INTRODUCTION

WHAT IS THE "MOVIMIENTO FAMILIAR CRISTIANO"?

The "Movimiento Familiar Cristiano" (MFC) is a Catholic movement wherein Christian families gather to receive support from each other and to promote Christian and Human Family values with the hope of becoming better Christians and a better family. They are deeply conscious of the evangelizing dimension of their Christian Faith which seeks to improve the quality of life for all peoples through their commitment.

- It is a Catholic lay movement that invites families to evangelize other families. It promotes:
- Communication and dialogue between husband and wife in order to strengthen their marriage.
- Communication and dialogue among parents and their children in order to be a more united family and develop wholesome family members.
- A better understanding of the environment in which families live so that families can better adapt to that environment as well as create it and shape it.
- A more profound understanding of the root causes of our community problems as well as their Christian solutions.
- The development of acceptable family life styles which are in accord with Christian and Human values.

WHAT DOES THE MFC OFFER?

In order to help married couples grow in their marriage, the MFC offers its members a program of formation, a methodology of understanding, and five specific moments of growth.

A. THE PROGRAM OF FORMATION

This program consists of a cycle of four phases (etapas) based upon fundamental aspects of family formation: family values, religious development, married life formation, educational development and formation for making a communal commitment. The material for each theme consists of subjects to be discussed in groups, between husband and wife and within the family, as well as subjects for group discussion at the general meetings of the groups.

The principal objective of these dialogues is not to collect all kinds of information. Their goal is to integrate these ideas into the married life of the couples so that they may change who they are, how they think and the way they live. For this reason, the discussion is always followed by a commitment to action. This commitment, which is the fruit of dialogue, consists of a concrete act of behavior, that is easy to do and sincerely and freely accepted by the group or the couple.
The objectives of The Program of Formation are:

- To emphasize and develop the importance of dialogue, especially between husband and wife, and parents and children.
- To study the problems which the Hispanic family faces when adapting to this environment and to strengthen the faith-life of the couples, helping them to discover Christ in the concrete, everyday happenings of married life, as well as family and community life.

B. METHODOLOGY OF UNDERSTANDING

This Methodology of Understanding can also be called a review of life and is realized by means of three significant moments: SEE, JUDGE, and ACT, which are not separate from each other, but are integrally united to one another. One has no meaning without the other two.

**SEE:** This consists in naming and analyzing the reality of each theme from the point of view of married life and/or family life. It challenges us not only to see life as it really is, but to name the causes for this situation and name their effects.

**JUDGE:** This consists in confronting the data which was identified in the SEE moment of our reflection process and to evaluate (judge) it in light of the Gospels (the Words and Deeds of Jesus) and in accordance with our Christian Faith experience. We need to let the Word of God judge, critique, modify and convert our reality.

**ACT:** This consists in transforming our family and married life reality in accordance to the Plan of God. Seeing and judging our reality does not serve us at all if it does not lead to meaningful action. This action we commit to do should be doable, practical and the result of a true personal and social conversion.

The MFC. uses this methodology through its principal charism, the gift of true dialogue between husbands and wives, among family members and with the community in general. Dialogue creates unity, gives life to a relationship and makes personal conversion possible.

C. MOMENTS OF GROWTH

The MFC also offers its membership five moments of growth which, when taken together, become the way married couples and families are transformed, and through them, the whole of society. These moments of growth are:

1. **Prayer and Liturgical Life**
   This moment nourishes and develops the faith-life of the family by means of prayer and Liturgy, especially Eucharist. Prayer and Liturgy is what strengthens and gives life to our mission and ministry.

2. **Study**
   Each small reflection group studies and analyzes in a profound way our reality by means of dialogue and sharing of experiences. We need to rediscover our human and Christian family values.
3. **Church Ministry**
   The MFC urges their membership to involve themselves in the saving mission of the Church, always within a framework of collaborative ministry (pastoral de conjunto), committing themselves to development of the community and the building of the Kingdom of God. The MFC is not just another study group, but disciples of conversion and change.

4. **Fellowship**
   When hospitality is given and received, it contributes and develops a spirit of friendship and bonding among all the couples of the group. We need to extend our family and personal experiences in order to enrich others with our own insights and be enriched by others as we become part of their lives and experience. We also begin to network with others in a more total, human way.

5. **Responsible Financial Support**
   This component develops the Christian value of sharing what we have with the neediness of others and our common efforts.

When a married couple enrolls in the "Movimiento Familiar Cristiano", they may not be aware of the fullness of opportunities that this Movement offers. However, as they live it, they will make these values their own.

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**WHAT DOES THE MFC EXPECT FROM YOU?**

The MFC expects its members to be of good will and to be constant in their commitment to it. The couple should freely choose to belong to the Movement. They should be motivated by a desire to develop a better family life and be a Christian leaven to society. The rewards for the couple, for the family and the, whole of society will be in proportion to the generosity and effort given.

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**HOW DOES THE MFC WORK?**

It works through a networking of groups that meet biweekly (every two weeks) and in general assemblies at the local, regional and national level. The groups within a locale, usually dioceses, form a Federation. All Federations belong to a Region, and all the Regions make up the national structure. Every unit is under the direction of a coordinator and a "asesor".

**A. THE GROUP**

The small reflection group is basically a small ecclesial community. It is the heart and soul of the MFC, that which gives it life and foundation. It is its most important component. It consists of married couples, assisted sometimes by the "asesor", led by a coordinator and meets biweekly for the purpose of enriching the members in love and knowledge of Christ so that they may better live their daily life. This is done by reflecting and commenting upon the themes presented through the MFC. Guide Books. The Group has a life of its own. It should transform itself into a stable community in which Christian values and ideals are lived, joys and sufferings are shared,
ministry and mission is realized. It is important that the families of each circle develop a Christian love and respect for one another so that they can truly be a Christian community.

B. MEETINGS

Meetings are indispensable for the life of the group. There are two kinds of meetings:

- **Biweekly.** The Biweekly meetings take place in homes of the group and is the means by which the MFC offers the families the help needed for an ongoing Christian formation. They are not just a study groups; they are a community in which prayer, study, fellowship and enrichment takes place. They are indeed a domestic Church, evangelizing and being evangelized. The Word of God is core to this meeting and what illuminates everything about it.

- **General Meetings.** Now and then, the MFC will have general meetings of all its membership of the federation. Their purpose is to provide information, education and formation, as well as an Opportunity to grow in fellowship and friendship. The objectives of these meetings are:
  1. Enhance the communication and friendship among all members of the federation.
  2. To awaken within the groups the interest of dealing with common problems that impact the family within their area, in light of the Word of God and the teaching of the Church.
  3. To deepen a greater understanding of some aspect of MFC
  4. To develop a common spirit and community prayer.

C. THE COORDINATOR COUPLE

Each group has a Coordinator Couple that is responsible for overseeing that the meeting takes place in an orderly way so that their objectives are reached. This couple relates to the group, not as teachers, but as servants, helping each participant contribute to the success of the whole group.

The Coordinator Couple is not only responsible for its group, but it is also the link to Federation. In this way, the group is part Of the saving mission of the Church. Also, the Coordinator Couple serves as animator and strives to help create an environment of unity and fellowship so that an authentic Christian Community can flourish. Therefore, the Coordinator Couple should be well connected to the pastoral ministers of the Church, strive to strengthen their faith-life continuously. In that way, they witness to the group a desire to keep improving with each meeting.

D. ADVISORS (ASESORES)

- The Church Minister advisor has the role of counselor. She or he accompanies the MFC in order to achieve its goals, always respecting its integrity and charism. The asesor's function is to encourage, give direction and be an example to the group, especially during the reflection time. When the asesor is present in the group, she or he should actively participate in it, conscious of not dominating it or controlling it.
The MFC also has other advisors who sometimes are specialists and experts in the sciences, like Theology, Sociology and Human Development. When the asesor is also a priest, he can also minister to the MFC as Eucharist presider, represent the Church clerical leadership and help give direction to the faith life of the families.

THE OUTLINE OF A GROUP MEETING

1. PRAYER:

It is of vital importance that each group begin their meeting with a prayer which can be led by the Coordinator or any other person present at the meeting. Whoever leads the prayer may choose which prayer to use. The prayer should never be omitted.

2. REVIEWING THE PREVIOUS COMMITMENT:

Before beginning the reflection process, each couple gives a report as to how they did with their previous commitment.

3. THE REFLECTION:

The Theme is read aloud, either by the Coordinator Couple, another person or in combination with others.

4. DIALOGUE AND ANALYSIS:

Using the questions provided for the group reflection, the members are given an opportunity to express their opinions, ideas and feelings, as well as share experiences. Each one should feel the obligation to participate to the fullest, risking to voice opinions. Each person's opinions and experiences adds to the life and vitality of the group.

5. THE WORD OF GOD:

After the group sharing, then the Word of God is read and applied to this situation as the guiding light for our Christian family life.

6. COMMITMENT:

As a result of the reflection in light of the Scriptures, a commitment to act is made. This is one of the ways of putting into practice what needs to be done. This action can be the responsibility of an individual, the couple, the family or the group.
7. OTHER BUSINESS:

This time is reserved for announcements, reports and other business that needs to be shared within the group.

8. FINANCIAL CONTRIBUTION:

Each member is asked to make a voluntary and anonymous financial contribution to the MFC. This money will go for ongoing needs of the MFC and for the materials that are used in the group meetings as well as in the general meetings. Stewardship is also an act of Faith.

9. THE FINAL PRAYER:

The final prayer brings closure to the meeting, so that all can be of one heart and mind. It can be led by whomever wants to and with whatever prayer desired.

7. FELLOWSHIP:

After the meeting finishes, there can be a period of fellowship which can strengthen friendship. It is important that it be kept very, very simple.