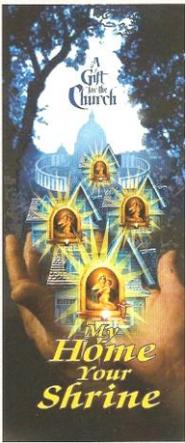


SYMBOLS IN THE HOME SHRINE – A LIVING SHRINE

MY HOME, A SHRINE (pages 79-90)



A LIVING SHRINE

The Christian family is called to become a domestic Church, a shrine which radiates the presence of God. Pope St. John Paul II prayed for this intention in 1980:

O God, from you comes all fatherhood in heaven and on earth. Grant that every human family on earth may become a true SHRINE of life and love for coming generations, through your Son Jesus Christ, who was born of a woman and through the Holy Spirit ... (Home Shrine brochure, South Africa). How can we become such a SHRINE of life and love, a living shrine?

A LIVING SHRINE OF THE MOTHER THRICE ADMIRABLE

The Schoenstatt Family has been inspired to realize through the home shrine not only the ideal of the domestic Church, but also the goal of forming each family and each person into a shrine of life and love. We listen to Holy Scripture: *"Lord, how good that we are here! With your permission I will erect three booths here"* (Mt. 17:4). We want to take the shrine – just as it is – with us into our families. Our family should be a living shrine of the Mother Thrice Admirable. Who will transform our family into a Church in miniature, into the one, holy, Catholic and apostolic Church? Mother takes perfect care. (Fr. J. Kentenich, "The Family," pg. 11)

OBJECTS IN THE SHRINE

The various objects in the shrine – the altar, the cross, the statues of the saints, the windows, the sanctuary light, and so on – each have their own proper value and serve a special purpose. They each also have a symbolic value which points beyond the objects themselves to the supernatural world and relates a certain message to us. We may feel especially attracted to a particular symbol because it expresses our own mission and task in life. When we choose a specific symbol in the shrine and strive to live according to its message, we ourselves can become more and more a living shrine.

THE SEARCH FOR OUR OWN SYMBOL

The symbols in the shrine 'speak about' our own original way of becoming a living shrine and can be a great asset in our striving for perfection. The following list of symbols and the sketchy interpretation of their various messages will give us a clearer understanding of their function and stimulate us to set out on our search for our own personal symbol in the shrine.

The meaning and message of the symbols

THE ALTAR is the place of Christ's sacrifice on the cross. As THE ALTAR, we strive to accept cross and suffering as special gifts of his Father love because they will be made fruitful for the redemption of many people.

THE SANCTUARY LIGHT indicates the presence of the Blessed Sacrament in the tabernacle. As THE SANCTUARY LIGHT, we are called to be a brightly shining light which radiates the love of the Father and always points toward Christ who is alive among us.

THE CROWN symbolizes Mary's queenship; it is a sign of her power over the evil one. As THE CROWN, we want to enrich our personality, to become noble in word and deed.

ST. MICHAEL defeated the devil and hurled him into hell. As ST. MICHAEL, we are called to fight the ungodly influences around us and courageously defend our Faith.

THE FATHER EYE is the symbol of God the Father, of his loving care for us. As THE FATHER EYE, we have the mission to a life of endless love, of benevolence toward others, guiding them homeward to the Father.

THE TABERNACLE conceals Christ who is present among us in the form of bread. As THE TABERNACLE, we are specially called to acknowledge the presence of Christ in the Blessed Sacrament and to adore and revere him.

THE KEY locks and unlocks the entry way to the shrine and the door of the tabernacle. As THE KEY, we are called to open ourselves to the values of God and to be closed to all that opposes his holy wish and will.

THE WOOD CARVING on the altar speaks of excellent workmanship, it symbolizes the special honor and glory given to God. As THE WOOD CARVING, we should become soft and pliable so that the master carver, God, can carve and form us according to his design.

HOLY WATER is used to impart God's blessing upon various objects and upon his people, placing them under his special protection. As HOLY WATER, we want to become a blessing for our surroundings.

THE WINDOW is the connecting link with the outside world; it brings in the sunlight and allows the freshness of the air to fill the room. As THE WINDOW, we want to be clear and clean so that through us the fullness of light can reach the people around us.

THE CROSS is the sign of redemption. As THE CROSS we want to be conscious of the great value of our own suffering.

THE HOLY SPIRIT is the Sanctifier who descends upon us with his sevenfold gifts. As THE HOLY SPIRIT, we want to be reminded of our responsibility to be always open to his inspirations.

THE SWORD of St. Paul indicates the instrument by which he died. It also points to a higher reality: "The sword of the spirit, the word of God" (Eph. 6:17). As THE SWORD of St. Paul, it is our task to proclaim God through our word and example, and to fight to establish his kingdom.

More symbols

There are many other objects in the shrine, each having a significant symbolic value for us. Even though some are less obvious, they are not of little importance. These, too, can be an inspiration in our striving to become a living shrine:

THE BELL proclaims God's message to us. We are called in a special way to announce the Good News.

ST. JOSEPH lived the life of an everyday saint who we want to follow and imitate by living a life of righteousness and service.

THE HINGES on the shrine door enable the door to function properly. As THE HINGES, we could be the hinge in our family, preserving family unity with our love and selfless service.

THE FLOWERS on the altar bloom for the glory of God, so too, we want to give glory to God and increase the joy and happiness of others.

THE MORTAR between the bricks binds the bricks to each other and gives the walls stability. As THE MORTAR, it can be our task to give strength to others, to give them support when they are down, to bind them to God.

THE FOUNDATION OF THE SHRINE gives strength to the entire building so that it does not sink into the ground. Our lives should be built on firm rock, on Christ and upon the principles and truths of our Faith. As a firm foundation, others can rely on our strength and support.

THE CANDLES on the altar burn in honor of Christ and give off light and warmth. As THE CANDLES, we want to consume ourselves, giving light and warmth to others, always keeping the flame of our love directed upward.

THE DOOR welcomes visitors and friends inviting them to enter and offering shelter and protection. As THE DOOR, we could strive to welcome and accept others, offering them shelter in our heart. Yet, our door should be closed to the destructive spirit of the world and to those who threaten to lead us astray.

Other ingenious ideas

The objects that are used in HOLY MASS contain a wealth of inspiration for our striving to become a living shrine. We might therefore wish to choose the chalice, the paten, the bread and wine, or other Mass-related items as our special symbol.

It is also possible to choose a specific part of the MTA PICTURE and make it a symbol for our daily striving. Such a choice might include Mary's hands, her eyes, her mantle, her smile.

EXTERNAL REPRESENTATION OF THE SYMBOL IN THE HOME SHRINE

It is an excellent idea to place the symbol we have chosen into our home shrine as an inspiration and daily reminder of our special mission. There are many different ways of presenting these symbols, for example through a picture, a miniature form of the symbol, a design on a banner, or some other meaningful display.

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: THE EFFECTS OF THE SYMBOL IN THE REALITIES OF DAILY LIFE

The symbols we have chosen speak all by themselves of our goal and special task in life. They can be a most effective power of inspiration and formation. When we look at our symbol, we can be drawn closer to God and become inspired to improve our attitudes and actions. When we are down and are tempted to let go of all the great ideas of becoming a living shrine, when things in life do not run so smoothly and all our well-meant efforts only seem to make matters worse, then a glance at our home shrine, a glance at our symbol can give us the strength to continue striving and the hope to overcome discouragement. And should some family members ever become upset and no longer care to listen to well-meant talks and pleading arguments, we could silently place their symbol before them and allow that symbol to 'give the sermon.' God uses many different means to reach a person, means that are far beyond all human effort and understanding.

There is no magic power connected with these symbols. They are simply a tangible means through which we can relate to the supernatural world and become more and more a shrine of life and love, a living shrine.

The symbols we have chosen should also be a part of our home shrine prayer. As we present each symbol, we could explain its specific message for us and how it can stimulate us in our striving for sanctity.

COMMIT: BEGIN THE SEARCH FOR YOUR LIVING HOME SHRINE SYMBOL

Prayerfully read through pages 82-88 in the My Home, A Shrine book for ideas and inspirations to stimulate you to set out on your search for your own personal symbol in the shrine.

PRAY:

Dear Mother Thrice Admirable, Queen and Victress of Schoenstatt and Queen of the Three Graces on the Move, please help me to find the symbol that will inspire me and form me into a shrine of life and love, a living shrine. I trust your might, your kindness Mother dear. I do believe that you are always near. Schoenstatt's great Queen, O Mother mild, I blindly trust in you and in your child. Amen.

