

# Fiat Couples Groups

Fellowship and Faith-Sharing for Catholic Married Couples

## INFORMATION FOR NEW GROUPS & NEW MEMBERS



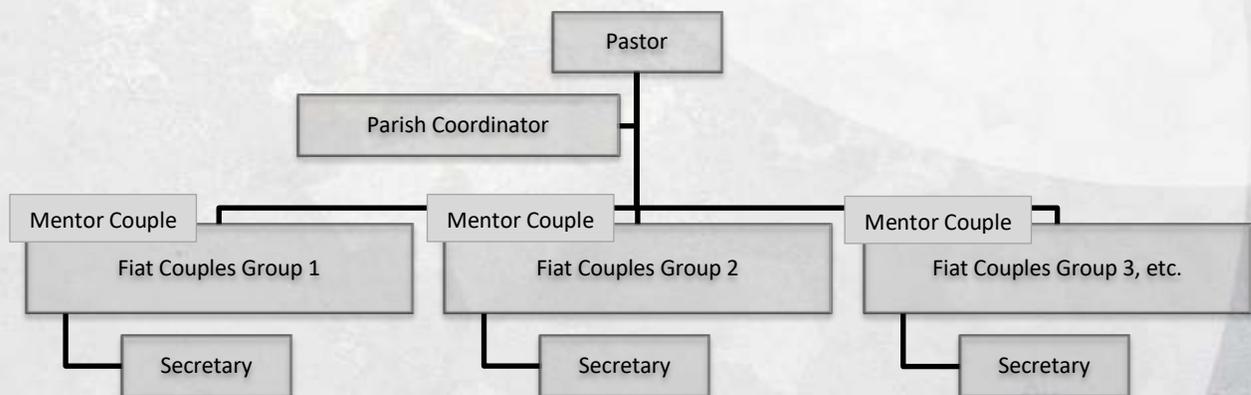
### I. MISSION: *Fiat Couples Groups* exist to help:

- **Individuals** grow closer to Christ and His Church
- **Spouses** grow closer to one another
- **Couples** develop a small-group community within their parish
- **Parishes** offer a ministry for marriage enrichment

### II. FOUNDATIONAL PRINCIPLES:

- As Catholic Christians, members follow Christ and the teachings of the Catholic Church.
- Members believe marriage is a covenant between each other and God and that marriage is a path of sanctification.
- Members come together for fellowship and faith-sharing to support one another in their vocation of marriage.

### III. STRUCTURE AND ORGANIZATION: *Fiat Couples Groups* are parish-based. Groups operate with the permission of the pastor, the support of the Parish Coordinator, and if possible, with the temporary assistance of a Mentor Couple.



### IV. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES:

**Pastor:** This ministry requires minimal work from the pastor. The pastor is responsible for:

- Approving the ministry
- Directing, promoting, and supporting the ministry as he sees best
- Addressing concerns that may arise within the ministry

**Parish Coordinator:** Recommended when parishes have more than one group. Can be a staff member or volunteer. The Parish Coordinator acts as the liaison between the *Fiat Groups* and the pastor. The Parish Coordinator is responsible for:

- Promoting, coordinating, and supporting the ministry
- Serving as the parish contact for the groups
- Maintaining records regarding groups (members, locations, dates, contact information, etc.)
- Communicating between pastor and groups

**Mentor Couple:** It is recommended that an experienced couple from an existing *Fiat Couples Group* serve as the mentor couple to new groups (if possible). The Mentor Couple is responsible for:

- Helping the new group get started by guiding them through the process, hosting the first gathering, and running the second gathering at a new member's house
- Serving as the group's liaison with the Parish Coordinator and pastor
- Assisting the new group with any needs or concerns until well established and the mentor couple is no longer needed

**Members:** We recommend couples commit to a group; however, they do so at will and should feel free to end their involvement at any time and for any reason. Members are responsible for:

- Making the group a priority (exceptions may arise; however, once committed, couples should make every effort to attend monthly)
- Participating in and contributing to the practices and behaviors listed below
- Hosting on a rotating basis (exceptions may arise; however, hosting is a joyful part of the experience)
- Bringing assigned item(s) on a rotating basis for the monthly potluck meal

**Host Couple:** Groups meet in each couple's home on a rotating basis. When hosting, the host couple serves as the leaders for the evening. The host couple is responsible for:

- Ensuring couples have been reminded (by the secretary) of the date, location, and assigned potluck item
- Confirming all potluck items are covered (if a couple cannot attend, the host couple supplies the missing potluck item)
- Providing the main course and making sure it is ready once the prayer portion of the evening concludes
- Ensuring the *Fiat Couples Group Prayer Guides* are on hand for the evening (one set of prayer guides may be passed from home to home or couples may purchase a set online to keep in their homes)
- Maintaining the evening's schedule
- Leading the prayer portion of the gathering (this includes choosing a song to begin and end with; keeping the time during the Scripture reading and prayer portion; leading the closing prayers and blessing over the meal; etc.)

**Group Secretary:** Groups should designate a secretary. The secretary is not the leader of the group but serves by fulfilling the administrative needs of the group. The secretary is responsible for:

- Distributing the agreed upon annual calendar (an Excel Template for meeting dates and rotating host and potluck assignments is available online)
- Maintaining communication among members (most importantly reminders of date, location, and potluck assignments at least one week prior to the gathering)
- Maintaining communication between the group and the parish (pastor or Parish Coordinator)
- Registering the group online with Annunciation Ministries

## V. PRACTICES AND BEHAVIORS FOR SUCCESSFUL GATHERINGS:

- **Be open.** Members are encouraged to be open to both giving of themselves and receiving from others. Sharing should flow naturally and comfortably. At no time should any member feel coerced to comment during the Scripture reflection or prayer portion of the gathering.
- **Be considerate.** Members are asked to respect the thoughts and opinions of others and to be mindful not to dominate the time during the Scripture reflection and prayer portion of the gatherings.
- **Be trustworthy.** Members should develop an atmosphere of sharing, trust, and appropriate confidentiality. Any concerns for someone's safety (mental, physical, or spiritual well-being) should be shared with the parish or appropriate authorities (in accordance with safe environment policies).
- **Be reflective.** The prayer portion is faith-sharing, not instruction. Faith-sharing is contemplating Scripture and humbly sharing with others what God is personally saying to you. Members should avoid teaching and the temptation to correct what someone else has shared.

## VI. TIPS FOR ESTABLISHING AND MAINTAINING A SUCCESSFUL FIAT COUPLES GROUP:

- **Be welcoming.** Groups are successful regardless of demographics (in terms of years married; ages and number of children; cultural backgrounds; etc.). The important commonality is a desire on the part of all members to grow closer to God and one another through a small group community.
- **Be discerning.** It is recommended that groups meet the first time without requiring a commitment. After the first meeting, it is recommended that interested couples make a temporary commitment, perhaps long enough for each couple to host once. After that, couples can decide if they want to continue, start another group, or discontinue.
- **Be committed.** Once couples commit to the group, they should attend as much as possible, building their other commitments around this gathering.
- **Be consistent.** It is recommended groups choose a set day of the month to meet (for example, the first Saturday of every month). This allows couples to easily remember when the gatherings are held. Even if a few couples can attend a given month, it is recommended that groups still meet.
- **Be flexible.** Change of date may need to occur (for example, when the set day falls on a holiday, near a school vacation, or the host couple is unable to host on that date). Every effort should then be made to change the gathering date well in advance.
- **Be invested.** There is no formal leader of the group. All couples act as the leader when they host, and all couples share in contributing to the practices and behaviors that make for a successful group. All members should feel comfortable reaching out directly to the Parish Coordinator or pastor with any questions or concerns.

We at Annunciation Ministries offer you our prayers and support for the success of your group. We invite you to register your group with us (through our website) so we know you are meeting and can stay in touch (via periodic newsletters). We pray that your participation in a *Fiat Couples Group* draws you closer together as a couple, closer to Christ and His Church, and closer to the other couples in your group. May the Holy Spirit guide your group. May Mother Mary intercede for each of you. May God be glorified by your lives, marriages, and families.

**For more information, to order *Prayer Guides*, register your group, or download a schedule template:**