

The time of the home shrine is now!

Joe and Judy Yank

(Joe and Judy Yank are members of the second course of the Family Federation from Milwaukee. Joe grew up in one of the home shrines dedicated by Fr. Kentenich when he was in Milwaukee. They have three children all of whom are active in Schoenstatt, one is a Schoenstatt Sister of Mary. They have a home shrine, which is named Star of the Sea – Hope of the Future.)

We are at a crossroads in our human existence, and we believe that more than ever we need to listen intently to the words of our Father and Founder:

In a message to the Schoenstatt Family in 1968, shortly before he died he wrote, “Some prefer to call the present times apocalyptic. By this they do not mean that the end of the world is at hand. God intends the powerful breakdown and new creation to remain an impenetrable mystery to all mortal beings. Yet the term is meant to express the fact that the newest time, as it has shown itself until now, is uniquely similar to the end times – almost as alike as two peas in a pod.” As a caring father leaving a legacy to his family, a mission for our time, he said, “**With Hope and Joy, Confident in the Victory, We go with Mary into the Newest Time.**” JK, Message - September 1968

After experiencing two world wars and spending much of World War II in Dachau Concentration Camp our Founder spent 14 years during the 1950s and '60s in exile here in Milwaukee. During that time there was a different kind of war going on. It was known as the Cold War, a war at which the superpowers, specifically the United States and the USSR, were building Nuclear Arsenals equipped too potentially destroy the earth and all its inhabitants.

In the USSR there was a movement to destroy the family by taking the education of the children away from the parents so that the State could indoctrinate them in the Communist ideals. This ideology was rapidly spreading throughout the world. In the United States there was a different kind of breakdown of the family going on. The revolution against authority, especially parental authority and the revolution against sexual morality were destroying families, demoralizing children and changing society. During the same time a small number of families here in Milwaukee were listening to our Father and Founder as he helped them sort out the signs of the times.

People in those days were building bomb shelters beneath their homes because of the ever looming threat of nuclear war. Our founder saw the threat more clearly, as not only involving nuclear weapons but an ideology that was threatening the basic cell of the human race, the family. He became instrumental in calling into existence the home shrine. The home shrine at that time became for many a “bomb shelter” that could protect the family from the deadly holocaust perpetuated by an increasingly secular mass mindedness that was spreading throughout the world.

In 1963 Fr. Kentenich clarified the meaning and importance of the home shrine, he said; “What do we mean by ‘home shrine’? Many of us have not only dedicated their house to the Blessed Mother in general, but also offered it to her as a Living Shrine.”

“What I am about to say is of elementary importance for the future: Everything which holds true for the Original Shrine and for the daughter shrines also holds true for the home shrine.”

In later conversation that night he added, “Collectivism can close or destroy all the churches, close or destroy all our shrines. But *the home shrines – no one can destroy them!*” The Birth of the Home Shrine – Second Edition – Fr. Jonathan Niehaus, pg 63.

Today more than ever the family is at center stage in this divine vs. diabolical conflict. Our homes have now become the front lines of a battle that involves more than physical weapons. The opposition is using all the age old moral decadence and applying it to the most modern and sophisticated weapons, communication, pedagogy, sociology, psychology, science, philosophy and theology. These weapons are clearly being used by the supernatural powers that are determining the course of our world today. These powers are looking for instruments to carry out their plans. In the midst of this fog our home shrines, our living shrines, stand as pedagogy of freedom and pedagogy of truth.

In 1968 our Founder wrote about the gigantic battle between divine and diabolic powers as it is depicted in the Apocalypse. The two great signs, the great Apocalyptic Woman and her adversary the dragon are at war. He wrote, “Both of these powers in the background are searching for instruments here on earth to carry on and complete the momentous battles. ... The powers of God and Satan have chosen the world as their battlefield, and through their instruments they fight for world dominion.” JK, Message -September 1968

Last year, the recently appointed bishop of Glasgow, Scotland, Philip Tartaglia, said “I could see myself going to jail possibly at some point over the next 15 years...if I speak out.” He boldly opposed the government’s plans to implement gay “marriage”. When the Scottish government announced its plans, Bishop Tartaglia warned it would have “enormous implications for religious liberty.”

“I am deeply concerned that today, defending the traditional meaning of marriage is almost considered ‘hate speech’ and branded intolerant,” he said.

Our Holy Father when he was Cardinal Archbishop of Buenos Aries had a similar problem. In 2010, when Argentina became the first Latin American country to legalize “same-sex marriage”, Cardinal Bergoglio encouraged clergy across the country to tell Catholics to protest against the legislation because, if enacted, it could “seriously injure the family,” he said.

In 2010 Cardinal George, Archbishop of Chicago, said that, given the hostile direction of the US government and society in general, “I expect to die in bed, my successor will die in prison and his successor will die a martyr in the public square. His successor will pick up the shards of a ruined society and slowly help rebuild civilization, as the Church has done so often in human history.”

Already in the Second Founding Document of October 18, 1939 our founder stressed: “We would like them (the events and experiences of our age) to show us the future tasks of our family. We all feel that we are approaching a great world catastrophe and a turning point in time. Again and again we ask

ourselves: Is this the time for which Divine Providence has built the ark of our family, or must the tide rise higher and become more devastating?"

When the tide rises will our ark be ready to carry the future Church to the new shore? What will be the fate of the Church in times to come? Where will the life and faith of the Church thrive and flourish? Again we listen to our Founder, "Collectivism can close or destroy all the churches, close or destroy all our shrines. But *the home shrines – no one can destroy them!*"

What do we think is to become of our Holy Church in the future if all our priests, bishops and cardinals are put into prison or murdered in the public square as Cardinal George indicated? Many are called to be martyrs, to give their lives for the faith, but many are also given the grace of God to remain with their flock to suffer for and minister to the faithful. Where will they go then when their churches, cathedrals and shrines are being burned, their sanctuaries destroyed?

Where did Peter and the apostles stay on their journeys? Jesus told them "Wherever you enter a house, stay there until you leave from there." Mark 6: 10 Paul in his letter to the Romans says, "Greet Priscilla and Aquila, my co-workers in Christ Jesus, *who risked their necks for my life* ... greet also the church at their house." Romans 16: 3-5 Again he writes to the Church in Corinth, "The churches of Asia send you greetings. Aquila and Priscilla together with the church at their house send greetings in the Lord." Corinthians 16: 19

Again we repeat Father's words, "Collectivism can close or destroy all the churches, close or destroy all our shrines. But the home shrines – no one can destroy them!"

Is now the time for the home shrine? Are we ready to give a place to our Lord when he comes knocking at our door? We can be sure the time will come when our Church will see this kind of persecution, maybe not during our life time, but possibly during the lifetime of our children or our children's children. The persecution we are talking about here will probably not only be local, in one place or the other, or even affecting only certain nations. We can imagine that it will take on international dimensions. If we look at the climate today we can see that the storm is not far off.

Let us listen to our Founder's prophetic insight given to us 45 years ago as a father to his children, "*We may often feel depressed when we see how the poor weak beam of collectivism develops an irresistible formative power and determines world history, while we, who possess the full and radiant light of the Sun, look only into the past and avoid looking into the future, or else answer today's problems with depressing pessimism. From the beginning Schoenstatt has taken great care to make the entire Christian Vision of the future its own, and through its 'secret', to clothe it in an original and effective form.*" JK, September 1968

We must *never* forget Schoenstatt's "secret" that great gift we have been given, the Covenant of Love with our Lady. Our Founder called it, "the fundamental form of our existence, our final goal, and fundamental source of strength ... *What you have inherited from your fathers, acquire it to make it your own!*" Schoenstatt Covenant Spirituality, texts by Fr. Kentenich, edited by Jonathan Niehaus.

So what can we do in a battle that involves such weapons used by the Deceiver and his faithful instruments bent on the destruction of mankind? Our Father and Founder encouraged us to use all the same weapons, sociology, psychology, science, philosophy, theology, communications and pedagogy, **but always faithfully and effectively in the service of the Queen.** Our MTA is the great educator and she has chosen to educate her children in the **home shrine.** Our Founder never let us forget our primary mission as instruments of the Queen – he said; “This is the mission and we should not forget this in our times that are so disoriented and so disorientating. We should not only work to make *Christ* known to all paganism; no, ‘take the *Child and his Mother.*’ We should take Jesus **and** Mary in holy bi-unity to whichever place we are to fulfill a mission.” And our mission begins in the home!

In the Letter from Santa Maria, April 15, 1948, Father wrote to the newly forming Schoenstatt Family Movement in Germany, “Take the picture of the Blessed Mother with you and enshrine it in your homes. Then they in turn will become little shrines where the venerable picture will prove to be a source of grace, create a holy family atmosphere, and form holy family members.” – The Birth of the Home Shrine – Second Edition – Fr. Jonathan Niehaus, pg 98.

In the 1950 conferences for families our Founder said; “We listen to Holy Scripture: ‘Lord, how good it is for us to be 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 MTA Shrine. Who will transform our family into a Church in miniature - into the one, holy, Catholic and apostolic Church? Mother takes perfect care! (....) – ibid, pg 32.

“You, too, want to stand in holy watch (around the shrine), but you do not want to just stand around the shrine. You want more: You yourselves want to become a living shrine. My family life a living shrine of the MTA! Sooner or later the affinity between you and the shrine will become clearer. On the one hand we find the walls, dead walls. On the other we find ourselves, living stones. Now I can rediscover all the symbols that we have in the shrine in my shrine, in my family.” – Ibid

We read from the Catholic Catechism:

From the beginning, the core of the Church was often constituted by those who had become believers “together with their household.” Acts 18:8 These families who became believers were islands of Christian life in an unbelieving world. CC 1655

*In our own time, in a world often alien and even hostile to faith, believing families are of primary importance as centers of living, radiant faith. For this reason the Second Vatican Council, using an ancient expression, calls the family the *Ecclesia domestica* (Domestic Church). It is in the bosom of the family that parents are “by word and example ... the first heralds of the faith with regard to their children. It is here that the father of the family, the mother, children and all members of the family exercise the priesthood of the baptized “by the reception of the sacraments, prayer and thanksgiving, the witness of a holy life, and self-denial and active charity.” Thus the home is the first school of Christian life and “a school for human enrichment.” CC 1656-1657*

We can see that the expression Domestic Church was used to identify the family during Vatican II. In our Schoenstatt Family we began building home shrines / living shrines while Vatican II was still in session. We build our shrines not because it was mandated by the Church but because our Mother, through the heart of our Father and Founder, asked us to invite her into our homes and from there renew the world in Christ her Son. Our Founder and the founding generation of the home shrine anticipated the need. Thus our home shrines as a model or prototype of the domestic church are a gift for the Church of today and the Church of future generations.

We look back to October 18, 1914 and the first covenant our MTA sealed with Father Kentenich and the Seminarians. What vision did he see when he said? “You gather what I am aiming at: I would like to make this place a place of pilgrimage, a place of grace for our house and for the whole German province, and perhaps even further afield.” Did he know that someday there would be more than 200 daughter shrines throughout the world? Did he know that there would be thousands of home shrines? Did he know that the Pilgrim MTA would spread the message of Schoenstatt to every corner of the earth? We can see now to what dimension this vision of our Founder has progressed. This great network of Shrines will impact the future of our Church and world beyond compare. Can we claim, in the light of our mission for 2014, that this network of shrines, from Original to daughter to home to heart to pilgrim, is truly the most eloquent physical sign of the Covenant Culture that is Schoenstatt?

In our home shrine we are safe in our Mother’s arms with a side glance to the world’s claims and we remain protected from the negative influences of the world. Here we have access to the three pilgrimage graces our Mother promised, the grace of being at home in a homeless society, the grace of inner transformation in a world that does not want to submit to the will of God and the grace of apostolic fruitfulness in a Church that is in dire need of evangelization. The graces that pour forth from the home shrine to mother and father and children are an immunization against the ideological diseases that are killing families in this age. From here as a living shrine we go forth to transform the world. **“In the shadow of the Shrine, the fate of the Church and world will be essentially co-determined for centuries to come.”** JK 1929 MPHCEV – Mater Perfectam Hababit Curam Et Victoriam – Mother Takes Perfect Care She will be Victorious!

This weekend we want to enter into a dialog with one another to discover, from the perspective of our Father and Founder and our own cumulative cultural experiences, how the home shrine / living shrine is the answer to the difficulties facing our families today and how it has become an integral part of our Covenant Culture. We want to discover anew the magnificent stream of graces flowing from the heart of our dear Mother to her faithful children from her network of Shrines. Let us stand with our Father in Hope and Joy, Confident in the Victory, as we go with Mary into the Newest Time, the time of the Home Shrine!