



Living Monstrance

Based on: Marian Woman—Outlines for the
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Group Outline Three: **Women of Prayer**

Prove first that you really love me. . . by a life of ardent prayer!

Let us consider this third covenant demand of Our Lady. We are living monstrances carrying in us the divine life of Jesus Christ, especially after we receive holy Communion. Through us, Our Lady wants to bless others and make our each of our homes a shrine.

In a talk of February 28, 1966 our founder, Father Joseph Kentenich said:

We are children of our time. We all know that the air we breathe is far from holy. We are aware of our own weakness. We know how much we are dependent on our surroundings, the atmosphere in which we live. Not without good reason one speaks today – more than before – of *education by the environment*.¹ If as children of new times, or let us rather say, as genuine Schoenstatt children who have a mission for the Church at the new shore, we wish to guard ourselves against the disadvantages of the worldly atmosphere which we cannot avoid – we have to learn the art of changing the atmosphere from an unsacred one into a sacred one. . .

Thought question: What are some examples of how we are influenced by the world around us?

Father Kentenich continues:

Our task is to find a way from the worldly into the sacred atmosphere. We cannot simply cast off or leave the atmosphere in which we live. The question is to create a sacred atmosphere within the worldly which enables us to become immune against the worldly atmosphere in which we live. . .

¹ Original Text: Milieu – Pedagogy

Our answer is: To build and extend the home shrine as a supernatural air-conditioning system. Here the exchange of air has to take place. Worldly air from the world outside must here be converted into sacred air and sacred atmosphere. Of course, the air-conditioning can only function if we start functioning according to the principle: “Nothing without you – nothing without us! How can this be done? We look into the Founding Document. The fourth claim which concerns us in this connection, is: *By a life of ardent prayer, earn many merits and place them at my disposal.*

Thought question: What are ways that you can purify the atmosphere of your home using the image of the air-conditioner?

Our task as a living monstrosity is, therefore, to radiate the divine life in such a way that it fills the whole house. We must therefore learn the art of prayer.

To pray means to speak with God personally, in one’s own original way and to give one’s heart to God. A spiritual writer describes prayer in this way:

To pray means to rise from the anxiety of the world and go to the Father.

To pray means to walk through the very midst of coldness and darkness and go to the Father.

To pray means to bend one’s head so that the hand of the Father, the good, the strong hand can rest on it: *My child, what do you want?* The child responds: *Father, I only want to be with you.*

Thought question: Which of these descriptions of prayer speak to you and why?

Our founder added:

However, we find it so difficult to leave the worldly atmosphere of our occupations and rise to foster contact with God.

We find it most difficult to pray in the rush of everyday life. This is the very reason why we should practice it. One cannot learn to pray in one day. Often to begin with we need formed prayers to guide us. Gradually we then tell God our petition in our own words, and then as time goes by we learn to speak with the Father and the Mother as their beloved and loving children. We tell them all that burdens us and what we enjoy. This is as it should be. If we have reached this stage the Father (Mother) takes us by the hand, as it were, and leads us further step by step. It is as if he then would say: *You actually*

always ask me to do what you want. Would you not like to try once to do what I have in my plans for you?

Thought question: What are the steps in learning to pray?

Our founder explained:

To pray does not mean to move God to give us something which he would not give us otherwise. Neither does it mean telling God something which he does not already know, nor trying to bring God around to [agree with] our point of view. We have, generally speaking, many false concepts in regard to prayer. God does not need to be brought down to our level. His thinking does not need to change, instead, we have to change our thinking. . .

To pray means to change my mind; it means receptivity and readiness to accept what God has ordained for me from all eternity. Our Lord thus taught us to pray: Thy will be done! Through prayer my will is to be brought into conformity with the will of God. No one is more concerned about me than God, the Father. I cannot ask for anything that is to my benefit which God has not ordained for me by love.

If illness befalls me – it is ordained from all eternity. What shall my prayer effect? I should grow and fight myself into the will of God the Father. This concept of prayer differs widely from that which we commonly hold.

Thought question: What are some examples of where in prayer we could be helped to change our minds toward doing God's will?

Such prayer makes us strong and free. The natural scientist, Dr. Alexis Carel (1873-1944), wrote:

Prayer is a power as effective as the force of gravity. It is the most powerful form of energy which can be radiated. He who has made sincere prayer his habit, will find that his life is profoundly changing. As a doctor I have experienced that people got over an illness and depression only through the power of prayer after every other therapeutic means had failed. Only in prayer is it possible to create a perfect harmony of body, intellect, and soul which furnishes weak persons with an unshakeable power. Today more than ever before prayer is an absolute necessity in the life of men and of nations.

The American statesman, Abraham Lincoln, expressed his confidence in prayer by declaring:

I speak with God and my soul feels relieved whenever I do so. Then I find the solution to my problems. I would be the most shallow and conceited fool if by carrying out my duties I hoped to manage without that wisdom that comes from God and not from men.

It is said that the president of a large-scale enterprise in Philadelphia did not receive anyone for fifteen minutes every day. He was then engaged, having his *audience with God*. He asked God's guidance, counsel, light, and wisdom.

Thought question: Where have I experienced the power of prayer?

Do we need guidance, counsel, light, and wisdom, too? We know well that nowadays a wife and mother needs such an audience perhaps more urgently than the president of a large-scale enterprise. This is why the Schoenstatt mothers seriously try to have their 10 minutes of silence every day. The individual mother knows well that this *audience with the Father or the Mother* gives her the strength to manage the day. Those who loyally adhere to this practice experience that they are drawn nearer to God throughout the entire day. For example, at family prayer, the others can feel that Mother is not just reciting a prayer, but speaking with someone, indeed praying. There is a saying:

Tell me with whom you keep company, and I will tell you what kind of person you are.

This also holds true in this case. Our being with the Blessed Mother in loving prayer makes us more and more like her. Then Our Lord can bless and work miracles through us. In our surroundings a sacred atmosphere is created, a change of air takes place. Our home becomes a sanctuary – a shrine.

A home becomes a holy place if people are prepared to sacrifice and give themselves in love, to live a life of prayer, to meet God and thus become a blessing for others.

FOR DISCUSSION

1. Our task is to transform the worldly atmosphere in our homes into a sacred atmosphere. Do you have a home shrine? If so, how can the home shrine achieve this and what should our contribution be toward this transformation?
2. What is prayer? What types of prayer do you use during the day?
2. Why is it important that we set aside a specific time for prayer, recollection, and silence? What effect can this have on our families?