

OUR HOME SHRINE, A PLACE OF GRACE

MY HOME, A SHRINE (pages 47-59)



Fulfillment of the covenant agreement

The transformation of our home into a place of grace requires more than simply arranging an MTA picture and a crucifix in a nicely decorated corner of our home. It is dependent on the condition that we live out of our covenant of love with the Mother Thrice Admirable, Queen and Victress of Schoenstatt. If we keep our part of the covenant agreement, then the Blessed Mother will do her share, erect her throne of grace in our home and perform miracles of transformation in our family.

The Six Demands of the Covenant

These covenant demands are contained in the Founding Document, the words which were spoken when the first covenant was made on October 18, 1914. The realization of these demands transformed the chapel in Schoenstatt into a place of grace; the same power will also transform our house into a place of grace.

1) Prove first by your deeds that you really love me

Do God's will – The covenant must not remain a mere emotional matter, it must become effectively fruitful. The Blessed Mother wants us to show her that we love her and God by striving to do God's will for our lives.

Have faith in Divine Providence, in God's master plan of love for our life.

2) Increase your striving to the highest degree

The object of our striving is God's will. We want to strive to the best of our ability to perfect every aspect of our life (spiritual, mental, emotional, physical)

We want to search for truth and live it

Persevere in struggles to the end – not giving in to discouragement and despair.

We want to fight temptations and get up again with a positive attitude

Faith to find God behind all events in our life and in our time. (voice of time)

3) This Sanctification I demand of you

Call to become holy, to make God the center of life and fulfill His wish and will

Perform ordinary duties extra-ordinarily well to the best of our ability

Everyday sanctity today! Begin anew now, today! Not tomorrow, but now, today!

4) Diligently bring me contributions to the Capital of Grace

Offer everything to the Blessed Mother in return for her graces (prayer, sacrifices, joys, good works, suffering, sorrow, difficulties).

Offer everything everyday by praying a Morning Offering prayer

5) Fulfill your duties faithfully

Duties specific to your life are a manifestation of God's will - Duties specific for you: as a child of God, as a member of the Church, as a citizen of your country, in your vocation, in your profession, and in other duties you take on.

6) Pray fervently – to secure a life of ardent prayer

These demands present a vast program of self-education which will take a lifetime to fully realize. Therefore, we need not consciously pursue all of these demands at the same time. Our earnest efforts to improve in one area will naturally affect other aspects of our personality formation as well. If we faithfully persevere in fulfilling at least one small point of our covenant demands each day and offer it as a contribution to the capital of grace, we will have fulfilled our part of the covenant. On the other hand, we need not limit ourselves in proving our love to God and in our striving for sanctity. In times of great happiness as well as in times of dire need, our generosity and love may urge us to bring many contributions to the capital of grace – as many as we possibly can.

Five laws that show God and the Blessed Mother want to take possession of our home:

Many people wonder whether they are really worthy of having a home shrine. How do we know for sure that God and the Blessed Mother truly want to take possession of our house and make it a place of grace?

1) God is absolutely free in His choice of places from where He wants to be especially active. It is a great gift that God, through his Mother, wants to descend to this insignificant, ordinary home, and pour all his riches upon this family; he even wants to make it a place of grace – God's free choice, and our cooperation. Exteriorly our house will remain the same. But the promise of the Founding Document will one day become a tangible reality in our home too: *"Everyone who comes here . . . shall experience the glory of Mary."* (Schoenstatt, the Founding Document)

2) If God attaches Himself to a certain place, He always demands that people strive for holiness in connection with this place. A great task and a grave responsibility rest upon us: a constant striving for sanctity so that our home shrine will always remain a place of grace.

3) If the people who are now gathered around the shrine cease to strive for sanctity, we may expect God to terminate His special connection with the place. We must be ready to accept that if we become lax in our striving and allow ourselves to be overcome by half-heartedness and apathy, *we could expect Our Lady to depart from our Schoenstatt shrines. She has obliged herself to stay for a time. She is kind. But in the long run, if we stop, she will also stop* (The Home Shrine pages 37-38).

4) If we really try by our earnest striving for sanctity to confirm the choice of God and Our Lady, they will, so to say, fill the whole house with grace after grace in endlessly rich measure. Each person and every family is in constant need of grace, abundant grace. *Our Lady must give us in rich measure the grace of spiritual transformation, the grace of a spiritual home and the grace of spiritual fruitfulness* (The Home Shrine, page 38).

5) A place of grace belongs not only to the people dwelling there, but to all those who in any way come to it in faith. Our home and families can truly become centers of a strong radiation of grace for the entire neighborhood and perhaps even for people who live a great distance from us. The Mother Thrice Admirable, Queen and Victress of Schoenstatt, will do great things in our family, in and through us, if we take our home shrine seriously and strive to keep Our Lady present and active in our home.

The home shrine prayer – a founding document

The history of each Schoenstatt (daughter) shrine is marked by a founding hour – the moment in which the new stream of grace breaks forth and begins to flow from this shrine. It is the day when the shrine is officially dedicated and the Mother Thrice Admirable, Queen and Victress of Schoenstatt is formally invited to come and dwell there and make it a place of her special activity. At that moment the shrine becomes a place of grace just as the Original Shrine did on October 18, 1914, when the covenant of love with Our Lady was sealed for the first time.

Each home shrine also has its specific hour of foundation on the day of its dedication. At that time the family, or at least one member of the family, prays a special, self-composed prayer, a prayer of invitation and of renewed acceptance of the covenant demands. In this prayer we beg the Mother Thrice Admirable, Queen and Victress of Schoenstatt, to take possession of our home, to erect her throne of grace there and to work miracles of transformation in our family. We can state our particular needs and requests very explicitly – all that we wish the Blessed Mother to do in our home, for each and every family member. We should also express how we intend to fulfill our part of the covenant so that our home shrine becomes more and more a reality in our life. We may also wish to include special petitions and prayers of thanksgiving of all the gifts and guidance we have received.

This home shrine prayer is an important document for the family; it is the foundation of a new place of grace, making our home a shrine. It is the founding document of the home shrine.

The home shrine prayer also includes the special name and the various symbols which the individual and family members have chosen. These topics will be dealt with in greater detail in the following chapters.

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: A Proof of Love

Home shrine owners consider themselves quite wealthy. Their wealth, however, does not depend on Wall Street; they have become sharers and stockholders of an imperishable capital, the capital of grace of the Mother Thrice Admirable in the shrine. Can we grasp the greatness of this gift that is offered to each and every one of us? Countless graces are at the disposal of our Blessed Mother. How much could she give if only we would cooperate, if each day we would offer to her, our covenant partner, our deeds of love, our prayers, our joys and accomplishments, our failures and anxieties, our sacrifices and renunciations, our suffering and troubles as a simple contribution to the capital of grace. Then she could perform miracles of grace and transformation in all her shrines and home shrines of countless many people.

Even though we have a home shrine and make earnest efforts to fulfill our covenant demands, we will still experience many disappointments in our life. Many times we may stop and wonder whether it still makes sense to keep on trusting and striving, to continue working and praying when we do not always obtain the success we so ardently hope for. It is exactly in these times that we need the special graces and blessings from our home shrine. They will give us new courage and strength to begin again to prove our love anew and to nurture the hope for the moment when we will again tangibly experience God's love and be able to embrace and adore his holy will more fully.

While **Father Kentenich** was pastor for the German-speaking community at St. Michael's in Milwaukee, he experienced the following, as he himself tells the story: *"Someone once came to me on Valentine's Day and gave me a gift. This was the most beautiful gift I had received in weeks. And what was it? It was a simple cigarette. The man brought it to me and told me that this was his last cigarette and he was going to give it to me. He declared that he did not want to smoke anymore. And why? He wanted to offer this sacrifice on behalf of his children so that they would be able to live in the atmosphere of purity throughout their entire lives and would remain morally and spiritually intact."* (Die Schoenstattmutter, page 109)

With prayer and sacrifice as a proof of our love we can prepare the way for grace to become effective from our home shrines for each member of the family. We can be sure that our founder would say the same about us as he did about the person who offered him such a valuable Valentine's Day gift: **"These are the heroic people of today, the people whom the Blessed Mother wants to prepare for the spiritual battles in today's world."** (Die Schoenstattmutter, page 109)

We should not only approach our covenant partner in a constantly pleading way, begging for this or that favor, but we should also come with our hands filled with contributions.

COMMIT: Each Day Bring One Simple Contribution to Our Lady for her Capital of Grace

a deed of love a prayer a joy an accomplishment a failure an anxiety a sacrifice a renunciation a suffering a trouble a difficulty a sorrow
To keep track and as a reminder of this commitment, find a creative, visible, concrete way to offer your contribution to the Blessed Mother – beads or slips of paper in a bowl, a checkmark on your Spiritual Daily Order, a flower for a bouquet of flowers in the Place of Honor you provide for the Blessed Mother, etc.

PRAY: Morning Offering

"What I bear and endure, what I say and what I dare, what I think and what I cherish, all the merits that I gain, what I direct and what I conquer, all my joys and all my sorrows, what I am and what I have, I give to you as a gift of love. Use it so that the holy stream of graces flowing richly from the shrine may fill the souls of those who have given their hearts to Schoenstatt and gently lead there all those whom you wish to choose in kindness. Accept everything that our efforts may be fruitful which we dedicate to the Trinity." (Heavenwards page 16)

NOTHING WITHOUT YOU, BLESSED MOTHER, NOTHING WITHOUT US!

