



Discipline #7 - Build fraternity and evangelize men in monthly parish gatherings

Men Need a “Band of Brothers” in the Spiritual Combat

Christ establishes a Catholic Band of Brothers – From the beginning, Christ built a “Band of Brothers” by calling the 12 Apostles to build the Church Militant. Christ knew that men bound together become stronger; “Iron sharpens iron, like one man sharpens another” (Prov 27:17).

The Apostles continued as a Band of Brothers – The Apostles carried on Christ’s model of gathering together in Catholic brotherhood to successfully build the Catholic Church (Acts 2:42). Catholic men are adopted sons of the Father and are spiritual brothers, bound together in Baptism and nourished and unified in the Eucharist.

Research confirms the power of a Catholic Band of Brothers – Research confirms that Christ was right about building a “Band of Brothers”: Men who have bonds of brotherhood in their parishes pray more, go to Mass and Confession more frequently, read Scripture more frequently and are more engaged in their parishes and in the faith lives of the children. Catholic fraternity is critical for men to grow in faith.

How Satan Attacks the Fraternity of Catholic Men

Satan targets Catholic men – Satan rebelled against God (CCC 391-395), breaking the holy fraternity that existed in the beginning. Satan, named by Christ as the “father of lies” (John 8:4), seduces the woman, Eve, to achieve his ultimate goal of tempting the man, Adam, to sin (Gen 3); the Sin of Adam created division between man and God and between men. Satan fails to tempt Christ (Matt 4:1-11) and Christ warns men, teaching them to pray, “Deliver us from the Evil One” (Matt 6:13; CCC 2850-2854). Despite Christ’s victory over Satan, Satan continues to prowl the earth seeking to divide and destroy men, knowing if he can conquer the men, women and children are more vulnerable.

Satan attacks to isolate and divide men – Satan attacks in multiple ways: the media-saturated culture draws men into virtual gaming, pornography, and entertainment, isolating them and reducing the opportunities for building true fraternity; the divorce epidemic and single motherhood separates boys from their fathers, reducing their ability to build strong male fraternity; the promotion of the homosexual lifestyle can cause men to become wary of bonds of brotherhood; priest sex scandals can cause men to be suspicious of priests;

Satan’s attacks on Catholic men have been effective – Only 1 in 6 practicing Catholic men have strong bonds of brotherhood in their parishes. The lack of Catholic fraternity is one of the key reasons for the exodus of Catholic men from the Church; 1 in 3 baptized Catholic men have left the faith.

Acts 2:42 is the model for building a Band of Catholic Brothers

And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers. (Acts 2:42)

Acts 2:42 describes how the Apostles built the early Church – The Apostles “devoted themselves” to the uncompromising commitment to Christ the King and to the welfare of other Catholic men. “*The Apostle’s teaching*” drew men together to pass on Christ’s Gospel, first orally and ultimately in Scripture and the Magisterium. Following Christ’s example of choosing and forming men, the Apostles continued to emphasize “*Fellowship*.” As established by Christ, the Apostles continued the “*Breaking of the Bread*”, feeding Catholic men the Eucharist in Mass and drawing men to Christ in Adoration. Continuing Christ’s example of prayer, the Apostles engaged in “*The Prayers*”, drawing men together in adoration, chant, spoken prayer and teaching men to pray for their brothers in daily personal prayer.

Acts 2:42 builds Catholic fraternity today – Christ grew His early Church by the Apostles’ commitment to the practices of Acts 2:42. Rather than strictly social approaches which fail due to changing priorities, men’s busyness and personality conflicts, drawing men together in Christ gives men supernatural graces through the Holy Spirit. Men grow in devotion by observing other men devoted to prayer and receiving forgiveness and grace in the Sacraments of Confession and the Eucharist. Men encounter Christ in a meaningful way by being taught the Gospel. Men grow in confidence when they hear the witness of other men who struggle with sin and are helped by Christ. Men build bonds of brotherhood and respond to being part of something bigger than themselves. Following the Acts 2:42 model builds parish fraternity today.

Following Acts 2:42 to build Catholic fraternity in a parish.

Establish a parish vanguard – To evangelize the world, Christ establishes and builds the Church by calling, forming and leading the Apostles. To evangelize men in a parish, many who are lukewarm and lack fraternity, a parish vanguard of 12-20 men (of various ages) formed and led by the parish priest to become *Catholic Watchmen*, can be an excellent tool. After following the Acts 2:42 model (gathering in devotion, prayer, confession, catechesis, fellowship) for a period of months to grow in the Holy Spirit and brotherhood, the priest and men together launch a mission to evangelize men in the parish; faithful to Christ’s call to evangelize all men (Matt 28:18-20).

Implement the TAP Principle to reach men – The only truly effective way to evangelize men is by personal invitation; literally, one man “TAPs another man on the shoulder” and invites him to a *Catholic Watchmen* event. The vanguard identifies men (name and contact information) who are active in the parish (e.g. attends Mass regularly, has kids in school or religious ed, gives to the parish, etc.); evangelization is ultimately personal, men must receive a personal invitation. The priest and each member of the vanguard should prayerfully discern how many and which men to personally invite each month to attend the *Catholic Watchmen* meetings. To build broad awareness, *Catholic Watchmen* materials (monthly videos and handouts) can be distributed via email all men in the parish and by posting on the parish website, which provides an opening for a personal invitation to the next event. Ultimately, the goal is that every single man in the parish is personally invited into the *Catholic Watchmen* “Band of Brothers” by another man. Wouldn’t it be great if each man received multiple invitations?

Encourage small “Bands of Brothers” – Catholic men grow deeper in faith when they are part of a small “Band of Brothers” with whom they can discuss their personal challenges, hold each other accountable and grow together in prayer and holiness. Various approaches can help build bonds of brotherhood: encourage men to meet 12 new men in a year; launch small group bible studies; rally men to mentor groups of young men; hold pilgrimages, vigils (e.g. Keepers of the Fire) and men’s Adoration hours (Midnight Watch), etc.