

# A DOMESTIC CHURCH

## A Community of Prayer

The story of Scripture is the story of families who struggle, of those who grapple with sin and face doubts, fears and uncertainties. St. Paul reminds us that families can overcome such struggles if together they embrace the new mode of life found in Christ. Like the families in the New Testament, modern families are called to welcome the presence of God into their homes through common prayer and increased family devotion. In this manner, families become the domestic churches they are meant to be.

## A School of Faith and Charity

Domestic churches are sanctuaries from the hardship of the secular world, a place where, protected and guided by their parents, children grow in maturity and grace. Parents, by their word and example, pass on their faith and provide an environment for the discernment of truth and the practice of virtue. *Gaudium et Spes*, the pastoral constitution on the Church in the modern world, teaches that “with their parents leading the way ... children and indeed every-one gathered around the family hearth will find a readier path to human maturity, salvation and holiness” (48).

## A Mission of Evangelization

In the Synod of Bishops’ document on the pastoral challenges of the family, we read, “Evangelizing is the shared responsibility of all God’s people, each according to his ministry and charism.” The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* teaches that families are of primary importance as centers of living and radiant faith. Through the witness of family life we present the most effective form of evangelization: “a Christian life lived with charity and faith” (USCCB, *Disciples Called to Witness*).

Founded in 1882 by Blessed Michael McGivney, the Knights of Columbus is the largest Catholic fraternal benefit society in the world, with more than 1.9 million members in the United States, Canada, the Philippines, Mexico, Poland, the Dominican Republic, Puerto Rico, Panama, the Bahamas, the Virgin Islands, Cuba, Guatemala, Guam, Saipan, Lithuania, Ukraine, South Korea and France.

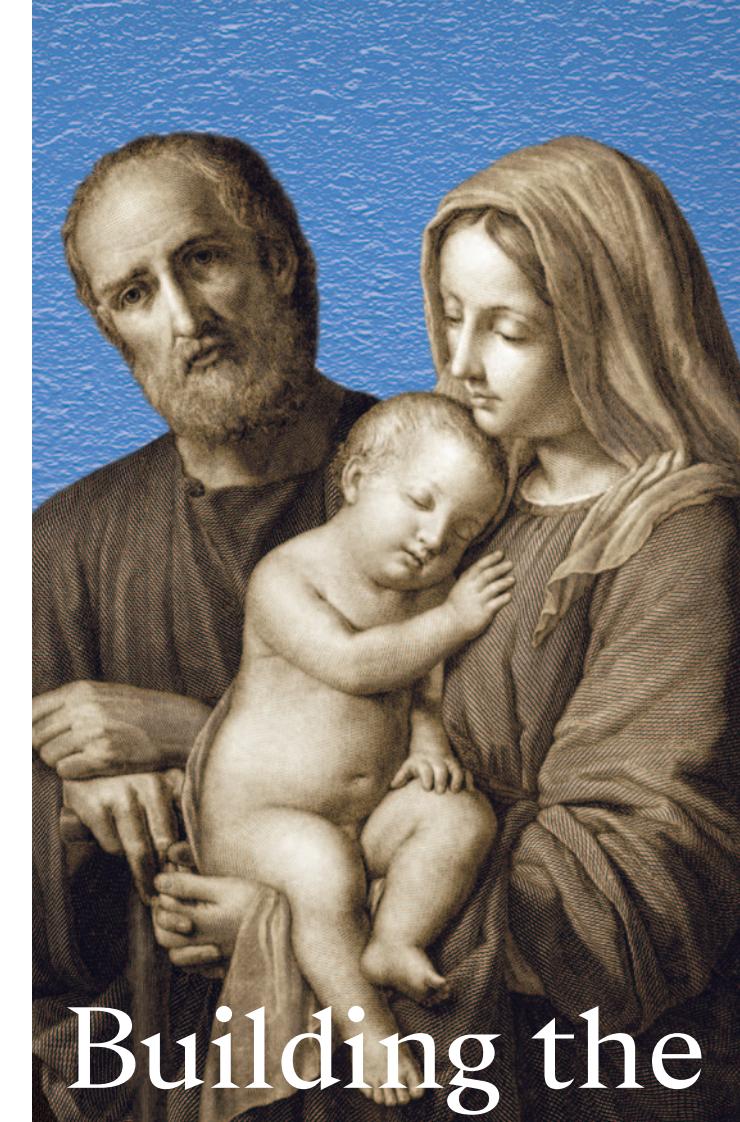
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Building the  
Domestic  
Church®  
While Strengthening Our Parish



Faith in Action

# EACH FAMILY IS CENTRAL TO THE NEW EVANGELIZATION

The phrase “domestic church” has been used to describe families since the beginning of Christianity. In his *Letter to Families*, St. John Paul II explained, “The Fathers of the Church, in the Christian tradition, have spoken of the family as a ‘domestic church,’ a ‘little church.’”

Today, the Church still uses this unique description, saying, “The family is, so to speak, the domestic church. In it parents should, by their word and example, be the first preachers of the faith to their children; they should encourage them in the vocation which is proper to each of them” (*Lumen Gentium*, 11).

More precisely, a domestic church is a Christian family that, strengthened by the graces of the sacrament of matrimony, lives together in a community of prayer; learns about the faith, human virtue and Christian charity; and helps evangelize the world.



*“The dignity and responsibility of the Christian family as the domestic church can be achieved only with God’s unceasing aid, which will surely be granted if it is humbly and trustingly petitioned in prayer.”*

– St. John Paul II

## Strengthening and Sustaining Our Parishes

The Knights of Columbus seeks to strengthen family life through its Building the Domestic Church While Strengthening Our Parish initiative. Through this initiative, the Order promotes various programs that support Christian family life and encourages councils and families to more fully integrate with the sacramental and social life of their parish. We thereby hope to not only help each family participate in the Church’s mission of evangelization, but to also strengthen our members and revitalize our parishes.

Pope Francis asks in *Amoris Laetitia*, “Who is making an effort to strengthen marriages, to help married couples overcome their problems, to assist them in the work of raising children and, in general, to encourage the stability of the marriage bond?”

In thousands of parishes throughout North America, Asia and Europe, the answer is the Knights of Columbus.

*“The family has well deserved the beautiful name of ‘domestic church.’ ... Furthermore, the family, like the Church, ought to be a place where the Gospel is transmitted and from which the Gospel radiates.”*

– St. Paul VI

## Our Strategy for the Family

Building the Domestic Church While Strengthening Our Parish is our strategic plan for a renewed closeness between families and parishes. Through the Faith in Action program and other activities, the Knights of Columbus offers tools and materials that will help families grow and find the encouragement they need. By building upon long-established programs and developing new ones, the Knights of Columbus hopes to strengthen our parishes and establish our councils as revitalized centers of lay leadership for the Church.

*“The family as domestic church is central to the work of the new evangelization and to the future sustainability of our parishes. ... The Knights of Columbus is providentially positioned to play a key role in the new alliance between the Church and family.”*

– Past Supreme Knight Carl Anderson



For further information, visit the Building the Domestic Church website at: [www.kofc.org/DomesticChurch](http://www.kofc.org/DomesticChurch)