

What is the BISHOP'S COMMITTEE DISCUSSION PROGRAM?

The Bishop's Committee Discussion Program exists within the Family Life Department of the Diocese of Buffalo to encourage personal growth through self-awareness. Members meet in small groups facilitated by leaders who have been trained in the techniques of group dynamics. Discussion topics are developed annually by an Agenda Committee from member input and presented in a written agenda designed to provoke free exchange of ideas and ideals among group members. This exchange provides an opportunity to explore feelings about self, family and community while enriching the Christian lives of its members.

The Discussion Program originated back in 1952 as an offshoot of the Bishop's Committee Visitors' Program which provided information about religious education to mothers of pre-school children. These women felt the need to discuss this written material in greater detail and decided to use the technique of small group discussion as a means of sharing their thoughts and ideas. As the Discussion Program progressed over the years, members felt the need to become more aware of their feelings and attitudes about themselves, their families and other aspects of their lives. In 1960, the

Discussion Program began developing its present personal growth oriented material. It has evolved into a Diocesan-wide resource with a membership of over 900 in 45 participating parishes.

HOW IS THE PROGRAM STRUCTURED?

The Bishop's Committee Discussion Program is under the immediate guidance of a Diocesan Coordinator, affirmed by the Diocesan Moderator. The coordinator is assisted by a Council, each member specializing in a specific area of responsibility.

STATEMENT OF PHILOSOPHY

It is the belief of the BCDP that personal growth through self-awareness is essential in the development of the mature Christian. Through group discussion, members experience the sharing and openness necessary for learning about themselves and others and God's love for them.

The benefits from these insights assist them in meeting the responsibilities and challenges they may encounter as people and members of a family and community. Confident Christians who are gaining in maturity are a source of growth to everyone they meet.

The following points are intended to help make discussions more productive, satisfying and enjoyable:

- *Listen carefully to others*
- *Maintain an open mind; this helps people to really listen.*
- *Respect the confidential nature of the group. It is important to remember that what is said in the group remains in the group. Trust is an integral part of free discussion.*
- *Help develop other member's ideas. Ask clarifying questions.*
- *When a disagreement does occur - keep talking! Explore the disagreement and search for common concerns beneath the surface.*
- *Value the experiences of other members, but help keep the discussion focused.*



WHAT ARE THE REQUIREMENTS FOR MEMBERSHIP?

Membership is open to all interested persons, regardless of religious affiliation. Those who join the Discussion Program are opening themselves to an exciting sharing opportunity

Group members must use the agenda material provided by the Program for the specified month and year. Group members do not engage in fund-raising of any kind, nor is any money other than the cost of the agenda required.

WHAT IS THE TIME COMMITMENT?

Meetings are held once a month from October through May usually in the member's homes on a rotating basis.

HOW CAN I BECOME A MEMBER?

There are several ways to become a member of the Bishop's Committee Discussion Program. Watch your parish bulletin for an announcement in August or September about the upcoming Bishop's Committee Discussion Program year. If you are not sure whether your parish currently participates, you can contact the Family Life Department at 847-2210.

If it is a participating parish, you will be given the name of your Parish Contact person. If it is not a participating parish,

you will be given the name of the chairperson of a nearby parish to contact; you are not limited to your parish boundaries.

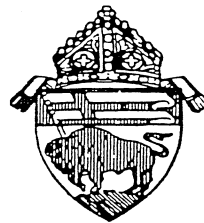
We look forward to hearing from you!

**Family Life Department
Diocese of Buffalo
795 Main Street
Buffalo, NY 14203**

847-2210

E-mail

familylife@buffalodiocese.org



The Bishop's Committee Discussion Program

