

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE HOME SHRINE

MY HOME, A SHRINE (pages 15-31)



Significance for the Individual Family

The spirit of our time, with its positive influences as well as its insidious evils, has a very powerful and consequential impact upon the family. We are faced with the tremendous challenge of coping with everything that our competitive, humanistic and pluralistic society is offering mankind today. Oftentimes we seem to experience utter helplessness when we realize how very little we ourselves can really accomplish. We are constantly confronted with the widespread confusion in matters of faith and morality, with the insecurities, subtle temptations and luring pleasures of our modern world. We are so much in need of clarity and security; of courage and hope, of a strong faith and genuine love. Who can give us the help that we really need, help for every moment of our lives, permanent help?

a. A Marian atmosphere

What is this distinctly Marian atmosphere like which the Blessed Mother wants to create in our homes? Father Kentenich spoke at great length about Marian atmosphere and education and pointed to a **threefold task which the Blessed Mother has as our educator** which we can easily apply to her activity in our home shrine, in our family as the domestic Church: Mary leads us into a deep, lasting and ever more profound relationship to God. Her own person becomes our great ideal, the point of orientation for our everyday living in the constant search to do God's will. Ultimately, she assures us of her powerful intercession on our behalf and of the help of grace so that we can fulfill our task here on earth. As St. John took her into his home, we also want to take her into our home as our Mother and educator and beg her to do all that we ourselves cannot accomplish.

b. A supernatural atmosphere

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 possible effort to live our lives by divine standards. Since the home shrine is of such vital importance for the family, it should be erected in a suitable place in the house – not tucked away in the farthest corner, but rather in a place that is easily accessible to everyone. It should have a prominent place, **a place of honor**, so that the Blessed Mother can truly do her work – healing, transforming, strengthening our entire family and all those who come to our home.

Significance for the Family as the domestic Church

a. The family, a domestic Church

Since Vatican II, we speak of the family as a Church, the domestic Church. We can do so when we consider the twofold concept of the Church: The Church as an institution and formal organization, and the Church as the community of all redeemed people united in Christ. **The family is such a community of redeemed persons united to each other in love and faithfulness, the well-spring of new life.** The family will be a Church, the Church of the home, when Christ becomes more and more the center of the family, the uniting and life-giving bond, when his wish and will become the norm for our every action and direct our family life. Just as Christ is the head of the Church which he founded upon the rock of Peter, so also is he the head of the domestic Church, the Church of the home; he is the third partner in the marriage covenant between husband and wife. Each family is a vital cell of the Church-at-large and essentially co-determines the fruitfulness and life within the Church.

b. The mission of the family

The documents of Vatican II describe very clearly the mission of the family: "The family has received from God its mission to be the first and vital cell of society. It will fulfill this mission if it 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" (Laity, #11). 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 any religious vocation" (Church, #11).

c. The life and function of the family

Pope Saint John Paul II describes the life and function of the family as the domestic Church in his apostolic exhortation on the Christian family, *Familiaris Consortio*: The Church educates the Christian family and brings it salvation. The family that has become a saved community in turn has to become a saving community and share Christ's love with others. The domestic Church needs constant education in the faith. The family, as a small-scale Church, should be a sign of unity for the world. The Church of the home should reach out for families who are far away from the faith.

d. The Blessed Mother, the Mother of the domestic Church

The Holy Father, Pope Saint John Paul II, implores Mary's motherly aid to help each family to truly become a little Church: "May the Virgin Mary, who is the Mother of the Church, also be the Mother of 'the Church of the home.' Thanks to her motherly aid, may each Christian family really become a 'little Church' in which the mystery of the Church of Christ is mirrored and given new life. May she, the Handmaid of the Lord, be an example of humble and generous acceptance of the will of God. May she, the Sorrowful Mother at the foot of the Cross, comfort the suffering and dry the tears of those in distress because of the difficulties of their families" (*Familiaris Consortio*, #86).

e. The Home Shrine, the visible image of the domestic Church

The home shrine helps to make the domestic Church a tangible reality in the home. It is the visible, religious center of the little Church, the family.

- Loving communication with God

The home shrine constantly reminds us of the persons of supernature and invites us to foster a loving communication with God and Mary. Then our faith can become more alive and be more easily integrated into every aspect of our life. The home shrine is a very suitable place to initiate important matters of life and to evaluate them in the course of their development; it helps to unite the family members in prayer and stimulates them for

religious conversation; it becomes a guiding light in the moral and religious education of the children as well as that of the spouses; it is a source of inspiration and courage in giving new life to family traditions and in developing new family customs.

- Harmony between nature and supernature

The home shrine helps to create an atmosphere where nature and supernature sound together in harmony so that each family member can make a serious effort to act responsibly, as it is fitting to the spirit of the domestic Church. In this little Church of the home we can gain clarity and strength in the many decision-making moments of everyday life – in both big and small matters: the choice of music, TV programs and entertainment; of friends and future spouses; of vocation, life style, profession and job; of moral action, family problems and the numerous other decisions that affect our life. The presence of God and the Blessed Mother in the home shrine becomes a great educational factor, especially when our own educational skills have failed us, when our pleas and admonishments, our advice and suggestions, our demands and prohibitions seem to go unheeded.

- Power of apostolate

In our time today, it takes much courage for Christian families to openly profess their religious beliefs. Through the home shrine they can freely manifest their faith. The sacred atmosphere, the external signs and symbols and the religious experiences give testimony to the supernatural realities effective in our daily life. The religious signs and symbols in the home shrine also have their own special power of apostolate. They speak clearly in their own silent way of just being there. They may be a source of inspiration to some, eliciting a fruitful sharing of religious thoughts and ideas; to other they may simply be an object of great admiration, perhaps awakening the desire to obtain the same article; and yet, to others they may be – at first glance – a stumbling block, objects that seem inappropriate in our modern progressive age. However, once they realize the symbolic and inspirational value of these religious articles, they may change their opinion and come to appreciate the worth of these signs and symbols in their everyday life. The home shrine offers a tremendous opportunity to families to make the spiritual dimension of the domestic Church an experienced, tangible and lasting reality in everyday life and to radiate it into the world around them.

Significance for the Church

The individual family has a very important position within the Church, the family of God. Vatican II advises the families: “Let parents, then, clearly recognize how vital a truly Christian family is for the life and development of God’s own people” (Familiaris Consortio, “Education,” #3). The strength of the Church and society depends largely on the family.

Does a family truly have such an impact upon Church and society? We might ask ourselves why our Savior spent thirty years in the solitude of his family before he began his public life. “The answer is not unknown to us: The Father wanted to secure in an unmistakable manner the immeasurable blessing which proceeds from true Christian families” (The Home Shrine, p. 3).

The Church and society can best be renewed through the renewal of its smallest cell, the family. The home shrine offers a great help in this endeavor. With the graces from the shrine and special education of the Blessed Mother, parents can truly build up the Church in their families

The home shrine is making an essential contribution to the Church, especially in this modern age when the substance of faith is weakened and the whole concept of the Church is confused. There exists – side by side – many different and even opposing opinions and styles of living, and we can too easily lose sight of God’s commandments and basic principles. The religious atmosphere is gradually being swallowed up and replaced by a paganistic spirit. The home shrine is a great tool which enables us to maintain a sacred atmosphere in our home and to secure a growing faith experience in the everyday life of our family.

THROUGH THIS ENCOUNTER, with thanksgiving and gratitude, let us pray to be open and to receive the **GRACE** to have in our homes a **HOME SHRINE, a PLACE OF GRACE** dedicated to our Mother Thrice Admirable of Schoenstatt from which she, the Mother of God, can intercede for us the three pilgrimage graces of the shrine and all the graces we need to be holy families and holy family members who can fulfill our mission in the Church.

REFLECTION: Significance for Schoenstatt

Through the home shrine the Blessed Mother can fulfill her great mission for our time. It is the same mission which she wants to fulfill from all Schoenstatt shrines. Already in 1929 Father Kentenich expressed this mission with the prophetic word: “In the shadow of this shrine the destiny of the Church and world will be essentially co-determined for centuries.” From her shrine the Blessed Mother wants to reveal her glories, and through us and with us, united in the covenant of love, she wants to transform the whole world.

The mission of the Blessed Mother encompasses the entire world, all peoples and nations as well as the individual: through the covenant of love she wants to form each one into a useful instrument for the fulfillment of her mission. She wants to educate the individual person in his or her own small world, in the very situations of everyday living. Her mission is so great that she extended her activity beyond the Original Shrine to the daughter shrines and home shrines. In this way she could multiply her effectiveness by channeling her gifts to many people and thus influencing every aspect of their daily life.

“Similarly, I envision now that our family is also visited by the Blessed Mother. People today, including Catholics, want to rob the Blessed Mother of her mission, but she is forever faithful to it. Just as she hurried into the hill country to the house of her cousin Elizabeth, so also she now tries to change the whole world through daughter and home shrine. She herself goes through the world once more in search of places where she can dwell, where she is accepted and received” (The Home Shrine, pages 50-51).

She does not search for these places in order to rest. No, she wants to be welcomed into the domestic Church, into the family, in order to work for us, to intercede on our behalf, and to educate the new person, a new family for our society and Church. From the home shrine she wants to fulfill her mission for our time.

PRAY with Father Kentenich his Home Shrine prayer:

“My room (home) is your Shrine where you work for the Father’s glory. There He transforms my whole being into the Trinity’s most beloved Shrine, where the sanctuary light continuously burns and the glowing fire of love never dies; where the fire of sacrifice upon sacrifice banishes all selfishness from the heart; where roses decorate the altar and lilies never cease to bloom; where paradisaical breezes waft and raise heart and mind to heaven; where the spirit of the world cannot enter as in the eternal city of Sion; where peace reigns and happiness laughs because God’s angel keeps diligent watch; where Christ rules and is triumphant and leads the whole world to the Father.” (Heavenwards)

