

My Home Shrine: A World of Attachments – A Fountain of Holiness

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I (Sue) grew up not far from here during a tumultuous time in the Church. Our parish priest had left the Church and started his own religion, and nuns everywhere were leaving their convents and throwing off their religious habits. During this time my dad would be working out in our yard and now and then he would see Sisters drive past our house. He was amazed to see what he perceived to be Sisters wearing religious habits and wondered where they were going. So, one day, when he saw a Sister drive by, he jumped in our car and followed her. That is how my family came to know Schoenstatt. Paul and I made our Covenant of Love on our wedding day. Our home shrine was dedicated on November 23, 1986, with the name “Fountain of Holiness”. We have 5 children and 5 grandchildren.

Sue and I met at the University of Wisconsin in the fall of 1978. We were both in the School of Music. On the first day of freshmen music theory, our professor said, “All of us are here because we love music. But loving music alone is not enough. We have to learn how to ‘deal’ with it”; how to understand it more fully; how to integrate it into our lives. All of us have been drawn here today because of the life of the home shrine, that gift of our Mother Thrice Admirable present and active in the very midst of our everyday lives; that gift given to us through the hands of our father and founder to help educate our hearts and draw them deeply into the love of the Triune God. Learning how to better ‘deal’ with, or live and love our faith; to better integrate it into our lives, will help all of us come to an ever deeper and deeper love of God. Toward this end, we would like to present the beautiful world of attachments in connection with the home shrine and the family.

During the time of Father Kentenich’s exile in Milwaukee, Divine Providence gave him the opportunity to work extensively with married couples and families for the first time in his priestly life. It was during this time of closely observing them in the needs of their daily lives, giving retreats, such as is recorded in the book *The Family in the Service of Life* in Madison, Wisconsin and weekly talks in Milwaukee, as recorded in the books *On Monday Evenings – Speaking to Families*, that he set out a program in which he called and led them to the Nazareth Family ideal - a call to holiness through a world of attachments.

They had never heard a priest talk about striving for holiness on the level of the Nazareth Family ideal. This seemed impossible, but it is also a timeless ideal. He then patiently educated and encouraged the couples over the following 13 years as to how they could practically strive for this high ideal. He had found families in Madison and Milwaukee struggling to find balance between their jobs, their families, and their outside activities. They were struggling to find unconditional love in their marriages and struggling to raise their children as free, firm personalities. As one Madison lady put it, “After seven years of marriage, Hank and I discovered that our expectations for living ‘happily ever after’

were not being fulfilled. This is when Divine Providence, in the form of Fr. Kentenich, came into our lives.”

Integral to their striving was his education into the beautiful world of natural and supernatural attachments. And it was in this atmosphere of the trials of family life, education in and striving for this ideal, that the home shrine was born. The home shrine has been one of the key means of building and fostering this world of attachments in marriage and family life.

The attachment to the Blessed Mother in the home shrine is a corner stone of our spiritual lives. Words can't express the intimate relationship we have with the Mother of God in our home shrine, the countless little miracles she has worked, the healing and transforming of hearts. It is a frightening task to try to raise our children to be saints in a pagan world and always remain faithful ourselves, so we gave the Blessed Mother the title of “Fountain of Holiness” in our home shrine. We want her graces to flow through our whole house and fill each of us. As a fountain has an endless supply of water, our Fountain of Holiness will always shower our family and our home with an endless supply of graces. Her presence and the flow of her graces will always inspire a Marian and supernatural atmosphere in our home and in our family. The flow of her graces can not be ebbed as she guides us, educates us, and protects us. Without the home shrine and the covenant of love, as parents, we would be frightened and nervous, just as those first couples were, as they expressed their heartfelt needs to Father.

When Fr. Kentenich spoke with one of the families in Madison about what was important in the education of their children, he said these words to them,

“... We should prepare our children so that they can meet the future - a future which may not be Christian. After a big storm has gone through a wood land uprooting many trees, a few trees remain standing because they have roots which have grown deep - and after the storm the trees that remain standing grow roots which go into the ground even deeper - so it must be with our children and our home. Their roots should grow strong and deep in our home. If children are brought up in a proper Christian atmosphere then we need not worry about the future. Even though a crisis may arise, in the long run our children will return to their basic roots.” (Private notes of Hank and Dorothy Gmeinder from a talk Fr. Kentenich had with them about their children as written in the Gmeinder's unpublished book *Song of Home: A Tribute to the Memory of Fr. Joseph Kentenich*, Madison WI.)

These roots Father talked about are this world of attachments that we strive to create in our family life, in our home shrine.

Healthy attachments are at the very heart of Schoenstatt's covenant message. They are crucial to the formation of the whole person. So what exactly are healthy attachments? Attachment is another word for bond or love. In the book *The Family at the Service of Life* we hear Father Kentenich telling the families repeatedly about the importance in the

“Nazareth Family” of the father, mother and children being united by the bond of deep, warm love. (Fr. J. Kentenich *The Family at the Service of Love*, pg. 25.)

Fr. Kentenich was convinced that modern man’s deepest problem is that he lacks the ability to attach or to bond. Our society tends to lack roots. People move from one job to another, one relationship to another, one house to another, one city to another with increasing frequency. Even within one’s own house now technology allows us to almost totally disconnect from each other, even when we happen to be only feet apart.

In one area after another the lack of solid roots, or stability, is evident. This constant drifting from one thing to another never allows the soul to develop roots and take hold, and without these roots, the soul does not experience what it means to love and to be loved **unconditionally**. Not the “here today, gone tomorrow” love, or the “what’s in it for me” love, but real unconditional love. A variety of attachments to persons, places, things, values, and ideals are necessary in order to really develop the capacity to love in **this** way rather than in the superficial version promoted by society today.

Another hindrance to the forming of attachments is the constant distractions and interruptions we are bombarded with. Things are more distracting than ever now that our phones go with us wherever we go, and if it isn’t ringing, then it is signaling a text message or a tweet. It is all very distracting and interrupting, and hinders true attachment. We recently saw a group of 4 or 5 teenagers sitting at a table in a restaurant. It was disappointing to see that instead of talking and enjoying each other’s company, they sat silently with their heads bowed, each one texting on their cell phones. Instead of forming a bond with each other, their texting created distance between them.

In 1957, in speaking to the couples on this topic, Fr. Kentenich said,

“Is our home a shrine or is it a nest of robbers? No, my home is a sanctuary. What do I do with my shrine? I try to keep all of the noise and dust out of my home. What must I do with my family? I must keep the noise of the world out. There must be a supernatural atmosphere in the shrine of our family home.”
(Private notes of Hank and Dorothy Gmeinder taken from Fr. Kentenich’s afternoon talk to Madison and Milwaukee couples on June 2, 1957, as written in the Gmeinder’s unpublished book *Song of Home: A Tribute to the Memory of Fr. Joseph Kentenich*)

Attachments are needed on the **natural** level to persons, places, things, values, and to ideals and on the **supernatural** level to God, the Blessed Mother, the saints, to the Mass and the whole spiritual world. When these two levels of attachment, the natural and supernatural, are healthy and permeate each other, when they interrelate and affect each other, a person is more whole and more physically, emotionally, intellectually, morally, and spiritually fruitful. When one level is missing or is unhealthy, the person is not whole on the other level. It becomes obvious then that attachments are vital to a person’s ability to really love and to be a well-balanced person, but the society we live in makes it increasingly hard to develop and foster these bonds.

We often picture attachments in this way: We all know what a bicycle wheel looks like. To begin with, let's imagine that I am at the hub or center of the wheel. Each spoke of the wheel symbolizes one of my relationships, one of my attachments to another person, to a place, a thing, a certain value, or ideal. All of these attachments should lead me ultimately to God who unites all things, holding them together, forming the outer rim. When all of my attachments are healthy the wheel is in balance, but if there are unhealthy bonds – then one spoke after another may break or be absent and the wheel will come out of balance more and more and finally collapse. Therefore, fostering and maintaining healthy attachments in my life will lead me to a deeper love of God and will keep my life more in balance.

In 1956, Fr. Kentenich said,

“What comes closest to heaven? Not movies, nor cars in which we travel through the world, not dancing, not magazines, not radios, etc. What comes closest to heaven? THE LITTLE FAMILY HOME! Will your children look back and say the same? Where a person is born and raised is the most beautiful place in the world next to heaven...no matter if one has money, fame, builds many houses, enjoys life, etc...” (Private notes of Hank and Dorothy Gmeinder taken from Fr. Kentenich's talk to Madison and Milwaukee couples on the Ideal Schoenstatt Family on September 4, 1956, as written in the Gmeinder's unpublished book *Song of Home: A Tribute to the Memory of Fr. Joseph Kentenich*)

I (Sue) can say that these words are true for me. God blessed me with wonderful parents who really lived the belief that family comes first. They made every effort to create unity in our family and make our home the place we wanted to be. We did things as a family: we always had dinner as a family and never in front of the TV; we even did our homework together – all of us sitting around the table doing our work; we loved to have popcorn and watch family slides (this was before the digital age); we went boating and camping as a family; and we prayed together everyday. Our home had a definite spiritual atmosphere, even before my dad followed a Sister to Schoenstatt, but after that we also had the grace of the home shrine. All of these things I've mentioned created healthy attachments for us children as we grew. We still have a strong family bond and all of us nine children are very devoted to our parents. Through these attachments we learned how to love, and our lovely home life gave us a glimpse of what our heavenly home will be like. The home my parents created started us firmly on the path of striving for that heavenly home.

There can be different levels of attachment to the people that God has brought into our lives. These can include the relationships we have with our friends and neighbors, the closeness we feel for our relatives, and in particular the bond of love between, parents and children, and for our spouse. Also, there are attachments to places - which would include our home and especially our home shrine. Our grandchildren call Sue 'Nonna', and are always asking our daughter to go to Nonna's house: they have a real attachment to our home and the people who live there. When they come to our home we are very focused on them. We play with them, read to them and converse with them using a lot of

eye contact. They have particular toys here that they look forward to playing with and particular games that they only experience at Nonna's house. They have fun at our house and they feel loved and accepted.

As we heard earlier, Father Kentenich helped the families see that true attachment in our family means that, "the father and mother and children are united by the bond of deep, warm love." Fr. J. Kentenich, *The Family at the Service of Life*, pg. 25. We've always heard that love is such a powerful force. Similarly, so are attachments and this can be expressed in two ways: attachments have the power to unite and the power to create resemblance. I'm sure that most of us can see these elements in our marriage, or between ourselves and a parent, or between ourselves and our children, or someone else we are very close to; someone we love. Fr. Kentenich told the couples in the Monday Evening Talks how couples resemble each other more and more as they grow in their love over the years. I remember how my sister-in-law, after she had children, jokingly told her mother who lived in New York that she didn't really miss her because every time she started to say something to her children she heard her mother's words coming out of her mouth!

The unifying factor of attachments is so strong that Fr. Kentenich also expressed it in another way as: "I am in you, and you are in me, and we two are in each other." He also referred to this as being in "constant living contact" maintaining a constant *in-with-and-for-one* oneness of souls. What that means is that not only do we like each other enough to be with each other, but we love one another so much that we become a part of the other. This means that we really share our lives; the sorrows and the joys.

In 1957, Fr. Kentenich told the couples,

"Each one should carry the burden for the other one...I should take the crosses and burdens of the other on myself. When you divide a cross it then becomes half as heavy; but when you divide (or share) a joy it then becomes a double joy..." (Private notes of Hank and Dorothy Gmeinder taken from Fr.

Kentenich's afternoon talk to Madison and Milwaukee couples on June 2, 1957, as written in the Gmeinder's unpublished book *Song of Home A Tribute to the Memory of Fr. Joseph Kentenich*)

This idea of being united explains so much of the Church's teaching about our relationship with God: 'I am in you, and you are in me, and we two are in each other' means that we may share in God's life! If I love God, if I am 'attached' to God, then the power of that attachment unifies us; I am in God and God is in me! This is also true in marriage: I love my spouse and have taken vows **to keep** that unity of life - that 'I'm in her and she's in me and we two are in each other - and we strive to keep that unity of life alive until death do we part.

Now on the flip side, we can see the harm that can come about if we were to become attached to someone or something that is **ungodly**. The law of 'I am in you, and you are in me, and we two are in each other', the law of unity, would still apply. Father talked about attachments being 'organic', they are an inseparable part of the whole. They can't be isolated or insulated from the whole. I cannot have an attachment and claim it is

separate from who I really am, or that it will not affect all aspects of both my natural and spiritual life. I think a universal worry for parents is: what if my child becomes attached to someone who is not good for them? As parents we know the affects are truly 'organic' – they can harm the whole life and personality of my child, and even jeopardize their soul for all eternity.

When our son, Michael, was a freshman in high school, a very pretty girl asked him to a school dance and he accepted the invitation. The problem was that the girl was Hindu. I said, "Michael, we have talked with you since you were little about how important it is for you to marry a Catholic and that you shouldn't date anyone you would not marry; this girl is not even Christian." He said that he had been caught off guard and didn't want to be rude. He agreed that it was not right to go down this path and I agreed that since he had already accepted her invitation, it would be wrong to back out now. We decided together that he should go to the dance with her. After that, although he would treat her as a good Christian would, he should not date her anymore. Because we were able to intervene early and because Michael took his faith seriously and was open to our guidance we were able to avoid what could have been a harmful bond in Michael's life.

Michael's story doesn't end there: when he went off to college he started dating Heather, who was a Christian, but not Catholic. He told her from the start that he always knew he would marry someone who is Catholic. In time, Heather studied the Catholic faith and converted. When they were married, Michael told me, with a smile, "Mom, I couldn't find a good Catholic girl, so I made my own!"

There is also another power of attachment: the power to create resemblance. This goes to a deeper level than unity, now we have a harmony of hearts and inclinations. Not only our mind adopts the attitude of the one we love, but our heart, instincts, and drives do also. We do not just accept things intellectually but now with our hearts and souls. With this power of attachment, we do not just love the Blessed Mother; we actually begin to become another Mary.

Father gave a beautiful example to illustrate this harmony of hearts as he spoke to the families about the Nazareth Family Ideal. He told about the example of St. Therese, the Little Flower's relationship with her father. He related,

"St. Therese saw God in her father, and all the great gifts she received from God came not from God directly, but from her father. She even learned from her father how to love our Lord, she didn't get it directly from looking at our Lord.

Let me now explain how she could say: 'For me my father is God.' Imagine what it was like when the tiny child, who loved her father deeply, was taken along to church. She adored her father, as it were; and vice versa, the father 'adored' his little queen. They loved each other deeply. The child obviously watched what her father was doing closely. While her father was praying – the Blessed Sacrament was exposed – the child did not look at the altar, she looked only at her father. And through her father and in her father she saw God. How wonderfully she describes this! Since her father was gripped by the presence of

God, the child was also gripped – but by the God who was present and living in her father.” Fr. J. Kentenich, *Family in the Service of Life*, pp 56-57

This power of attachment is also beautifully illustrated in the living shrine stream that was developed here with Father and the families. The living shrine symbol I choose as my own in the home shrine demonstrates this power of attachment. I choose a symbol that possesses qualities or virtues that I want to imitate – something that I want to resemble, that I want to be. Our son, Michael, chose the sanctuary lamp as his symbol. He wants to spend his life consuming himself for Christ just as the sanctuary lamp does. He wants to be a light testifying to the presence of Christ in our world. He wants to be a spark of hope and joy in the darkness. He prays that others will see Christ in him or in themselves through his interactions with them.

As his symbol, our son, Vincent, chose the sanctuary bells, the ones that ring at the consecration during Mass. These bells announce the entrance of our Lord and ring out in reverence for Him. They acknowledge the Real Presence. Whether there is a kneeler or not and whether anyone else kneels to receive or not, 13 year old Vincent almost always receives Holy Communion on his knees in honor of the Real Presence of Christ.

Again, we can see the importance of developing healthy attachments when we consider that on the emotional and spiritual level we **will** begin to resemble that which we are attached to. The resemblance is easily seen in the moral and spiritual life as it causes a change in values and attitudes. Think again of those whom we love, especially our children: who or what would we want them to be attached to, and how can we help them develop healthy bonds? There are plenty of **un**healthy possibilities tempting them and Satan is **not** **un**aware of the importance of attachments. We all know of people who have developed bonds such as these to movie stars, rap stars, or the gang of trouble-makers in the neighborhood and begin to resemble their moral values and attitudes. But we, who are people of faith, need to live with our eyes on eternity. In a world filled with inappropriate attachments bombarding us from every side and with eternity in the balance, how can we lead our families to bonds that are healthy? Schoenstatt provides an answer to that question with the gift of the home shrine.

The home shrine leads us to a real and intimate attachment to the Blessed Mother. In turn, Mary **wants** to be attached to us and to our children. Mary, who was the only remaining light of faith in the world when Christ was buried in the tomb, wants to be the light of faith for our families, especially for our children. She wants to come into our homes and sanctify us and our children. She wants us to be attached to her so that she can do from the home shrine what we are unable to do by ourselves. She will help us with the responsibility of seeing that, despite the world we live in with all its influences, our children will find the way to God and to heaven. These were the very same concerns that the parents had back in 1962 when the mothers first asked Father Kentenich if the Blessed Mother couldn't come into their homes, just like in the shrine. And they are still the relevant questions and concerns for our times today, and even more so.

The Blessed Mother wants to help us develop healthy attachments within our family. This is her great desire for us as she lives and works with us in our home shrines. Once again,

Father Kentenich also referred to this attachment as being in “constant living contact” with the one you love; again, this ideal of – “I am in you, you are in me, and we are in each other”. How can we develop these deep bonds? Let us start by looking at the relationship of parents and children. God built-in the starting point for us: most mothers feel a deep bond with their child long before the child is born and have already begun to envision the rest of their life with that child in it. She is already ‘attached’ to this little life. During the pregnancy, the father grows in his attachment to the baby as he feels his new little one move and as he interacts with the baby this way. We know that babies can hear before they are born and by the time they are born they already recognize the voices of their parents and siblings. This attachment grows as the child learns to completely trust and rely on the parents, and the parents sacrifice to give completely of themselves for their child.

The attachment between parent and child is at the very core of education. In his talks with the couples throughout his time in Milwaukee Father Kentenich spoke very often about the parents being the first educators of their children. In 1955 in a private talk to Hank and Dorothy Gmeinder of Madison he said,

“It is very important that parents do not become too social minded. It is very important that they stay home and spend their time with their children!”

Again in 1958, he told them,

“It is so important for you to retire from other activities and devote your time to your family because what goes into your children’s minds now is more important than what anybody can tell them later on. That’s why it is so important that when Mrs. Gmeinder gets the “baby blues” she tells herself that what she has to suffer she will offer up to help her children in later life. Tell the Blessed Mother that what I have to suffer is for my children.” (Private notes of Hank and Dorothy Gmeinder as written in the Gmeinder’s unpublished book *Song of Home: A Tribute to the Memory of Fr. Joseph Kentenich*, Madison, WI.)

As parents, we must understand and accept the responsibility that the focal point of our child’s education is not in the school, and not even in the church, but is in the family. Even the secular, psychological studies have shown that parents have the greatest influence on a child’s life, not the teachers, not the coaches, nor the parish priests have nearly as much influence as the parents do in the life of their child. No matter what society tries to tell us we must remain conscious of this reality. Fr. Kentenich talked about how vital it is for both the parents and the child to build these deep bonds of love.

The power of unity and the power of resemblance in attachments are fundamental in the education process. Parents need to form strong attachments with their children that they nurture throughout their lifetime. These bonds need to be built on deep love in order for education to be possible. We have the perfect means to make certain this influence, this attachment continues to bear fruit – and this is, of course, through the life with and in our home shrines. We can see how these securely established bonds of love set the tone for

the future with our children. In the Mother's Day Card given to me by our son, Tony, who is 27 years old, he thanked me for standing by him and never giving up on him. Recently, I was in the car with our 28 year old, married daughter. As we were stopped at a stoplight, some girls walked past us who were dressed very immodestly. I said, "Abby, even at your age, if you dressed like that I'd give you a piece of my mind." She said, "I'm counting on it; if you see me doing something wrong, I'm counting on you to let me know." She was sincere: the bond of love is securely in place and she is still open to education.

For children to really learn from their parents, to assume their values and ideals, they must feel truly loved by their parents. They must feel the parents are interested in them, that they are central in their lives. The parents are motivated to strive for holiness in part because of their desire to set a good example for their child. The child may at first strive for holiness in order to please the parents and then as they grow, ultimately to please God. Once again, this happens in what Fr. Kentenich called the atmosphere of, 'constant living contact.'

How do we nurture and sustain that attachment? If we take Father's words on the definition of the Nazareth Family seriously, making, as he said, "the child's interest my interest", then making time to spend with our children is a way of nurturing healthy attachments. Fr. Kentenich talked about the importance of parents really taking time with their children, and the importance of playing with them. Parents need to spend time with their children to truly know them and build the bonds of love and trust. Once again this is the "constant living contact" with the child, and the child knowing that they are "unconditionally loved". The parents need to really know their children and take on the interests of the children; making the child's interests my interests.

In the talks of Father found in the book, *Foundations of Education in the Home*, we hear Father tell the couples,

"...the children must feel that when I come home I live in them; that I make their interests my interests and mine theirs. Children's interests vary and are not always the same. If the toddler is interested in playing, then I play. When the child grows and develops different interests, I must adapt my interests and make those interests mine." Fr. J. Kentenich, *Foundations of Education in the Home*, pg. 28.

Here we see what it means to live in, with, and for one another.

For instance, in our family, last fall our son, Dominic, took up hunting. This has never been an interest of mine (Paul) but I helped him get the equipment he needed and seeing his new love for this sport, my own enthusiasm grew: not because I now loved hunting for myself but because I loved it in him. I could talk to him about hunting with real not pretend interest and eagerly awaited the results of each hunting expedition wanting to hear every detail. I did not just equip him for hunting. I made his new interest mine. I was able to nurture my attachment with Dominic by genuinely and enthusiastically sharing in his experiences.

There are also many traditions that have grown in our family life that create and sustain our attachment not only to an individual, but to the whole family. Once again we want to live in, with, and for one another. Whenever we celebrate a birthday, during the course of the birthday dinner, everyone gives their own toast to the birthday person. Typically, the toast is a heart-felt expression of love and appreciation of the birthday person. We call it “clink and drink.” We have a family polka band we all play in and not only are we playing music together but we are having fun and joking around while doing it. Following my parents’ example (Sue), we also have a boat since it is something we can do as a family that, even with the age differences of our children, we all enjoy. Another tradition we have is the crowning of Mary in our home shrine each Mothers’ Day. The children have taken on the responsibility of setting up a May altar in our home shrine and preparing a ceremony with music, prayers, and petitions. These are the kinds of experiences that form and deepen attachments that bind the children to the family and will draw our children to want to resemble our spiritual and moral attitudes. Then we, as parents, can more easily lead our children to an attachment with the Blessed Mother and with God.

These are attachments on the natural level; now, how do we develop them on the supernatural level. Again, God built in the starting point for us: He placed a longing for Him in our souls. We feel that longing, the longing to be loved and to belong, but we do not always recognize the only thing that will satisfy it, which is God Himself. That longing is God’s invitation to us to become attached to Him – to accept His love and to love Him, to be united to Him and to resemble Him more closely. He respects our free will and does not force us into a relationship with Him.

On our life journey, the Blessed Mother reaches out to us with her motherly love. When I take her into my home in my home shrine and make my home her home, she becomes attached to me and waits for my response. She then wants to lead me and my family to her Son. I like to think of St. Joseph in this regard. How different would his life have been if he had **not** taken the Blessed Mother into his home! But he submitted to God’s will and trusted in Him. And what was the effect of her being in his home? St. Joseph became intimately attached to Jesus in a way that he would not have been if he had not taken Mary into his home: he was at the birth of Jesus, he lived and ate with Him; he conversed with Him daily and could ask Him anything he wanted to; he worked with Jesus and was tended to by Him when he died. Part of Mary’s mission was to bring Jesus, in an intimate way, to St. Joseph by means of the family and the home. She longs to continue to live this mission in all families in their homes and for us in our home shrines.

When we invite Mary into our home, as St. Joseph did, then our home shrine creates a spiritual atmosphere in the home. Fr. Kentenich said that children should always be in a religious atmosphere. The children become at home in the supernatural world **and become attached to it**. While our children were little, we had our home shrine on a low table that was pretty much at eye level for them. It was not unusual to find a dandelion on that table that one of the children had brought as a gift for the Blessed Mother, or a toy that they wanted to show her. It was always a delight to hear one of the children say, “I have two mothers; you and the Blessed Mother!”

In this spiritual atmosphere created in the home shrine, prayer and conversations about God and morals become natural and frequent. Our Catholic faith is something that permeates our everyday life. The natural level truly touches the supernatural level. The home shrine is so readily accessible to the family and to family life, and is a visual reminder of the very real spiritual world we live in. We have truly become attached to the Blessed Mother, and she is united to us as individuals and as a family.

Fr. Kentenich, in his great words of the foundation of the home shrine in 1963, said, "Everything which holds true for the Original Shrine and for the daughter shrines also holds true for the home shrines." Therefore, the grace of being at home will be active: my home will feel like a real home for me and my family making the attachment to the family, to the home, and to the home shrine more concrete. The grace of inner transformation will help my family to be like-minded in spiritual matters; to have that unity on the level of resemblance. And finally, the grace of apostolic fruitfulness will apply especially to me with my children; we will be more apostolically successful with them as, through their attachment to us and to the Blessed Mother, they come to resemble more and more our moral and spiritual beliefs, and then are able to go forward into the world and share this "new life".

Paul and I had our first three children pretty close together; then we had a nine year hiatus before God blessed us with Dominic and Vincent. When they were little I became concerned because I realized that they were not making a connection between anything and God. There wasn't any emotion for religious things or even a curiosity. I tried everything I could think of to awaken this in them but to no avail. I even asked the older kids, "What am I forgetting? What did I do with you that I'm not doing with them?" Finally, I went to my covenant partner in our home shrine and said, "Blessed Mother, I've done all I can think of, please help. Please awaken a sense of spirituality in my little boys." I think she must have loved that prayer because she began right away. Now when we did catechism they wanted to do another chapter and another and had such good questions. Prayer time and Mass were transformed and they began talking about spiritual things with a real love. Then after seeing their older brothers and their sister make their covenants of love, they asked if they could also make their covenant; they were 5 and 6 years old at the time. When I asked them why they wanted to, they said, "To be closer to the Blessed Mother and so she will be closer to us." One day I overheard Dominic telling Vincent, "When you make the covenant, the Blessed Mother will never leave you." Our Mother Thrice Admirable entered into a covenant of love with them at the tender ages of 5 and 6 years old. When the mother of the home goes to the Mother of the home shrine for help, it is taken seriously. Our Fountain of Holiness really worked a miracle of inner transformation!

However, attachments carry responsibilities with them also. When talking about God's and the Blessed Mother's attachment to places, in particular now the home shrine, Fr. Kentenich, in a talk in May 1964 to couples in Milwaukee, stated that we could say that certain laws of attachment apply. First, it should be understood that God is free in His choice of places to have a special attachment to; where he wants to work in a special way.

When He chooses a home shrine or other place of grace, He expects the people to strive for holiness there.

We know that if we do not make contributions to the capital of grace in our home shrine, we tie the Blessed Mother's hands (so to speak) and she is unable to give us the graces we need. To nurture the attachments of the Covenant of Love and the home shrine, we must strive for holiness and make contributions to the capital of grace. We must prove our love for the Blessed Mother. It must be a living and active relationship. When one of the kids comes to Sue with a problem, part of her advice usually includes; be sure to offer it to the capital of grace – she always tells them, “Don't waste it!”, and the other part of her advice is that they should also ask their covenant partner for help. These types of things create a living and interactive relationship with the Blessed Mother through the home shrine.

Then Father Kentenich continues on with the next laws of attachment. If we do our part, if we live our attachment to the Blessed Mother in our home shrine, we know that she will not be outdone in generosity, and graces will be showered down upon us and upon all who come to our home shrine in faith. I recall when early in our marriage while we were living from paycheck to paycheck, it was sometimes hard to make it to the next payday. There came a day when I didn't have any groceries to make dinner or any money to go to the store. I went to the home shrine and prayed, “Blessed Mother, I don't have any food and my children are going to be getting hungry.” Soon the kids called to me from the backyard. A large, friendly dog had wandered into the yard and they were delighted. The dog had tags on so I called the owner. She was very grateful but couldn't come for him right away and asked if we would just keep him until she could get there. We gave him some water and the kids had a great time with him. When his owner came she wanted to pay us for having kept him and, though I declined, she insisted on giving us \$10.00. As soon as she left, I put that \$10.00 in the home shrine and we knelt down to thank the Blessed Mother for her generosity. We never saw the dog or the lady again but our Dear Mother, in her generosity, had heard my prayer and provided for us.

Sue and I often ask ourselves, how do we live and nurture our attachment to the Blessed Mother in our home shrine? Well, when you love someone, you do not ignore them or exclude them. You never tire of proving your love or doing little kindnesses for your beloved. Sacrifices are easily borne for someone you really love. These are the things we should also do for the Blessed Mother so we have a living, healthy relationship with her.

Conversely, what happens when we neglect or ignore someone? The attachment, the loving bond, becomes weak and eventually breaks. Father expressed it this way,

“When the people united with the Shrine stop striving for sanctity, then we must expect that God will remove his special connection to the place.” Fr. J. Kentenich, *Foundations of Education in the Home*, pg.66

Fr. Kentenich often spoke about how theory or reason alone can not gain sanctity for us. Nor can simply living a good life. But that sanctity takes a deliberate cultivation of a life of love, in taking actual steps in our everyday life.

Such is the case when striving to cultivate healthy attachments. Striving to strengthen these bonds will play an important role on our journey to holiness, and life in our home shrines gives us the ideal means to accomplish this goal. As with all love, this life of love very often requires sacrifice and suffering and it often means having to be counter-cultural: as Fr. Kentenich said, “We must always remember that we have to be able to swim against the storm!” (Private notes of Hank and Dorothy Gmeinder from a talk Fr. Kentenich had with them about their children as written in the Gmeinder’s unpublished book *Song of Home: A Tribute to the Memory of Fr. Joseph Kentenich*, Madison WI.)

In that regard, we have always stressed to our children the need to be very discriminating in what they watch on TV or at the movies. Recently, our son, Dominic, came home from school excited. A number of his classmates were organizing a group to go to a movie. They were even going to have a party beforehand and dress in costumes. He was really looking forward to the camaraderie as he had been waiting for some activity of this nature to occur. I reminded him that we had to check the Catholic review of the movie to see if it was appropriate. When I read the review which included partial nudity and an uncritical view of adultery, I told him that I really did not think he could go. When he read the review he agreed that he should not go to the movie, even though all of his classmates were going. It was a bitter disappointment for him, especially when his friends talked about the great time that they had, but he never wavered in knowing that he made the right decision. The grace flowing from our home shrine and the supernatural atmosphere it creates gave Dominic the ability to look at the situation with his eyes on eternity.

The home shrine is the great gift we have been given by our Blessed Mother through the hands of our father and founder. It is the fertile place of grace in which we can develop our natural and supernatural attachments, and deepen them within our family life together with the Blessed Mother and the Triune God. From the home shrine she will be our educator in deepening our bonds of love. We can see this is such a great gift to society and the Church – this world of attachments through the home shrine; so many of the modern ills of the world, especially in marriage and family life, could be overcome with this gift. We need to give this gift from our home shrine to everyone we encounter. Each of us can do our part in our own little part of the world. We know we are connected in this great network of home shrines around the world in this desire to bring the world back to Christ.

As we continue to strive for this high ideal, with all of our weaknesses that have to be overcome, our prayer for all of us is that each of our home shrines becomes more and more each day a “Fountain of Holiness” which radiates ever more brightly our great mission. Thank you.