



FRATERNUS

Mentoring Boys Into Virtuous Catholic Men

Fraternus is a National Catholic organization for boys (grades 5 – 12), their fathers, and other spiritual men with a desire to mentor boys in virtue and in learning how to live a true Christian life. This program is especially beneficial for single moms who need their sons to have masculine role models; and for boys whose fathers chose not to participate in the program. The organization has grown to 23 chapters in 9 states with the largest chapter at St. Paul Cathedral in Birmingham (boasting over 100 members including several fathers and sons from St. Theresa).

“Fraternus” is a Latin word meaning “Brotherly,” and was chosen as the organization’s name to express the brotherhood aspect of the mentoring process. Having like-minded Catholic men and boys keeping each other accountable is a powerful tool in the fight for Virtue in a world going in the opposite direction. There is no better way to build a strong bond between a father and son than having them pray together, learn together, play together, and keeping each other accountable. **“As iron sharpens iron, so one man must sharpen another” (Proverbs 27:17).**

Fatherhood in America is quickly breaking down... 40% of children in the U.S. will be raised without their father in the home. Even with a father present, many are absent both emotionally and spiritually. **Pope Emeritus Benedict said: “The crisis of fatherhood we are living today is an element, perhaps the most important, threatening man in his humanity.”** The Fraternus mission is not only to mentor our own children in virtue, but to be an example to the outside world of how a true Christian lives out his faith. The organization teaches that it is not enough to go through the motions and checking off the list of only attending Mass and being a “good person.”

How does Fraternus work? Basically with weekly **Frat Night** meetings and an occasional outdoor **Excursion**:

FRAT NIGHT is a two-hour weekly meeting held during the school year. There are usually one or more priests available for leading prayers, providing opportunities for Confession, and offering spiritual guidance. All adult men involved with the program are required to take an online course in Abuse Recognition, and complete a background check. Electronic devices are not allowed so that the men and boys can focus on the spirituality of the meeting without distraction.

Following an opening prayer, a small meal, and several games of dodge-ball, a short movie clip is played that revolves around the seven virtues of **faith, hope, love, prudence, justice, fortitude, and temperance**. After a brief talk, the boys are broken down into smaller age groups for **Squad Time**. The small group offers fellowship and discussions at an age-appropriate level; and focuses on how the relevant virtue relates to their daily life. The boys are led by a small group of Captains encouraging the participation of each boy. At the end of the squad time, a tangible challenge is given to exercise the virtue in each boy’s life (getting up early to pray, attend an early daily Mass, serve in a local soup kitchen, pray at an abortion clinic, make a sword, take a cold shower, etc.). The challenge is then reported on the next week. The completion of challenges is recognized at Fraternus ceremonies.

During squad time for the boys, the men have a separate adult level discussion of the Weekly Virtue, and are encouraged to dialog with their sons on the drive home about what they learned that evening. Squad time is followed by closing prayers, and sometimes joining the Priest and Parish Community in the church for the Compline service (Night Prayer of the Liturgy of the Hours).

EXCURSIONS are periodic gatherings experienced in an outdoor setting which is much needed in a world saturated with media and materialism, especially in the teen years. Fraternus Excursions are designed with a common theme and goal for the participants, namely, learning about their true identify as men. Camping, canoeing, bonfires, inspiring talks on the battle for salvation, outdoor games, and outdoor cooking, are all a part of bonding with each other while learning the virtues of living a Catholic life.

The Birmingham Fraternus meets on Wednesday evenings from 6:30 to 8:30 at St. Paul Cathedral. If you would like to explore the Fraternus experience with your son (grades 5 – 12), stop in to one of the meetings and introduce yourself. You probably already know some of the men and boys involved.

For more information, contact Terry Rumore at (205) 222-7204, and check out the Fraternus website: <http://www.fraternusbrothers.org/the-need/>

