

The **DOMESTIC/FAMILY CHURCH**

– SENT TO WITNESS AND EVANGELIZE IN THE TIME OF PANDEMIC

Dear Fathers, Religious Sisters and Brothers and all the Faithful of Umzimkulu Diocese
DEAR FAMILIES



The life of the world, and the life of the Church has changed in recent months because of the pandemic of CoronaVirus. It changed the way the people relate to each other, they see each other in different perspective, often as would be potential carriers of the virus. The Church communities are not allowed to gather together in the worship of God and prayers, receiving the Sacraments, especially the Body and Blood of Jesus in Holy Communion. Many families are separated, lost jobs and income to support each other, many are sick and some die.... Fear and anxiety about the future fills the hearts and minds of all.... This new situation calls for the new social life and new ways of proclamation of the Gospel in our communities and families.

Pope Francis in last years was preparing us for this time of lockdown, by reminding us that all Christians, as **baptized disciples of Jesus** are **sent** to proclaim the Good News in their families and communities – as **missionaries/apostles of Jesus**. His expression: **“Missionary Disciples”** was the program to encourage all the baptised to open their hearts to the Word of the Gospel – the Good News, to accept it, implement it in their own lives and then to share with others in the families and communities.

The Catechism of the Catholic Church in No.783 states:

“Jesus Christ is the one whom the Father anointed with the Holy Spirit and established as priest, prophet, and king. The whole People of God participates in these three offices of Christ and bears the responsibilities for mission and service that flow from them.”

From the Mission of Jesus the whole People of God receives their mandate to become the priests, prophets and kings to serve others as Jesus served and sacrificed his life for our salvation.



As a priestly, prophetic, and royal people, they build up Body of Christ, as St Paul says in 1 Cor 12:27: *“Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it.”*

So everyone as the members of the Church has own role to fulfill in the Church’s community, especially as the members of Christian Families, to become the Domestic Churches, where the worship of God is done and the service of love to each other and to the neighbours.



The term **“Domestic Church”** refers to the family, the smallest body of gathered believers in Christ, called also the **“Little Church”**, which is the fertile ground for discipleship, sanctification and holiness.

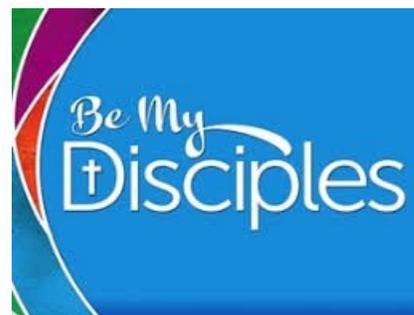
This **“Little Church of Family”** is the part of greater Church Family, in which we could distinct four levels:

There is the Universal Church led by the bishop of Rome, Pope Francis and all bishops in union with him. There is the local diocesan church, led by its local bishop – in the situation of Umzimkulu Diocese – Bishop Stanislaw Jan Dziuba, OSPPE, and I assure you of my daily prayers at Holy Mass. This local diocesan Church is uniquely positioned to guide us

on how best to implement our faith in our own time and culture. There is the local parish church, from which we receive most of our religious instruction and the sacraments. Finally, there is this fourth layer of Church. **The Domestic Church** plays a key role in our sanctification because it is the primary place where we practice our faith, prayer and coming to intimately love other persons.

Saint John Paul II in an Apostolic Exhortation on the Role of the Christian Family in the Modern World identifies the four primary tasks of each family:

- 1 Forming a community of persons
2. Serving Life
3. Participating in the development of society
4. Sharing in the life and mission of the Church.



In our time of pandemic, where the society and the Church is limited in its full functioning, the role of each Christian family as Domestic Church, the Little Church in the Family of the Catholic Church is essential in fulfilling of the mandate of the Church as the place of worship and salvation of all peoples and the school of service and mutual love.

I ask you the CATHOLIC FAMILIES OF UMZIMKULU DIOCESE and all the families to renew your Commitment



to Jesus Christ, as Little Churches – gathered together in prayer – the grandparents, parents, children... and neighbours, especially those living alone.

This time of pandemic, when we cannot meet in our Parish Church for celebrating of the Holy Mass, receive the Body and Blood of Christ as the Bread of Life for our life journey, when the priests can only celebrate the Holy Mass alone in parish churches, for all the parishioners and the whole world intentions, **you as the**

Domestic Church can continue the work of the Church in the communities you live.

The Church is present there, because you are there. In the Holy Mass' opening prayer for the Laity we say: *"O God, who have sent the power of the Gospel like leaven into the World, grant that your faithful, whom you have called to live amid the world and its affairs, may be fervent with the Christian spirit and, through the tasks they carry out in this present age, may constantly build up your Kingdom."*

How to build up and strengthen the Church that is in your family?

- Begin praying as a family and reading from Scripture daily, certainly before meals, but also first thing in the morning or before bed. Find a suitable time that works for your family. Use the liturgy of the Church – especially the prayers for the Holy Week, that I send in the media or from the missal if you have.
- Pray a Family Rosary & Divine Mercy Chaplet (each member leads a decade, and everyone shares intentions).
- Have a special table, covered with white cloth with Crucifix on it, Bible, candles, Rosary, holy water, picture/statue of Jesus, Mary or Saints if you have. This is your small altar of your Family Church.
- Make the Sacraments a regular celebration – take the whole family to Confession and Holy Mass when it will be possible!
- Begin family traditions, and prayers based on the seasons celebrated in the liturgical calendar, like Advent, Christmas, Epiphany, Lent, Easter, Saints' Feast days. Use sacramentals, like blessed candles, holy water, medals, statues/pictures of the saints, of Jesus in your prayers.
- Make worshiping God, family prayers a priority. Do not postpone because of favourite film in the TV.

- Teach stewardship and charity to your children, through word and example.
- Demonstrate love for your spouse, your children, your neighbors, and the world. Remind your children that they are loved by God and have been given gifts to serve others.
- Talk freely about the presence of God in the joys and sorrows of your life.
- Participate in the lay ministries and activities of your parish community.
- Allow your children to witness you in private prayer. Encourage your children to pray daily on their own, to listen for God's call, and if heard, to respond.

Prayer of Consecration TO THE HOLY FAMILY

Lord Jesus, Your hidden years with Your Blessed Mother and St. Joseph at Nazareth showed us the beauty of the community of life and love that the family is meant to be. You taught us the value of selfless love, humble obedience, and silent sacrifice. You showed us how to sanctify the daily give-and-take of family life. Today, we, the members of the _____ family, publicly acknowledge You as the true Head of our family and the King of our home. We pledge ourselves to model our family after the Holy Family of Jesus, Mary, and Joseph of Nazareth. We consecrate to You, Most Sacred Heart of Jesus, through the Immaculate Heart of Your Mother, in union with St. Joseph, our work, our play, our sorrows, and our joys, along with our interior and exterior possessions, including the value of our good actions—past, present, and future. This is the covenant we make with You, Lord. In return, Lord Jesus, we ask You to bless and protect us, keeping us ever faithful to this covenant, and helping us to sanctify our lives by faithfully fulfilling the responsibility of each present moment only for Your glory. Jesus, King of Families, come and reign over our family! Mary, Queen of Families, take possession of our hearts! St. Joseph, Protector of Families, help us to be absorbed in and reflect the love of the Holy Family! Amen.

Daily Renewal

OF YOUR CONSECRATION

I consecrate All my life to the Sacred and Eucharistic Heart of Jesus, all through the Sorrowful and Immaculate Heart of Mary, all in union with St. Joseph. Amen.

Yours in Christ, praying for All of You

+ Stanislaw Dziuba, OSPPE

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Bishop of Catholic Diocese of Umzimkulu

