

MILWAUKEE04: Golden Jubilee of the Exile Shrine

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Michael Fenelon is a member of the Schoenstatt Family Institute, together with his wife Margaret. His parents attended Father Kentenich's Monday Night Talks in the early 1960's and his family was one of the first to have their Home Shrine blessed by Father. He and his wife were blessed with many beautiful personal experiences with Father Kentenich as children. Currently he lives near Chicago with his wife, and is the father of two children Sarah, 25 and Stephen, 21. He and his wife work with the movement in Chicago region and hope to some day have a shrine in their area.

Mary's Gift

The History and Meaning of the Exile Shrine in Milwaukee

Introduction

When I was asked if I would give this talk I readily agreed. Then I thought more about it and asked myself, what have I agreed to? What do I know about this topic? I grew up in Milwaukee only two miles from the Exile Shrine; after my family came into contact with Father Kentenich and the shrine in 1960 I visited Father together with my parents many times; I went there with my family dozens of times; years later, my wife and I had many dates at the shrine and walks in the cemetery before we were married. I had experienced this shrine, you could almost say in my everyday life, for over 40 years, but what did I really know about the history and meaning of the Exile Shrine – this gift of the Blessed Mother's? My wife, Margaret, said that this talk would truly have to be the Blessed Mother's gift to me.

It is so good for us "locals" to have all of you "pilgrims" here with us from many different places. Often the case is that it becomes too easy for us to begin to take the gifts we have around us for granted. The danger is that the Exile Shrine, and all of the rich heritage that surrounds it, becomes routine for us who are living so close. And routine often tends to cheapen a thing. Having you here with us, to celebrate this Jubilee of the Exile Shrine opens our eyes once again to the great riches and great gift we have been blessed with.

A certain aspect of the Exile Shrine has a deep relationship with my identity of Schoenstatt as a young boy and man growing up in Milwaukee, and was one of the influences that led my wife and me toward our vocation to the Family Institute: that is the aspect of Schoenstatt's international dimension.

How many of us have asked ourselves where would I be or what would my life be like now if I had not met Schoenstatt? I suggest that every one of us has asked and answered these questions and we have profusely thanked the Blessed Mother for her great gift to us. As a young boy

growing up in Milwaukee I could have simply grown up in my neighborhood, gone to my neighborhood schools, parish, stores, parks, married a neighborhood girl, etc... and lived a somewhat “happy” life as I saw many friends do. In fact even today with our world of instant access through the internet and jet planes, I know of wealthy high school children and even some adults who know very little of what exists outside their own city. But in my case and for all of the families around the Exile Shrine in Milwaukee the Blessed Mother stepped in with her gift of people such as yourselves – who in the early 1960’s from the United States and from other countries – came to visit Father. And what did Father do? He sent them to visit the families. Many came to visit my home and family, as I was growing up. Maybe some of you sitting out there now were sent by Father to visit us.

Our house was the center of entertainment on our block. We already had nine children, but when cars started to pull up in front of the Fenelon house people would start to gather on their front porches to see who was coming this time - Africans, South Americans, Germans, and in later years after Father left Milwaukee, also priests. We knew nothing of Schoenstatt as the great international movement that it was, but years later in looking back I could see the wisdom of our Father forging those international ties of the heart. I don’t know how many times I have had people stop me in Germany over the years and tell me they remember visiting our home, sharing memories like, “I visited your home on Easter Sunday, April 18, 1965 and you children were looking at the candies in your Easter baskets,” and they could remember all of the details 35 years later. These international family ties are truly a gift of the Blessed Mother from the Exile Shrine.

And now as I look out at all of you in front of me I see a new searching and asking to share in this Exile Shrine history as we start this jubilee celebration. I wish to greet each one of you; those that have traveled an hour and those that have traveled 24 hours; those that have pilgrimaged from down the road and those that have pilgrimaged from across the ocean; those that speak English and those that speak Spanish, or German. These differences do not matter. For as our Father showed us, we are one family in our Covenant of Love, and we come here together to celebrate the Golden Jubilee of a shrine that Divine Providence gave a special place to in our local, national and international Schoenstatt history and as a special gift to our Church.

It is appropriate that we are here as an international family celebrating this jubilee. Each one of you is an expression of the rich Exile Shrine history. Now we have the opportunity to relive our history, to savor it once again, so that we will know our own history and never take what we have for granted, because it is a rich history given to us by our Blessed Mother as a gift.

My presentation under the title of ‘Mary’s Gift’ will be divided into two main sections:

- 1) The History of the Exile Shrine
- 2) The Meaning of the Exile Shrine

In exploring the history of the Exile Shrine we will look at four distinct periods:

- 1) How the Shrine was built (1954)
- 2) The Exile Years (1954–1965)
- 3) The “Divine Love” Years (1965-1979)
- 4) The Last 25 Years (1979-2004)

Then we will look at the meaning of the Exile Shrine under three aspects:

- 1) As a Marian Shrine (for the local Church)
- 2) As a Schoenstatt Shrine (for U.S. Schoenstatt Family)
- 3) As an Extraordinary Schoenstatt Shrine (for the international Schoenstatt Family)

History of the Shrine

How the Shrine was built (1954).

It is of great significance to remember that the year in which the Exile Shrine was built was a Marian Year, which had been opened by Pope Pius XII on December 8, 1953. This year was meant to bring to a close a great Marian century which began with the proclamation of the dogma of the Immaculate Conception in 1854 and concluded with the proclamation of the dogma of the Assumption of Mary in 1950. Thus the year of the shrine's construction - 1954 - was the 100th Jubilee of the dogma of the Immaculate Conception.

We need to correctly understand our history as to why and how the Exile Shrine was built. (Throughout this section we will draw heavily on the memories of Fr. Joseph Haas and Fr. William Brell. Fr. Haas was Provincial of the local Pallottine community at the time and he and Fr. Brell, who was also a Pallottine Father, later became Schoenstatt Fathers when the Fathers' Institute was erected in 1965. Their words will be taken from the Schoenstatt periodical, the *OIKIA* which the Schoenstatt Fathers began to publish in the late 1960's, and also from talks Fr. Haas had given, concerning the history of the Exile Shrine, to a mothers' pilgrimage from Texas.)

At one point, some years ago, the incorrect story was circulating that the Pallottine Fathers, the Brothers and everyone present at that time in the province, combined together in building the shrine expressly for Father Kentenich, so that he would have a place that would remind him of Schoenstatt and that would be a place for him to say Mass. This was untrue. It is historically incorrect. The shrine was never directly built for Father.

Fr. Joseph Haas was very insistent that this was not the case. It was very important to him that the true history of the shrine be known. He explained that he, along with some of the other Pallottine Fathers who were present in this province at the time, had come to know Schoenstatt from its early beginnings when they were in Germany and it had become a part of their lives. When Fr. Haas became acting Pastor of Holy Cross Parish, the Fathers began to share Schoenstatt's history with the parishioners. They began to have weekend retreats for the youth, explaining how Schoenstatt and the Original Shrine came into existence. In time, after hearing about this history, and about how the little chapel had previously been used as a tool shed, a spark began to glow especially within the youth, and in particular in the hearts of two young girls. These twin sisters came with their mother to Fr. Haas one day and asked him if they couldn't change the old school house, the first Holy Cross school, into a shrine. Couldn't they clean out this old building that is now being used as a tool shed, and have their own shrine? Fr. Haas in his own words related, "Mind you, none of them said, we could build a Shrine for Father

Kentenich. No.” Then Fr. Haas said to the girls, “Oh girls, wait a minute. If, if you really want to have a shrine, why don’t we go all the way, and really build a shrine? Then of course I said, you go along and think about it, pray about it.” (Fr. Joseph Haas, *Talk to Pilgrimage of Texas Mothers*, July 4, 1977)

For some time this idea was prayed about and talked about within the parish. Finally it was formulated. The Holy Cross Parish, through the impetus of the Holy Cross CYO (Catholic Youth Organization), wanted to offer to the Blessed Mother a Marian Year Gift, this shrine. That was the original motivation. The thought was not that they should build the shrine for Father Kentenich, but rather the desire for the life of this new shrine came about very naturally in the hearts of the parishioners, especially the youth.

After the decision was finally made to give this gift, this shrine, to the Blessed Mother for her glory in the Marian Year 1954 and also as a Jubilee gift on the 40th anniversary of Schoenstatt’s existence, the Fathers resolved to have the shrine built by the Pallottine province. It was financed with the gifts and donations of the people, but it was completely constructed with the priestly hands of three Pallottine Fathers.

Groundbreaking: May 18, 1954

The ground breaking was set for Tuesday, May 18, 1954. During May devotions that night, a sermon was preached as an introduction to the ceremony that was about to take place. Then there was a great procession to the building site, which was marked off by vigil lights. Fr. Haas, the Provincial, blessed the grounds. The prayer, which was written by Father Kentenich and prayed by Fr. Haas at that occasion, began:

Dear Mother Thrice Admirable and Queen of Schoenstatt: Look benignly upon your family gathered here in order to initiate publicly and solemnly the preparation of the jubilee gift which we intend to present to you during this Marian year.

With the breaking of the ground we begin officially the erection of your Shrine; of that Shrine which by our contributions to your treasury of graces we have long since erected deep down in our hearts.

Graciously deign to descend upon this little piece of land, and make it a place where you will be especially active in educating and sanctifying souls. From here form them into perfect images of your Divine Son and make them useful instruments in your hand to use them according to your wishes wherever spiritual battles must be fought and won. We beg you with childlike love: Bless our beginning....

(Translated from the German by Fr. William Brell, S.A.C., “*Prayer of Dedication at Groundbreaking*” *OIKIA* 1967, Vol. I, Nos. 5 & 6, 59-60)

Then Fr. Haas asked the founder of Schoenstatt, who of course was present there at this important celebration, to turn the first spade in the groundbreaking. At the end of this ceremony all those present assembled and recited a short act of consecration together.

Construction

Soon the construction began, and in Fr. Joseph Haas' words,

“This shrine is built from bottom to top by priestly hands, and one who also helped was a Pallottine Brother. Father August Soemer supervised the overall project, and Fathers Brell, Wolf, and Piskula were the main priests who worked together. The Shrine went up so fast. Father would stand there sometimes, going by, and would encourage them and just show interest.” (Fr. Joseph Haas, *Talk to Pilgrimage of Texas Mothers, July 4, 1977*)

We can stop now for a moment and try to imagine the way it was. These priestly Fathers in their work clothes, mixing the cement, working hard laying the blocks one by one, forming the window arches, framing the steep pitched roof, nailing down the slate shingles, constructing the bell tower, and Father walking by every now and then stopping to offer a few words of encouragement. One can just see Father walking by the shrine, stopping, hands resting on top of one another, or stroking his beard, smiling and continuing on. What joy must have been filling their hearts. Here in Milwaukee, so far from Schoenstatt, Germany, soon there would be a shrine, our Mother's home where she could work her miracles of grace. Here they must have sensed the reality, that even though it was true that this shrine was their gift to our Mother Thrice Admirable, this shrine was really much more her gift to them. Soon her presence there among them would be a reality. In a way it was a special gift of our MTA to Father, for this was the only shrine, out of all the shrines that came before (or after), that Father could observe being built from start to finish. He could stand in his window, the big picture window that looks out onto the shrine, and watch the daily progress as it quickly rose up out of the ground. This must have given him great consolation as he lovingly accepted the cross of his exile.

Cornerstone Laying: June 20, 1954

On Sunday June 20, 1954 the cornerstone of the shrine was laid. Once more the faithful gathered in Holy Cross Church; after the rector of the provincial motherhouse preached the sermon, the official document for the cornerstone was read by Father Brell. A short excerpt from this document gives us an insight into who built the shrine and why:

...The Sisters at Holy Cross School as well as the members of Holy Cross Parish under the guidance of their parish priests also join the Pallottine Fathers and Brothers in erecting this jubilee gift in honor of our Mother Thrice Admirable. They too, desire humbly to erect this shrine as a home-stand and training center for our Mother Thrice Admirable and Queen of Schoenstatt, whence she may exercise her saving mission in this modern age. They ask this in virtue of their covenant of love with her as the great educator and leader of God's people on earth. May she sanctify the lives of all who are receptive and willing; may she instill into all of this parish, this city, and far beyond, a genuine spirit of a truly Marian apostolate in their respective walks of life.

Thus may from this shrine be realized the prophetic words of Vincent Pallotti: She is the great missionary. She will perform miracles of grace.

(Fr. Joseph Kentenich, “*The Cornerstone Document (June 20, 1954)*”, translated from the German by Fr. William Brell, S.A.C., *OIKIA*, 1967, Vol. 1, Nos. 5 & 6, 61-62)

Dedication: October 18, 1954

The dedication of the shrine took place on the fortieth anniversary of Schoenstatt’s founding, Monday, October 18, 1954. The event was prepared for in the parish with a novena preached by Fr. Lepore. Let us listen to a report from the *OIKIA*.

Father Brell gave the welcoming address and delivered the sermon. At that time - about 300 people made their act of consecration to the MTA. The picture for the shrine was then blessed by Father Haas. After a floral tribute had been paid by the first communion class, the MTA picture was carried in solemn procession to the shrine by two Schoenstatt Sisters preceded by the color guards of the Catholic War Veterans. Since the grounds were not as yet landscaped, most of the people remained in the auditorium and recited the rosary. (Fr. William Brell, S.A.C., *OIKIA*, June 1967, p. 39.)

Father Joseph Haas proceeded to bless the shrine, and then when the time came to give the final blessing he turned to the people saying:

... You know, we have the great privilege, I just happened to think of it, we have the Founder of the Schoenstatt movement right in our midst. Why don’t we ask him for a blessing, a special blessing. Of course the ranks kind of opened up in front of the Shrine and Father stepped forward and standing there he pronounced the blessing in Latin. ... (Which) he sang. It was a very solemn moment. (Fr. Joseph Haas, *Talk to Pilgrimage of Texas Mothers, July 4, 1977*)

So, in this way Father Haas was able to ask Father Kentenich, who was standing outside with the other priests in the procession, to give the final blessing to the shrine, and Father did, singing the blessing in Latin. Then finally came the special moment when the Blessed Sacrament was brought into the shrine. After this the ceremony was completed with benediction in the auditorium and then an all-night vigil of adoration took place for the first time in the new shrine.

We listen once again to Father Haas as he gives us some final details of this joyous event.

The Shrine then was dedicated and it was - it was beautiful. It was such a happy day. There were – oh, many people. Then in the evening when everything had quieted down, and the day had come to an end; as oftentimes Father would when we had doings like this or something else where we have celebrated, he would come down and would sit in the rectory.... Then he would talk. On this particular night he said, “Yah, wasn’t this a beautiful day? You have every reason to be very happy tonight and grateful. It must have pleased the Blessed Mother very much that you have given her this gift.” Then he spoke those memorable words, “**Was it not kind of the Blessed Mother? She followed me into my exile with her Shrine.**” Then we realized we all had been used. I

said to Father, “Father, we were used, weren’t we?” And he said, “Yes, you could say that.” And I said, “Well, it was really worth our while...” You see, from his own lips how he saw this. The Blessed Mother followed him into his exile. When you go and see the Shrine today, always remember this is his interpretation and he believed it firmly. She followed him into his exile with this Shrine, and we all were used by her. Then Father said, “Sure she could have worked a miracle and just all of a sudden put up there a Shrine, couldn’t she? She, who could by her intercession, get Almighty God to have a spring come out of rock in Lourdes, and have the sun, all of a sudden, begin to dance all over the sky in Fatima, she could have somehow created this place as an attractive pilgrimage place, couldn’t she? No, she wanted to just do one thing, use everyone involved and make everybody happy.” [Father Haas continues,] Then on top of that give them assurance from the Founder himself, yes, you did, I used you. Thank you for letting me use you. You gave me a chance to give to him, my special, specially chosen instrument, my covenant partner, who represents all of you, to be near him in his exile. His exile which has great meaning and I have to participate in it. This is all of a sudden how we began thinking. (Fr. Joseph Haas, *Talk to Pilgrimage of Texas Mothers*, July 4, 1977)

We can see now Father’s interpretation of the events surrounding the building of this shrine. One of the great crosses he must have experienced, when being sent into exile so far from his Schoenstatt home, was the knowledge that he would be separated from the shrine. Now, after two years without her presence in the shrine, he was very content with this gift that our Mother had just given to him. She brought it about in her usual way, using the willing instruments who had offered themselves into her loving hands.

Crowning: December 8, 1954

The Mother Thrice Admirable was crowned in the shrine on December 8th of that same year. This feast day of the Immaculate Conception, at the close of the Marian Year, was chosen as the day on which to crown our MTA, and thereby join the Holy Father who only a few weeks before had proclaimed Mary Queen of the Universe. We listen to Fr. Brell’s description of the event:

Wednesday, December 8th, saw a multitude of people visit the shrine in silent adoration before the exposed Blessed Sacrament.... About 500 people had gathered for the ceremony. Father Brell gave the final meditation and recited the novena prayer. Then the rosary was said while the first communicants and the altar boys formed a living rosary and gave a floral tribute to Our Lady. Thereupon deacon and sub-deacon flanked the MTA picture and Father Haas, standing behind and holding the crown above it, recited the crowning prayer. After this ceremony the priests and altar boys formed the procession during which Father Kentenich carried the crown. In the shrine he gave it its permanent place above the picture on the altar. Benediction with the Blessed Sacrament in the auditorium brought to a close a great day and a year of grace.” (Fr. William Brell, *OIKIA*, Vol. I., No. 4, June 1967)

The Exile Years (1954-1965)

With the completion of the shrine there started a fruitful period of quiet activity centered around the shrine and our Father. These exile years from 1954 to 1965 I believe can be characterized by the words, “We go to visit Father” and the corresponding response of Father, “You will always find me in the shrine.” The intimate connection of Father and the shrine and all who visited him was a reality during this period. The first years were a rather quiet time, however visits began around 1960. People came to visit Father, but Father always turned the attention back onto our covenant partner, the Blessed Mother in her shrine. So if we want to look at the life of the shrine during this period we must also look at our Father. They are absolutely interconnected.

Almost immediately, quietly, but energetically the Blessed Mother worked in the local community from her shrine. In 1954 she introduced her first instruments for Schoenstatt in the Milwaukee area, Mr. and Mrs. Gilbert Schimmel, to Father, and in 1955 in the shadow of the Exile Shrine there started one of the most prolific and important works of our Father on marriage and family life: the Monday Night Talks. Over the next nine years these talks were the opportunity for Father to work out a practical Marian pedagogy for everyday married and family life: to translate the theology of the Church and the popes into a marriage spirituality for our time. It was here also that Father introduced the couples to the spirituality of the covenant of love, blank check, inscriptio, the shrine and its history, practical faith in divine providence, etc... among the many topics of married life.

It was through this Monday Night Talk group that my wife’s and my parents, and many other couples came to really know and love Father and the shrine. Over the years many traditions and life streams developed around visiting Father and going to the shrine. When new babies were born the families often would stop to meet Father at the shrine, some times on the way home from the hospital, and Father would take the baby into his arms and offer the little one on the altar to the Blessed Mother and then give the mother a special blessing. Many of us throughout the years have kept this tradition, we experienced with Father, with our own children. When we had our first communions or confirmations we would go to the shrine to meet Father and he would give us a little talk and special blessing. I remember on my first communion Father gave me a medal that the novices of the Sister’s community wear. Very surprised, Sister Winfriede told me afterward that no one except the sisters ever received those medals. I got scared. I almost thought she might take it away from me, but it was Father who gave it to me.

When I started to attend summer boys’ camps in 1963 I remember we would meet with Father at the shrine for our “Theme” talk before heading out to our camp. Father would give us a talk in the shrine, such as being “Golden Boys” and then give us his blessing. Then outside the shrine surrounded by a mob of 30 boys he would greet each one of us with a few words, a handshake and smile before sending us off.

On Christmas Eve families would gather with Father in the shrine to offer our Advent strivings to the Christ Child. We would sing Christmas carols and the children would gather around Father in the sanctuary of the shrine at the crib. Then afterwards we would gather with Father in his office and celebrate with him. He would hand out shrine cookies (little cookies shaped like a shrine) and gifts. Many times they were the same gifts that some one had just given to him

moments before. A few years ago a lady from New York City showed me the shrine cookie, she had saved all these years, that Father had given her when she visited him in Milwaukee.

And we can't forget the celebrations on the 18th of the month renewing the covenant day and also the covenants of love that were made in Father's presence in the shrine over the years.

The experience of the local Schoenstatt family of the shrine was one of simply meeting a Father there: of meeting a true father like no other. It was an experience of family: of children with their father. We were oblivious to the wider issues and tensions of the exile that had placed Father here in Milwaukee and that had even reached the halls of the Vatican and the Holy Father himself and would reach into the Second Vatican Council. We were actually quite naive to Schoenstatt being any more than what we experienced here in Milwaukee, although we knew subconsciously there was something more out there in this world of Schoenstatt with all of the people from around the world who came to visit Father here in Milwaukee and whom we met at the shrine. How did those people who visited Father from across the ocean encounter the Exile Shrine?

Many people came to see Father during the last part of the exile period. While many of those travelers had the exile experience similar to that of Milwaukee, Germany was quite unique. I would like to share a story of one of those people who was in the intense struggle in Schoenstatt, Germany during those years and came unexpectedly to Milwaukee to visit Father. It is the story of **Günther Boll**, who would later be the first ordained Schoenstatt Father.

Günther Boll joined the Pallottine seminary in 1952 at the start of the exile. He knew nothing of the inner situation of the exile at the time. Before this he had only seen Fr. Kentenich twice in **meetings in** Schoenstatt. But as he began to read Father's writings he became convinced of the greatness and mission of this man he barely knew. In 1956 he was part of a group of seminarians that made a secret consecration in the original shrine, offering their lives and sacrifices to the Capital of Grace for the victory of Father Kentenich, that he would be recognized by their superiors as a man of God and a great founder of our time, a man illuminated by the Holy Spirit. Unfortunately their superiors found out about this consecration and they were dismissed from the community of the Pallottines 1½ months before their profession. However, through the kindness of a Swiss Schoenstatt priest they were able to continue their studies at a Swiss seminary.

Since **Günther Boll** was no longer officially a member of Schoenstatt in the Pallottine seminary he was free to write to Father about his situation. Milwaukee was now the center of the world for him with the founder there and it was a great shock when in 1959 he received an invitation to visit Father. Not only had he never met Father, he only knew two people that visited Father in Milwaukee. The only picture he had seen of Father in Milwaukee was one of Father with Gilbert Schimmel at his cabin at the lake. In September 1959 his opportunity for his "grand pilgrimage" came. He had never flown in an airplane and this was going to be a great experience to actually "meet this holy man in this holy place."

All he had been told was that when he arrived at the train station in Milwaukee he was to call Father. He was so nervous that he had to dial the number four times. When he finally got through, the person who answered the telephone told him that Fr. Brell would meet him in 20 minutes. It was the longest 20 minutes in his life. Finally, he saw a car pull up to the curb and

when he looked in he saw a man in the passenger's seat with a long white beard. He couldn't actually believe Father had personally come to meet him.

Father asked him to sit with him in the back seat. On the way back to Holy Cross, Fr. Brell was describing the city, but Günther Boll didn't see a thing except Father. He was so nervous that he couldn't answer Father in any more than one or two word answers. Father didn't know what to do, so he just sat back and looked at Günther Boll with a smile. Finally, Günther Boll smiled and the ice was broken.

The next thing Günther Boll knew they were in front of the shrine and Father suggested that they give thanks to the MTA. Once in the shrine Günther Boll was so excited he couldn't even pray. After a short time, Father noticed this and said they should go to the kitchen and get something to eat first, and that they could come back later and pray. Like a true father he was aware of every little need of the child. That was Günther Boll's first of several visits to the Exile Shrine with Father over the next years. He was able to spend hours with Father and for the first time in his life open up his heart from the very depths. Father would ask him a question, never probe, but he would just completely open up. Fr. Boll said that, "he released his soul" to Father. For him this time with Father in Milwaukee demonstrated that "he was a child of Father" and "it was the happiest time of his life."

This was truly a universal experience of all who visited the Exile Shrine and Father during this period. I remember a woman from New York City telling me of her visit to Father in Milwaukee. She lived in one of the worst areas of Brooklyn. The gangs and drug dealers ruled the streets, so that she couldn't even let her children outside the apartment alone. They lived in cramped conditions, in three rooms on the fourth floor. The drug dealers even controlled the stairways of the building. This woman needed to visit Father. She had no money, so she sold her bedroom furniture to buy her bus ticket and rode for 24 hours to Milwaukee to meet Father. She said Father looked into her eyes, held her hand and took her to the shrine. She had never been so at peace in all her life and she remembers every detail to this very day.

These experiences of the Exile Shrine during these years were intimate father experiences and life experiences. In a time of a great deal of tension between Schoenstatt and the Pallottine community, between Schoenstatt and the Church, within the Church itself, in this period of "Schoenstatt's testing", the Exile Shrine was a gift of a peaceful father experience for all those that came, whether from the local area of Milwaukee or from across the ocean. The Blessed Mother truly gave a gift to us all.

The "Divine Love" Years (1965-1979)

The question may be asked, "When did this shrine become known as the 'Exile Shrine'?" When asking this question of those who were present during those years, it becomes apparent that the term Exile Shrine began to be used only after Father left and the shrine itself went into 'exile'. Now what do we mean by this? The shrine itself went into exile? Father said his final good-bye in Milwaukee on the morning of September 16, 1965, in the Exile Shrine, and his departure left a great void. He was the one who held all things together by his very presence, and his departure was felt deeply as a great loss. In a way, symbolically this loss was unexpectedly expressed

within the very walls of the shrine itself. We will listen to what Fr. Joseph Haas felt about this event as he wrote in the Schoenstatt magazine, the *Oikia*, in early 1967.

In the history of our Schoenstatt Family, November 2, 1965, looms as the day when our Shrine, the spiritual home of our Family, became an Exile Shrine in the fullest sense of the word. Since its solemn dedication during the Marian Year of 1954, the Shrine had served our exiled Father and Founder as his spiritual refuge and as such had already become a Shrine of Exile. But the unforgettable Poor Souls Day of 1965 imposed exile upon our Mother Thrice Admirable and Queen of Schoenstatt and thereby we, too, the spiritual children of an Exile Family, were sent into exile. (Fr. Joseph Haas, *OIKIA*, Vol. I, No.1, 1967)

So what actually took place on that November day? The picture of our Mother Thrice Admirable was removed from the Shrine and replaced by the picture of Our Lady of Divine Love, St. Vincent Pallotti's favorite image. Eventually the whole altar and communion rail were also removed and replaced with a simple wooden altar. Mirroring her flight into Egypt, our Mother Thrice Admirable was able to find refuge with the Schoenstatt Sisters in the Movement House very near the shrine. However this exile was to last, once again, 14 years. It wasn't until March 21, 1979 that our Mother was able to return in all fullness to the shrine, and take up her residence there once again.

It may be difficult to grasp completely the meaning of this time of exile, however, it may have been part of the necessary process of healing the deep wounds that were inflicted when Schoenstatt was separated from the Pallottine community in October of 1964. It may be that at the time, after Father's departure, the Pallottine community wanted to express the feeling that this chapel "belonged to them". It may also have been a means of Divine Providence's testing the importance of this shrine in the hearts of the Schoenstatt Family making it possible for the shrine to be slowly, spiritually re-conquered by them. Whatever the cause, it is a blessing that the shrine was always kept as a place of grace, a Marian place, rather than having been turned into a tool shed, or torn down. The pews and the stations of the cross remained throughout those 14 years.

I remember, as a member of the boys' youth in the early 1970's, an impulse developed to re-conquer the shrine through our contributions to the capital of grace. A hurricane had just struck the southern Texas coast near the shrine and blew down the boy's youth cross. The cross was thought to have been blown out to sea, but a couple of days later it was found by someone many miles away and returned. The boys from Texas brought a piece of this cross to our camp in Milwaukee that summer and together, along with boys from Wisconsin, Texas and New York, we erected a large cross here on the hill at the international center. Then we took the piece of the cross that the boys brought with them from Texas and glued a small piece of it under the back right pew of the Exile Shrine. We also buried a small piece of the cross at the outside corner of the shrine. It was our symbol of the power of the Blessed Mother, that having returned the cross from a hurricane, she would be victorious and one-day return to the shrine. I remember for years every time I went into the Exile Shrine I would go over to the right rear pew and feel the little piece of cross. It is possible, and probable, that there were many different quiet symbolic acts of re-conquering the shrine during this time.

Another possible meditation on the meaning of the “exiled” shrine could be that in those years following the Vatican Council a non-Marian time ensued within the Church (a time that we are still feeling the repercussions of.) Mary, our Mother was driven from her home in hundreds of churches. It is possible that symbolically, in one of her primary shrines, she allowed herself to be exiled, in this way indicating a most important element of this time, the need for renewed holiness of her Schoenstatt children.

Throughout those 14 years the Schoenstatt Family suffered, prayed and offered, uniting as an Instrument Family, waiting for Divine Providence to answer their call. In their readiness to serve her, they asked our Mother and Queen what she desired of them. Father Haas gave his answer to this question.

“...By giving her the place she desires in our hearts and homes, we will gently force her to re-establish herself in her Exile Shrine.... She will return to her Shrine when we have proven to her that we really love her. She is quoting to us now the words we so often say to her: Nothing without you.... Build your heart into a shrine; build your home into a shrine. From there she will return to her throne of grace...” (Fr. J. Haas, *OIKIA, Vol. 1 No.2, 1967*)

Permission was granted in 1970, to have the MTA Picture attached in the shrine just for the monthly all night adoration on the eve of the Covenant Days.

On April 13, 1978 Fr. Soemer told the sisters after Mass in the Movement House that they could attach the MTA picture permanently in the shrine, and finally on March 21, 1979 permission was given for the altar to be returned.

It was with a sense of great joy that the Silver Anniversary of the shrine, once again restored, could be celebrated on September 9, 1979. (The Jubilee could not be celebrated in October because the Parish celebrated its 100th Jubilee at that time.)

The last 25 Years (1979-2004)

When looking now at the past 25 years of the history of this shrine, since it was brought back to its original form, we may see that it is a rather unremarkable history. Mostly quiet years of the Schoenstatt Family’s deepening in the spirit of Father. Unfolding little by little the meaning of his exile, his exile legacy: trying to understand more fully and to live in daily life, Father’s love for the Church. Living in the reality of the grace of the home shrine. And growing into the new Father, child, and community image that developed in and around him.

There are several events of importance that took place during these years. First, on October 16, 1983 the Holy Spirit symbol was attached in the shrine. This was a gift of the Cenacle Generation of the Schoenstatt Diocesan priests. They sent a representative from Germany to the celebration of the attachment of the Holy Spirit. On October 19, 1986 the Schoenstatt **Family of Milwaukee** offered the Father Eye to our Mother Thrice Admirable as a gift for Father for his 100th birthday.

In June of 2002 delegates from all across the USA gathered for a special national convention to celebrate the Jubilee of Father's arrival here in Milwaukee. United in spirit with all of the Schoenstatt Family throughout the country we came together to *welcome Father once again in our midst, to listen to what he wishes to say to us, and to respond to him with all our hearts.* We desired to take up the treasures he left us and make them our mission. As we experienced Father together here in the Exile Shrine and throughout all of the Exile places, a great unity was felt together as Schoenstatt Family, and new decisions were made to take up once again the great vision of our father and founder and bring this mission to fruition through our lives, as his witnesses in our Church and world today. As a fruit of this convention, for the first time, new impulses of lay leadership sprang forth and were acted upon.

The highlight of these past 25 years was the international celebration in July 2002 of the 50th Jubilee of Father's arrival in Milwaukee. This was a great celebration in which over 500 young people came to Milwaukee from around the world on their way to (or from) the World Youth Day celebration with our Holy Father in Toronto. This Jubilee celebration was a great success and a great joy. These hundreds of young people came in order to meet Father, to know him as he was known here among the Schoenstatt Family, as a real and true father. They walked where he walked, knelt where he knelt in the shrine, and saw, talked to, experienced first hand the places and people that Father knew. What a beautiful and Spirit-filled time it was. The youth were profoundly moved by their encounter with our Father. This time was a new awakening of the Milwaukee Schoenstatt family in the rich exile legacy and the need to re-conquer and bring new life to the shrine.

And now in preparation for this great Jubilee, the local Schoenstatt Family, surrounding the Exile Shrine, has united together to spiritually build the shrine in their hearts. At the time the shrine was built back in 1954, there really was no official Schoenstatt Family present. Therefore the desire arose now in this year of preparation for this Jubilee, to construct this shrine anew in our hearts as Schoenstatt Family. Each branch has chosen a part of the shrine to prepare spiritually (and repair physically if necessary.) The Schoenstatt Fathers are offering the Father Eye, the Sisters – the MTA picture; the Family Institute – the Bell; the Family Federation – the inside doors of the Tabernacle; the Couples League – the Altar; the Men's Branch – St. Joseph's Staff; the Single Women – the Tabernacle; the Mother's League – the Monstrance; the Boys Youth – the Ver Sacrum Lamp; the Girls Youth – the Apostles; the Hispanic Family – the Holy Spirit; and the Pilgrim MTA, Rosary Campaign – the Light Frame. The entire local Schoenstatt Family, united together, is offering our Mother once again the crown, that she may answer the desires of many hearts, and reign faithfully and powerfully as Queen from this shrine, her throne, where she will work her special miracles of Exile Legacy graces.

Meaning of the Shrine

As a Marian Shrine (to the local Church)

Now we may ask ourselves, what is the meaning of this shrine? First of all we may ask the question what does this shrine mean for the local Church, for the Church here in Milwaukee? We of course know the obvious answer to that question. This is a very special *Marian* shrine open to welcome *anyone* who wishes to come to visit. Here our Mother waits with open arms for the old,

the young, the small, the great, each entering her home as her child seeking a Mother's love and care and education. It has been reported that even Milwaukee's own Archbishop Dolan, who we will greet tomorrow when he comes to preside over a special liturgy, has quietly come to the shrine now and then for a visit, to spend time there in prayer with our Mother and her Divine Son.

It is a rich blessing for our Church in Milwaukee that since the year 2000, everyday in the shrine, there is the opportunity for daily Eucharistic Adoration. Every Wednesday and each Covenant Day there is a Holy Mass offered in English. On First Fridays there is a Mass in German and one in Spanish. We may rejoice in the realization that our Mother Thrice Admirable has been present and active here in the Milwaukee Archdiocese throughout these past 50 years. She is present and ready to distribute her graces to all who are in need, seeking hearts open to be used as instruments in her hands.

In 1954 Father Kentenich was asked to write a series of Lenten sermons for the parishioners at Holy Cross Parish. These thoughts of Father may be found in the book *Mary, Our Mother and Educator*, translated by Father Jonathan Niehaus. In one of these sermons we find words our father and founder spoke about the shrine. First, he spoke of what was said about the shrine in Madison, which was only one year old at the time, and then about the future shrine at Holy Cross Parish. He said:

The people say, "...How well one can pray here, and how much peace of heart we receive by coming to this shrine!" That is easy to understand: the Blessed Mother dwells and has her throne there and wants to prove herself from there in a singular way as the Mother Thrice Admirable. As St. Peter once joyfully exclaimed when he saw the glory of the Lord on Tabor, "It is good to be here. Let us erect three tents!" (Mt 17,4) that is how all feel when they enter one of these favorite places of our Blessed Mother in the spirit of faith.

That is very likely the reason that urges us on in the Marian Year to offer the Mother Thrice Admirable a shrine on our parish grounds. She should come from heaven for us, too, and settle among us. As the great missionary, she should take the reins of our parish in her hands. She should be our educator, our leader in every moment of life. In a special way she should guide all the members of our parish through the dark portals of death (to appear) before the face of the divine Judge.

(Fr. Joseph Kentenich, *Mary, Our Mother and Educator*, p. 32&33, translated by Fr. Jonathan Niehaus.)

From this shrine our Mother desires to work her miracles of grace in countless hearts. She is ready and waiting for all who come to her in faith.

As a Schoenstatt Shrine (to the U.S. Schoenstatt Family)

For our local Schoenstatt Family here in the United States this shrine has been the place from where our Schoenstatt Movement has spread and flourished throughout our country. It is here that we encounter Father in a very unique way. Here Father resided for nearly 14 years quietly

inspiring a deeper love for our Mother Thrice Admirable in the hearts of countless people. He instilled in those hearts an undying belief in the reality of her presence in the shrine, and this has become a conviction of faith based on the experience of the power of her love.

Within this shrine Father celebrated over 3,000 Holy Masses, it is believed more than he was able to celebrate in a continuous stretch of time in any other shrine. Every morning of those 11 years since our Mother had given him this gift, Father would walk down the sidewalk to the shrine to offer Holy Mass at 5:50 A.M. I remember getting up early and walking the two miles (we didn't have a car) to the shrine some Saturday mornings with my father to Father Kentenich's morning Mass. It was a time for my father and me to talk and I especially remember my father singing the Magnificat in Latin as we would walk along. I still remember that melody to this day. After Mass Father would sometimes invite my father and me back to his office. Father would have me sit down, then disappear into the kitchen and come back with a donut or pancake, and while I was busy he would talk with my father. Forty years later, these memories of early morning walks to the shrine are like yesterday.

Once again, Father said, "You will always find me in the shrine." And that is where he always was. He led every person who visited him to our Mother in the shrine. Even if he was not physically there, his heart was in the shrine. Even now, for some reason, it is in this shrine that I feel Father most present. It is most probably because this is where we met him often, where he took us whenever we visited him, where he dedicated our younger sisters and brothers from both my wife's and my family, and where he prayed so very often and spent so many hours.

The capital of grace of the Exile Shrine, was specially filled by our father and founder, and from this shrine we receive the grace to live faithfully our exile legacy. We realize that Father placed all the suffering of those years of his exile into the capital of grace of this shrine. It certainly must be "overflowing" with graces for all in need, especially as we strive to live the legacy left to us. How grateful we can be to Father for all of his many offerings and sacrifices placed in the treasury for his Schoenstatt Family, for each one of us, to draw on, for we know the great power of this capital of grace.

As an Extraordinary Schoenstatt Shrine (to the International Schoenstatt Family)

When we come from far and near into contact with this shrine we share in the mission of the exile, which we often refer to as our exile legacy. From this shrine we discover and grow into Father's world, a world that became more experiential during his exile: his gentle fatherliness, his love for the Church, the birth of the home shrine, and his concept of the new father, child, and community image. The life and suffering lived by our father and founder throughout those fourteen years of exile became a great message for us. God has entrusted this mission to us as a gift from this shrine, a divine task to be realized in our daily life. From the Exile Shrine each one of us may expect to receive the necessary graces to live faithfully this legacy unfolded for us through Divine Providence by our father and founder. We take a moment to look at this legacy opened to us within the Exile Shrine.

Dilexit Ecclesiam - He loved the Church.

This is the motto chosen by Father to be written on his tombstone. It describes his whole life and mission: He loved the Church. During his fourteen years of exile he lived his *Dilexit Ecclesiam* - his love for the Church - in deep suffering and great joy. It never ceases to amaze us as we look back to the years when we would visit Father here in the shadow of the Exile Shrine, how it was impossible to even guess that he was suffering in exile at that time. We never saw anything but a gentle, loving, joyful father, always there, available for his children. He lived faithfully his obedience to the Church, inspiring many hearts to follow his example. His love for the Church is a holy legacy for us. As members of our Schoenstatt Family, each one of us is called by God to love and serve the Church as he did, even to the cross.

The Home Shrine.

The “new world” of the home shrine unfolded and blossomed during the years of Father’s exile. Here the life stream of the home shrine was able to develop in a more concrete manner under the watchful eye of our founder, and our Mother chose this time and place for the “foundation”. The first home shrines in our entire Schoenstatt Family were formed here in Milwaukee in the shadow of the Exile Shrine. They became a model for all future home shrines which would be erected throughout the world. The home shrine, as an extension of the fountain of grace, flowing from the Original Shrine, is a great gift, which the Heavenly Father has given to our Schoenstatt Family, the Church and world. It is a living example of the beautiful reality of the “domestic Church” which has been defined and proclaimed by Vatican II. It is a great joy and privilege to be able to take part in this stream of grace, making it ever more possible for our Mother to transform the Church and world from her shrine.

A New Understanding of the Father, Child and Community Image.

In many of the talks he gave after his return to Schoenstatt, Father spoke about the image of the Father, child and community which is a special grace of the Exile Shrine, revealed to us by God in a most tangible way during the exile years. God gave to our family a new understanding of his great love for us as **The Merciful Father**. Every person in authority on this earth should become a reflection of his divine fatherhood. Our father and founder himself became a spiritual father for many, a perfect reflection of God’s fatherhood, of his great love and mercy. By his faithful obedience to the Church during this time of exile Father was given the gift of being able to be a true father. This was the beautiful gift received by all those who encountered him during this period.

The natural response to fatherhood is childlikeness. Each of us must become a child before God our loving Father. The Blessed Mother, as our mother and educator, will take each one by the hand and form us into this **New Child**, into an everyday saint. In our childlikeness we will become painfully aware of our own limitations. We will be given the grace to accept these limitations and in this way become worthy of the Father’s great merciful love. In meeting a true reflection of the Heavenly Father in our father and founder during this exile time around the shrine, people understood what it was to be a true child of the Father.

Together, united in this shrine, we form **A Community**, gathered around our father and founder, which unites all nations and cultures into one family. Father was a father to all – his heart was truly international: He respected and preserved the originality of each person and yet was able to unite them all into one family, whose members strive with all their hearts to live in, with and for one another. The graces to unfold, grasp and live in this image are found within the Exile Shrine. All who visit this shrine in faith will receive these graces to become true children of Father, children of the exile.

Conclusion

We have now taken a little journey through a holy history, experiencing a small fraction of the rich heritage of this Exile Shrine, given to us as a gift of love from our Mother Thrice Admirable 50 years ago. We have taken a glimpse at the history of the shrine's simple beginning with the question of two girls in Holy Cross Parish, "Father, couldn't we clean out the old school building and make it into our own shrine?" How simple are the instruments of the Blessed Mother for her great tasks. We saw the enthusiasm and response of the parish and Pallottine community to take up this inspiration and carry it through. We saw the joy and the comfort the shrine gave our Father too as he said, "see how she (the Blessed Mother) followed me into exile with her shrine." We saw how the shrine became part of the center of a lived Schoenstatt life during the exile years, as visitors came from near and far to see Father and experience the exile graces. We saw the trauma when the shrine went into exile after Father left in 1965, the 14 years of spiritual deepening of the Schoenstatt family that was required and the gift of Divine Providence in restoring the shrine to its original condition. And finally we saw the recent new life associated with the Exile Shrine that shows a serious understanding and desire to protect the rich legacy of this shrine so closely united with our father and founder.

We listen once again to Father in the Lenten sermons written by him in the Marian Year 1954 as preparations were being made to begin building the shrine. We listen to his image of and desire for this shrine:

Do you now better understand the importance of the fulfillment of our program for this year? We wish to erect a shrine in our parish for the Mother Thrice Admirable and Queen of Schoenstatt. How many graces may we expect for all families and circles if we do this in the proper spirit **and protect the shrine in the future as an extremely valuable treasure!** All that we know about such places of grace will become a joyful reality **in our very own backyard.** [Emphasis added]

Wherever the Mother Thrice Admirable and Queen of Schoenstatt settles, she is primarily and particularly active, as is her wont, as educator in our modern times. Her shrines are the formation centers and workshops of the new man and the new social order in the way that God desires for today, so that the Church can perfectly fulfill her mission for our times. From there she wants to draw human hearts to herself and educate them to become perfect instruments in her hand. All who dedicate themselves to her there, all who make a covenant of love with her will be taken by her into a serious school of genuine, solid everyday sanctity such as our times need. They will be placed by God into Our Lady's care, so that she may educate them to carry out His great plan.

With this we touch upon the methods which God uses when dealing with his favorite children. He gives them to His Mother to be educated, thereby very practically interpreting the last will and testament of our Savior, “Ecce Mater Tua!” [“Behold your Mother!”]

(Fr. Joseph Kentenich, *Mary, Our Mother and Educator*, p. 135, translated by Fr. Jonathan Niehaus)

Now I would like to repeat what I had said in my introduction: we have had the opportunity to relive our history, to savor it once again, so that we will know our own history and never take what we have for granted. It is a rich history given to us by our Blessed Mother as a gift. Let us cherish this gift. Let us make it our own. In the words of Father, “let us protect the shrine in the future as an extremely valuable treasure.” The treasure of this shrine is waiting for us. Let us go there to our Mother in faith, and through our Father’s loving hands receive from her the many gifts and graces our hearts desire, as we give to her in return our serious striving for sanctity. United together with all those who have gone before us, we too encounter Father in a special way in this Exile Shrine, Mary’s gift to Father and Mary’s gift to each one of us.