COVENANT

Plan of Life

The Holy Family of Kettle River

Communitas Dei Patris

Approved on December 8, 2006
Feast Day of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary
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The Presentation of the Lord

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Introduction

On Pilgrimage Home as One Family of God the Father

1 On Pentecost, the early Christian community began its pilgrimage to the house of the Father as one family united in prayer with Mary, our Mother, and with Peter, *first of the apostles* and Vicar of Christ. Filled with the Holy Spirit, Peter exhorted everyone to: "Save yourselves from this corrupt generation!" (Acts 2:40) by means of repentance and baptism for the forgiveness of sins. Thus, everyone was invited to receive the Holy Spirit to become children of one Father and brothers and sisters in Christ. Every day, thousands accepted the message and devoted themselves to *the teachings of the apostles, the communal life, the breaking of bread, the prayers, meeting together in the Temple area, and sharing meals with exultation and sincerity of heart,* and God blessed them and multiplied their numbers (cf. Acts 2:42, 46-47).

2 As persecutions of this new Catholic family intensified in the first three centuries, so also did heroic acts of sacrificial love multiply in the closely knit community; virgins, martyrs, confessors, popes, bishops, priests, deacons, married couples, and other countless saints inspired an ever increasing number of men and women to also want to leave everything behind to join this pilgrim journey home to the heavenly Father.

3 At many periods in the history of Christianity, when the original evangelical spirit of the Church waned, God the Father sent holy men and women to recapture the spirit of the early Christians in its zeal to live the Gospel of Jesus Christ like Ss. Augustine, Benedict, Bernard, Norbert, Dominic, Francis, Teresa of Avila, and many others who established religious families. These saints, along with Christian families, also looked to the Holy Family of Nazareth as a model for living holiness in family life.

4 In our time, the fathers of the Second Vatican Council called for a renewal of holiness in all Christian families, religious institutes, and parish communities inspired by the Holy Family and the model of the early Church. Every Christian is being called to unite in continuous prayer in the presence of Jesus together with Mary, the Mother of Jesus, under the guidance of the Holy Father to bring about a new Pentecost; filled with the Holy Spirit, we can truly live as children of the Father, brothers and sisters in Christ, and as one family lead others into the family of the Catholic Church.

A Means to Renew the Family and the Church

5 As St. Francis of Assisi gazed upon our crucified Lord, Jesus spoke to him and said, "Francis, rebuild My Church, for it is falling into ruins." He rebuilt the Church by restoring the spirit of the early Church community which left behind all to live as a family, as children of one Father. In the spirit of St. Francis, one of our patron saints, *Communitas Dei Patris* is a means to bring about renewal within the family so as to renew the Church.

Who We Are

6 *Communitas Dei Patris* (the Latin pronunciation is: Cŏm-ŭn-ē-tăs Dā-ē Pă-trēs. The English translation is *On Pilgrimage Home as One Family of God the Father*)[1] is an Association of Faithful Catholics in the Roman Catholic Tradition; we draw our life-breath from the Church, in the Church, and with the Church by actively participating in her liturgical prayer and sacramental life under the guidance of the Blessed Mother. Like the early Church, we are a pilgrim people made up of families and individuals who support one another in living the fullness of the Catholic Faith as we journey home to our heavenly Father. Members can be young or old, rich or poor, educated or uneducated, single, or married with or without children, grandparents, priests, or religious.

7 Our association of families began informally in 1991. In 2002, after years of prayer and study together, we formalized the vision and purpose of the association in the form of a *Covenant Plan of Life*. *Communitas Dei Patris* is a way for individuals, married couples, and families to live out and promote together the truth of God's plan for marriage and family life in the midst of a world that has largely forsaken

God. It is a beacon of hope that the healing and restoration of marriages and families can come about through prayer and faithfully living the truths of Sacred Scripture and the teachings of the Catholic Church.

8 Inspired by the model of the early Church, the Holy Family of Nazareth, and the rules of life of the great monastic families, we sought to be a family association that would be a path to holiness for Christian families who desired deeper communion with God and one another. We felt called to unite together to bear witness with courage, conviction, and complete sacrificial self-giving love, to the truth of the Catholic Faith and the gospel of life, as the early Church did in the midst of an unbelieving world. This may seem radical, but in reality it is the level of faith and personal witness we are called to live. Jesus said, "If anyone wishes to come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me. For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will save it" (Lk 9:23-34).

Our Covenant Relationship

9 At baptism, we entered into the new and eternal Covenant by becoming children of God the Father within the universal family of the Catholic Church. In a similar way, by renewing our baptismal promises by means of a total consecration to Jesus through Mary according to the St. Louis de Montfort formula, with the special intention of living this consecration within the particular family of *Communitas Dei Patris,* we enter in and promise to live the *Covenant Plan of Life* together with other members of this family. In the words of the consecration, we give the Blessed Mother, on a personal level, and as a family, "the entire and full right to dispose of me, and all that belongs to me, without exception, according to thy good pleasure, for the greater glory of God in time and eternity."

10 In our covenant and as a pilgrim family, members forego social status by embracing one another as brothers and sisters in the Lord, as children of one Father guided by our Mother Mary. Individual member's and family's inalienable God-given rights to autonomy (self-governance and freedom), family identity or culture, and privacy are respected in the *Covenant Plan of Life*. Our solidarity within *Communitas Dei Patris*

is rooted in our deep love for Jesus in the Eucharist, the Blessed Virgin Mary, and our Holy Father.

Full Communion with the Holy Catholic Church

11 *Communitas Dei Patris* is an Association of Faithful Catholics in the Roman Catholic Tradition. We are faithful Catholics who draw our life-breath from the Church, in the Church, and with the Church by actively participating in her liturgical prayer and sacramental life at the parish level; and, by living the evangelical counsels of chastity, poverty, and obedience according to our state in life.

Prayer

12 Members of *Communitas Dei Patris* are committed to daily family prayer within the parish and home. It is in prayer that we grow together in love and become united as one family—in the natural family, the family of *Communitas Dei Patris*, the family of the Catholic Church, and the family of God the Father. Daily family prayer is also the bond that unites us in our common pilgrimage to the house of the Father. For our members, prayer is like the heart that pumps life-giving blood to the body because it is from prayer that everything begins and emanates; indeed, everything in our daily life-cycle is an outward expression of the fruits of prayer (cf. Commission, 56.). The source and summit of our daily prayer is Mass, Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament, the Liturgy of the Hours, the Rosary, and family prayer in the home. Each member is encouraged to participate in one or more of these pillars of daily prayer as they are able according to their state in life, while all share in the graces and blessings of prayer together as a family.

Chastity

13 We are convinced that, together with daily family prayer, living the virtue of chastity in marriage, as a virgin and within the family is at the very heart of the universal return of families to the house of God the Father and the new springtime in the Church. By embracing the virtue of chastity, the bonds of love between husbands and wives, parents and children, and brothers and sisters in Christ are strengthened and fortified thus enabling them to rediscover the beauty of life, love, happiness, and peaceful communion with one another and with God.

Poverty

14 In the spirit of poverty, our members embrace a spirit of detachment from material possessions for the sake of the Kingdom of God. Trusting in the providential love of God who is our Father, we set aside social status and attachment to the things of the world in order to live in greater freedom from inordinate desires to seek after riches or inordinate fear of losing or sharing what we have acquired. This was the spirit of the early Church: "All who believed were together and had all things in common; they would sell their property and possessions and divide them among all according to each one's need" (Acts 2:44). Members do not literally donate everything they possess so that it is owned by the community, but freely choose, according to their ability, to use individual resources to help others in need.

Obedience

15 With ardent desire to live in perfect communion with the one true Faith established by Jesus Christ, all of our members profess fidelity and obedience to the Pope, to the ordinary and extraordinary Magisterium united with him, to the official teachings of the Roman Catholic Church, and to the local bishops where members live. (cf. Heb 13:17) [Introduction].

Communitas Dei Patris and the New Evangelization

16 We believe that the universal healing and restoration of marriages and families, and thus the salvation of souls, is at the forefront of the *New Evangelization of the World.* In his **Letter to Families**, Pope Saint John Paul II said, *"The history of mankind, the history of salvation passes by way of the family. The family is placed at the center of the great struggle between good and evil, between life and death, between love and all that is opposed to love. To the family is entrusted the task of striving, first and foremost, to unleash the forces of good, the source of which is found in Christ, the Redeemer of Man" (#23).*

17 Our primary mission within the *New Evangelization* is to help bring spiritual revival to families by means of the sacramental graces of the Church. We carry out this mission by joyfully and enthusiastically establishing weekly **Family Prayer Night Devotions** and **Perpetual Eucharistic Adoration** within our own parish communities as a means

to foster and support daily prayer in the home; and by assisting parents and families in providing authentic **Family Chastity Formation** within the home. Through a renewal of daily family prayer, chastity formation within the family, and family associations which live, promote, and defend the Catholic way of life, the new evangelization will bear fruit on a local level and eventually lead to a new springtime within the Universal Church.

18 *Communitas Dei Patris* seeks to evangelize in the spirit of the early Church and zealously bear witness to Jesus Christ by daily devoting ourselves *to the teachings of the Apostles* (official Church teachings), *meeting together in the temple area* (praying together in common), *the breaking of bread* (attending Holy Mass), and *sharing meals with sincerity of heart*. The Covenant establishes a common vision for families to be fully integrated into the life of the Catholic Church, committed to daily family prayer in the home, and to be united as a world wide family of families so that our prayers and sacrifices of intercession may rise up throughout the day to the throne of Our Heavenly Father for the universal healing and restoration of families and salvation of souls. In this way, we hope to become better witnesses to the light of Christ in a world that is being plunged into a sea of darkness.

19 At the local level, members are free to choose how they live their consecration as an individual, a family, or in communion with other members or families. The Covenant of *Communitas Dei Patris* establishes a common vision for all members worldwide, but is open and flexible to accommodate particular local needs, traditions, customs, availability of members and sacraments, etc. As pilgrims on a journey together we rejoice and are blessed by the rich diversity of our members which enrich both the local and universal family of *Communitas Dei Patris.*

20 Our members, wherever they may be in the world, are the missionary arm of *Communitas Dei Patris* in the *New Evangelization of the World*. Their joyful participation in daily parish life is a testimony to the movement of the Holy Spirit in their lives and so they become witnesses to the lukewarm, the faint of heart, and the unchurched in their parishes, villages, towns, cities, states, and nations. With radiant love

and joy they will inspire in the hearts of others a desire to come home to the Father. On this pilgrimage home to the Father with new brothers and sisters in the Lord, healing and restoration begins to flow within hearts, in marriages and families, and begins to touch others in need. "And every day the Lord added to their number those who were being saved" (Acts 2:47).

Final Blessing

21 To Mary, Mother of Christ, and our mother too, we entrust this *Covenant* of *Communitas Dei Patris* and all peoples throughout its existence who will be beneficiaries of this wonderful grace; all for the greater honor and glory of God in time and eternity.

July 16, 2007, Feast of Our Lady of Mount Carmel

The Commission

Communitas Dei Patris (Communitas),
On Pilgrimage Home as One Family of God the Father

Article 1. Calling and Name

25 "But when the fullness of time had come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to ransom those under the law, so that we might receive adoption. As proof that you are children, God sent the spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying out, 'Abba, Father!' So you are no longer a slave but a child, and if a child then also an heir, through God" (Gal 4:4-7).

26 *Communitas Dei Patris*[1] seeks to live in fullness that familial love relationship each person and each family was created to have with our Heavenly Father through the merits of Jesus Christ as a response to Vatican II's universal call to all the families of the earth to pilgrimage back to our Heavenly Father, *"from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named"* (Eph 3:15). *Communitas* is also a response to our Heavenly Mother, whose call is *"a loving and urgent invitation addressed to all the children of God so that they will return to the house of the Father"* (Pope Saint John Paul II, As the Third Millennium Draws Near, 54).

27 As children of our Heavenly Father, *Communitas Dei Patris* is called to bear witness on earth to the dignity and holiness of family life, to proclaim the gospel of the family, and to live the truth that:

- all families are called to live fully their baptismal commitment to Christ in the family of the Church.
- all families are called to holiness, prayer, and a sacramental life to live more fully as the *domestic church* on earth.
- God the Father desires that His plan for marriage and family life be made known to every family on earth.

Article 2. Our Family

28 *Communitas Dei Patris* is an association of faithful Catholics comprised of individuals, families, priests, and religious who freely choose to pilgrimage together to the house of the Father[2] through full and active participation in the liturgical prayer and sacramental life of the Roman Catholic Church, in communion with the Pope and the hierarchy united with him[3], and under the guidance of the Holy Virgin Mother of God.

29 Following the personal example of Pope Saint John Paul II ("Pope of the Family"), preeminent among the patron saints of *Communitas Dei Patris*, we entrust ourselves to the Blessed Virgin by means of the act of consecration to the Immaculate Heart of Mary according to St. Louis Marie Grignon de Montfort. In this total consecration to Jesus through Mary, we, like our late Holy Father, donate ourselves completely to the Virgin Mother of God, to be formed in imitation of Christ by her, and to be entirely at her disposal to carry out the evangelical mission of the Church, *"so that the divine message of salvation may more and more reach all people of all times and all places"*[4] (Can. 211).

30 Joining together, priests, religious, and lay members support one another as a family on pilgrimage for the greater common good,[5] under the maternal guidance of the Virgin Mary, in living the Gospel of Jesus Christ by:

- imitating the early Church in its "communion of thought and prayer with Peter and around Peter, the shepherd of the lambs and of the sheep" (Pope John XXIII).[6]
- professing the evangelical counsels of poverty, chastity, and obedience according to each person's vocation or state in life.[7]
- participating daily in the liturgical and sacramental life of the Church.
- sharing in common prayer when possible and the works of our apostolates.
- devoting ourselves to *The New Evangelization of the World*.
- praying and fasting for the healing and restoration of families, and for the salvation of souls.
- encouraging vocations to the priesthood and religious life.[8]

Article 3. Eucharist

Source and Summit of Life

31 The Eucharist, Jesus Christ truly present body, blood, soul, and divinity, is the central mystery of our faith which permeates and animates the very life of *Communitas Dei Patris*, its members and its apostolates. Wholly integrated into the life of the Church and sacraments, we look to the Eucharist for our daily nourishment in celebration of Mass, adoration of the Blessed Sacrament, love of God the Father; and in our unity and communion with one another, the Church, the body of Christ, and with all the saints in heaven. Each time we receive Eucharist, we are transformed by its power.

32 We fully and humbly embrace the Eucharist as the foundation for life on our pilgrimage home. Let us, therefore, contemplate the universality of the Eucharist in the life of all of our members:

Eucharist and the Church

33 "Every commitment to holiness, every activity aimed at carrying out the Church's mission must draw the strength it needs from the Eucharistic mystery and in turn be directed to that mystery as its culmination. In the Eucharist we have Jesus, we have his redemptive sacrifice, we have his resurrection, we have the gift of the Holy Spirit, we have adoration, obedience and love of the Father" (*Ecclesia De Eucharistia*, 60). "Sharing in the Eucharist, the sacrament of the New Covenant [cf. l Cor 11:23-29], is the culmination of our assimilation to Christ, the source of 'eternal life'" [cf. Jn 6:51-58] (*Veritatis Splendor*, 21).

Eucharist and the Priesthood

34 "The Eucharist is the principal and central raison d'etre of the sacrament of the priesthood, which effectively came into being at the moment of the institution of the Eucharist, and together with it" (*Dominicae Cenae*, 2). It is for this reason that we highly esteem, honor and support our priests, and foster vocations to perpetuate this holy sacrament in the life of the Church.

Eucharist and Mary

35 "As community, we are called 'to imitate Mary, woman of the Eucharist, in her relationship with this most holy mystery'" (*Ecclesia De Eucharistia*, 53) as she guides us faithfully to Christ (cf. *Redemptoris Mater*, 44). "Above all, let us listen to Mary Most Holy, in whom the mystery of the Eucharist appears, more than in anyone else, as a mystery of light. Gazing upon Mary, we come to know the transforming power present in the Eucharist. In her we see the world renewed in love" (*Ecclesia De Eucharistia*, 62).

Eucharist and Marriage

36 "The Eucharist develops the affective love proper to marriage in daily giving to one's spouse and children, without forgetting and overlooking that 'the celebration which gives meaning to every other form of prayer and worship is found in the family's actual daily life together, if it is a life of love and self-giving'" (*Evangelium Vitae*, 93) (Preparation for the Sacrament of Marriage, 41).

37 "The Eucharist is the very source of Christian marriage. The Eucharistic Sacrifice, in fact, represents Christ's covenant of love with the Church, sealed with His blood on the Cross. In this sacrifice of the New and Eternal Covenant, Christian spouses encounter the source from which their own marriage covenant flows, is interiorly structured and continuously renewed" (*Familiaris Consortio*, 57).

Eucharist and Family

38 "As a representation of Christ's sacrifice of love for the Church, the Eucharist is a fountain of charity. In the Eucharistic gift of charity the Christian family finds the foundation and soul of its 'communion' and its 'mission': by partaking in the Eucharistic bread, the different members of the Christian family become one body, which reveals and shares in the wider unity of the Church. Their sharing in the Body of Christ that is 'given up' and in His Blood that is 'shed' becomes a never-ending source of missionary and apostolic dynamism for the Christian family" (*Familiaris Consortio*, 57).

Eucharist and Communitas

39 "It is around the Eucharist, celebrated or adored, 'source and summit' of all activity of the Church, that the communion of souls is built up, which is the starting point of all growth in fraternity. (Fraternal Life in Community, Rome 1994, 4).

40 "The gift of Christ and his Spirit which we receive in Eucharistic communion superabundantly fulfils the yearning for fraternal unity deeply rooted in the human heart; at the same time it elevates the experience of fraternity already present in our common sharing at the same Eucharistic table to a degree which far surpasses that of the simple human experience of sharing a meal. Through her communion with the body of Christ the Church comes to be ever more profoundly 'in Christ in the nature of a sacrament, that is, a sign and instrument of intimate unity with God and of the unity of the whole human race'" (*Ecclesia De Eucharistia*, 24).

Eucharist and Fraternity

41 "The Eucharist is the creative force and source of communion among the members of the Church, precisely because it unites each one of them with Christ himself: Really sharing in the body of the Lord in the breaking of the Eucharistic bread, we are taken up into communion with him and with one another. 'Because the bread is one, we, though many, are one body, all of us who partake of the one bread'" [*1 Cor* 10:17] (Some Aspects of the Church Understood as Communion, May 28, 1992, Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith).

42 "Celebrating Eucharist together cannot, however, be the starting-point for fraternity because it presupposes that communion already exists, a communion which it seeks to consolidate and bring to perfection. The sacrament is an expression of this bond of communion both in its invisible dimension, which, in Christ and through the working of the Holy Spirit, unites us to the Father and among ourselves, and in its visible dimension, which entails communion in the teaching of the Apostles, in the sacraments and in the Church's hierarchical order" (*Ecclesia De Eucharistia*, 35).

Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament

43 "A Christian community desirous of contemplating the face of Christ... cannot fail also to develop this aspect of Eucharistic worship, which prolongs and increases the fruits of our communion in the body and blood of the Lord" (*Ecclesia De Eucharistia*, 25).

44 "Adoration of the Eucharist begins in communion and leads to acts of Eucharistic piety, adoring God the Father, in Spirit and in Truth, in the risen and living Christ, truly present among us" (The Eucharist: Source and Summit of the Life and Mission of the Church. *Lineamenta*, 60).

Article 4. The Holy Spirit and Our Vocation to Love

45 Through Baptism and Confirmation we become temples of the Holy Spirit and receive an outpouring of the gifts of the Holy Spirit in order to love and fulfill God's will and purpose for our lives (Cf. CCC 1265, 1302). The Holy Spirit illuminates the path of love which consists in following Christ, crucified and risen from the dead, so that we too may love more like Jesus; "that is, to be the image and instrument of the love which flows from Christ" (Pope Benedict XVI, Homily, Pentecost Sunday 2006.)

46 Christ affirmed the two great commandments of loving God above all else and our neighbors as ourselves, but then on the night before His sacrificial death on the cross, Jesus proclaimed the new commandment of love: "Love one another. As I have loved you, so you also should love one another." (Jn 13:34-35). *As I have loved you* introduces the new standard of Christ's sacrificial and self-giving love that we are called to follow, that is, in totally dying to inordinate self-love and freed from all selfishness, we can become one in the *agape* love of the Father. One in love with the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit we experience deep communion with God and with one another as a family; and, this total sacrificial love within the family of God the Father is meant to shine before all men so they too can be led to the wedding feast of God's love. Out of all the gifts of the Holy Spirit, St. Paul says that agape love is the greatest (Cf. 1 Cor 13:13), since agape love alone will endure forever.

47 The other manifestations of God's love -- *eros* (spousal love) and *philia* (friendship or brotherly love) -- are designed to mature in sacrificial self-giving *agape* love. *Agape* love is "the self-giving love of one who looks exclusively for the good of the other," (Pope Benedict XVI, Lent 2007) a disinterested love that operates in service to family, friends, and neighbors. (Cf Lk 10:29-37). Jesus demonstrated this unconditional love and forgiveness toward us and we must first receive His love *(As I have loved you)* so we can demonstrate it to others (*so you should love one another).* Human nature can not totally love and forgive unconditionally without the divine assistance of the Holy Spirit. Let us unceasingly pray and be open to receiving all the gifts, graces, and strength of the Holy Spirit so God will *forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us*, and so that we do not fall into temptation and sin but be delivered from evil. For if we do not love and forgive others neither will our heavenly Father forgive us. (Cf Mt 6:12-15) Only through the Father's unconditional *agape* love flowing through Christ will we grow in holiness and our vocation of love.

48 The Holy Spirit has imparted a special grace or charism to *Communitas Dei Patris* (Cf. CCC, 798.) to help us manifest His love as true children of one family of God the Father, to be a light in the world which has fallen into spiritual darkness. The Holy Spirit also gives each member of this family unique gifts to serve the common good (Cf. 1 Cor 12:4-11.). Let us welcome and celebrate all the gifts of the Holy Spirit, and in unceasing prayer with Mary, continually ask the Father for a new Pentecost so that we may become His missionaries for the healing and restoration of marriages and families which will bring about the renewal of the Church. *"Come Holy Spirit, come by means of the powerful intercession of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, your well-beloved spouse!"* Let us begin this prayer with Mary within our own homes, parishes, and towns so the light and love of Jesus Christ will radiate out and reach all people to the ends of the earth.

Article 5. Spirituality

49 The St. Louis de Montfort consecration[10] itself contains the interior rule that governs the heart of our members. The consecration involves a renewal of the vows of baptism, a renunciation of Satan, and a total offering of oneself to Jesus through Mary, "to carry my cross after

Him all the days of my life." Living this consecration in communion with others is an ideal that inspires great hope, joy, and optimism.

50 As the consecration is lived out on a day to day basis, members become aware that the Virgin Mary arranges the situations of one's life in such a way that great and heroic sacrifices of self are required. Daily crosses are lovingly sent to purify and transform souls into a deeper communion with Christ and a fuller sharing in the sufferings of the cross. This *New Pilgrimage of Families* within the Catholic Church brings with it the gifts of great joy and love, but de Montfort himself clearly explains how these treasures are obtained, and it is by each member accepting his or her own cross: *"His own cross, which is the greatest gift I (Jesus speaking) can bestow upon my chosen ones on earth; his own cross, whose thickness is made up of the loss of one's possessions, humiliations, contempt, sufferings, illnesses and spiritual trials, which come to him daily till his death in accordance with my providence; his own cross, whose length consists of a certain period of days or months enduring slander, or lying on a sick-bed, or being forced to beg, or suffering from temptations, dryness, desolation, and other interior trials; his own cross, whose breadth is made up of the most harsh and bitter circumstances brought about by relatives, friends, servants; his own cross, whose depth is made up of the hidden trials I shall inflict on him without his being able to find any comfort from other people, for they also, under my guidance, will turn away from him and join with me in making him suffer"* (Friends of the Cross, II C 18).

51 In the particular life of our married couples, the mystery of Christ's cross provides a special grace because, *"it is by following Christ, renouncing themselves, and taking up their crosses that spouses will be able to 'receive' the original meaning of marriage and live it with the help of Christ. [Mt 19:11] This grace of Christian marriage is a fruit of Christ's cross, the source of all Christian life"* (CCC 1615).

52 Each member is called to complete surrender and abandonment to the will of God through the Blessed Virgin in order to be formed into the likeness of her Son Jesus. The path to holiness, or the *Covenant Plan of Life*, is none other than the way of the cross, of living the Gospel of Jesus Christ which is the complete detachment, surrender, and emptying of one's self, sacrificing all, out of love for and service to God and one

another. In this complete detachment from self and abandonment to the will of God alone, the Virgin Mary forms *Communitas* in imitation of the early Church in its prayer and apostolate, in its unity and love, and in its total trust in the providential love of God.

53 Therefore, one is to understand that *Communitas Dei Patris* is neither an escape nor a refuge from the world but is rather a very strenuous and ongoing spiritual journey home to our heavenly Father through obedience in living the Roman Catholic Faith. Members learn to embrace each adverse situation throughout the day as an opportunity for spiritual growth. Each trial is "the greatest gift" which de Montfort writes about in his letter to the *Friends of the Cross*.

54 Throughout the history of the Church, families of faith consistently looked to the Holy Family and the early Church for inspiration to express in new and fruitful ways the spirituality of the cross. The "spirit of the cross" as understood by St. Louis de Montfort is the cornerstone of the spirituality in *Communitas Dei Patris*.

Article 6. Prayer and Contemplation

55 Members of *Communitas Dei Patris* strive to live in an attitude of contemplative prayer, especially as expounded and taught by the Doctors of the Church: Ss. Teresa of Avila, John of the Cross, and Therese of Lisieux.

56 *"God, being most respectful of the freedom He has given to us, speaks to our heart when it is uncluttered and silent. He does not interrupt worldly conversations and pursuits. We hear Him, therefore, only to the extent that we are disposed by inner stillness and undistracted by selfish desires"* (Fire Within, Pg. 140). Through a detachment from the senses and the soul, we set our minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth (cf. Col 3:2) whereby an inner stillness and quiet is created through which God communicates His loving presence to the soul.

57 Prayer and contemplation are the chief cornerstones of *Communitas Dei Patris* from which everything begins and emanates. Our daily life-cycle is an outward expression of the fruits of prayer

and contemplation which are always directed to the greater honor and glory of God both in time and eternity by the very nature of our total consecration–*Totus Tuus*–to Jesus through Mary.

58 The unity which is so desired within *Communitas Dei Patris* has as its roots the daily family prayer of its members and friends. It is the bond through which all graces flow into each family to:

- strengthen the marriage and deepen the love between husband and wife.
- establish proper order within the family.
- deepen the love between parents and children.
- strengthen and fortify the faith of each of its members.
- become a vibrant domestic church and thus contribute to the vitality of the local and Universal Church.
- foster deeper and more meaningful relationships with God our Father, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit.

Article 7. Charism

59 In response to the loving and urgent invitation of the maternal voice of Mary, *Communitas Dei Patris* seeks to return to the house of the Father by "doing what Christ commands." Given a name by the Father (cf. Eph 3:15), *Communitas* is also endowed with a particular grace, a gift of the Holy Spirit to share in the apostolic mission of the Church,[12] to build up the body of Christ, and this is in particular to restore and rebuild the domestic church, the family, the heart of the Body of Christ and civilization. In imitation of Mary, *Communitas Dei Patris* seeks to conform itself to God's revealed plan for family life, to a life of charity and holiness, and to help others live more fully by this gospel message in this particular period of history.

60 *Communitas Dei Patris* aspires to live the love life of the Blessed Trinity which is reflected in the Holy Family, in Jesus, Mary, and Joseph. We dwell on the deep mystery of the Incarnation, the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit humbly dwelling in the heart and womb of the Virgin Mary, and with St. Joseph, revealing a new model of family life which is a reflection of the life of heaven on earth. The Holy Family's mission was nothing less than one family called by God the Father to be the model of love through which his Son Jesus Christ would enter the world and be the

source of salvation for all mankind. So too each member of *Communitas Dei Patris* seeks to offer his or her ordinary daily life, prayer and service, consecrated to God in imitating the Holy Family, in order to be a means to radiate eternal gifts, graces, and life for the salvation of families throughout the world. The special mission of *Communitas Dei Patris*[13] is to:

- live the marital covenant desired by God.
- strengthen the marital bond, pass on the faith to the children, evangelize through personal witness, and foster vocations to the priesthood and religious life.
- live the official teachings of the Roman Catholic Church with uncompromised fidelity, and in particular those which pertain to marriage and family life.
- grow in personal relationship with God and one another.
- support the local and Universal Church through their gifts, talents and treasures.

61 *Communitas Dei Patris* is in the world, but not of the world (cf. 1 Jn 2:15). Our mission to the world is for the healing and restoration of marriages and families and salvation of souls by:

- interceding in prayer and fasting for the universal healing and restoration of families, an end to divorce and healing of marriages, for an end to abortion, contraception and other sins against the sanctity of life from conception to natural death,[14] and when appropriate by encouraging married couples to embrace the principles of natural family planning.
- encouraging daily family prayer in the home.[15]
- encouraging the establishment of weekly *Family Prayer Night* devotions and *Perpetual Eucharistic Adoration* in each parish community throughout the world.
- encouraging chastity formation for all children by their parents using the authoritative teachings of the Catholic Church that are presented in *Theology of the Body for Families and Single People*.
- praying and fasting for the establishment of a feast day on the Church calendar honoring God the Father.

Article 8. Evangelical Counsels

62 *"The Church's rich variety is manifested still further from within each state of life. Thus within the lay state diverse "vocations" are given, that is, there are different paths in the spiritual life and the apostolate which are taken by individual members of the lay faithful. In the field of a "commonly shared" lay vocation, 'special' lay vocations flourish. In this area we can also recall the spiritual experience of the flourishing of diverse forms of secular institutes that have developed recently in the Church. These offer the lay faithful, and even priests, the possibility of professing the evangelical counsels of poverty, chastity and obedience through vows or promises, while fully maintaining one's lay or clerical state. In this regard the Synod Fathers have commented, 'The Holy Spirit stirs up other forms of self-giving to which people who remain fully in the lay state devote themselves'"* (*Christifideles Laici*, 56).

63 Consistent with the Traditions of the Church and the examples of holy men and women throughout the history of Christianity, beginning with the Holy Family at Nazareth, the evangelical counsels[16] of poverty, chastity, and obedience have been a rich source of grace and blessing to those who practice them and to the Universal Church and Body of Christ. All are called in the gospel message to "seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness" (Mt 6:33). Our members "seek first the kingdom" by embracing the evangelical counsels according to each person's state in life. In this way, we are more fully able to embrace a life of total trust in God the Father's providential care while calling down grace upon grace for the universal healing of families and the salvation of souls.

Article 9. Patron Saints

64 *Communitas Dei Patris*, its members and apostolates, are consecrated to the full care and protection of St. Joseph who will safely lead them according to the perfect will of God the Father through the loving and maternal Heart of Mary.

65 Our Holy Father, the late Pope Saint John Paul II ("Pope of the Family"), is preeminent among the patron saints of *Communitas Dei Patris*. He is our role model for living the de Monfort consecration and

the truths of the Roman Catholic Faith by way of personal example, and in particular through his writings, teachings, and all that he brought to the Church and People of God during the term of his pontificate.

66 Other honored patron saints of *Communitas Dei Patris* are Ss. Teresa of Avila, John of the Cross, Therese of Lisieux, Louis Marie Grignon de Montfort, Padre Pio, Faustina Kowalska, Catherine of Siena, Francis of Assisi, and Joan of Arc.

67 The spiritual Mother of *Communitas Dei Patris* is the Mother of Our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, who from the very beginning inspired its formation.

Article 10. Joining Communitas Dei Patris

68 *Communitas Dei Patris*, or *Families of God the Father* is a movement of the spirit. We are a family of families, and as members of this family, we have no national, regional, or local organizations to join; no membership forms to complete; no meetings to attend; and no dues to be paid. We are on a pilgrimage together, so when joining this family, members set aside worldly personal position, rank and social status to become brothers and sisters of one family in Christ, and in one spirit of love journey home together to the house of our heavenly Father.

69 Becoming a member is simple and easy. Members of *Communitas Dei Patris* must be in right order with the Roman Catholic Church, mature enough to understand and live the St. Louis de Montfort Consecration, and be able to freely choose to live the *Covenant Plan of Life* without compromise. Entire families including children may become members together by virtue of a parent's consecration. Individuals may join *Communitas Dei Patris* even if other family members do not. In these cases, married persons are advised to seek the support of their spouse, and young people the permission of their parents.

How to Become a Member

70
1. Pray and discern if God is calling you to be a member of this family of families in the Roman Catholic Church.
2. Decide if you can live in accord with all the aspects of the *Covenant Plan of Life* with faith and trust in God's help.

3. Make the St. Louis de Montfort Consecration on any feast day of the Blessed Mother or St. Joseph, preferably after individual Confession and Mass. Either alone or together with others who have chosen to become members, make the consecration with the special intention of becoming a member of *Communitas Dei Patris* for life.
4. An annual renewal of this Consecration and intention is highly recommended. Membership ends if the *Covenant Plan of Life* is intentionally renounced or seriously violated, in which case the member in effect cuts himself off from the Covenant and is no longer a member.
5. After the Consecration, members immediately:
   - enter into communion with other members of *Communitas Dei Patris* worldwide.
   - share in the spiritual benefits and graces of *Communitas Dei Patris*.
   - receive the daily prayer support of the worldwide family of *Communitas Dei Patris*, and are encouraged to pray for all its members daily.

Article 11. Forming Small Faith Communities with Other Members

71 Individuals and families within a local area or parish are encouraged to pray together when possible as a means of supporting one another in living the *Covenant Plan of Life*, promoting the apostolates of *Communitas Dei Patris,* encouraging one another in the faith, developing new friendships, and fostering strong family values.

72 Individual members and small faith communities are the missionary arm of *Communitas Dei Patris* in carrying out *The New Evangelization* within the parish family. Members serve to bring **Eucharist Adoration**, **Family Prayer Night Devotions** and **Theology of theBody for Families and Single People** to local families as an essential means to revitalize, renew, and strengthen the faith within families, parishes, and dioceses which will help bring about a *new springtime* in the Universal Church.

Guidelines for Participating in Small Faith Communities

1. Members may freely establish, join, or leave a small faith community at any time. A small faith community is comprised of *Communitas Dei Patris* members who desire to unite with other members in a local or regional area to pray together and to support one another in living the Faith, the *Covenant Plan of Life*, and advancing the apostolates of the association.
2. A small faith community is like a family of families within a parish or regional setting with the goal of establishing fraternal communion between members. As such, there may be one or many small faith communities within larger parishes or regional settings.
3. Members are not obligated to join or participate in small faith communities but are generally encouraged to do so if possible.
4. By mutual understanding, small faith communities are free to decide how they will support one another in living the *Covenant Plan of Life* and how they will promote the apostolates of *Communitas Dei Patris*.
5. Members may not create rules or bind other members to certain obligations other than those already established in the *Covenant Plan of Life*.
6. No member or small faith community shall violate a family's inalienable God-given rights to autonomy (self-governance, financial independence and freedom), family identity (culture), and privacy.

73 Being a member of a *Communitas Dei Patris* small faith community carries certain privileges and responsibilities. Primarily important are:

- remaining humble and avoiding spiritual pride in considering yourself a better Catholic than others.
- remaining firmly rooted in Church teachings and in the sacramental life of a local parish community.
- bearing witness to the merciful love of Jesus to your brothers and sisters in the faith, and to the unchurched.
- joyfully tithing your time, talent, and treasures to support the parish, diocese, and the Universal Church.

Coordinating Small Faith Community Activities

74 Small faith communities must elect a facilitator(s) (either a single person or a married couple) to administer the incidental affairs of the community which can include but are not limited to:

- being the community's liaison with the parish priest or in some cases the diocesan bishop.
- working with the facilitators of other small faith communities to coordinate the apostolates of *Communitas Dei Patris* within a local area or region.
- facilitating miscellaneous issues within the community itself.

75 Facilitators(s) have no authority to enact binding legislation on another member or on the community, or incur debt in the name of the community.

76 The facilitator(s) will serve for a period of one year beginning on January 1st of each year, except in the first year the community is formed. In the first year, members will select a facilitator from within the group. The rotation of facilitators is to take place every year on January 1st, the Feast of Mary, Mother of God.

77 Each member (either a single person over the age of 18 or a married couple) is encouraged to serve their term as facilitator on an annual rotating basis.

Article 12. Covenant

78 The Covenant Plan of Life of *Communitas Dei Patris* expressed in the Introduction, Commission, and End Notes provides members with the founding vision for sharing in the life of this family association as we pilgrimage together to the house of the Father within the universal family of the Roman Catholic Church and may not be altered in any way except by the founding members or the Holy See.

Article 13. Duration

79 *Communitas Dei Patris* is a spiritual movement within the Catholic Church for the renewal of marriages and families and the

salvation of souls; and so also the renewal of the priesthood and consecrated life and the Universal Church family of God. The association's mission and lifespan shall be perpetual.

Article 14. Suppression

80 An individual member or a particular local small faith community may be suppressed by competent authority, usually the arch/bishop of the diocese in which the member(s) reside, for activities that cause serious harm to ecclesiastical doctrine or are a scandal to the faithful. Such activities would likewise violate the *Covenant Plan of Life* thus rendering the member(s) affiliation with *Communitas Dei Patris* invalid.

End Notes

Introduction. Quotes taken from: **Declaration of the truths relating to some of the most common errors in the life of the Church of our time. May 31, 2019.**

From the Explanation

"In our time the Church is experiencing one of the greatest spiritual epidemics, that is, an almost universal doctrinal confusion and disorientation, which is a seriously contagious danger for spiritual health and eternal salvation for many souls. At the same time one has to recognize a widespread lethargy in the exercise of the Magisterium on different levels of the Church's hierarchy in our days. This is largely caused by the non-compliance with the Apostolic duty – as stated also by the Second Vatican Council - to 'vigilantly ward off any errors that threaten the flock'" (Lumen gentium, 25).

From The Fundamentals of Faith

"The right meaning of the expressions 'living tradition,' 'living Magisterium,' 'hermeneutic of continuity,' and 'development of doctrine' includes the truth that whatever new insights may be expressed regarding the deposit of faith, nevertheless they cannot be contrary to what the Church has always proposed in the same dogma, in the same

sense, and in the same meaning" (see First Vatican Council, Dei Filius, sess. 3, c. 4: "in eodem dogmate, eodem sensu, eademque sententia").

Cardinal Raymond Leo Burke, Patron of the Sovereign Military Order of Malta
Cardinal Janis Pujats, Archbishop emeritus of Riga
Tomash Peta, Archbishop of the archdiocese of Saint Mary in Astana
Jan Pawel Lenga, Archbishop-Bishop emeritus of Karaganda
Athanasius Schneider, Auxiliary Bishop of the archdiocese of Saint Mary in Astana

1. *Communitas Dei Patris* (the Latin pronunciation is: Că mŭn-ē-tăs Dā-ē Pă-trēs) is a family on *a pilgrimage home to our Heavenly Father.*

Communitas Dei Patris means "On Pilgrimage Home as One Family of God the Father." C*ommunitas* comes from the Latin root, *communis* which basically means common or what is held in common, shared by many. In the context of Communitas Dei Patris, the definition of "communitas" in our name points to its members, both individuals and families, who have entered into a covenant, a sacred bond of kinship in living the official teachings of the Roman Catholic Faith, and in particular those pertaining to marriage and family life, in communion with one another so as to become witnesses of the truth in a world that has largely forsaken God. In this covenant, members forego social status by embracing one another equally as brothers and sisters in the family of Communitas Dei Patris while safeguarding each individual family's inalienable God-given rights to autonomy (self-governance and freedom), family identity (culture), and privacy as we pilgrimage together to the house of the Father in the family of Communitas and Universal Church.

Solidarity within Communitas Dei Patris is rooted in our deep love for the Eucharist, the Blessed Virgin Mary, and our Holy Father; and, in our common apostolates for the healing and restoration of families and the salvation of souls. The cornerstone for our unity as family can be found in our total consecration "to Jesus through Mary" (according to St. Louis de Montfort) in much the same way that we become children of God the Father by adoption through baptism; and by living our covenant agreement with great hope, joy, and enthusiasm.

By way of personal witness, Communitas Dei Patris offers new hope to all marriages and families that real, true, and lasting healing and restoration is possible when they genuinely live the precepts of Sacred Scripture, Tradition, and the official teachings of the Roman Catholic Church. Indeed, God has given everyone these treasures and truths so that they might enjoy peaceful communion with him and with one another (cf. Congregation For The Doctrine Of The Faith: Letter To The Bishops Of The Catholic Church On Some Aspects Of The Church Understood As Communion: 3, 18).

2. Letters to Families, 72. It will be the task [of associations of families] to foster among the faithful a lively sense of solidarity, to favor a manner of living inspired by the Gospel and by the faith of the Church, to form consciences according to Christian values and not according to the standards of public opinion; to stimulate people to perform works of charity for one another and for others with a spirit of openness which will make Christian families into a true source of light and a wholesome leaven for other families.

Can. 298 §1. In the Church there are associations which are distinct from institutes of consecrated life and societies of apostolic life. In these associations, Christ's faithful, whether clerics or laity, or clerics and laity together, strive with a common effort to foster a more perfect life, or to promote public worship or Christian teaching. They may also devote themselves to other works of the apostolate, such as initiatives for evangelization, works of piety or charity, and those which animate the temporal order with the Christian spirit.

3. Can. 204 §2. This Church, established and ordered in this world as a society, subsists in the Catholic Church, governed by the successor of Peter and the Bishops in communion with him.

4. Can. 210. All Christ's faithful, each according to his or her own condition, must make a wholehearted effort to lead a holy life, and to promote the growth of the Church and its continual sanctification.

Can. 211. All Christ's faithful have the obligation and the right to strive so that the divine message of salvation may more and more reach all people of all times and all places.

5. CCC 1906-1914. By common good is to be understood 'the sum total of social conditions which allow people, either as groups or as individuals, to reach their fulfillment more fully and more easily. The common good concerns the life of all and consists of three essential elements: 1) respect for the person by permitting each of its families and members to fulfill their vocation by exercising the right to act according to a sound norm of conscience and to safeguard privacy, and rightful freedom in matters of religion; 2) social well-being and development by taking into account what is needed to lead a truly human life: food, clothing, health, work, education and culture, suitable information, the right to establish a family, and so on; 3) peace, unity and love as the foundation built up in justice and animated by love. Each member participates according to his position and role in promoting the common good first of all by taking charge of the areas for which one assumes personal responsibility: by the education of one's family, by conscientious work, and so forth.

6. Acts 2:42-47. They devoted themselves to the teaching of the apostles and to the communal life, to the breaking of the bread and to the prayers. Awe came upon everyone, and many wonders and signs were done through the apostles. All who believed were together and had all things in common; they would sell their property and possessions and divide them among all according to each one's need. Every day they devoted themselves to meeting together in the temple area and to breaking bread in their homes. They ate their meals with exultation and sincerity of heart, praising God and enjoying favor with all the people. And every day the Lord added to their number those who were being saved.

7. Can. 207 §1. By divine institution, among Christ's faithful there are in the Church sacred ministers, who in law are also called clerics- the others are called lay people. §2. Drawn from both groups are those of Christ's faithful who, professing the evangelical counsels through vows or other sacred bonds recognized and approved by the Church, are consecrated to God in their own special way and promote the salvific mission of the Church. Their state, although it does not belong to the hierarchical structure of the Church, does pertain to its life and holiness.

8. *Optatam Totius* 2. The duty of fostering vocations pertains to the whole Christian community, which should exercise it above all by a fully Christian life. The principal contributors to this are the families which, animated by the spirit of faith and love and by the sense of duty, become a kind of initial seminary...

9. Can. 215. Christ's faithful may freely establish and direct associations which serve charitable or pious purposes or which foster the Christian vocation in the world, and they may hold meetings to pursue these purposes by common effort.

Can. 216. Since they share the Church's mission, all Christ's faithful have the right to promote and support apostolic action, by their own initiative, undertaken according to their state and condition.

10. Short version of the St. Louis de Montfort Consecration: I, _____, a faithless sinner, renew and ratify today in thy hands the vows of my Baptism; I renounce forever Satan, his pomps and works; and I give myself entirely to Jesus Christ, the Incarnate Wisdom, to carry my cross after him all the days of my life, and to be more faithful to Him than I have ever been before. In the presence of the heavenly court I choose thee this day as my Mother and mistress. I deliver and consecrate to thee, as thy slave, my body and soul, my goods, both interior and exterior, and even the value of all my good actions, past, present and future; leaving to thee the entire and full right to dispose of me, and all that belongs to me, without exception, according to thy good pleasure, for the greater glory of God in time and eternity. Amen.

11. CCC 2684. "In the communion of saints, many and varied spiritualities have been developed throughout the history of the churches. The personal charism of some witnesses to God's love for men has been handed on, like 'the spirit' of Elijah to Elisha and John the Baptist, so that their followers may have a share in this spirit. [cf. 2 Kings 2:9 ; Lk 1:1 ; PC 2.] A distinct spirituality can also arise at the point of convergence of liturgical and theological currents, bearing witness to the integration of the faith into a particular human environment and its history. The different schools of Christian spirituality share in the living tradition of prayer and are essential guides for the faithful. In their rich diversity they are refractions of the one pure light of the Holy Spirit.

The Spirit is truly the dwelling of the saints and the saints are for the Spirit a place where he dwells as in his own home since they offer themselves as a dwelling place for God and are called his temple. [St. Basil, *De Spiritu Sancto*, 26, 62: PG 32, 184.]"

12. CCC 2003. Grace is first and foremost the gift of the Spirit who justifies and sanctifies us. But grace also includes the gifts that the Spirit grants us to associate us with his work, to enable us to collaborate in the salvation of others and in the growth of the Body of Christ, the Church.

There are sacramental graces, gifts proper to the different sacraments. There are furthermore special graces, also called charisms after the Greek term used by St. Paul and meaning 'favor,' 'gratuitous gift,' 'benefit.' [cf. LG 12.] Whatever their character - sometimes it is extraordinary, such as the gift of miracles or of tongues - charisms are oriented toward sanctifying grace and are intended for the common good of the Church. They are at the service of charity which builds up the Church. [cf. 1 Cor 12.]"

CCC 951. "Communion of charisms. Within the communion of the Church, the Holy Spirit 'distributes special graces among the faithful of every rank' for the building up of the Church. [LG 12 # 2.] Now, 'to each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good.' [1 Cor 12:7.]"

13. CCC 1656. In our own time, in a world often alien and even hostile to faith, believing families are of primary importance as centers of living, radiant faith. For this reason the Second Vatican Council, using an ancient expression, calls the family the *Ecclesia domestica*. [LG 11; cf. FC 21.] It is in the bosom of the family that parents are 'by word and example . . . the first heralds of the faith with regard to their children. They should encourage them in the vocation which is proper to each child, fostering with special care any religious vocation.' [LG 11.]

Lumen Gentium 11. Finally, Christian spouses, in virtue of the sacrament of Matrimony, whereby they signify and partake of the mystery of that unity and fruitful love which exists between Christ and his Church (cf. Eph 5:32), help each other to attain to holiness in their married life and in the rearing and education of their children. 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, fostering with special care vocations to a sacred state.

Familiaris Consortio 54. Evangelization, urged on within by irrepressible missionary zeal, is characterized by a universality without boundaries. It is the response to Christ's explicit and unequivocal command: "Go into all the world and preach the Gospel to the whole creation." The Christian family's faith and evangelizing mission also possesses this catholic missionary inspiration. The sacrament of marriage takes up and reproposes the task of defending and spreading the faith, a task that has its roots in Baptism and Confirmation, and makes Christian married couples and parents witnesses of Christ "to the end of the earth," missionaries, in the true and proper sense, of love and life.

Evangelii Nuntiandi 71. One cannot fail to stress the evangelizing action of the family in the evangelizing apostolate of the laity. Furthermore, the family, like the Church, ought to be a place where the Gospel is transmitted and from which the Gospel radiates. In a family which is conscious of this mission, all the members evangelize and are evangelized. The parents not only communicate the Gospel to their children, but from their children they can themselves receive the same Gospel as deeply lived by them. And such a family becomes the evangelizer of many other families, and of the neighborhood of which it forms part.

14. *Evangelium Vitae* 92. Within the "people of life and the people for life," the family has a decisive responsibility. This responsibility flows from its very nature as a community of life and love, founded upon marriage, and from its mission to "guard, reveal and communicate love." Here it is a matter of God's own love, of which parents are coworkers and as it were interpreters when they transmit life and raise it according to his fatherly plan. This is the love that becomes selflessness, receptiveness and gift. Within the family each member is accepted, respected and honored precisely because he or she is a person; and if any family member is in greater need, the care which he or she receives is all the more intense and attentive.

The family has a special role to play throughout the life of its members, from birth to death. It is truly "the sanctuary of life: the

place in which life—the gift of God—can be properly welcomed and protected against the many attacks to which it is exposed, and can develop in accordance with what constitutes authentic human growth." Consequently the role of the family in building a culture of life is decisive and irreplaceable.

As the domestic church, the family is summoned to proclaim, celebrate and serve the Gospel of life. This is a responsibility which first concerns married couples, called to be givers of life, on the basis of an ever greater awareness of the meaning of procreation as a unique event which clearly reveals that human life is a gift received in order then to be given as a gift. In giving origin to a new life, parents recognize that the child, "as the fruit of their mutual gift of love, is, in turn, a gift for both of them, a gift which flows from them."

15. *Marialis Cultus* 52. We now desire, as a continuation of the thought of our predecessors, to recommend strongly the recitation of the family Rosary. The Second Vatican Council has pointed out how the family, the primary and vital cell of society, "shows itself to be the domestic sanctuary of the Church through the mutual affection of its members and the common prayer they offer to God." The Christian family is thus seen to be a domestic Church if its members, each according to his proper place and tasks, all together promote justice, practice works of mercy, devote themselves to helping their brethren, take part in the apostolate of the wider local community and play their part in its liturgical worship. This will be all the more true if together they offer up prayers to God. If this element of common prayer were missing, the family would lack its very character as a domestic Church. Thus there must logically follow a concrete effort to reinstate communal prayer in family life if there is to be a restoration of the theological concept of the family as the domestic Church.

16. Can. 573 §1. Life consecrated through profession of the evangelical counsels is a stable form of living, in which the faithful follow Christ more closely under the action of the Holy Spirit, and are totally dedicated to God, who is supremely loved. By a new and special title they are dedicated to seek the perfection of charity in the service of God's Kingdom, for the honor of God, the building up of the Church and the salvation of the world. They are a splendid sign in the Church, as they foretell the heavenly glory. §2. Christ's faithful freely assume

this manner of life in institutes of consecrated life which are canonically established by the competent ecclesiastical authority. By vows or by other sacred bonds, in accordance with the laws of their own institutes, they profess the evangelical counsels of chastity, poverty and obedience. Because of the charity to which these counsels lead, they are linked in a special way to the Church and its mystery.

Can. 574 §1. The state of persons who profess the evangelical counsels in these institutes belongs to the life and holiness of the Church. It is therefore to be fostered and promoted by everyone in the Church. §2. Some of Christ's faithful are specially called by God to this state, so that they may benefit from a special gift in the life of the Church and contribute to its saving mission according to the purpose and spirit of each institute.

Can. 575. The evangelical counsels, based on the teaching and example of Christ the Master, are a divine gift which the Church received from the Lord and which by His grace it preserves always.

Can. 576. It is the prerogative of the competent authority in the Church to interpret the evangelical counsels, to legislate for their practice and, by canonical approval, to constitute the stable forms of living which arise from them. The same authority has the responsibility to do what is in its power to ensure that institutes grow and flourish according to the spirit of their founders and to their sound traditions.

Can. 577. In the Church there are many institutes of consecrated life, with gifts that differ according to the graces given them: they more closely follow Christ praying, or Christ proclaiming the Kingdom of God, or Christ doing good to people, or Christ in dialogue with the people of this world, but always Christ doing the will of the Father.

Can. 578. The whole patrimony of an institute must be faithfully preserved by all. This patrimony is comprised of the intentions of the founders, of all that the competent ecclesiastical authority has approved concerning the nature, purpose, spirit and character of the institute, and of its sound traditions.