



*Mothers in the Domestic Church*  
*By Cindy Scheltens -Illinois*

Woman touched by God, authentic reflection of Mary  
*Mujer inspirada por Dios, reflejo auténtico de María*



What a relief and blessing that we have the Mother Thrice Admirable, Queen, and Victress of Schoenstatt in our covenant of love and in our Home Shrines - our Domestic Churches. She is actively working with us and truly lives with us at our home. In cooperation with her, she gives us a heart for our family to love and serve to the glory of God.

Father Kentenich encourages us:

*A mother's heart overflows with the riches of love. A mother's heart teaches love. A mother's heart awakens love. A mother's heart leads love onwards to the child's father, and beyond him to the eternal, infinite God.<sup>1</sup>*

In order for the mother's heart to be effective, we cooperate by being loving wives to our husbands and joyful mothers to our children. Our education to live as children of God, and to be strong in difficult times, begins and continues in the home. Our Blessed Mother teaches us how to serve: First, God, then our husbands and then our children. This is the proper order of serving in our vocation as mothers. Because mothers and fathers are the primary teachers of their children, we must ask ourselves the question: *What are our children learning at home?* As you know, they are watching everything we do and listening to everything we say. Every action and reaction from us is a lesson in the classroom of vice or virtue. Through our words and deeds, we witness to our children the truths of our Catholic faith especially when we are joyful, but even in times of trial and tribulation. I would just like to add here, that this applies to grandmothers or those nearing that stage of their life. The grandchildren are watching us and we have an impression to make on them.

Pope Benedict XVI wrote:

Within the womb of the Christian family as *domestic church*, husband and wife join together in a sacred labor of love that with their gaze on Christ's Mystical Body bonds them to a common spiritual and missionary purpose. Each Christian family is called to be a *domestic church*.<sup>2</sup>

We don't have to look far for our missionary purpose as mothers in the domestic church. We have the network of shrines in Schoenstatt as an inspiration from the Founding Document to make our home:

---

<sup>1</sup> J. Kentenich, *Family at the Service of Life*, pg. 189

<sup>2</sup> November 1, 2010.

*...a place of pilgrimage, a place of grace...All those who come here (to pray) shall experience the glory of Mary and confess: 'It is good for us to be here...here shall be our favorite place'.<sup>3</sup> (FD, 7)*

Mothers, in our domestic churches, we are called to be a Living Monstrance, a reflection of Mary, an apparition of the Blessed Mother in human form. No matter what is going on around us, whatever chaos or distortion of the truth is being touted, we can attach ourselves in love to our covenant partner, our Mother Thrice Admirable. Father Kentenich said to his parishioners in Milwaukee:

*It is understood that such an intimate attachment will gradually bring about a profound Marian likeness since the child will necessarily bear the features of the mother! Hence, when we love the Mother of God, then we love what she loves. What does she love? She is the personification of the love of Christ and of the Father! From our domestic churches, we nourish the life of Christ in the members of our families. In doing so, we assist in the renewal of the Church and world by bringing Christ to others.*

Cardinal Joseph Cardijn states...

*There is one institution which cannot be replaced by anything else, which lies at the root of the happiness of mankind, of peace, progress and civilization: It is the family which is the first cell and the first center of life, the first home. The family is an image of God, of the Blessed Trinity.*

The responsibility falls on each of us as we strive to live our Covenant of Love with the Blessed Mother because:

There may be families who do not understand or believe they are a domestic church...Perhaps they consider their family too 'broken' to be used for the Lord's purposes. But remember, a family is holy not because it is perfect but because God's grace is at work in it, helping it to set out anew every day on the way of love...Wherever a family exists and love still moves through its members, grace is present. Nothing - not even divorce or death - can place limits on God's love.<sup>4</sup>

I don't know about you, but I have had the unfortunate experience of watching love in a family, especially love between a husband and wife, burn out. The feeling of lovelessness is tangible in a home where husband and/or wife have given up. It is a cold and loveless experience to be in a house that used to once be inhabited by a mother's heart, alive with love for her family. Mothers, we can never let this happen in our families and with the Covenant of Love, we can remain confident that Mary is helping us to do our small part.

Personal witness: One morning, after a daily Mass, I had the beautiful experience of running into another Schoenstatt mother. What this lovely mother did not know was that our encounter was truly God's Divine Providence. I had just experienced a strong

---

<sup>3</sup> J. Kentenich, Founding Document, 7.

<sup>4</sup> Follow the Way of Love": A Pastoral Message of the U.S. Catholic Bishops to Families

inspiration during that Mass to pray the Rosary every day. I was excited, distracted, and puffed up with pride as I was walking up to Communion thinking to myself, *Today, I will begin by praying one decade of the Rosary every day.* But, as is often the case, Our Lord had a different plan in mind for me, as this mother was about to reveal. Without solicitation, she told me about her devotion to praying the Scriptural Rosary. The Scriptural Rosary? Isn't that really long, I thought to myself. I had just made the commitment to pray *one decade* but I experienced the Lord's invitation to do more. In my humility, I went home that morning and prayed the Scriptural Rosary. With a heart full of love and gratitude for this devotion, the Holy Spirit gave me the inspiration I needed for this presentation.

As I meditated on the Sorrowful Mysteries, I recalled the encounter between Jesus and the Weeping Women on the way to the cross: *But Jesus turned to them and said, 'Daughters of Jerusalem, do not weep for me; weep rather for yourselves and for your children.'*<sup>5</sup>

Mothers, God has blessed me with adult daughters who, like Jesus, carry crosses. Like Simon, I step in when I'm called to lighten their loads with some *truth of our faith or hope in a resurrection.* I allow myself to weep with the reassurance that God said that it is okay, and I trust that it will be, in the fullness of His time and will. It's taken many years to get to a place of this kind of trust. My past is riddled with episodes of fear and anxiety resulting from life experiences. But Our Lord met me on the way and reminded me that He has given me a mother as a sure guide in the covenant of love. ... It became a constant source of support and reorientation back to God and His Church.

In the gospel of John (19:26-27) ~

*Jesus said to his mother, 'Woman, this is your son.' Then to the disciple he said, 'This is your mother.' And from that moment the disciple made a place for her in his home.*

We know that it can take a lifetime to master our vocation as mothers but God does not demand perfection, He demands striving and his demands always come from his kind and loving heart. And, yes, we will fail often but like Jesus showed us, we will keep getting up with the help of our Blessed Mother, in our covenant of love, and carry on.

### **Reflection:**

1. How have you experienced the positive help of the domestic church through your home shrine and/or family life?
2. What are a few challenges that we experience in the domestic church and can ask Mary as heart of the family to help us follow her example?

---

<sup>5</sup> Luke 23:28