

MY HOME SHRINE – A GIFT TO THE CHURCH
Sr. Marie Day

Now in 2013 two events are running parallel with one another: the celebration of the 50th anniversary of the opening of the 2nd Vatican Council which began with the Year of Faith on 10/11/2012 and the 50th jubilee of the birth of the home shrine. Its jubilee year officially opened on 10/18/2012, seven days later.

These two events are now attracting so much attention in 2013 because both of these events announce the same essential message for our time: the domestic church as proclaimed anew at the 2nd Vatican Council and the home shrine where the domestic church is realized.

These two events are attracting so much attention NOW because we know so well the situation of our countries and the entire world today. It can be summarized: the attempt to destroy marriage and family. When marriage and family, the foundation of society, are destroyed we damage and annihilate society itself.

What is the effect that we desire from these two events, from the focus on the domestic church? The effect we wish to achieve is number ONE: to bring the gift of the home shrine more fully into the Church for the renewal of our world through the renewal of marriage and family. And number TWO: to fulfill the promise of our father and founder to Pope Paul VI. In the audience on 12/22/1965, Father Kentenich assured the Holy Father that, together with his Family, he would make every effort to actualize the post-conciliar mission of the Church as perfectly as possible.

As Father's children we wish to continue to carry out his promise, specifically the mission of the post-conciliar Church in the light of the "domestic church." Vox Temporis – Vox Dei – against the background of our time today it becomes apparent that the domestic church – the home shrine – is THE answer for the renewal of the world, for it serves to renew marriage and family, the basic foundation of society.

What is the domestic church? Let us summarize the qualities that are found in the domestic church as found in many of the documents of the Church including the Catechism of the Catholic Church, Rights of the Family on the Threshold of the Third Millennium, Familiaris Consortio:

- The love of husband and wife mirroring the mystery of Christ's love for his Church
- Parents who build each other up, who stand in reverence before each other
- Where the family exercises the priesthood of Baptism with a family life centered on the lordship of Christ
- Where they learn endurance, joy, fraternal charity and generous forgiveness
- where the family proclaims the Gospel by example and in words
- Where the family radiates warmth and a welcoming spirit to all
- Where every member of the family is encouraged to live a life under the banner of self-giving and a life of solidarity

With these qualities the outcome has to be holy marriages, holy families and a holy Church. When these qualities are present in a family, the domestic church is alive and well!

If there are 1.18 billion Catholics – and in many cases they are also living in one of the countless "domestic churches" all throughout the world – why are our countries and world in the shape they

are today, when we see what the domestic church is and what a power of formation and transformation can come from it?

According to an article written by Thomas Knieps – Port Le Roi, a Roman Catholic theologian holding the chair for The International Academy of Marital Spirituality at the Faculty of Theology of the Catholic University of Leuven, Belgium, “the ‘domestic church’ does not represent much more than a pious metaphor.” A pious metaphor – just a figure of speech in which a word or phrase is applied to something which is not literally applicable.

What is the home shrine? The time of the home shrine is NOW. YES, FOR IT IS THE ANSWER TO CHANGE THE PIOUS METAPHOR OF THE DOMESTIC CHURCH INTO A LITERAL REALITY.

The home shrine helps to make the domestic church a tangible reality in the home. It is the visible center of the little church, the family. What is the home shrine? We will look at several definitions.

The home shrine is the place of the lived domestic church. What does live mean? It means.... Active, alive, continuing in existence or use, vibrant, bustling, flourishing, successful, blooming!

For the home shrine to be effective, to be truly a domestic church and not just a pious metaphor, it has to be alive – vibrant, successful, flourishing with the activity of the Blessed Mother and her Divine Son. For our home shrine to be “alive” we know that means for us the living of our covenant of love, faithfully fulfilling the six demands of the covenant:

- Prove first by your deeds that you love me
- Increase your striving to the highest degree
- This sanctification I demand of you
- Diligently bring me contributions to the capital of grace
- Faithfully fulfill your duties
- Lead a zealous life of prayer

All these are our contributions to the capital of grace! If we are not faithful to our covenant, to the bringing of our contributions to the capital of grace, we tie the hands of the Blessed Mother and she cannot carry out her task as the Mother, the Queen, the educator, the Mediatrix of Graces, the great anti-diabolicum from our home shrines. If we do not do our part, our home shrine “dies”; there is silence; there is no activity on the part of the Blessed Mother. It is simply a beautiful corner some place in our home – nothing more, a place where one finds only dust and clutter! Then even the home shrine is a pious metaphor.

The home shrine is a place of practical lived faith – practical faith in Divine Providence. In our home shrines the Blessed Mother reigns as the Queen of Faith, the child of heroic faith in Divine Providence. She was always aware of her dependence on God and his plan for her life. Her soul was available for the wishes of the Father at every instant of her life. Her faithfulness encompassed all; her faithfulness enriched all; her faithfulness is without boundaries.

She wishes to give to us, through her example and through her intercession the grace, that our faith, too, is alive, that we too live each moment of our lives out of the practical faith in Divine Providence. She is the Mother of Divine Providence and as such, she has the task from our home shrines of interceding from the Holy Spirit the great grace of faith in Divine Providence.

We all know and experience how challenging life is – the many injustices, the unfairness of life, the crosses and sufferings, the tragedies. We are also aware that in these situations many people turn away from God; they become angry and bitter. For us, in our home shrine, we receive the grace to see God's loving Providence in every event and happening. The Blessed Mother helps us to accept the Father's will and even come to the point to find joy in it and to be able to say thank you – even for the crosses. Without this living faith in Divine Providence you and I will not be able to master life today and grow through it to the heights of sanctity. These graces we receive from our home shrine.

Each home shrine is unique because each family has its own originality. The uniqueness of Mary's activity is captured and expressed in the name of the home shrine. This name also expresses the ideal, the mission of the family. Therefore, the name is very important.

The home shrine is also a place of evangelization. The family's task to evangelize is of utmost importance. In his Apostolic Exhortation: On Evangelization in the Modern World (1975), Pope Paul VI wrote, "One cannot fail to stress the evangelizing action of the family in the evangelizing apostolate of the laity. He pointed out that the family, like the Church, ought to be a place where the Gospel is transmitted and from which the Gospel radiates. Such families – living out of their domestic churches, he concludes, should become the evangelizers of many families."

It was on November 29, 1963, a day after the proclamation of the founding of the home shrine that our Father said: "The third grace this family would like to ask of you is the grace of apostolic fruitfulness. They want to be apostles for each other. The children should be examples for one another just as the parents strive to be good examples for them. But what they wish most from you, dear Mother and Queen of Schoenstatt, is that they become a little paradise on earth..."

In speaking of the life and function of the family, John Paul II in Familiaris Consortio said that by receiving the love of Christ through the Church, the family becomes a saved community and they are then called upon to communicate Christ's love to their brethren, thus becoming a saving community. It is a place of evangelization.

The home shrine is a radiating center of holiness. The home shrine, as our cradle of sanctity, becomes the place where we are formed into saints who can go out into our world, remain unaffected by the world, and help to sanctify the world. As a Marian shrine, our home shrine radiates its power into the world as stated by Pope John Paul II on May 13, 1982: "...In certain places the Mother's presence is felt in a particularly vivid way. These places sometimes radiate their light over a great distance and draw people from afar. Their radiance may extend over a diocese, a whole nation, or at times over several countries and even continents. These places are the Marian sanctuaries or shrines."

The home shrine is a very important tool for us in building the Kingdom of God, for it creates a supernatural atmosphere in our profane world. This sacred atmosphere of the home shrine gives us the strength to make every effort possible to live our lives in this world by divine standards, living with the loving God throughout the day and seeing God in everyone and in every event in the world.

The home shrine is our mission for the world! Schoenstatt has a mission for the entire world! We are grateful to be part of this mission! From our home shrine – in the light of the name of our home shrine – the Blessed Mother sends us out to bring the Good News to all corners of the world! We go with our great missionary as her little missionaries.

As we now summarize what the home shrine is:

- a place of the lived domestic church
- a place of practical faith – practical faith in Divine Providence
- a place of evangelization
- a radiating center of holiness in the world
- a place from where we fulfill our mission for the world

We can see that it is the home shrine that can free the domestic church from being a pious metaphor for the home shrine – with what it is – helps make the domestic church a tangible reality.

Therefore we can say with great confidence that the time of the home shrine is NOW in order to remove the pious metaphor and save the world. On December 13, 1963, Father said: “If our heavenly Mother blesses our endeavors, that means we have discovered the future direction of pastoral care. Please think over the fact that we often speak of a pluralistic society, a society lacking a distinctly Catholic atmosphere. This is a very difficult situation. How will the correct atmosphere be created, and who will have the burden of bringing it about? It will have to be created by families in their own homes. That's why, when I bless a home shrine, I like to speak about 'islands that are moving.' It is not as if the islands are large. They are tiny islands where a vibrant Christian spirit prevails.”

I would like to say “Alleluia!” We realize how important the home shrine is for the Church and world!

It truly is the answer to the world situation today. God has given us this gift in our time. Let us with great joy and gratitude go forth to share this gift with the 1.18 billion people that make up the Body of Christ throughout the world. Isn't God good!