

# The Great Atmosphere – A Lived Reality

## A Home Shrine and Living Shrine Testimony

Michael and Margaret Fenelon

It has often been acknowledged in Holy Scripture, by the saints, by the great philosophers over the ages, and by our father and founder, that the greatest educative and transformative force isn't what one preaches with words, but what and how one preaches through one's life. We see the reality of this universal principle, especially in its contradiction, through the lives of those around us and in the world at large. Why are we so disturbed when a leader, whether political or religious, says one thing and does another? And why are we so struck by Father Kentenich? Because he was so absolutely genuine – what he said was who he was, what he said was what he lived. He was a true man of God. There was never a contradiction in him. This is what attracted the couples to Father and won their hearts during his time here in Milwaukee. This is what urged them on in their striving for the ideals he presented to them.

In Milwaukee Father Kentenich educated the couples that came to him about the ideal of the Nazareth Family, as to what a true Schoenstatt Family should strive to become. He educated the families to see that their first apostolate, the one that God had given them, was their family. Nothing could be more important, should disrupt or distract from this first apostolate. He didn't just leave the couples with these lofty ideals and the struggle with these everyday strivings, but he helped them to develop what he called a "Great Atmosphere" in the home and their married life in order to secure the ideal of the Nazareth Family. With the many pressures of the secular world all around us, we need this "great atmosphere" in our homes to counteract the increasingly, almost irresistible, negative pull, so that true education and formation can occur in the home shrine to prepare parents and children to be strong, firm and free, priestly personalities able to go out and change our world.

This creation of a "great atmosphere" captivated our parents in the early 1960s when they came into contact with Father: how they as spouses could strive to create this deep, warm love in their marriages; how they could educate and form their growing families into the spiritual world of values; and how they could create an atmosphere that would last even when the children left home. These were the longings of the couples that came to Father during his time of exile in Milwaukee and the "great atmosphere" which Marge and I grew out of and witnessed as children.

Now we would like to share with you some of the experiences we were blessed to have with Father as our "father". A true gift of Divine Providence was given to the families in Milwaukee; 14 years of life with our Father. Through Father's love and example; he offered us, his children,

an education – all that was necessary was an open mind and heart. By the genuineness of his being he drew us to himself and opened up to us a whole new world – the world of the great atmosphere of the home shrine.

You will notice that whenever we talk of Father Kentenich, we often just say “Father”, because that is what he was to us. Due to the exile we knew almost nothing of the great movement he founded – the magnitude of Schoenstatt in Europe and South America. To us he was **Father** – always concerned, always available, always kind. In Milwaukee, Father Kentenich could really be a father to the children around him.

Fr. Carlos Boscamp, many of you in Argentina may know this name, told us and others many times that you really don’t know someone until you know their name, their face and their home shrine. It was his way of letting us know, long before the Twitter and Face Book worlds of superficial contact, that you really need to know someone in person, and ultimately know them in their home shrine, to form a relationship and to really know who they are.

This is our family in our home shrine. Our daughter Sarah, is 34 years old, lives in Milwaukee and owns her own business as a Massage Therapist, and is praying for someone to share her life of faith with. Our son Stephen is 30 years old, married to Mary almost three years ago and they have our little grandson, James who is almost 1 1/2 years old. And they just told us recently that we are going to be grandparents again in December.

This is our home shrine which is named “Home in the Hands of our Father”. We dedicated it in 1979, two years after we were married. The name came out of our personal experiences with Father and the depth of the graces we received through the home shrines we grew up in.

This photo was taken of my (Fenelon) family with Father on Nov. 27, 1964 when he came to our home for one of the celebrations of our home shrine. I am the oldest of 12 children, eight of which are in this picture.

My family came into contact with Schoenstatt in 1960. My parents were a good Catholic couple, married in 1953, raised in Catholic homes and educated in Catholic schools. My father was an English teacher at a Catholic high school in Milwaukee and was very active in the parish through the Legion of Mary. This meant he was out many of the evenings of the week after work at prayer meetings or visiting people in their homes to share the faith and on weekends he would visit elderly homes and sometimes assist them in getting to Mass.

This left my mother with the difficult task of caring for, at that time, 6 children pretty much alone. Although what my father was apostolically doing was good it was causing a severe strain on their marriage. It was at this time that Father came into their lives.

In my father's visit around the neighborhood he had come in contact with Schoenstatt Sisters who were teaching at St. Philip Neri School near where we lived. He had tried to convince them to join the Legion of Mary and they tried to convince him of Schoenstatt. Every time he visited them they would send him home with a large bag of cookies, cakes and bread for his growing family. In 1960 they invited my parents to come to the Monday Night Talks with other couples, to meet Father Kentenich, and they accepted.

My father was introduced to Father Kentenich at one of the first meetings by the Schoenstatt sister. My father had a stubborn streak and was not one to just go along or to be pushed into something. He told Father Kentenich that if he had to choose between the Legion of Mary and Schoenstatt, he would take the Legion of Mary. The Sister was horrified at my father saying this, but Father just looked him in the eyes, smiled and said nothing.

Within 6 months my parents had made the Covenant of Love and the Blank Check, and a year later they made the Inscriptio. Father had totally won their hearts.

This photo was taken in 1959, before the "official" foundation of the home shrine. There was a crowning stream among the families, and Father came to crown the Blessed Mother in our (Yank) home.

When my father and mother first met Father, they were young parents – here you see 6 of the 7 children in our family. My father was also very busy outside of family life, after work he would go to many other activities, such as the choir and different Church meetings. This was difficult for my mother. I remember back as a little girl of 5 years old, seeing and hearing my mother cry. This is something that leaves an impression on a little child.

It was at this time that my parents began looking for something in their spiritual lives for both of them and the family. In Divine Providence, through his work, my father met a couple who knew Father, and they invited my parents to come to a Monday Evening Talk.

Right away, when they heard Father speak, they were very impressed with what he had to say. Never before had they heard any priest or anyone else ever speak about all the spheres of marriage and family life the way he did.

He spoke to them about the family being their first apostolate; that the family should be most important in their lives; it should be the center of their concern. Father helped bring our family "home" – together – united both physically and spiritually.

My parents met Father in March of 1958, and already made their Covenant of Love on June 1<sup>st</sup> of that same year, only 3 months after having met Father. He could see the open hearts – the

need for the Blessed Mother's motherly care and education to transform the hearts of these parents so that the children would grow in this atmosphere of love.

I was old enough to remember, now as I look back, the real change that took place in my parents after Father came into our lives. Though life was never perfect – there was a greater peace - a more joyful atmosphere in our home.

Those couples who first began meeting with Father were known as the 'pioneer couples'. They were mostly a little older, and their children were not so young any more, some had grown and were already leaving the home. These were simple, ordinary people seeking to live a life of faith.

Though Father could not 'organize' Schoenstatt while he was here in Milwaukee, he spoke with the couples about Schoenstatt's spirituality; the covenant, the graces of the shrine, the life of faith, and many other topics.

When our parents arrived in the late 1950's and early 1960's, they were couples with young children, and Father called these new couples "the new babies of the family." Father immediately changed the topics of his talks to include a deeper understanding of marriage and couple life, marriage intimacy and communication, the importance of the family and the education of children.

Through this time came the beginnings of the home shrine development. In 1962 – 1963 the stream of the living shrine began with these younger families and then the home shrine – with the great question that two of the mothers asked Father – "Could the Blessed Mother really come down into our homes like in the shrine?"

Father recognized the great need in their hearts, they felt at a loss of how to educate their children in the faith – how to bind the family spiritually together.

We have seen the amazing holy history of the home shrine as we traced the finger of Divine Providence through time. That vision of Father, the seeds planted long ago as early as the Pre-founding Document. Then blossoming further in the Letter of Santa Maria where he said to take the picture of the Blessed Mother into the home and therefore making the home into a "little shrine". And then we see Father patiently waiting. We often ask ourselves what our lives would have been like if Father Kentenich had not come to Milwaukee, if this hadn't been the path of Divine Providence. We know that many lives, and especially our own lives and the life of our families would be very different today.

The next series of photos were taken on Feb. 2, 1964 at the living shrine and home shrine dedication of my (Fenelon) family.

As was mentioned in the home shrine history presentation by Victor and Olga Alegria this morning - in late 1962, the final stages of the home shrine development, which took place here in Milwaukee, came about with the idea of the living shrine starting to take shape in the families. It was a unique pre-development of the actual home shrine foundation.

During this time Father had the opportunity to work closely with the families and observe their daily married and family life as he introduced them into the world of Schoenstatt values and ideals. He was the confessor and spiritual director of a number of them, so he knew intimately their challenges. The living shrine presented a beautiful means of binding the family together in a deeply spiritual way and to the Schoenstatt world.

It concretely expressed one of Father's central themes of creating a "great atmosphere" in the home in which all could find a place and be loved unconditionally through a deep and warm bond of love. It was a practical and livable means of growing into a deep attachment to the shrine, to God and the Blessed Mother; vibrant relationships between family members; and strong bonds to our Schoenstatt ideals and mission.

The living shrine was such a simple idea that it could be completely overlooked. However, it is obvious from the prayers Father prayed at the living shrine dedications that it is a deep and profound act and that it held significant consequences for the future of the individuals and the families. And what is this idea? Each member of the family chooses a symbol from the shrine, to be formed by the symbol, and to become the symbol. In this way they become a living shrine: a living shrine that guarantees the striving of the home shrine and attaches the family members deeply to the Original Shrine and their home shrine.

It was very interesting a few years ago after giving a presentation such as this, someone pointed out that we didn't say that we chose this symbol, but that we are this symbol. We had not noticed this before, but that is the reality and ideal of choosing a symbol, that we actually become in some sense the symbol, through its ability to be integrated into all facets of our life.

We had a beautiful experience in Chile after a presentation such as this. A man told us that he was a graphic artist. He made his living by making ideas come to life through symbols. He had never thought of this idea of a living shrine. He was so excited, as he said that he was going to go home and re-found his home shrine.

Most of the living shrine symbols in our (Fenelon) family center around the Mass, or are near the front of the shrine around the altar. With a large family we had quite a few symbols, some of which are St. Michael, the Cross, the Tabernacle, the Eucharist, the Candle, Altar, the Paten, the Chalice and the Wine (for Mass).

Many years later my mother remarked that every day at Mass, no matter where her children are, she can see them physically present there before her. This was the reality of the power of the living shrine symbols, to unite the family together; that Father had hoped could really be lived.

I would like to share my (Fenelon) father's and mother's symbols and what Father's prayer was for them. It shows the beauty of complementary symbols and the depth Father saw in them.

My father chose to be the Chalice and my mother the Wine; both a central part of the Holy Mass. I think of the many times my father saw those two symbols raised up by Father Kentenich at his 6:00 am morning Mass in the Exile Shrine. These two symbols are intimately united in the most holy reality, Christ really being among us, literally giving himself as living food. Both my father and mother intimately united as the chalice and wine in this mystery as they are in their marriage sacrament. I can only imagine what they must have reflected on and experienced by these symbols over the years.

Father Kentenich prayed the following for my mother's symbol:

“The **mother of the family** would like to symbolize the **wine**. The wine needed in holy Mass has two qualities: It must be pure and it must be genuine. ... If the mother wants to see herself symbolized in the wine, then as mother of the family and as spouse, she must be the epitome of womanhood. There must be nothing artificial in her, nothing phony ... . As we see the Blessed Mother as the ideal of womanly nobility, simplicity and intactness, so the whole being of the mother of the family should be as genuine as that of the Blessed Mother.

Mass wine has a second characteristic: It is set aside because it is changed into the Blood of our Lord. The mother of the family is not content with being genuine and true on the ethical level ... she also wants to ... be elevated into a supernatural atmosphere in order to be a living reflection of the eternal infinite God.

Hence, all who are under the mother's influence should experience an extraordinarily warm, supernatural spirit; a warm, supernatural atmosphere which radiates from her and draws everything upward with her.”

Father Kentenich prayed the following for my father's symbol:

“The **father of the family** chose the **chalice** as his symbol. ... A chalice has to be made of gold. It will contain the divine Blood.

The father, too, wants to be genuine, realistic and down-to-earth in both directions. ...everything in him should be like pure gold. He is not content with being an iron

father or merely a silver father. No, he wants to be a golden father. An iron father fulfills his duties as far as he has to, and that's it. A silver father goes beyond his mere duties as far as he is able to, but lastly he acts out of purely ethical, self-centered motives.

In his whole being, a golden father is directly bound to and connected with the eternal infinite God. He strives to embody the ideal of a golden father in his whole being. He strives to become a living image of the eternal Father.

The second great attribute of a chalice is this: In the chalice, the wine is changed into the Blood of Christ. In a similar way, the father wants to embody the ideal of an interiorly transformed person, a completely changed person, a completely transformed father of the family.

... By transformation, by a moral miracle, the father of the family should come to be completely at home in the supernatural world."

How deep these words are! They weren't given to theologians, or the Schoenstatt Fathers and Sisters, but to a simple couple striving for holiness with all of the realities and needs of a large, growing family, and living fully in the world. This prayer brought together an ideal to strive for the binding to the supernatural world, to the shrine and to each other.

My brother, Bernard, wanted to be Fr Kentenich in the living shrine. The Schoenstatt Sister said no one could be Father Kentenich in the shrine. But Bernard would not give in. When the time came that night for the dedication of Bernard's symbol he said he wanted to be Father Kentenich. Father gave a beautiful little prayer for Bernard. He immediately turned Bernard's symbol of Father Kentenich into that of the father eye and God the Father. He didn't let the symbol rest on himself, but on the characteristics and attributes of God the Father.

What did Father see in the symbols and the living shrine? Let us look at Father's words for Bernard:

"Therefore, we ask you, dear Mother Thrice Admirable and Queen of Schoenstatt, see to it that in his own way, Bernard writes all the interests of his small family deeply into his heart and gives his entire strength for it. The family might have ever so many concerns, whether they be illness in the physical sense or inner difficulties, or whether sooner or later sin, too, wants to interfere in the paradise of our family: the father's eyes take note of all these things, time and time again. They take care that all difficulties will work out for the best of each individual. ... That is to say, the father always has to help along that his family becomes an ideal family. As to Bernhard, this presupposes an extraordinarily heroic selflessness ... ."

Father was binding each member of the family to God, and to one another, through the symbols. He had no way of knowing that my father would die very young and the children, like Bernard, would have to shoulder additional responsibility. These words were prophetic.

You may ask, can a five year old choose a symbol and have it mean something later in life? We believe the symbols have the ability, through the grace of the home shrine, to influence one's life, or at least to be present in a subconscious way to help influence one as they grow. Bernard is one of the most fatherly men I know, other than my own father. He married Marge's youngest sister, Barb, and they have 11 children. He is a man of extreme calm, patience, kindness and prayer. He has given up pretty much all his personal hobbies and is always there for his children and wife. Outside of his work, they are his world.

At the end of the evening, as Father was about to leave, Bernard gave Father his hat. Father took it and then put it on Bernard's head. We like to think that Father was saying that Bernard chose a good symbol.

My sister Ann, is the Tabernacle. Here Father is showing her a picture of her symbol. Father had time even for the smallest of babies.

My sister Jean, is the Altar. Whenever Father came to our home the children would gather around him – Father was such a “father”. Each of them saying, “Father”, “Father” until they caught his attention. They loved to show him the things that were important to them, especially their toys. He would have all the time in the world to talk to each one about their toy.

One of those toys especially caught father's eye. We had a puppet show at home and one of the characters was the devil. When Father saw this puppet he took it by the neck and shook it. How serious he looks in the photo. We like this photo, which shows Father's naturalness, even in this playful way, he was educating the children about the realities in the supernatural world.

Father came to our (Yank) home on February 24, 1963 for the dedication of our Living Shrine.

Our family knew Father over a seven year period from 1958 – 1965.

The children grew. Father told the parents “When you have small children – you have small problems, when you have big children – you have big problems.”

Father spoke with our parents about their teenagers and how the teenage years can be the “loneliest time” in a person's life and could be even lonelier than being in prison.

He helped them as parents in the difficult time of the 1960's, which was a time of rebellion against authority in the USA, especially against parental authority and it was the beginning of

the sexual revolution which affected many hearts. Through Father Kentenich's guidance, my parents were able to create an atmosphere to help navigate those stormy seas.

Father tried to help the parents educate their children in inner freedom, as they grew older; how not to force them, but to draw them in with a life and atmosphere of love and joy.

Father came six times to our home and four times to Mike's, almost all for celebrations related to the home shrine. He waited for you to ask, and then he would come.

My 'baby' sister Barb in the photo is the one who married Mike's brother, Bernard. Here the family is showing Father a book that was made about all of our symbols.

We feel that Father gave us a great gift. The living shrine unites us. It gives us attachments in a "homeless" world. Every time we go to visit the shrine we can see all of our family members there before us, and it is a way to unite our hearts across the miles, and even into eternity.

The living shrine symbols can help to shape and form life. The symbol can play a great role in the discovery of our personal ideal. This has been the case in my life – I had chosen the Sanctuary Lamp, and this symbol has grown very dear to me and has helped me discover and form my personal ideal - growing and deepening throughout my life (continuing to grow).

My father chose to be St. Peter in the shrine – the key. These are some of the words Father spoke in our living shrine prayer for my father.

He prayed,

"Let **the father of the family** truly be a second **Peter**, like Peter who has his place on the altar of the shrine. In the Church, Peter is the bearer and custodian of the key. In a similar way, let the father of the family also see and fulfill his task better every day. By his word and example, he wants to open up heaven for every member of the family. What the Apostle Paul said in general, "Your citizenship should be in heaven," applies in a very special way to the father of the family. He is only able to be the custodian of the key and lead his family to heaven to the extent that he himself lives in heaven with all his heart and soul."

My mother is the Cross – Father prayed to our Blessed Mother for my mother,

"She wants to be the **living cross** in the family, which also holds a place of honor in the shrine. Teach the mother to hang on the cross as often and as many times as there are members in the family. The words our Lord said about his own cross, about his crucifixion, should also apply to the mother of the family: "When I am lifted up on the cross, I will draw all things to myself." The mother of the family has to prepare herself

that the children will grow up; she has to expect that the children like so many young people their age, will sooner or later cut the apron strings and go their own way. Then she should and may repeat again and again: “When I hang on the cross, I take care of my children. What I can no longer accomplish through my words, I may do—similar to our Lord by his crucifixion—by my own cross and suffering.”

The spiritual world became more and more an everyday reality – we have seen and lived this reality. Through all the challenges of life, and there have been and are many, the living shrine with the life of the symbols gave a foundation, an “anchor”.

As I mentioned with my father and mother, Father prayed a special prayer for each of us and our symbols. My mother felt how important these words of Father were and she typed them on a special card for each of us – words for us to live by.

My older sister chose to be the “Bell” in the shrine – the bell in the bell tower. Several years after she was married she moved to Alaska, far away from all her family here and all that she was familiar with. This was very difficult for her and she felt the natural loneliness of being far away. She meditated on how she was the only member of our family who chose a symbol from outside of the shrine. But now whenever we hear a bell ring we think of our sister; and when we would take my parents to the shrine, even in their last years when they would go with their walker and wheelchair, they would always have to ring the bell for their daughter and say a prayer for her. I still do this now and I tell her that I rang the bell and prayed for her in the shrine. This brings her near and gives both of us great joy and comfort knowing we are united spiritually in the shrine.

When Father was here in Milwaukee the home shrine became a reality in stages. It began with the living shrine stream, then came the dedication of the home shrine, and then later the naming of the home shrine.

This photo was taken when Father came for the naming of our (Yank) home shrine. The name my parents chose for our home shrine is “Confidencia Heroica” “Heroic Confidence”. Later, after Father left Milwaukee, they added – “In the Spirit of the Magnificat.”

We, the children saw our parents live out of this ideal. We saw this being deeply lived in our parent’s souls. These ideals became part of the very air we breathed, the “great atmosphere” we lived in and still have a huge influence on our lives.

One of my younger sister’s has had many difficulties throughout her life. And for most of her life she did not really feel at home in the world of Schoenstatt, she had difficulty with many things having to do with Schoenstatt. But the one connection that she always held onto was her symbol – the candle. This was her one contact, her one attachment to our Schoenstatt world.

She would always remember that she was the candle and that she needed to bring light to the world around her, and she would try to do this.

Sometimes we cannot see the graces working in our lives until many years later.

4 years ago – now in her 50's – she finally felt drawn to dedicate her home shrine. She felt the great need of our Mother's presence in her home, in her life. This actually took place the year my parents died. She chose as the name, the ideal, of her home shrine - "One Heart".

She feels the powerful graces that help to root her in her faith and keep her strong through all the many difficulties that life continues to hold. She tells me how often she "runs" to our Mother in her home shrine and finds peace there – united in one heart.

We watched our (Yank) parents growing more deeply in their symbols.

Mom and Dad and one of my brothers, in particular, felt very strongly the importance of the living shrine, and they talked often about it, feeling the need to share it.

I would just like to share one example of the importance of the living shrine in our family.

It is a story of one of my brothers who had a serious nervous breakdown in his early 20's. It is a story that he feels compelled to share, and I will read it in his own words.

"In my own experience, the living shrine is invaluable. It has given me a point of contact with the supernatural world and has deepened my love for all that is sacred within the Church, within the depths of our Catholic faith. The idea that each person chose a symbol came very naturally to our family. It wasn't something that was only for the children, but for the parents as well, and as Father prayed a simple prayer for each person and their symbol, he spent more time on Dad and Mom than he did on each of the children. This to me shows the importance of childlikeness before the Father, simple humble childlikeness especially on the part of the mother and the father...

If I were to tell you how my life progressed from the time of this living shrine dedication until this day there would be many blank spaces. The road I traveled was that of many young people growing up in these difficult times. My life and soul hovered many times at the edge of the abyss. What saved me? The living shrine! The further I would go from the realization of my ideal and symbol, the more my parents would grow closer to their own symbol and ideal. My brothers and sisters too were united in a very special way and we knew one another as brothers and sisters normally do but also through our symbols. There is a spiritual sense of togetherness that crosses many miles, boundaries and differences. 'Our citizenship should always be in

heaven.' [St. Paul says.] We need in our time, something to draw us there. The home shrine, in its 'living' dimension, can be that icon that draws us upward, heavenward, always higher until we reach the goal of our journey."

If you remember Father's words about my parent's symbols – my father being St. Peter/the key, opening the gates of heaven for the children by living in heaven with all of his heart and soul. And my mother, the cross, hanging on the cross and suffering for each child in need. They truly took their symbols to heart.

As you can see (and probably all know) just having a home shrine does not mean that we will always live in the clouds, that it will be like heaven on earth. Even when you have a home shrine that was blessed by Father himself, there are very real crosses and sufferings - they are part of the world we live in. But, we know that we are never alone! Our Mother is there with her graces to lift us up and help us through all of our difficulties.

Through the grace of the home shrine Father gave our families new life. My (Fenelon) father had a special relationship with Father Kentenich. It was as a son to a father. My father had a difficult relationship with his own father. His father had several nervous break downs and family life was difficult. My father left home as soon as he could. With Father Kentenich he felt he had found a real father, how it was to be truly loved by a father, how it was to be a true son and how to be a true father for his own children.

Every morning before work my father would go to Father Kentenich's Mass at 5:50 am in the Exile Shrine. Since we didn't have a car this meant that he would get up at 4:30 am in order to get to the Mass. Daily Holy Mass had always been important to my father, but now he would not miss Fr. Kentenich's Mass in the shrine.

On Saturdays he would sometimes take us older children to the Mass at the shrine. We would walk the 2 miles to the shrine. Along the way I remember my father would sing the Magnificat in Latin and we would play games to keep ourselves entertained. After Mass we would go to Father's office. Father would invite us in, sit us children down at a little table in the hall, and then he would disappear into the kitchen. He would return with whatever he could find to give us children – a donut, piece of fruit, a cookie. Then he and my father would go into his office and my father would go to confession and have spiritual direction. He did this almost every Saturday for three years. You could say he was truly formed by Fr. Kentenich. This is the type of access we had to Father. Just knock on his door and he would stop everything and make time for you.

My father wasted no time. My mother said he was a changed man, a changed husband and a changed father – almost the very words of my father's living shrine prayer. He was a teacher and he gave up his summer job, and the extra income, so that he could help my mother and be

with the children all summer. He did much of the cooking and clothes washing and food shopping. We had an old house and he taught us what it was to work. But he also showed us how to have fun. We had no car, but we had 10 bicycles. He would take us on adventures all around the city. We would go to the museum, the beach, the zoo, the swimming pools, lakes for fishing. Since there were so many of us we had a birthday party or two just about every month and my father was always the wild leader of the festivities. It was a glorious time for us children.

We could not have known that only 11 years after Father left Milwaukee, at the age of 48, my father would die of heart failure, leaving 11 children at home with my mother, the youngest child being only 6 years old. But in those years he totally dedicated his life to his family, his wife and to his Schoenstatt life, so that we had a firm foundation for the future.

At my father's funeral during the burial at the cemetery someone overheard my three youngest brothers, who were 6, 7 and 9, discussing who their father was now talking to in heaven. One thought it was Gilbert Schimmel, who was one of the first Schoenstatt men in the US and very close to Father who had died, the second thought it was the Blessed Mother and the third thought it was Fr. Kentenich. How could three small children take so naturally to heart a supernatural reality that most adults don't acknowledge?

It is explained by a second story. When my father was in the hospital after heart surgery and was hooked up to many monitors and tubes one of the Schoenstatt Fathers came to visit him. My father asked him, "Have you ever seen the heart of the Blessed Mother?" The Schoenstatt Father looked at him quizzically, not quite comprehending what he was getting at. My father simply pointed to the heart monitor above his bed with the blue line tracing his heart beat across the screen. He said, "There is the heart of the Blessed Mother." For him the covenant of love exchange of hearts was so real, as real as the bed he was laying on. This was the atmosphere that my parents strove to create and surround us with in our home shrine.

After numerous trials of growing up in our family, with many of the same struggles that happen in most families today – the loss of faith, divorce, education difficulties – after many years, all 12 children are now practicing Catholics, which is very unusual in our country today. Through all the years of raising the children on her own after my father's death the life my mother had created with my father and the home shrine were her anchors.

Father guided our families in the life of lived faith, and helped them to begin practical liturgical traditions in the home – making Faith a part of life.

My (Fenelon) father was very sensitive to Fr. Kentenich's education in how to make faith come alive in the family. A Lenten tradition my father started in our home was a crown of thorns which he wove from a thorn bush. During the year my father would give the Blessed Mother in

the home shrine, and my mother, roses from his rose garden. When the roses died he would then save the petals. During Lent for every offering we made we could put a rose petal on a thorn, so that by Easter the crown would be blossoming and soft for our Lord. Even the smallest of children could understand the Capital of Grace in this way. Many times we would compete to see who could put the most rose petals on the crown.

In this picture he (with some of the children) brought the crown to Father on Easter Sunday in 1965 to offer it to our Mother in the Exile Shrine.

We have continued this tradition of the crown of thorns throughout our married life. It brings faith to life – attachments to the spiritual world.

Our Institute course family, and some of our friends see this symbol's value and carry on this tradition. We even had a Protestant family visit our home and seeing the crown wanted to do this in their own home.

We were blessed to have Father visit our (Yank) home shrine the night before he left Milwaukee for Rome. This was the evening of September 15, 1965. Father was able to visit 2 home shrines that evening, and we were fortunate that one of them was ours.

The news that Father was leaving was all very sudden, and when everyone heard this news, which was a sad moment for Father's 'family' here in Milwaukee, they wanted him to come and visit them one last time.

My parents had invited Father some time before to come to our home shrine on that evening to accept their Joseph Engling Act and to dedicate our family as a Living Kingdom of the Father. When they learned that he was leaving the next morning they didn't think he would be able to come. However, Father kept his appointment with us.

The telephone was frantically ringing throughout that evening. However, we never answered it. Looking back at these photos we see the quiet reserve of Father praying with us that evening for a long time in our home shrine.

We imagine him offering all that was to come, there into the hands of his Mother. We see in the calm reserve of his being, his deep attachment to Our Mother and her loving care for him, and his deep faith in Divine Providence, there in our 'Heroic Confidence' home shrine.

After being given the opportunity to work so closely with families here in Milwaukee, we feel that Father's decision to keep his appointments and come to the 2 home shrines on his final night showed the importance he placed on marriage and the life of the family, and this new in-break of the Divine with the home shrine. This is what he had poured so much of his heart and soul into for the past 14 years.

For our parents – the home shrine was (and still is for Mike’s mother) truly the center of life. All life revolves around it and is nourished through it.

It is a joy to see the uniqueness of each home shrine, as individual as each and every person and family, and the unique graces that flow from it. Here we see once again my parent’s home shrine – “Confidencia Heroica – In the Spirit of the Magnificat.”

Their faithfulness in their shrine never ended. Through all the difficulties, until their dying day, they prayed and offered all there for their children and grandchildren. And the fruits of their faithfulness are evident as this life carries on. Out of their home shrine six new home shrines have grown. We can see the graces of ‘Heroic Confidence’ pouring out into these new shrines; ‘Confidence in the Father’s Loving Providence’, ‘Will of Our Father’, ‘One Heart’, ‘Home in the Hands of Our Father’, ‘Star of the Sea – Hope of the Future’, ‘Behold Your Mother – in Confident Surrender’, as we live out of the graces of our own home shrines.

I (Fenelon) grew up in this - “Ita Pater – Stabat Mater” home shrine; The ‘Yes Father – Mother Standing Beneath the Cross’ shrine. As I look back, I can see how prophetic the home shrine name was for my parents and how they lived out of it. They couldn’t have known that my father would die so young leaving all the young children to the sole care of my mother. Many times I think of my father in the hospital knowing he was going to die and how he and my mother had to live out of the reality of the home shrine ideal: standing beneath the cross and saying their Yes. Sorrowfully, but with total confidence in the Blessed Mother’s care.

Here in the home shrine is where the spiritual roots of the “great atmosphere” had grown deep. This then allowed the children to “fly” away and yet know that they ALWAYS have a home in the heart of this shrine. A place where they are unconditionally loved and no matter what happens or what they do, they can come back to and be received there with open arms.

I have a brother who rejected our family. He rejected my mother and all of his brothers and sisters. He wanted nothing to do with us. He became involved with the wrong friends, with a woman who turned him especially against my mother, he left the Church, he became involved with drugs, and he eventually went to jail. It broke my mother’s heart and it weighed on her greatly. She once again had to draw deeply from her ‘Ita Pater – Stabat Mater’ home shrine.

Over the years we tried to contact him. Every attempt was rebuffed angrily with untrue accusations of what we had done to him and the woman he now called his wife. Once when my mother was very ill and we feared she may die, I located his address and wrote to him. I said if there was anything I may have done to cause this division I apologize, but mom was very sick and please come home and reconcile with her. I received an angry letter of accusations and rejection.

In May of 2003 I happened to be home early from work and the telephone rang. On the other end was my brother. This was the first time I talked to him in 20 years. His first question was, "Is my mother still alive?" A heart breaking question, but one that showed me he had at least read my last letter.

He told me his wife had put him in jail on some false charges, had taken all his money, sold all of his company's equipment and had left him with nothing. He had hit the bottom. A friend of his asked him if he had ever called his mother. He said no. The friend through an internet search found my telephone number. He was afraid at first to talk to me, but for the next 2 hours we shared, and I told him about all the brothers and sisters, most of who were now married, and the 23 nephews and nieces he had never met. It was a 20-year blank in his life.

At the end of the conversation he asked if I would call my mother and all the brothers and sisters for him. I said, no, that was his responsibility. He was very afraid. I told him we had been praying for this very day in our home shrines for 20 years and not to be afraid. I said everyone would welcome him back with open arms. After we hung up, I immediately called my mother. I told her if she gets a telephone call tonight not to let it go, but to answer it. That is all I said.

That night my brother talked to my mother for the first time in 20 years. The next Sunday was Mother's Day and he received a pass from jail and visited her. What great joy now filled her heart! He called all of the brothers and sisters over that weekend, and every one of them welcomed him back immediately. The photo you see of the family was the first time we were all together after 20 years.

It is the classic story of the Prodigal Son; with one exception. All of the brothers and sisters welcomed him back with no resentment. It is a beautiful witness to the power of the home shrine and the "great atmosphere" it creates. Any difficulty of marriage and family life that any of us face, can be accepted and offered to the capital of grace, and then helped or overcome with the graces from our MTA through our active and fruitful home shrines.

When we were in Brazil recently someone asked me for an example of how my symbol of St. Michael had come alive for me. As I was thinking how to answer, it came to me that the Prodigal Son story of my brother was just such an example. Father Kentenich said in the prayer for my symbol that St. Michael protects the family from the devil and drives out evil in the family. He also is the protector of the Eucharist. I had the strong desire to bring my brother back to the family and especially to rid him of the evil that was corrupting him. My brother's symbol is the Eucharist. Of all of the telephone numbers his friend could have found or any family member he could have called, he called me. After reflection, I don't believe this was a coincidence, but the hand of Divine Providence.

My mother continues to live in the reality of her “Ita Pater – Stabat Mater” home shrine, taking all of her children, 39 grandchildren, 7 great-grandchildren and all of our needs there.

Through this powerful gift of grace and the supernatural world that Father opened up to our families, my mother was able to not only survive the raising of the children (especially through many of their teen years) by herself after my father’s death, but she has been able to help lift up each of the children in their own originality and help them through all of the difficulties of our modern world.

One of the beautiful things you see is how the home shrine can carry on throughout the generations. From our parent’s two home shrines ours was born, with the ideal “Home in the Hands of our Father”, with our uniqueness, our personal ideals and our mission brought into its creation.

And now a home shrine lives and continues on through another generation. Now as a third generation our daughter, Sarah, had her own home shrine dedicated in her apartment in 2006. Her home shrine name and ideal is “The Cause of our Joy”. And this past February she crowned the Blessed Mother there.

It is beautiful to see that with her melancholic personality her living shrine symbol is the candle. It balances out her inner meditative side with the outward desire to show the inner joy she lives, especially living out the ideal of her symbol in a dark and hurting world. And then what a joy it is to see how her home shrine name compliments her symbol perfectly.

The Blessed Mother brought Marge’s parents, who were 90 and 91, to live with us in 2008 when they needed full time care. Fr. Carlos Boskamp used to tell us, “We don’t move, the Blessed Mother moves and we follow her.” As you can see the Yank’s home shrine came to our home and they followed. We now have two home shrines in our home. This is the one you see here up on the stage.

We only had one year together before they both passed away within two months of each other. It was a beautiful year as we witnessed this frail couple living their Covenant of Love in serenity as they obviously knew the end of their life was approaching. It was a year of seeing their daily living as they quietly prepared for a holy Schoenstatt death.

They invited the parish priests to come and hear their monthly confession and bring communion. They would meet with the priests in their home shrine, where they were witnesses to this lived spiritual reality. They still practiced their Schoenstatt Hour as faithfully as possible. We would see the door to their apartment close and hear conversation in the home shrine. A while later the door would open back up when they were done. This life was a

beautiful witness for all the family who gathered at our home and in their home shrine throughout the year.

Both of them died a holy Schoenstatt death, in their home shrine, in our home. It was an incredible experience for Marge and me, for our children and the whole family and a witness to the parish priests. For us it was a gift to be able to extend our hand to them to walk with Father in the last days of their lives. One of our parish priests, who is from Nigeria, was especially touched. He gave Marge's mother the Last Rites just a few hours before she died, and he spoke with her. He said it was incredible to experience such a holy death. He said this wasn't common in his ministry. In fact we were told by a friend that at his Mass at the parish the following Monday after Marge's mother died he gave his homily on what it means to die a holy death and shared what he had witnessed.

Through the gift that Father gave them, of being "rooted" so deeply in the heart of our Mother and her Son, they could live in the rich home shrine atmosphere of Divine Providence to the end. They could enter the gates of Eternity literally through the door of their home shrine, "Heroic Confidence – In the Spirit of the Magnificat".

Immediately after Marge's father's death in June 2009, we returned home after the funeral, all of us of course were sad and we received this picture in an email of a family from Madrid, Spain in their home shrine. They are members of the Family Institute, as were Marge's parents also. In the email they said they had been praying for Marge's mother and the family. You can see in the picture that the previous photo of the Yanks in their home shrine is taped below this families MTA picture in their home shrine. They had received it as part of our Christmas letter. Marge's mother smiled and just said, "They haven't forgotten us." Although the family from Spain had never met the Yanks, they were united with them spiritually as a family of families across the ocean through the home shrine.

In a special way during this Jubilee Year, we thank Father and our Mother for the gift of the home shrine. We believe the home shrine is the greatest gift Schoenstatt has to offer to the Church and world today. It is the place where marriage and family life is transformed, united together in the natural and supernatural realities. The home shrine is a true and vital means of conquering the "new shore" and fostering attachments within the home, across the oceans, and into eternity.

This picture was a gift of Divine Providence to symbolize the fatherhood of Fr. Kentenich with us his spiritual children. I (Mike) still remember the day that this picture was taken. It was a bright sunny day in May 1963 when I was 8 years old. People had come to meet Father and look at a piece of land for what they hoped would be land for the future International shrine. Sometime during the walk I must have been up near Father and he took my hand. I have to

confess that I actually don't remember that moment, but I would imagine we must have exchanged a few words. A few years ago a Schoenstatt Sister, who was there at the time, told me why Father took my hand. She explained that it was because the ground was uneven and he wanted to steady himself, but he didn't want to take the arm of an adult, so I must have been nearby, and he took the hand of a child. It gives a beautiful meditation on how we don't only need Father, but that he needs us to be his children, in his hand, to accomplish our Schoenstatt mission.

Marge and I call this our "passport" to the world. We have been invited to speak in different places throughout our Schoenstatt world because of this photo. I used to be embarrassed to speak about this picture. I thought that there are many other people who can witness about Father better than the remembrances of an 8 year old boy. I came to gradually see that people attached themselves to this photo as a way of attaching themselves to Father.

One experience in particular brought this understanding to me. In 1998, Marge and I were in Rome for the first meeting of the movements with Blessed Pope John Paul II. There was a young woman and her grandmother there representing Schoenstatt in Brazil. We happened to be sitting next to each other waiting for the Holy Father to arrive and we were talking. The grandmother suddenly became aware that I was the "Little Boy" in the picture with Father and she just started crying. Her granddaughter explained to me that this was her grandmother's favorite picture of Father, which she had in her home shrine, because she saw herself in the place of the little boy. And **she** was walking in the hand of Father. This touched me deeply and will remain with me forever.

People could see themselves in place of that little boy. They may never have known Father personally, but through me and this picture they could experience Father and place themselves in Father's hand. For me this is a very humbling experience to be able to be used as an instrument in this way. People don't know the joy and the strength they give us by allowing us to share these experiences from Milwaukee with them. It is a special gift for us to be able to share this legacy with others to experience our Father through the mission of our home shrine - Home in the Hands of our Father.

Through our home shrines we want to create the "great atmosphere" in our homes and marriages, so that in the reality of this grace we may be helped to form ourselves and our children, and that all who encounter this atmosphere may be transformed. We want to go out and change the world through this gift to the Church for the renewal of marriage and family life. Let us take Father by the hand as his children and confidently walk with him to build together a new world through the home shrine with our Mother Thrice Admirable Queen and Victress of Schoenstatt.