



# Families: Essential Agents of Evangelization

*The Order is expanding efforts to strengthen the domestic church and our parishes*

by Supreme Knight Carl A. Anderson



ON DEC. 17, 2015, the supreme chaplain and I had the privilege of being received by Pope Francis in a private audience. Our meeting was an opportunity to discuss with the Holy Father many Knights of Columbus initiatives, including our new Building the Domestic Church While Strengthening Our Parish initiative.

Pope Francis has frequently spoken about the role of the Christian family as a domestic church, and he expressed special interest in this initiative. In an address last summer he said, “Families are the domestic church, where Jesus grows; he grows in the love of spouses, he grows in the lives of children.” We could not find a better mission statement for our new initiative than these words.

Our initiative also seeks to further goals set by the Synod of Bishops on the Family last October. The synod’s final document highlighted key elements of the Church’s ministry to families.

First, the document stated that “the family needs to be rediscovered as the essential agent in the work of evangelization.” Second, it emphasized the need for “a thorough renewal of the Church’s pastoral practice in light of the Gospel of the Family and for replacing its current emphasis on individuals.” Third, it called for greater “pastoral accompaniment” to promote growth in the “spiritual life and solidarity” of families — through devotional practices, greater attention to Scripture, and the Eucharist celebrated for families.

In other words, the synod called for precisely the type of pastoral programs

proposed by our Building the Domestic Church While Strengthening Our Parish initiative, which seeks to foster a new evangelization of the family and through the family.

Last month in my column, I discussed how this initiative would provide a new emphasis on youth ministry within the parish as the key to our Order’s youth activities.

This month, I take this opportunity to announce two practical programs within

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our new initiative. I have asked our state deputies and state chaplains to implement the following:

First, to incorporate into the opening Mass of every state convention held this fraternal year a simple prayer of family consecration to the Holy Family. Our goal will be to offer every Knights of Columbus family the opportunity for this consecration. As part of this program, we will ask every parish with an active Knights of Columbus presence to offer this prayer of family consecration during Masses celebrated on the first Sunday after Christmas, usually celebrated as the feast of the Holy Family.

Second, to sponsor corporate communions for Knights of Columbus families on Father’s Day, and that as part of

the eucharistic celebration there be an opportunity for all married couples to affirm their wedding vows.

Our hope is that these Knights of Columbus-sponsored programs of family consecration to the Holy Family and Father’s Day affirmation of wedding vows will become annual liturgical events throughout all the countries in which the Order is active.

These two very practical, parish-based programs can help build a new pastoral accompaniment for families. The witness of millions of families consecrated to the Holy Family and millions of Catholic couples affirming their marriages under the leadership of Catholic husbands and fathers could truly be the beginning of a new evangelization of family life.

In addition, councils should continue to sponsor our parish-based Holy Family Prayer program as well as our Building the Domestic Church: The Family Fully Alive monthly family devotional program. Both of these programs offer valuable resources for husbands and fathers seeking to assume greater responsibility in building the domestic church in their own homes.

In the days ahead, more aspects of our initiative will be announced as we lead new efforts to strengthen and preserve our families and our parishes.

*Vivat Jesus!*