

ECHO+ COMMUNITY
YOUNG ADULT OUTREACH
SPIRITUAL FITNESS WORKOUTS

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Men, here is the bottom line, God needs us to be disciples of our faith today more than ever – ordinary people like you and me whom God can use to do extraordinary things.

You may think that the term “disciple” refers only to the early followers of Christ. Jesus instructed the apostles (Matthew 28:19) to “go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit.

Empowered and motivated by the Holy Spirit – they turned the world upside down in His name. **They were on fire with His message.** Now it is our turn. God needs us to continue this work.

To be a disciple, means we are **called to accept Jesus’ challenge** to a new way of life – **to live a life fully alive.** That means a life built upon a personal relationship with Jesus; allowing ourselves **to be transformed through the power of His Spirit.**

We all long for authentic freedom that sets us free from the chaos in the world, in our relationships, and in our hearts. Real discipleship demands the humility **to be part of a community** of fellow believers who experience and share the acts of love that make life worth living authentically free.

With the power of the Holy Spirit, come walk with us on your faith journey. It does not matter **whether it is your first step or you have traveled many miles,** we will help you walk closer to the life Jesus calls us to live.

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WHY THE NEED FOR SPIRITUAL FITNESS WORKOUTS?

“We are now standing in the face of the greatest historical confrontation humanity has ever experienced. I do not think the wide circle of the American Society or the wide circle of the Christian Community realize this fully. We are now facing the final confrontation between the Church and the anti-church, between the Gospel and the anti-gospel, between Christ and the antichrist. This confrontation lies within the plans of Divine Providence. It is, therefore, in God’s Plan, and it must be a trial which the Church must take up, and face courageously...”

- St. John Paul II

SALVATION OF SOULS (S.O.S)

The ultimate goal of the Echo Community Young Adult Outreach is the salvation of souls. If we truly are in the greatest historical confrontation that humanity has ever experienced, as Pope St. John Paul II says, then this must be the unwavering objective – salvation of souls (S.O.S).

THE MEN OUR WORLD NEEDS

- **Faithful Disciples:** Men who actively live and share the teachings of their Catholic faith, rooted in prayer and the sacraments.
- **Courageous Defenders:** Men with the courage to defend the sanctity of human life, from conception to natural death.
- **Chaste Witnesses:** Men who embrace and model the virtue of chastity, respecting the dignity of themselves and others.
- **Sacrificial Providers:** Men who sacrificially provide for their families, recognizing their duty as providers and protectors, emphasis on the family as a domestic church.
- **Humble Servants:** Men who embody humility and servanthood, following the example of Christ, fostering a culture of selfless love.
- **Committed Fathers:** Men who embrace their role as fathers, actively involved in the spiritual and moral formation of their children, reflecting the Church's emphasis on spiritual fatherhood.
- **Prayerful Leaders:** Men who lead through prayer and discernment, seeking God's guidance in decision-making and exemplifying spiritual leadership.
- **Merciful Peacemakers:** Men who actively pursue reconciliation and peace, embodying the Church's call for mercy and forgiveness in a world often marked by conflict.

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WHAT HAS HAPPENED TO SO MANY MEN?

- Men have allowed themselves to become spiritually “out of shape.”
- Lack of proper catechesis
- Failure to uphold the Church’s teachings on Chastity
- Consequently, we have “dropped the ball” as spiritual leaders in our family, church, and community...so many men in our youngest generations have simply not been taught the truths of our faith.
- Many men are on the verge of Spiritual Bankruptcy
- ONLY 35% of Catholic men attend Church on a weekly basis
- Video games and sports are their “god”
- Lack of spiritual leadership in the Families
- Ignorance of the Faith, “spiritual, not religious”
- Porn trap - society has separated the substance of marriage from the form of marriage

HOW CAN WE CHANGE MEN’S ATTITUDE TOWARDS FAITH?

Replace a negative with a positive

- Faith is a low priority on their list - **high priority**
- No time! Caught up in the world - **schedule time / Time Management**
- Guilt trip, haven’t practiced sacraments - **interior cleaning (confession)**
- Out of date, not popular - **Change their hearts to be in Awe of God**
- Ignorance of their Faith - **Catechize Word of God**
- Have not been challenged - **Challenge them, hold them accountable**
- Women will handle it - **importance of men’s role**
- High divorce rate - **sacredness of the covenant of marriage**
- Lack of ethics and morality - **truth will set you free**
- Lack of chastity - **successfully integrate sexuality in their body and soul**
- Lack of participation - **honor to serve the Lord**
- Lack of respect for priests - **a love for the vocation and respect of Fathers**
- Low financial contributions - **spiritual nourishment leads to abundance**

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HOW DO WE REACH MEN?

- They just won't walk back into church
- They will attend a Men's Conference, Retreat, or Small Group **if** invited by others
- They will think it's cool because other men are doing it (peer pressure)

IS "NOW" THE TIME FOR MEN TO GET BACK INTO SPIRITUAL SHAPE?

- If not now – then when; if not us – then who?
- How bad do things need to get?
- **Now** is the time for men to stand up and defend Faith-Family-Country
- We need a Church filled with "Spiritually Tough Guy's."

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SPIRITUAL FITNESS WORKOUTS (SFW)

WHAT ARE SFWs?

SFWs are designed for Catholic men to help them grow spiritually and strengthen their faith. SFWs can be used by either teams or individuals on a weekly or bi-weekly basis. The content for these workouts is derived from four primary sources: the **Scriptures**, the **Catechism of the Catholic Church**, the **Crossing the Goal** series on the Echo Community website, and the various experiences we have on **the walk of our daily lives**.

WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF SFWs?

- To invite men into authentic friendships with men who can share, support and encourage their spiritual journey.
 - Relationships are a key to continued spiritual growth. Jesus knew this when he sent his disciples out **two by two**.
- To gather men together in order to honor God in prayer and worship.
- To invite the Holy Spirit to transform men's hearts.
- To educate men about the teachings of the Catholic Church utilizing the Holy Scriptures and the Catechism of the Catholic Church.
- To invite men into an active relationship with Jesus Christ and fellowship with the Church in order for them to come to a deeper understanding of what it means to be a true man.
- To understand and become fruitful in living out our baptismal call to holiness as sons, brothers, husbands, fathers, and friends willing to lay down our lives for the Lord.
- To empower men to recruit and encourage other men to join a Spiritual Fitness Workout team.

WHAT ARE SOME BENEFITS OF THE SFWs, WHAT MAKES SFWs DIFFERENT?

- Our approach is designed to equip Catholic men to become spiritually fit through our Workouts
- We are aiming for eternity – it's not just another program, **it is a way of life**
- Reenergized faith and love of family
- Tools to face daily demands
- Authentic, accountable friendships with men who will support your spiritual journey
- Builds a personal friendship with Jesus and further empowers the Holy Spirit in us to work
- Helps daily prayer life and a better understanding of the Word of God

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WHAT ARE SOME BENEFITS OF THE SFWs, WHAT MAKES SFWs DIFFERENT? (CONT.)

- Men are the focus
- Easy to follow format
- Sports-themed faith message – direct, to the point, man-to-man
- Approach is non-threatening, challenging, team oriented and builds **personal accountability**
- Workouts include hard hitting questions, integrated Scripture and catechism
- Can accommodate different size teams or individuals
- Easily accessible materials on the Echo Community Website
- 60-minute workouts are the right amount of time

WHERE CAN THE MATERIALS FOR THE SFWs BE FOUND?

- Materials for Crossing the Goal SFWs can be found under the Small Groups section of the YOUNG ADULTS tab on the Echo Community website
 - <https://www.echocommunity.us/crossingthegoal.html>

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POINTS FOR STARTING AND LEADING A TEAM

- The team should consist of 4-6 members. Once the team reaches 8 members, create a new team – if the team is too large it loses the value of brotherhood and time for discussion becomes too short for each team member.
- Each team should have two leaders to lead the team. **It is good to have multiple men who can lead the workouts**
- **Start and stop on time** – and men will keep coming back.
- Find a location and set a date to begin. You can meet in your homes, parish facility, office or any quiet and private place.
- Commit to follow the “Team” meeting format faithfully.
- A Workout Guide containing workout questions and reference material for the series episode can be downloaded from the Echo Community website
<https://www.echocommunity.us/smallgroups.html>
- Every team member must bring their SFW workbook so that they can each take personal notes and participate in group discussion.
- Team leaders should bring to every SFW one or two extra SFW workbooks with them for the possibility of new members. Workbooks can be downloaded from the Echo Community website
<https://www.echocommunity.us/smallgroups.html>
- Team members should be encouraged to notify the team leader that they are bringing a new member, so that the team leader is prepared
- Team leaders should encourage every team member to prepare before the meeting by listening to or viewing the episode for the workout
- All team members must make a concerted effort to create a personal action item and work to **accomplish it before the next workout**
- Provide a brief time at the beginning of the workout for team members to share about their progress with their action item. Leaders should share their own progress first.
- Encourage every team member to **bring their Bible to all workouts**.
- Keep a copy of the Catechism of the Catholic Church available during workouts.
- Every member should focus on their own spiritual training between workouts.

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SFW LEADERSHIP TRAINING **4-WEEK “MINI CAMP”**

Leaders should complete a 4-week “Mini Camp” in order to become Team Leaders, who can successfully lead Spiritual Fitness Workouts (SFW). In this two-step process the new leaders - first, learn about Echo Community Young Adult Outreach (YAO) SFWs, and then learn how to lead a small team effectively. Second, they then experience three Spiritual Fitness Workouts.

Introduction Meeting

- The new leaders meet with the Director of the Echo Community YAO or an experienced SFW Leader who has been leading a group of their own.

Week 1:

- Meet at an appointed time and location to receive the Season One Workbook and SFW Manual
- Walk through the SFW Manual and learn how to lead a group and what the program is all about

Experience Spiritual Fitness Workouts

- The new leaders participate together in **three** SFWs over a three-week period using the TEAM format. The Director of the Echo Community YAO or the SFW Leader who introduced the new leaders to the program should lead these three sessions

Week 2:

- Season 1: Series 1 - Our Father: Episode 1: Our Father Who Art in Heaven

Week 3:

- Season 1: Series 2 - The Godly Man: Episode 1: The Godly Man is Patient

Week 4:

- Season 1: Series 3 - Spiritual Combat: Episode 1: The War

Once the training program has been completed these men are ready to start facilitating their own SFW Teams.

Never Alone

It is important to note that men who go through this “mini camp” are not going to be sent out alone and never heard from again. Men leading SFW teams will have continuous contact with the Echo Community YAO, invited to regular SFW leadership get-togethers, encouraged and invited to go on Echo Retreats, and supported through mentorship and spiritual direction as needed and desired. **No man left behind.**

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SPIRITUAL FITNESS WORKOUT (SFW) - TEAM MODEL

SPIRITUAL FITNESS WORKOUT (SFW) MEETING FORMAT

(Team sizes: 4-6 Team Members | 8 max)

The Echo Community Young Adult Outreach recommends that a SFW Team start by meeting twice a month during the first & third or second & fourth weeks.

START ON TIME

Why work out spiritually?

Mt. 18:20 “For where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I in the midst of them.”

Step 1: Warm-up & Action item 10min.(max)

- **Introductions** - If there are any new members to the team, take a brief moment to introduce them to the team. If needed, give them a very short explanation of SFW.
- **Pray** - Kickoff by spending a couple of minutes in prayer asking the Holy Spirit to guide the team through this SFW. Including a brief time for intercessory prayer.
- **Action item** - The leader invites each team member to share how things went personally and spiritually concerning his **personal action item** from the previous week.

Step 2: Huddle Discussion ~45min.

- The leader leads the team in discussion of the episode by utilizing the Warm-up & Workout Questions.
- Remember, we are only as strong as our weakest member. Your contributions in the “Huddle” discussions are important to our team’s success.

Step 3: Action item/Prayer 5min.(max)

- Each team member takes a moment to silently write down one personal action item he would like to accomplish before the next workout.
- Close the meeting with the SFW closing prayer led by one team member.

Total time of the SFW 60min.(max)

NOTE: It is critically important that the SFWs always start on time and end on time. **Men will stop coming if they do not.** If men like to socialize then encouraging them to show up early and socializing before the workouts start is a good idea. However, when the agreed upon time to start the workouts arrives, start the workouts.

END ON TIME



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PRACTICING SPIRITUAL GROWTH

Train

- Daily Prayer
 - Set aside 15 minutes each day for personal private prayer, and gradually build up to 30 minutes
 - Use the scriptures and catechism references in the SFW for the coming meeting as your guide
- Mass
 - Attend Mass every Sunday
 - Prepare by reading the Scriptures prior to Mass, if you are married do this with your family
 - Each evening do a review of your day, ask the Holy Spirit to show you where you were pleasing to the Lord, then ask the Holy Spirit to show you where you came up short...**resolve to do better the next day**
 - Daily Mass, try to attend Mass, if possible, one other time during the week
- Confession
 - Go to confession once a month, or at least once a quarter
- Rosary
 - Commit to praying the rosary at least 3 times per week
- Eucharistic Adoration
 - Commit to going to Eucharistic Adoration 2 times a month, if you are married take your family with you one of these times each month
- Fast or Abstain
 - Chose one day a week, possibly as an SFW team, to fast or abstain from something i.e. meat, a meal, desserts, TV, social media, or **video games**

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TIPS FOR DAYS BETWEEN WORKOUTS

WEEK 1:

- At a minimum, spend 15 minutes of each day in prayer, give your “first fruits” to God
- Pray with the scriptures from the the previous week’s workout PREPARATION
- Reflect on the CCC paragraphs from the previous week’s workout PREPARATION
- Pray and meditate on what the Lord is saying to you through this and what was said in the SFW. Focus, each day, on the PERSONAL ACTION ITEM you wrote down.

WEEK 2:

- Prepare by watching or listening to the episode for the upcoming workout
- Pray with the scriptures from the upcoming workout in the PREPARATION
- Reflect on the CCC paragraphs from the upcoming workout in the PREPARATION
- Answer the SFW QUESTIONS
- Pray and meditate on what the Lord is saying to you through this and what was said in the episode. **Continue** to focus, each day, on the PERSONAL ACTION ITEM you wrote down from the previous workout.

- 1% of our 24-hour day is 15 minutes. Can you give 1% to the Lord?
- Find a place that is quiet, orderly, comfortable, and separated from all distractions when giving your 1%

HUDDLE TIPS FOR SFW TEAM MODEL

- Create a “secure environment” Everything said in the team stays in the team and is held in **STRICT CONFIDENCE**.
- Keep everything moving, if the discussion lags, move onto the next question.
- Stay on the subject at hand - don’t get off-base, redirect as needed.
- Don’t allow one person to dominate the sharing (including yourself).
 - You must kindly interrupt so that you can move on.
- Gently invite everyone to participate in the discussion, including those who are quiet. Everyone’s contributions in the team discussions are important to the team’s success.
- **Listen!** Be attentive to what is being said. All cell phones should be left out of the room or turned off
- You don’t need to comment on the men’s answers to the discussion questions.
- All members, and their sharing, are of equal value - no gurus.
- Refer to the Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC) for answers regarding Church teaching. **DO NOT GUESS!**

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HUDDLE TIPS FOR SFW TEAM MODEL (CONT.)

- Discussion of public figures and issues should be discouraged, these workouts are not a debating session.
- Discussion of Church figures and issues should be discouraged.
- Personal counseling during the meetings should be avoided.
- Personal experiences can be shared but any major issues should be handled outside of the meeting.
- Sensitive and difficult disclosures and sharing can be followed by taking time to pray
- **Be sensitive to the movement of the Holy Spirit and follow that movement.**

SPIRITUAL FITNESS WORKOUT (SFW) - INDIVIDUAL MODEL

The Echo Community Young Adult Outreach “Individual” SFW is designed as a personal workout to be done on a **weekly basis**.

TOTAL TIME ~ 60 MINUTES

Why workout spiritually?

Mt. 26:40-41 “When Jesus returned to his disciples he found them asleep. He said to Peter, ‘So you could not keep watch with me for one hour? The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak.’”

Step 1: Warm-up ~5min.

- **Prayer** - Kickoff by spending a couple of minutes in prayer asking the Holy Spirit to guide you through this Spiritual Fitness Workout
- **Action Item** - Your moment for self-accountability, reflect for a minute or so on how you did or did not do during the previous week with your action item.

Step 2: Workout ~25min.

- View or listen to the next episode.

Step 3: Reflection ~25min.

- Read and reflect on the Scriptures, Catechism, and other references contained in the workbook for the episode you completed in step 2 above.
- Answer the warm-up & workout questions in the workbook.

Step 4: Action Item & Prayer ~5min.

- Write down **one** personal action item you would like to accomplish before the next workout.
- Close with the SFW closing prayer and intercessory prayer

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PRACTICING SPIRITUAL GROWTH

Prioritize

- Make it a priority to keep your scheduled workout session once a week. Don't cheat yourself, but if a true emergency arises get back on track as soon as possible.
- Prepare by following closely the suggested training habits below

Train

- Daily Prayer
 - Set aside 15 minutes each day for personal private prayer, and gradually build up to 30 minutes
 - Use the scriptures and catechism references in the SFW you are doing for the week
- Mass
 - Attend Mass every Sunday
 - Prepare by reading the Scriptures prior to Mass, if you are married do this with your family
 - Each evening do a review of your day, ask the Holy Spirit to show you where you were pleasing to the Lord, then ask the Holy Spirit to show you where you came up short...resolve to do better the next day
 - Daily Mass, try to attend Mass, if possible, one other time during the week
- Confession
 - Go to confession once a month, or at least once a quarter
- Rosary
 - Commit to praying the rosary at least 3 times per week
- Eucharistic Adoration
 - Commit to going to Eucharistic Adoration 2 times per month, if you are married take your family with you one of these times each month
- Fast or Abstain
 - Let Wednesdays be a day to fast or abstain from something i.e. meat, a meal, desserts, TV, social media, or **video games**

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TIPS FOR SFW INDIVIDUAL MODEL

- Set a specific day and time for your weekly workout.
- Find a specific quiet and private place to do your workout.
- Be consistent - keep your workout appointment every week.
- Commit to follow the “Individual” workout model faithfully.
- Follow the content lineup for Season One.
- View or listen to series episodes on the Echo Community website
- Download the workbook containing questions and reference materials for the series episodes on the Echo Community website
- Reflect upon the workout questions and reference material from the Workout Guide during your workout.
- Keep your downloaded workbook in a binder or folder
- Write down your **action item** each workout and keep notes on your progress.
- Make a concerted effort to accomplish your action item before the next workout.
- Focus on your spiritual training between workouts.

WANT TO START A GROUP?

Find all of the content for the first year available to you on our website

<https://www.echocommunity.us/crossingthegoal.html>

We strongly believe that community is vital to our individual growth. As soon as possible, join or start a SFW Team. We can help you do that, reach out to the Echo Community Young Adult Outreach for help.

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SFW 2X2 GROWTH FORMULA

LK 10:1-2 “The Lord appointed Seventy-two, and sent them on ahead of him, two by two, into every town and place.”

Step 1:

- A. Recruit:** Start with 4 men, two will become leaders of team A and two of team B
- B. Train:** These men participate in the 4-week training to become team leaders.

Step 2:

- A. Recruit:** Both leaders in each team invite 2-4 men to form an SFW team - Team A1 and Team B1
- B. Train:** Two new leaders from A1 and B1 participate in the 4-week training to become team leaders for two new teams.

Step 3:

- A. Recruit:** Both leaders in each team invite 2-4 men to form an SFW team - Team A2 and Team B2
- B. Train:** Two new leaders from A2 and B2 participate in the 4-week training to become team leaders for two new teams.

Step 4:

- A. Recruit:** Both leaders in each team invite 2-4 men to form an SFW team - Team A3 and Team B3
- B. Train:** Two new leaders from A3 and B3 participate in the 4-week training to become team leaders for two new teams.

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SFW 2X2 GROWTH FORMULA (CONT.)

