic youths attending non-Catholic high schools and colleges interested in religious instruction classes. In the Archdiocese of Chicago Chi-Rho clubs have been formed for this purpose in many parishes, and in one parish CFM has assumed the responsibility of boosting attendance numbers. Previously, the average attendance record was less than twenty out of a

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<sup>38</sup> Chicago Act, May, 1952, 1.

<sup>39</sup> Chicago Act, July, 1952, 7.

possible 125 boys and girls. The section members personally contacted seventy-five "should-be" members and report that the weekly average was raised to fifty.

The social part of the meeting is now entrusted to CFM, and the section couples each take their turn in planning and supervising the programs. Color movies, such as those produced by Pan-American Airways, dance exhibitions by Arthur Murray couples, active games, quiz contests, and group singings are the most popular activities. CFM is still contacting prospective members and working for one hundred per cent attendance.<sup>40</sup>

The Chicago Federation's inquiry on "Politics" resulted in several actions aimed to boost the registration rate. CFM members took active steps to encourage neighborhood registration, and then stimulated interest and discussion about the various candidates for office. Many sections invited the candidates to speak before different groups in the community.<sup>41</sup> One couple in Indiana was instrumental in getting a sixty-six year old person to vote for the first time.<sup>42</sup>

The attention of a group in one of Chicago's suburbs was drawn to a neighborhood family in dire need of home nursing care. The mother was very ill, so CFM wives cared for her daily and cooked for the family. As this progressed the women decided that one of their group should take a

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<sup>40</sup> Chicago Act, May, 1951, 2.

<sup>41</sup> Statement of Mrs. Patrick Crowley, personal interview.

<sup>42</sup> Report of Indianapolis, Indiana, June, 1953, CFM Convention Folder.

home nursing course with the National Red Cross. In the evolution of this work the discovery was made that the suburb itself did not have any type of a Civil Defense organization. With the home nursing program as a nucleus, this group has joined with the civil authorities in organizing an efficient and adequate Civil Defense.<sup>43</sup>

A North side group reports that they were faced with a very serious newspaper problem in their neighborhood. A local newspaper featured a column filled with the more lurid and distasteful type of news. As an action they contacted the editor of this paper and offered to supply him with a sufficient amount of wholesome news if he would stop printing the more sensational. The editor accepted and, according to the group's report, the plan seems to be working out.<sup>44</sup>

In carrying out the work of the lay apostolate, CFM relieves the priest of many time-consuming obligations and assists him in organizing and maintaining parish functions. Several pastors have observed that the CFM members in their parishes integrate and reactivate other parish societies and usually accept and fulfill the responsibilities as officers. Distributing the parish bulletin, addressing and sending confirmation invitations, and various other types of clerical incidentals, are just a few of the ways in which CFM has serviced the parish priest.

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43 Chicago Act, December, 1951, 3.

44 Ibid.

As a result of the inquiry, "The Family in the Parish", a group in California revived the dying custom of a yearly parish picnic. Together with other families in the parish, they promoted a very successful picnic which drew five hundred persons, nearly one-third of the parish.<sup>45</sup> Other groups are sponsoring parish libraries, managing pamphlet racks, and distributing leaflet missals.

A section in South Bend is writing a parish booklet which will be given to newcomers to acquaint them with the priests and the facilities of the parish.<sup>46</sup> In Chicago one parish section is aiding new parishioners by "bearing a cake or a pie or something more tangible than just a grin."<sup>47</sup> In addition they are given a typed list enumerating recommended "sitters" and domestic help, practical nurses, and information on the neighborhood, e.g., location of shops, theaters, etc. If the newcomers are Catholic, they are urged to register at the parish rectory; if they are non-Catholic, data regarding their church are given.<sup>48</sup>

A section in Wilmette started a group of eighth grade students who follow a program similar to CFM. The couples report that the children are beginning to understand the terms and to feel the importance of CFM by taking part and performing actions themselves. This "junior" organization

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45 Chicago Act, July, 1952, 2.

46 Chicago Act, May, 1953, 3.

47 Chicago Act, May, 1949, 1.

48 Ibid.

is intended to keep children and teen-agers interested in parish activities--especially if they attend several different high schools--and as a training program for future CFM members.<sup>49</sup>

The far-reaching effects of CFM are noted in the reports contained in the 1953 Convention folder. Of the three sections listed from Japan, one group mentioned that some of their meetings are held in the Compounds of the Palace of the Crown Prince, whose Chamberlain is a member. Another person in that same section is the daughter-in-law of the Prime Minister, and another, the niece of the Empress.<sup>50</sup> The Japanese groups are endeavoring to follow the same program as the Americans.

The effect of the Christian Family Movement on each individual member is difficult to measure. The real depth of the movement can be felt only by the members themselves but they, in turn, influence their particular family, parish, and neighborhood. A group in Macon, Georgia, has expressed it in the following way:

How privileged we feel--this new section, the first in Macon, Georgia--to be included in this vital Movement! So deeply have the members of this section been affected and to such an extent have we felt the influence of CFM in our everyday lives, that it's hard to realize we're only a few months old. [After the first meeting]. . . we came away feeling a unity of purpose, an enthusiasm that has built itself higher with each succeeding meeting . . . Carrying out the actions has shown us what can be accomplished by just seven couples and has also made us aware of the need of enlisting others,

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49 Statement of Mrs. Patrick Crowley, personal interview.

50 Report of Tokyo, Japan, July, 1953, CFM Convention Folder.

particularly so because of the great field for apostolic work in Georgia . . . .51

In Kenmore, New York, the members feel that the meetings have helped their individual families in many ways, and especially have made them more conscious of their duties and responsibilities as Christians.52

The Chaplain in Montreal, Quebec, noted with satisfaction that none of the CFM couples had previously known each other and were soon bound together in a friendly union of understanding and sympathy. Several members remarked, "This is the first Catholic society that aims at keeping married couples together."53

Members of a Toronto, Canada, section relate that the section is now one year old and they are still full of enthusiasm. They began with seven members who have persevered and who now express a feeling of close relationship with each other and a realization of life's purpose. "We have learned, at least a little, of how each individual fits into God's plan of things."54

All of the couples in New Orleans agree that CFM has shown them their personal responsibility to others and ". . . we now have a glimmer of what it means to be a full-time Catholic. We are achieving a closer unity with Christ and wonder how we ever managed before CFM."55

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51 Report of Macon, Georgia, June, 1953, CFM Convention Folder.

52 Report of Kenmore, New York, June, 1953, CFM Convention Folder.

53 Report of Montreal, Quebec, June, 1953, CFM Convention Folder.

54 Report of Toronto, Canada, June, 1953, CFM Convention Folder.

55 Report of New Orleans, Louisiana, June, 1953, CFM Convention Folder.



A chaplain in Grand Rapids believes that CFM helps to set the tone of the parish. "It develops people with the right attitude, people who think with the Church."<sup>56</sup>

Results are less apparent, but eventually more productive, in parishes having a heterogeneous, underprivileged, or spiritually apathetic population. These groups sometimes do not understand and, therefore, are not impressed with the importance of religion in their daily lives. To explain the meaning of the Mystical Body and each individual's participation in that Body of Christ is perhaps the most difficult step in their educational process. Once a certain amount of understanding is achieved, their eagerness and sincerity often surpasses that of their more fortunate brethren. In cases where they have become spiritually lax, amelioration of their condition, then, is a chief concern. However, the truths of the Mystical Body are not easily fathomed, especially by those whose religious education has been neglected, and so, this enlightenment is sometimes long in forthcoming.

CFM was introduced into two such parishes in Chicago—parishes whose members were unfamiliar with the principles of Christian marriage and family life. There were, and still are, several couples whose marriages have not been sanctioned by the Catholic Church, but through the efforts of CFM, some have been validated and others are working toward that same purpose. One couple, in particular, submitted to several prescriptions, in order to

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<sup>56</sup> Report of Grand Rapids, Michigan, June, 1953, CFM Convention Folder.

receive the blessing of the Church, and presently, are active members of CFM.<sup>57</sup> Not all endeavors are as obviously successful, but, nevertheless, they are a genuine contribution to the furtherance of Christian living.

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57 Statement of Mrs. Patrick Crowley, personal interview.

## CHAPTER V

### EVALUATION AND CONCLUSION

The assurance of the flourishing activity of the Christian Family Movement is exemplified by the members of the clergy who have expressed a desire for its continuance. Priests in various capacities are encouraging CFM leaders and members by their prayers and laudable comments. On February 10, 1953, the Coordinating Committee received a letter from the Papal Secretary of State, G.B. Montini, invoking " . . . God's blessing upon your work, and I pray that . . . the praise-worthy efforts of the CFM may be crowned with a consoling measure of spiritual fruit."<sup>1</sup>

An Australian bishop, anxious to inaugurate CFM in his diocese, writes: "I still think that the most valuable experience of my trip last year was contact with the Christian Family Movement."<sup>2</sup>

A bishop from Canada has requested CFM booklets in order to promote its development in his diocese.<sup>3</sup>

From one of the southern states a bishop described the role of CFM in this fashion: "You members of family groups become, as it were,

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1 Chicago Act, May, 1953, 1.

2 Chicago Act, May, 1952, 2.

3 Ibid.

sacramentals to those around you."<sup>4</sup>

The Chancellor of a large diocese, who reviews more than one hundred cases of broken marriages each week, has evaluated the movement thus:

This work, so happily started a few years ago and so successfully continued, is going to prosper—in happiness for yourselves and in the support you can give to others. If a minority of pagans can convince people that marriage can't last, why can't we turn the tables and tell them marriage CAN LAST? Let's accentuate the positive.<sup>5</sup>

A Benedictine Abbot in the South writes that he has followed the growth of CFM with interest and is anxious that it continue to prosper. As superior of seventy-three priests and ninety seminarians he is encouraging the study and organization of the movement.<sup>6</sup>

Commenting on CFM, a university president describes the movement as "one of the most providential things that is happening in the United States today. If we get canonized parents in this country, as I think we will, it will probably come as a result of this movement."<sup>7</sup>

The idea of CFM seems to be suited to the needs of families in all environments, the world over. A Carmelite priest from Lima, Peru, requested CFM information and materials which he felt was indispensable in his work with families there.<sup>8</sup>

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4 Chicago Act, July, 1952, 1.

5 Chicago Act, May, 1951, 1

6 Chicago Act, May, 1953, 2

7 Chicago Act, July, 1952, 7.

8 Chicago Act, May, 1951, 1

A feature story on CFM appeared in one of the southern Catholic papers stating that "CFM meetings are geared to create a deep sense of humility and a strong determination to act."<sup>9</sup>

The chaplains of CFM were requested to give their reactions as spiritual directors of the movement.

"After Mass, the Sacraments, and breviary, this is the finest priestly work, involving real and methodical spiritual direction."

"A few lay apostles . . . can be a heaven in the parish."

"Your sermons and even personal contact with families will never do the good in their lives that CFM does."

"CFM gets religion over the Communion rail and into peoples' lives."<sup>10</sup>

When questioned about the effect of CFM on the families, the chaplains listed varied replies and these are enumerated in order of their frequency:

1. Greater unity as a result of better understanding
2. More family prayer
3. Christian atmosphere in the home
4. Awareness of family's responsibilities in the parish and community
5. Improved training and education of children in the home
6. Better families
7. Better family recreation<sup>11</sup>

Reporting on the effect of CFM outside the family, three-fourths

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9 Quoted in Act, October, 1953, 1.

10 Chicago Act, July, 1952, 5.

11 Ibid.

of the chaplains noted a definite change in the parish and thirty-four per cent observed a noticeable effect on the community.<sup>12</sup>

One of the leaders of CFM relates that the chief obstacles to the growth of the movement is the unwillingness of some pastors to permit its inauguration in their parishes. The reason given most frequently by these priests is that there are enough societies in the parish and that greater membership in the already-functioning societies, and not the creation of new societies, is the approach to the solution. CFM members contend that through the existence of the Christian Family Movement in a parish, other societies also benefit. Sometimes the pastor is convinced by observing and comparing groups in other parishes, but many remain unconvinced and will need more assuring proof of the efficacy of the movement.<sup>13</sup>

We have seen that the exigencies of the family today demand a spiritual re-birth and stimulation of "neighborly consciousness." Father Dennis Geaney, O.S.A., reminded CFM members recently that "there is no such thing as a self-contained family."<sup>14</sup> Families must work interdependently to bring the families of the community back to Christ, regardless of race, color, creed, economic status, intellectual or cultural background. This task will not be accomplished in just a few years or by any one group; nor

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12 Ibid.

13 Statement of CFM member, personal interview.

14 Statement of Father Geaney at Notre Dame Convention, June, 1953.

It is the author's opinion that CFM is making a definite contribution toward this goal by striving to unify all Christians into the bond of love within the Mystical Body, by making Christ the center of the home, and by their efforts to restore the sacramental nature of matrimony.

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