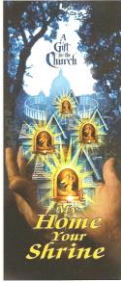


PREPARATIONS FOR THE HOME SHRINE DEDICATION

MY HOME, A SHRINE (pages 91-99)



Essential Elements of the Home Shrine

- 1) We want to prepare a special place of honor in our home for God and the Mother Thrice Admirable, Queen and Victress of Schoenstatt. The **crucifix** together with the **Mother Thrice Admirable picture** form the central part of the Home Shrine.
- 2) It is very meaningful to include a **picture or symbol of the Shrine** to remind us of the vital connection to the Original Shrine and the Daughter Shrines.
- 3) A **picture of the founder of Schoenstatt, Father Joseph Kentenich**, is also a very fitting element of our Home Shrine. It was through him that the covenant of love and Schoenstatt as a place of grace were given to us.
- 4) **Other precious religious items** can find their place in the Home Shrine, on a permanent basis or just temporarily.

The Choice of a Place

Choosing the right place for a Home Shrine is sometimes rather challenging. Some people have chosen a corner of their house, a fitting space on the wall, or a special niche. Others have set aside a den, a spare room or a large walk-in closet for their Home Shrine. There are many advantages in having the Home Shrine in a central place of the home where everyone can gather for common prayer, for important discussions or other family functions. However, such a central place often lacks the necessary peace and quiet for private prayer and meditation. Therefore, some people prefer to have their Home Shrine in a quiet, hidden place in their home. They might still attach an MTA picture and a crucifix in the central, busiest place of their house to invite family members to stop and greet our Blessed Mother in the course of their daily activities. This also gives friends and visitors a chance to look at her picture, to ask questions, to hear about her activity in the home and to be drawn into the stream of grace which emanates from the Home Shrine and fills the entire house. Such an arrangement provides many excellent opportunities to be apostolically active right in our own home.

Decoration of the Home Shrine

The decoration of our Home Shrine is very important as it helps to create a sacred atmosphere and reflects our love and confidence in our covenant partner. The use of religious signs and symbols related to the various Church feast days and liturgical seasons such as Advent, Lent and May, is an excellent way to keep our faith tangibly alive in our family. Thus, the Home Shrine becomes a living source of grace throughout the year.

Each person, each family is free to arrange the items of their Home Shrine according to their likes and needs, as long as the **essential elements** appear in one form or another. The Home Shrine should always be meaningfully decorated and not cluttered with many little treasures that have not found a place elsewhere.

Date for the Home Shrine Dedication

The day on which our Home Shrine is dedicated is comparable to October 18, 1914 when Father Kentenich and the seminarians, in the covenant of love, invited the Blessed Mother to come to dwell in the Shrine in Schoenstatt. Therefore, the selection of a day for our Home Shrine dedication should be made with great care. It could be the day of a family anniversary or a day that is in some way special to the family. It could be a Church feast day, one of the many feast days of the Blessed Mother or one of the saints, it could be a Schoenstatt feast day or a day special to at least one member of the family. If for practical reasons the Home Shrine dedication must take place on an ordinary day, then this day should become special for the whole family.

Many people celebrate the anniversary of their Home Shrine dedication – a cause for great rejoicing in the countless graces and blessings they have received.

The Actual Celebration of the Home Shrine Dedication

a. A simple form or a prayer service

The Home Shrine dedication can be done in a very simple, yet sincere way. The persons concerned pray their Home Shrine prayer and any other prayers of petition and thanksgiving they may wish to include. With this, their Home Shrine is dedicated and becomes a place of grace. Prior to this form of a Home Shrine dedication, the crucifix and the MTA picture should be blessed by a priest.

The dedication of the Home Shrine can also take place during a prayer service. Such a celebration could include prayers, songs, Scripture readings, a meditation, a homily. In a reflective way we are led to the high point of the celebration: The Home Shrine prayer which constitutes the Home Shrine. The dedication can be concluded with special prayers of thanksgiving and petition.

The most important persons at a Home Shrine dedication are those who desire to erect the Home Shrine in their home. They carry out the main and most necessary part – the invitation of the Blessed Mother into their home, with all their special expectations and requests.

The presence of a priest at a Home Shrine dedication is of great importance, for it emphasizes the significance of this event. The priestly blessing also has a special effectiveness upon the family. However, in case no priest is available, the Home shrine can still be dedicated.

b. Holy Mass in the home

It is very appropriate to dedicate a Home Shrine in conjunction with Holy Mass which imparts special blessings upon the family as a **domestic Church**. The actual Home Shrine dedication can take place before, during or after Holy Mass. A prayer service leading up to the Home Shrine dedication can easily be incorporated into the celebration of Holy Mass.

If several people wish to have their Home Shrines dedicated at the same time, there is a wide variety of possibilities. They could celebrate Holy Mass together and then pray a part of the prayer service for the dedication of the Home Shrine. This could be followed by a visit to each home, where the MTA picture and home would be blessed. The individuals involved would pray their personal Home Shrine prayer and do whatever else they wish to do to make their dedication uniquely their own.

There is no set form or official ritual regarding the dedication of a Home Shrine. Each family or individual can freely decide what is best and then prepare to set the founding hour of their Home Shrine, the opening of a new source of grace.

c. Guests at the Home Shrine Dedication

The Home Shrine dedication presents an excellent opportunity to share the wealth of Schoenstatt with many people. It is advisable, however, to give preference to one's own family members for it can be a very effective and fruitful means of apostolate. It can be a deep religious experience for children to observe their father and mother dedicate their Home Shrine. As family members they are drawn into the event in an outstanding way and receive special graces. They may thus be inspired to do the same in their own homes sometime in the future.

We may also wish to invite Schoenstatt friends who can be a great help to inspire the other guests who are not familiar with Schoenstatt. By sharing their own experiences, they offer moral support and give testimony that the founding hour of a new Home Shrine is truly a most significant event, a great moment of grace.

We can also invite friends who do not belong to Schoenstatt. The Home Shrine dedication may inspire them in such a way that eventually they might find their way into Schoenstatt.

Spiritual Preparation for the Home Shrine Dedication

The erection and dedication of a Home Shrine will be an act of utmost importance for the individual and the whole family. It will include much joyful anticipation as well as many moments of hesitation. Can we ever be completely ready to receive such an honored guest into our home? Will our home truly be a worthy dwelling place for our Blessed Mother? Will we all become worthy companions of our new family member, Mary? These and similar questions might frequently occupy our thoughts and even be the cause of a certain procrastination at times.

If we sincerely try to do our best to fulfill our part of the covenant, we need not worry anxiously for Mary will fulfill her part of the covenant also. She is the one who will transform us, little by little. All she asks for is our constant cooperation.

The weeks before the Home Shrine dedication should be a time of more intense spiritual and inner preparation for this great act. We should take a sufficient amount of time to write our Home Shrine prayer - it is the important document through which our home will be transformed into a place of grace. We need to pray, to reflect and meditate upon the content of our prayer, upon the name and symbol we want to choose and upon all the conditions which secure the permanent presence of the Blessed Mother in our Home Shrine.

The immediate preparation for our Home Shrine dedication could also include a special novena. We could pray our Home Shrine prayer or reflect upon some fitting readings about the Home Shrine each day. Some families prepare for their Home Shrine dedication by bringing the MTA picture into a different room of their house each day and allowing it to remain there for an entire day.

There are countless ways and means that will help us in our spiritual preparation for this great moment when our home becomes a special place of grace, a Shrine of our Mother Thrice Admirable, Queen and Victress of Schoenstatt. The more intense our preparation is, the more receptive we will be for the many graces that the Blessed Mother has in store for us.

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 BLESSINGS OF A HOME SHRINE DEDICATION

The dedication of a Home Shrine can be a profound, religious experience for the whole family. It strengthens our belief in the realities of the covenant: The Blessed Mother has truly descended among us and wants to actively fulfill her mission from our Home Shrine. Our own cooperation is not complete on the day of the dedication of our Home Shrine. "Nothing without you – nothing without us." This is the law of construction in Schoenstatt. It spurs us on to deeds of love, to contribute to the capital of grace, to again and again prove our love through striving, praying and sacrificing in our everyday life. In this way we guarantee the Blessed Mother's special presence in our home and her activity as Mother of Grace from our Home Shrine.

COMMIT:

Have you decided upon a Name and Mission for your Home Shrine? Have you picked a symbol to inspire you to grow in spiritual maturity, to make your Home Shrine a Living Shrine? If not, continue your search. Ask the Blessed Mother for her help and inspiration.

PRAY:

With heartfelt love, I thank you, Mother dear, with you to guide me, I need have no fear. When all around seemed dark and drear and gray, you stood as beacon for a brighter day. Your smile illumined every wakeful hour, you did uphold me with your gentle power. Thanks, a thousand thanks to you, to God shall be now and for all eternity. Amen.

