



Starting a Praying College Moms (PCM) Group at your Parish

Resources can be found at prayingcollegemoms.org

- 1) Contact your **parish office** to set up an initial meeting about forming a Praying College Moms ministry at your church. Have a time and date in mind for monthly meetings (morning and/or evenings) and reserve meeting space for the year. Possibly September through May with a break over the summer months.
- 2) Contact Laurel at howanitz@aol.com for the paperwork associated with starting a local Praying College Moms Chapter. She will send you the Praying College Moms Statement of Objectives (as listed in the Praying College Moms Articles of Incorporation) and help you register your Parish Group with Praying College Moms.
- 3) Bulletin Announcement - Place a "blurb" in your bulletin informing everyone about your group. An example is:

Did you know that there is a new ministry at (Parish)? It is Praying College Moms (PCM), a non-profit religious organization that provides outreach and resources to mothers of college-aged children. PCM local groups provide invaluable service in their faith communities through prayer groups, mentorship, encouragement, perspective,

resources and networking. All moms are welcome, even moms who do not have college age students. Come join us on _____ at _____.

4) Contact the **youth director** or appropriate person at your parish for the e-mails of high school seniors. Use this information to create a list for your initial distribution. This will help you get the word out to ladies who have a NEED for this ministry.

Meeting Format

The Praying College Mom's Group is not about the facilitator. It is about the group as a whole. Moms are encouraged to get involved and take ownership of the group. It is through these prayerful and conversational interactions that the beauty and the importance of the group shines.

Moms of all faiths are welcomed to join us! So feel free to invite any mom who you feel would benefit from our ministry.

Have name tags available as moms walk into the meeting and suggest that they put year and college of their child(ren).

1. **Start Every Meeting with a Prayer** - You can find prayers in Maribeth Harper's books *And So We Pray* or bring a book of your own. Designate one of the moms to be the prayer mom and, by doing so, allow more moms to be involved.
2. **Always remind everyone that the conversations are confidential.**
3. **Icebreaker** - Have everyone introduce themselves and tell the group about their college student(s) (include their school, year, area of study, etc.). Suggest a timely icebreaker about the student or mom (something like a move-in day highlight, Christmas holiday, summer event, an exciting moment, etc.) , which might take some

time, but it is a GREAT time for sharing and getting to know each other.

4. **Book Time** - You might start with "*And So We Pray*" by Maribeth Harper and tackle one chapter per meeting. Maribeth wrote the *And So We Pray* series specifically for Praying College Moms. You will not complete the book, but may pick up where you left off in the subsequent year. The chapters are very short so start by allowing everyone a few minutes to read the chapter. Summarize your thoughts and refer to parts that you think are important. At this point, moms will jump in and each with a different perspective, one that resonates with them. Everyone has a different take on the chapter and that is what is so neat.
5. **Housekeeping** - Go over dates and times of upcoming events (see below for suggestions). See if any books need to be ordered.
6. **Closing Prayer** - Read a prayer from the chapter just covered and add prayers for each of our college age children.
7. **Care Packages** - Have each mom bring a care package item to share with ladies in the room. You will go home with a GREAT care package to mail to your student. The facilitator might bring a "flat rate" box from the post office to the meeting just to make it a bit easier for the moms.
8. **Social Time** - Encourage everyone to stay around after the meeting to exchange information and just socialize.

Other Considerations

- 1) **AM/PM Sessions** - Coordinate with other parishes in your area so moms have more options for meeting times. Plan group events for all parishes so moms can get to know and build friendships beyond their immediate group.
- 2) **Mass Together** - Many of our groups attend Mass before or after the meeting.

- 3) **Meeting Environment** - You determine what setting works best for you - perhaps formal with a table or informal with couches (maybe a youth or bridal room).
- 4) **Picture Day** - Wear your student's college tee shirt to a meeting and have a photo taken for the parish bulletin.
- 5) **Speakers** - You may invite a speaker to come and talk with your group. For example, someone from on-campus Catholic communities.
- 6) **Mass Time on Campus** - Find out about the college campuses and their Mass time and how they operate (moms in the know). The more we know collectively the more we can be of help to our children. We talk about keeping your students Catholic so we try to gather information about college Mass times and other Catholic offerings.
- 7) **Build a Members Contact List** - Make sure you keep a list of names, phone numbers and e-mails to create your own email distribution list and please copy Laurel at howanitz@aol.com on ALL your e-mails so she can build a central data base to keep everyone updated on ALL the PCM happenings.

Meetings and Beyond Suggestions

- 1) **Rosary** - Praying College Moms pray. Dedicate one rosary per month for all college students and specifically your students.
- 2) **Christmas Event** - Have one mom host a potluck and collect gift cards for selected charity. In past years, PCM supported the St. Lucy Project and Catholic Charities.
- 3) **Summer Coffee** - Have an informal get together with moms from all local parishes.

4) Group Outings - There may be local events that may be of interest to your group. Make a plan and go! Some ideas are: Art Exhibits, Retreats, Mardi Gras, etc.

5) SIGNATURE Event - Care Packages. We think that it is nice to share our care package tradition with our extended family, namely our parish college students and orphan college students. We regularly offer to send a surprise care package to these students for a small charge. What a boost to them to know that we are supporting them in Prayer, Snacks and Sugar!

You may order a care package from our website (prayingcollegemoms.org) or if you would like to do one on your own. The following tips might be useful:

- a) Develop a timeline. Work backwards: Ship Date, Assembly Date, Final Date on Orders, Get boxes, Gather Donations or Do Shopping, Get Orders.
- b) Get the word out: bulletin announcements, emails to Praying College Moms, updates at meetings, etc.
- c) Decide on the box size. The post office offers free boxes for a flat rate (you may make arrangements for box delivery and pick up plus further discounts are available if you handle postage on-line). You may put as much in these boxes as the box holds. Moms who help out with the assembly can add a few extra items if there is room.
- d) Decide what will go in the boxes and price it out. Keep costs low as you determine what you can count on from your donors. Be sure to include some bulky items. You want the box to be full and substantial. Do not include liquids in the packages to avoid spills. Also, add some prayerful messages on bright colorful strips of paper and crunched them up as box filler. A prayer card is also nice.

- e) Decide how you will get donations. Will they be from Praying College Moms or from outside donations? If they are from Praying College Moms, you may want to use a tool such as SignupGenius.com. Alternatively, you may want to price the package and do the shopping yourself or enlist donations from local sponsors.
- f) Assembly Date. Make a party of it!
Have your Box Makers, Box Fillers, Box Closers/Labelers and Box Final Check Off-ers who will also assign a number to each box (tracking purposes). Know how many boxes you are making and set up stations for each item that goes in the box (if there are extra items add 1 or 2 more to the box). Sequence the items in an order with heavy and big items going in first and light and smaller items going last.
- g) Ship Date. If you haven't arranged a pick up time with the postal service then go early to the post office on the morning of the ship date with your check off list and be ready to assign tracking numbers to each box. We have had great success in sending packages to our students, but if something is amiss then you have a way of rectifying the problem. You may work with customer service at the postal service and get a refund. The refund could then be used to send a gift card to the student.

Books

- 1) We use **"And So We Pray"**, a book series written specifically for PCM, by Maribeth Harper. You may order books on our website prayingcollegemoms.org or directly through Christianbooks.com.

- 2) "Keeping your Kids Catholic" is another fine resource and available through Liguori Publications (Liguori.org).
- 3) Contact - Laurel Howanitz @ Howanitz@aol.com or Anita Alexander @ asalexander2@hotmail.com for any questions.