

The Ascension Weekly

November 5, 2017

“As Iron Sharpens Iron:” The Ascension Men’s Group

Alex Centeno, who was interviewed for this article, has been a parishioner for eleven years and is a current member of the Men’s Group.

How did you come to be involved with the Men’s Group?

The idea of a Men’s Group at Ascension originated back in 2013 with Fr. Larry. For some time, he had been assessing the needs of the parish and the ministries that were in place, and he began to develop the idea of forming a group for the men of the parish through which they could experience Catholic fellowship and together pursue spiritual development. At the time, I was involved in a number of parish ministries, so he approached me and others, including parish groups like the Knights of Columbus, to gauge our interest in such a ministry and to ask us for help in advertising it to the parish. We were all supportive and felt there was a real need for such a group at Ascension, so we began to spread the word and soon thereafter the group began to meet.

When the Men’s Group first kicked off, what was the typical format of a session?

Well, we began meeting once a month in the newly renovated rectory basement and engaged in discussions that centered upon issues related to our faith and the church. For example, over the course of several meetings we studied an important apostolic exhortation entitled, “Into the Breach,” written by Bishop Thomas Olmsted of Phoenix. The document was a call to Catholic men to recognize the ongoing spiritual battle taking place in the Church and the steep erosion of the practice of the faith among Catholics. In his letter, he urged men to boldly combat these downward trends within society and in their own homes by practicing their faith and living their Catholic identity fully within the context of their daily lives. He said, “One of the key reasons that the Church

The Men’s Group meets every second and fourth Tuesday of the month at 7:00 pm in the rectory basement. All men of the parish are invited!

is faltering under the attacks of Satan is that many Catholic men have not been willing to ‘step into the breach’ – to fill this gap that lies open and vulnerable to further attack.” He emphasized the importance of a vibrant and transforming Catholic fraternity for the realization of this goal; as it says in the Book of Proverbs in Scripture, “As iron sharpens iron, so a man sharpens his fellow man.”

It was this exhortation that led the Men’s Group to try out a new program for the next year called, “That Man is You,” a nationally acclaimed initiative that aims to help men encounter God within the context of their marriages and family life. The program ran from September of 2016 through this past May.

Now that the program year for That Man is You has ended, what is the current focus of the Men’s Group?

At the end of the year, a few of us expressed an interest in wanting to learn directly from Scripture. So we asked Fr. Larry if he would lead us in a more in-depth study of Holy Scripture. We’ve been at it now since late summer, and are currently studying the Gospel of Matthew. So far, the study has really helped us go deeper into God’s Word. Fr. Larry is an excellent teacher! At each meeting we always build in time for fellowship, in order to give members the opportunity to develop friendships and strengthen the Catholic brotherhood that is so helpful for growth in Christ.

As a final word, I strongly encourage all the men in our parish to join our Men’s Group at Ascension. I think that Bishop Olmsted put it best: “I think the Holy Spirit is asking us to move into a deeper appreciation that we’re involved in a real spiritual battle and that men are called to engage this battle with the help of God with confidence, with trust in God’s grace, but also with courage, and together with other men.”