



promoting the
centrality and integrity of
marriage for children
and society

Evangelization of Culture for Marriage and Family

Faith and Action Circle Meeting Leadership Guide

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CATHOLICS FOR THE
COMMON GOOD
INSTITUTE

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Faith and Action Circle Meetings

Purpose and Description

Evangelization of Culture for Marriage and Family Promoting the centrality and integrity of marriage for children and society

Participants in the *Stand with Children* project are part of the community shaping the future of marriage and family—a well-formed army prepared for positive action to reverse policies that seek to further undermine marriage and family, and working ardently to rebuild a marriage culture beginning with our own families and circles of friends.

These small group Faith and Action Circles are part of a larger effort sponsored by Catholics for the Common Good Institute including seminars, workshops, and retreats. The purpose of these meetings is to:

1. Forge community and fellowship for learning, action, and mutual support that will alleviate the sense of isolation so many lay Catholics feel and enable positive coordinated action for evangelization and civic participation;
2. Provide an opportunity for personal formation in the thought and method of John Paul II and Catholic Social Teaching. The emphasis is on learning new positive techniques for discussing issues related to marriage, family, and human sexuality with family members and friends in secular terms that they can repeat without fear of retribution or intimidation.
3. Build a prepared and committed team of people conversant in positive messages and techniques who can mobilize and quickly activate others to effectively promote or oppose policies related to marriage and family with school boards and government officials at all levels.

[D]ismantling the inhuman parody we call "modern American culture" begins not with violence but with the conversion of our own hearts.

Your task ... is to strengthen that spirit in each other ... and to instill it in all the people you reach with the extraordinary skills God has given you. If you do *only that*, but do it well, then God will do the rest.

*Most Reverend Charles Chaput
Archbishop of Denver
Remarks to Fellowship of Catholic Scholars.
September 26, 2010*

Weekly meetings are strongly recommended to adequately prepare participants to meet the crisis affecting our families and the increasing persecution of the Church and fellow Christians related to marriage, family, and human sexuality. It is necessary to not only understand the magnitude of the mission, but to have a sense of urgency to become formed and prepared for positive action.

Frequency of meetings will also help build relationships among members and lead to effective social and civic participation for rebuilding a marriage culture.

Leadership and Governance

Every circle should have a moderator and a liaison with the *Stand with Children* Network.

Moderator: The moderator's role is to guide the Faith and Action Circle meetings, coordinate decisions on meeting times and logistics, make sure participants have necessary materials, and confirm that everyone is informed about the content, time, and location of the next meeting. No formal training is required for this position.

Liaison: The liaison coordinates with the parish leader or the assigned county co-chair to stay informed of local activities supporting marriage and building the movement. The liaison will also provide information on development of issues and action related to marriage and family provided by either local leaders or through the Catholics for the Common Good website, ccgaction.org.

Common Fund: Each circle may decide to establish a "common fund" comprised of periodic voluntary donations. This is a tradition practiced by the early Christians as mentioned in the Acts of the Apostles and St. Paul's letters. The proceeds could be used for materials, social expenditures, or other needs as determined by the members of the circle. One person should be appointed for this responsibility.

Two part Faith and Action Circle Meetings

Part I – Study and Faith Sharing

Most of the meeting is dedicated to learning, formation, and community building. The process involves reading a prescribed text and providing personal reflections on the text. The focus must always be on self and never how the text applies to other people. Discussion and cross talk are discouraged to avoid being distracted by conversations, which can lead the group away from reflecting on the text and the primary purpose of this part of the meeting—learning and formation. In building community, the group is encouraged to take responsibility for supporting one another in their formation for mission.

Part II – Action and Business

The last part of the meeting is devoted to discussion and planning of practical ways of putting what is learned into action—in the home, among close circles of friends, in the work place, and in the public square. This can range from discussion of how to act on insights gained from that very meeting, to planning efforts to recruit new people into the movement. It would be good to also discuss results or difficulties related to personal or group actions since the last meeting.

Examples of Personal Action:

1. Share an insight gained with a family member and/or close friend to precipitate a conversation about love, marriage, family, or human sexuality.
2. Make a public statement in support of marriage and family using techniques learned from the movement through comments posted on blogs and websites, letters to the editor, email conversations, and on Facebook and Twitter.
3. Always discuss and practice reframing questions about marriage and family by describing the conflict between the two conflicting definitions of marriage.

Marriage unites a man and a woman with each other and any children that result from their union.

Marriage is a committed relationship between loving adults for their benefit (or private interest).

Examples of Group Action (many times in coordination with other area circles both inside and outside of the parish. (Examples include activities that CCG Volunteers are already doing in some areas):

1. Recruit new people to the movement for rebuilding a marriage culture and support them in setting up new *Stand with Children* Faith and Action Circles;
2. Plan and organize booths to promote *Stand with Children* at conferences and fairs, and other efforts to recruit more people joining the movement and participating in Faith and Action Circles;
3. Utilize techniques and share messages and insights gained in comments on Facebook, on blogs and websites, and in letters to the editor;
4. Organize petition and postcard campaigns in support of or opposition to legislation related to marriage and family at the local, state, or national level;
5. Organize regional CCGI conferences or workshops to learn new approaches and strategies for talking with family members, friends, and co-workers about the reality of marriage. Organize regional CCGI retreats to support the formation of a committed team for taking back marriage and family. Invite other organizations to co-sponsor these events. (These programs are currently only available in California.);
6. Organize teams to meet with legislators and their staffs to present new and positive arguments in support of marriage and family;
7. Develop celebration of marriage events in parishes for Valentine's Day as a means of educating parishioners, especially children, on the real meaning and good of marriage;
8. Call in to radio talk shows with positive comments and arguments on marriage and family. Some volunteer leaders have actually been guests on talk shows representing *Stand with Children*.

Faith and Action Circle Meeting

Sample Agenda

<p>The faith and action circle meeting is divided into two parts</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • study and faith sharing, and • action and business. 	Approx. Time	Elapsed Time (hr:min)
<p>(See moderator’s script for more guidance—Page 6)</p>	1 min	0:00-0:01
<p>1. Gathering and welcome, especially for new people or visitors</p>		
<p style="padding-left: 40px;">a. Opening Prayer: <i>Memorare</i> ,</p>	1 min	0:01-0:02
<p><u>STUDY AND FAITH SHARING</u></p>		
<p>2. Introduction (see Moderator’s Script of details—Page 6)</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">a. Review the mission to promote the centrality and integrity of marriage for children and society and its objective of building, forming, and training an army to rebuild a marriage culture.</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">b. Remind participants of the “reframing” approach of <i>Stand with Children</i> and the two conflicting definitions of marriage</p> <p style="padding-left: 80px;">i. A committed relationship between adults for their benefit</p> <p style="padding-left: 80px;">ii. Unites a man and a woman with each other and any children that come from their relationship</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">The real debate must be about what is the public interest for each definition.</p>	4 min	0:03-0:06
<p>3. Reading and reflection for learning and formation (see guidelines and moderator’s script)</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">a. Read opening statement for the reading and reflection</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">b. Read the content for the meeting and let participants share reflections about how the reading spoke to them</p>	58 min	0:07-1:05
<p style="padding-left: 40px;">c. Conclusion and summary by leader</p>	2 min	1:06-1:07
<p><u>BUSINESS and ACTION</u></p>		
<p>4. Committee reports; announcements; planning for activities; group problem solving</p>	20 min	1:08-1:25
<p>5. Collect and provide an accounting of donations for the “Common Fund”</p>	4 min	1:25-1:29
<p>6. Review priorities and assignments</p>		
<p>7. Sending forth for mission prayer: <i>Prayer for the Evangelization of Culture</i></p>	1 min	1:29-1:30

Moderator's Guide

Reading and Reflection Process for Study and Faith Sharing

Preparation before the meeting:

Provide reading assignment to participants prior to the meeting and ask them to prepare by reading it before hand.

In addition to reading the assignment, the moderator might want to discuss the text with a moderator from another group or a county co-chair to be prepared to answer questions.

Reading and Reflection Process

The purpose of the reading and reflection process is personal formation. It is not for solving problems or discussing matters outside of the text.

- 1. The discussion leader begins by explaining the process and asking people to take turns reading the article aloud.**
- 2. After the article is read, the discussion leader will ask participants to prayerfully offer reflections on content that resonates with them. Ask them to speak from the heart.** (The discussion leader should be patient and encourage people to be comfortable with silence to give participants an opportunity to reflect and comment.)
- 3. At the conclusion, the discussion leader can give a couple sentence summary of the reflections.**

Reflection Process Guidelines

Review the guidelines with participants and emphasize that it is more difficult than it would seem to avoid the temptation to go off on tangents. The process is very important, however, to assure the best quality experience and formation and learning opportunities for all.

- 1. Keep your reflection short** so that others have an opportunity to offer reflections;
- Once you offer a reflection, try to **let others share a reflection** before you offer another reflection;
- Become comfortable with silence.** That gives people time to think and reflect on the reading. It helps encourage people who are shy to offer reflections;
- Keep your reflections **focused on your own experience and feelings in the context of the text.** Try to avoid focusing on observations about other people;
- Avoid the temptation for cross talk or discussion of reflections**—that should be reserved for after the meeting.
- If someone is having difficulty understanding the meaning of a passage, it is OK to ask the group for helpful clarification.

Guidance for Discussion Leader

The process described above should be followed as closely as possible to permit everyone to participate, to avoid the domination of the group by one or two people, and to achieve the maximum learning and formation benefit for everyone.

Once the participants learn the process, the meeting should run smoothly. **However, it may be necessary for the moderator to gently remind people of the process to keep the meeting on track.**

Script for Moderator

Welcome

Opening prayer

Memorare

Remember, O most gracious Virgin Mary,
That never was it known
that anyone who fled to your protection,
Implored your help or sought your
intercession, was left unaided.

Inspired by this confidence,
I fly unto you
O Virgin of virgins, my Mother.

To you I come, before you I stand,
sinful and sorrowful.

O Mother of the Word incarnate,
despise not my petitions,
But in your mercy, hear and answer me.

Amen

Our Lady of Guadalupe, our patroness and
guide.

Pray for us.

Introductory Remarks (read periodically as a reminder of mission and vision)

- a. Mission of *Stand with Children* is to promote the centrality and integrity of marriage for children and society. We are part of a movement to rebuild a marriage culture starting within our own families and friends and through coordinated public witness of the reality of marriage.
- b. The true meaning of love, marriage, and human sexuality has been distorted and corrupted causing a great deal of confusion about marriage and the family, especially among children and young adults. People have come to have two conflicting understandings of marriage:
 - i. Many think it is a committed relationship for the benefit of adults
 - ii. However, we know that marriage unites a man and a woman with each other and any children that come from their union.The questions that we must ask are: How can we reduce the number of children who are deprived of a married mother and father? How does the understanding of marriage affect the choices of young people to marry? Where do people learn about the meaning and value of marriage to children and society? What is the public interest for each definition of the two conflicting definitions above?
- c. In our effort to promote and defend marriage, we must always strive to be in solidarity with the victims of confusion over love, marriage, human sexuality, and family, not in opposition to people who disagree. Focusing on the shortcomings of others has the negative effect of draining grace, obstructing love, and encumbering the awareness of our own sins. As cultural evangelists in service to Christ and his Church, we strive through communion with each other through Christ in the Eucharist to witness the truth (reality) by living it, and becoming love, even to our opponents.

Introduction of Reflection Process (important reminder for participants)

The process for the study and faith sharing part of our meeting is to read the prescribed text and prayerfully and meditatively offer personal reflections on the text. How does it speak to you personally? What insights did you gain? After offering a personal reflection to the group, meditate quietly and wait for others to take a turn. Sometimes people are shy and it takes time to collect their thoughts. It is good to become comfortable with silence and meditation on the text in between reflections.

Avoid discussions and cross talk. This is not the time for problem solving. Discussions can distract and lead people away from the lesson. Avoid reflecting on how the text applies to someone else; the focus should always be on you, the text, and insights you gain from it. Following this process will not be easy at first, but with practice, it will become easier for everyone.

Script for Moderator (continued)

Closing Remarks for the Study and Faith Sharing part of the meeting.

(This introduces the action part of the meeting and can be a time for discussion and problem solving)

Briefly summarize the key reflections offered.

Ask the group, what action might they take based on the insights gained?

Some suggestions:

1. Share an insight that you had with a family member or friend.
2. Write a letter to the editor or comment on blogs or websites using insights or techniques that you have learned.
3. When you hear people talk about the meaning of marriage, remind them that the issue is two conflicting definitions of marriage.

Conclusion of the Circle Meeting

After discussion of action plans and announcements, the moderator always concludes The Faith and Action Circle meeting by forming a circle of solidarity, and leading the sending forth prayer of the movement: The Prayer for the Evangelization of Culture.

The prayer expresses the Catholics for the Common Good vision for the evangelization of culture—a vision that unites us in Christ and the secular role of the laity in the mission of the Church. It calls for the intercessions of our Patrons, Our Lady of Guadalupe and Blessed John Paul the Great.

Prayer for the Evangelization of Culture.

O Holy Spirit, our Advocate and guide,
help us open doors to Christ's saving power,
which alone is the source of hope for humanity
and the renewal of society.

Fill us with courage to respond boldly
to the call of John Paul II to evangelize the culture.

Enable us by Your grace to live our faith in the
public square,
so that we may promote a civilization of love and a
culture of life, and
may secure justice for every human person at every stage and condition of life.

We ask this through the intercession of
Our Lady of Guadalupe and St (Blessed) John Paul the Great.
Amen.

Reading for Faith and Action Circle Meetings

Formation Circles for Evangelization of Culture for Marriage

1. Getting the Marriage Conversation Right (6-8 sessions)

Materials:

Getting the Marriage Conversation Right, a Guide for Effective Dialogue by William B. May: This text will provide an introduction to reality based thinking as an antidote to how relativism and influences of the culture cause us to unwittingly accept false premises about marriage, family and relationships between parent and child. It also provides a positive way of thinking about and presenting the reality of marriage in addressing current public policy about the redefinition of marriage. A guide for covering the book over six sessions although some groups may wish to do it over eight sessions to allow more time for reflecting and practicing on the 41 frequently asked questions at the end.

Can be purchased at Amazon.com (<http://amzn.to/V5D5y3>). Quantity discounts are available from Emmaus Road Publishing or for quantities over 50 call 213 291-3580.

“Study and Reflection Guide for *Getting the Marriage Conversation Right*”

Free download (<http://bit.ly/18qVATW>)

2. The Work of Evangelization of Culture for Marriage and Family (2 sessions)

Materials:

“The work for evangelization of culture for Marriage and Family”: a two part series for new participants or for continuing after *Getting the Marriage Conversation Right*. (Session 1, *Uniting in Christ for Evangelization of Culture*, Session 2 *Reality: the Antidote for Relativism*)
Free download (<http://bit.ly/17s9TZv>)

3. The Truth and Beauty of Love, Friendship and Sexual Ethics (divided into 2 series, 6 weeks each)

Materials:

Man, Woman and the Mystery of Love by Edward Sri: This book is based on Karol Wojtyla's (Blessed John Paul II) *Love and Responsibility*, which provides insight that are life changing and foundational to the evangelization of culture for marriage and family. With a focus on love, sexuality, true friendship, relationships, this book help people understand how perceptions in the culture undermine relationships and defeat the quest for love and intimacy leading to marriage. It is a how-to guide for single people and an examination of conscience for married couples. (Reflection questions are included in the booklet)

Can be purchased at Amazon.com (<http://amzn.to/11gnFi0>)

Additional Information about Catholics for the Common Good and *Stand with Children*

Evangelization of Culture and the Organization of Civil Society

The mission of Catholics for the Common Good is evangelization of culture based on the principles of Catholic social teaching and insights from Christian anthropology. Christian anthropology answers the fundamental question about what it means to be made in the image of God—how are we made, what are we made for, and what is necessary for human flourishing.

The work of evangelization of culture is neither liberal or conservative, but focuses on reality—the reality of God's creation that, when properly understood, points to Christ and eternal happiness with him. Doing this work is no less than direct participation in the mission of the Church—service to Christ himself.

What follows are guiding principles for the journey—principles that we refer to as the "Catholics for the Common Good Way."

Catholics for the Common Good Way

- 1. Recognize, and have faith and confidence that evangelization of culture must be a work of the Holy Spirit.** Evangelization of culture and social change begins with our own conversion. Prayer and communion with Christ in the Eucharist, the source and summit of Christian life, are essential. Rely on our intercessors and patrons, Our Lady of Guadalupe and Blessed John Paul the Great.
- 2. Always be faithful to the Magisterium, loyal to bishops, and respectful of priests** Through training, formation, and communion with local churches and the Chair of Peter, CCG strives to faithfully follow principles of social teaching and promote the understanding of the dignity of the human person made in the image of God.
- 3. Always be known by what we are for, rather than what we are against.** Our way is guided by the words of Blessed John Paul the Great to the Polish Solidarity movement in 1981: *"Solidarity was not against something or somebody, but for something."* *"Let your work serve human dignity, let it elevate man, let it elevate families, let it elevate the whole people."*
- 4. Always be in solidarity with victims** (never in opposition to perceived opponents or victimizers). Who are the victims of the breakdown of marriage or the distorted view of love, marriage, and human sexuality? Children who are deprived of a united family; Children and young adults taught falsely about love, marriage, and human sexuality.
- 5. Become love,** even to our detractors . Focusing on shortcomings and actions of "opponents" serves to: drain grace; obstruct the ability to love; encumber the awareness of our own sins.

Our vision is guided by the paraphrased advice of St. Francis de Sales: Do not judge, and find ways to excuse the sin by attributing it to ignorance. Following Christ's example on the Cross -- *"Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do" (Lk 23:34)*



CATHOLICS FOR
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EVANGELIZING THE CULTURE[®]

A Lay Apostolate for the Evangelization of Culture

About

Inspired by Pope John Paul II, Catholics for the Common Good has developed a unique model to support the secular role of the laity in the mission of the Church. This lay-led apostolate is a bridge from the academic to the practical—introducing concepts from Catholic social teaching and insights from Christian anthropology to the culture through a network of Catholic activists.

CCG provides strategic and tactical direction to Catholic individuals and organizations on current issues of interest, and organizes them for meaningful coordinated action with information and arguments that also help them build a practical working knowledge of the principles of Catholic social teaching.

Since its founding in 2004, Catholics for the Common Good (CCG) has developed a reputation of faithfulness and effectiveness working closely with the California Catholic Conference on a wide range of issues from physician-assisted suicide to marriage and family. In 2008, the California Catholic Conference called on CCG to lead the lay Catholic part of the Proposition 8 campaign, ProtectMarriage.com.

CCG endeavors to help form the exemplary Catholic citizen as someone who understands the dignity of the human person completely and clearly, engages in social and political participation with faith, reason, and charity, is “Catholic first” before allegiance to any ideology, and is able to explain the principles of Catholic social teachings to their family and friends.

While it is common for faith-based public policy organizations to have an underlying ideology, CCG works to start with the foundational principles of the social teachings that are neither liberal nor conservative but are based on revealed truth and reason. The introduction of ideological considerations is avoided by restricting activities to issues where the application of the teachings is so clear there is little room for disagreement. These include issues such as abortion, euthanasia, embryo protection, genocide, human trafficking, marriage, family, parental rights, religious liberty, human rights, extreme poverty, etc.

The CCG way requires that faith, reason and charity be always central to social and political participation, even in the face of persecution. The true Christian advocate must prayerfully maintain solidarity with the victims of injustice rather than focus on the sins of the victimizers. Focusing on the sins of others drains grace, obstructs love, and encumbers the awareness of one’s own sins.



CATHOLICS FOR
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INSTITUTE



promoting the
centrality and integrity of
marriage for children
and society

Stand with Children

A New Approach for
**Promoting the Centrality and Integrity of
Marriage for Children and Society**

Based on Catholic Social Teaching and Christian Anthropology

Stand with Children, a project of the Catholics for the Common Good Institute, takes a new approach to educating, forming, organizing, and mobilizing lay Catholic advocates for marriage. *Stand with Children* is designed to complement the USCCB's effort to support marriage and is based on the principles of Catholic social doctrine combined with insights from the method and the anthropology of Pope John Paul II.

Stand with Children moves the marriage debate away from issues related to homosexuality—expressed through the current cultural and political focus on individual rights, equal protection of adults and anti-discrimination. This focus has rendered efforts to defend the truth about marriage, the family, and human sexuality ineffective, obscured the meaning and purpose of marriage for many, and has made others reluctant to engage in public discourse for fear of appearing intolerant or discriminatory.

Unlike current efforts to defend marriage, *Stand with Children* presents marriage and the family as imperatives of social justice based on the common interest of every child without exception in the marriage of his or her parents. That interest can be verified through the natural desire of every person for connectedness with his or her mother and father—a connectedness known in society as marriage. Considering evidence of impediments to human development caused by family breakdown, the choice then becomes clear—the common interest of every child without exception or the private interest of selected adults.

Catholics for the Common Good Institute provides trainings, formation retreats and materials, and workshops to prepare a growing network of lay Catholic advocates to promote the centrality and integrity of marriage within their families and communities of influence, and to recruit others to the movement. Over 100 county co-chairs have been recruited in California, and representatives in parishes and Catholic organizations are being sought to support ongoing educational efforts and to provide local strategic and tactical direction.

This project was developed in collaboration with, and with the support of, Ned Dolejsi, Executive Director of the California Catholic Conference, and Rev. Michael Sweeney, O.P., President of the Dominican School of Philosophy and Theology in Berkeley, California.

Catholics for the Common Good is a lay-led apostolate for the evangelization of culture. It provides strategic and tactical direction to Catholic individuals and organizations on current issues of interest, and organizes them for meaningful coordinated action with information and arguments that also help them build a practical working knowledge of the principles of Catholic social teaching.



Prayers for Catholics for the Common Good and the New Evangelization

Prayer for the Evangelization of Culture.

O Holy Spirit, our Advocate and guide,
help us open doors to Christ's saving power,
which alone is the source of hope for humanity
and the renewal of society.

Fill us with courage to respond boldly
to the call of John Paul II to evangelize the culture.

Enable us by Your grace to live our faith in the
public square,
so that we may promote a civilization of love and a
culture of life, and
may secure justice for every human person at every stage
and condition of life.

We ask this through the intercession of
Our Lady of Guadalupe and St (Blessed) John Paul the
Great.
Amen.

Come, Holy Spirit

Come Holy Spirit, and fill the hearts of your faithful,
and kindle in them the fire of Your Divine Love.

Send forth Your Spirit and they shall be created,
and You shall renew the face of the earth.

Oh God, Who by the light of the Holy Spirit instructed the
hearts of the faithful,
Grant that, by the same Spirit,
we may be truly wise and ever rejoice in His consolation.

We ask this through Christ Our Lord.
Amen.

Prayer to Our Lady of Guadalupe, Star of the New Evangelization

Holy Mary, star of the new evangelization,
make us the light of the world.

We receive Christ in the Eucharist;
help us build the Kingdom in the world.
Teach us to do whatever He tells us.

May our study of His life lead us to love Him,
and our love for Him lead us to imitate Him.
If we are what we should be,
we will set the world ablaze and affect the culture.

We ask your intercession to make this so,
through Christ, our Lord. Amen.

Memorare

Remember, O most gracious Virgin Mary,
That never was it known that anyone who
fled to your protection,
Implored your help or sought your
intercession, was left unaided.

Inspired by this confidence, I fly unto you,
O Virgin of virgins, my Mother.

To you I come, before you I stand,
sinful and sorrowful.

O Mother of the Word incarnate,
despise not my petitions,
But, in your mercy, hear and answer me.
Amen

-
- For the intentions of the Holy Father, we pray to the Lord. *R: Lord, hear our prayer.*
 - For the intercession of Our Lady of Guadalupe, Star of the New Evangelization, and Blessed John Paul II in support of the work of the staff, volunteers and supporters of Catholics for the Common Good, we pray to the Lord. *R: Lord, hear our prayer.*
 - For the intentions requested by CCG members, and their families, we pray to the Lord. *R: We ask that the mercies of Christ be poured out in response to petitions from your servants, their families, and friends. We pray that these petitions be answered through the intercession of Our Lady of Guadalupe and Blessed John Paul II.*