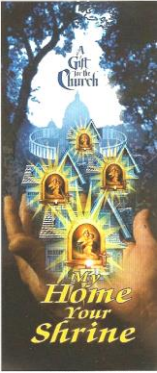


LIVING IN THE HOME SHRINE (Part 1)

MY HOME, A SHRINE (pages 101-115)



A Home Shrine has been dedicated with a name, the symbols, a special prayer expressing new covenant promises and hopeful expectations, a beautiful celebration that will long be remembered by family and friends. And when the routine of everyday life begins again, we might wonder at times whether we are truly receiving the special graces from our Home Shrine. We might wonder how we can fulfill the duties of our hectic everyday life and still live in the peaceful atmosphere of our Home Shrine. What can we do so that the Home Shrine becomes an experiential and integrated part of our daily life?

We should go to the Home Shrine often. There we can experience the presence of the living God in our life; there we can draw much spiritual strength so we can fulfill God's holy will in an ever more perfect way.

A. The presence of the living God, a tangible experience

In our Home Shrine the Blessed Mother will guide us, step by step, to a deep encounter with God in our daily life. She will help us to recognize his providential care and to believe that his Father love and mercy always accompany us on our journey heavenward. He will never abandon us, even in the darkest hours of our life.

1. Prayer

a. A Dialogue with God

- ✦ The Home Shrine invites us to have a dialogue with God; we can speak to him and listen to his message; we can meditate and reflect upon his loving providence in our life and discover new and meaningful ways to fulfill his holy will. Our conversation with God is a prayer which can become an integral part of our everyday life.
- ✦ The peaceful atmosphere of the Home Shrine can stimulate us to pray from our heart in a very spontaneous and intimate way.
- ✦ Living in the Home Shrine can include many different forms of prayer: from the very simple and short, to the more extensive, meditative type of prayer.
- ✦ Greeting the Blessed Mother in our Home Shrine is a simple yet very effective form of prayer. We can greet her before leaving the house and again upon returning. We can also look up to her during the day when we pass by and just simply acknowledge her presence. A greeting does not take much time and yet it can be a most powerful prayer.
- ✦ Teenagers can present themselves to the Blessed Mother before they go out and ask for her approval regarding their date, their friends, the clothing they have chosen to wear and the entertainment they plan to attend. They could also invite her to accompany them and upon their return they could stop by and briefly tell her how things went.
- ✦ The Home Shrine invites us to come to our Mother, no matter what is bothering us. She encourages us to take a good look at ourselves and to honestly evaluate our behavior and attitudes. She helps us to recognize our weaknesses and awakens in us the desire to improve. She waits for us in the Home Shrine with her hands full of grace, ready to educate and form us, to give us the strength to live a life that is more pleasing to God.
- ✦ The Home Shrine is open for everyone. Each person will find his own particular way to use the Home Shrine for his spiritual growth.
- ✦ We should also make the formal prayers, the basic prayers of our Catholic Church an important part of our prayer life. Children, too should learn these basic prayers when they are young, when their hearts and minds can still be formed. These formal prayers help to secure our bond to God, especially in times of spiritual dryness and aridity when we are deprived of the warmth and depth of religious feelings.

b. Family Prayer

- ✦ Prayer builds a strong foundation and will remain a permanent value for the family. In difficult times, under heavy blows of fate, prayer in the Home Shrine can truly save the family, strengthen the family bond and help us to see God's loving providence in the events of our life.
- ✦ It is not always so easy to convince all of our family members to gather in the Home Shrine for prayer. We need much courage to do so especially when teenagers tend to criticize their parent's suggestions and, in many cases, have their own schedules to follow.
- ✦ We can still invite them to participate in the family prayers, or at least let them know when the family gathers together in the Home Shrine for common prayer. Even if they do not come, they at least have the chance to unite themselves spiritually with the family in their own personal way.
- ✦ Our efforts to initiate family prayer in our Home Shrine will not go unrewarded.

c. Prayer of Petition

- ✦ The Home Shrine seems to become a very busy place when there is a great need. Each person has his own special concerns and can confidently bring them to the Blessed Mother in the Home Shrine.
- ✦ There are many other and by far more important needs in the family, especially when it is a question of life and death. The Home Shrine is a place where the family can receive much strength and consolation.
- ✦ When we bring our personal intentions and concerns to the Home Shrine, we can also ask the other members of our family to pray on our behalf.
- ✦ The Home Shrine is also an excellent place to bring the petitions of all those who ask for our prayers. There are many ingenious and effective ways of cooperating with the Blessed Mother.
- ✦ Students, too, have their special needs and find their way to the Home Shrine with great confidence in her assistance.
- ✦ The power of the Home Shrine can reach beyond the boundaries of our own family and penetrate the world around us, bringing light and hope to many others.

d. Prayer for Clarity in Decision-Making

- ✦ Important decisions can be made in the Home Shrine. Here we can discuss them with God and the Blessed Mother in a prayerful way and receive special guidance and clarity from our covenant partners.
- ✦ The Home Shrine can also be effective in the resolution of arguments.
- ✦ It will be a constant struggle to draw God into our daily life, to discuss everything with him and to really trust him. But even in our struggle, much blessing will come upon us. These blessings can radiate forth from our little Church at home, our Home Shrine, into the Church-at-large. In our homes we want to educate a praying people who will also be able to build and maintain the Church-at-large. Through the covenant of love with the Blessed Mother we are able to experience God as a living, personal God and are drawn closer and closer to him.
- ✦ All the many decisions which we have to make in life can be made in the Home Shrine – decisions about jobs, about our home and our family's way of living, about the education of our children, decisions regarding our choice of TV programs and music, of friends, and countless other issues. Since the Blessed Mother has taken up her abode in our home, she has become a very important member of our family and thus she should be actively drawn into all our decisions. Without a doubt, she will guide us and teach us to make the right decisions in life and give us the grace and courage to carry them out.

2. Celebrations - Liturgical seasons

- ✦ The Church teaches us to give honor and glory to God through the Liturgy, as well as through prayer services. Families can hold prayer services in their own home – very fittingly in their Home Shrine – and in this way celebrate the liturgical seasons and religious feasts in a meaningful way.
- ✦ Such prayer services can unite the family in celebrating the love that God has shown them in their daily lives and can be expressed in a variety of forms: May and Rosary devotions; novenas and prayers for various intentions; readings from the Bible or from other spiritual literature. The liturgical seasons of Lent and Advent also offer a wealth of possibilities for devotional services and for the development of family customs.
- ✦ Wherever the Blessed Mother has established her throne, the Church becomes alive and transmits her treasures to us. Devotions in the form of prayer services at home can effectively contribute to our spiritual formation and lead us to a profound encounter with God.

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: Family Feasts

The Home Shrine can play a special role in the celebration of family feasts such as Baptisms, First Holy Communions, birthdays, anniversaries, graduations. In a simple way we can link the natural joys of our life with the one who is ultimately responsible for them – God.

- ✦ On birthdays, the baptismal candle could be burned in the Home Shrine.
- ✦ On wedding anniversaries, the marriage candle could be burned, reminding us of the many blessings we have received and of the commitments that these candles symbolize.
- ✦ The anniversary of our covenant day can also be celebrated in a special way – not only once a year, but every month. We could burn our covenant candle and pray our covenant prayer.
- ✦ The anniversary of our Home Shrine Dedication can be similarly commemorated.

It is very important to recall the blessed events of the past and make them feastdays in our present life. The Church assures us that on days of remembrance we receive the same graces specific to the original event that we are commemorating. Anniversary days are also days of renewal when we again immerse ourselves into the spirit and meaning of that great event of the past. The celebration of family feasts helps to create a truly joy-filled atmosphere in our home. Genuine joy nurtures a healthy family life and creates an openness for the Good News of Christ. Where there is joy, God can become a more tangible reality in daily life.

COMMIT:

- ✦ Prayfully read over the forms of prayer presented here and commit to using one of the forms of prayer described during your prayer-time in your home this month.
- ✦ Is a prayer service or liturgical season celebration a possibility this month?
- ✦ "The Catholic All Year Compendium Liturgical Living For Real Life" book by Kendra Tierney has many ideas for celebrating liturgical seasons and Saints of the day too.

PRAY:

Mother Thrice Admirable, Queen and Victress of Schoenstatt, Queen of the Family,

- Pray for us
- Form our family into the domestic Church
- Bless the whole world. Amen.

