

WALLS

Another characteristic of a domestic church other than living out the liturgical year is adorning the walls in each room with icons and holy pictures.

I remember how my mother would have religious icons or holy pictures in each room with a small votive light under each one. I was so aware of this that I would be a bit wary of the votive lights burning day and night so much so that before going to bed unbeknownst to my mother I would blow out the votive lights for fear of a fire. But the next day, they would be lit again by my mother. When a friend of mine came for the first time into the home and seeing all of the holy pictures on the walls he said, "Walt, your home is like a church."

All of the holy pictures on the walls centered around one specific place and that was the "Icon-corner." This holy corner was most important for my mother's prayer life. It also played a big role in my prayer life while growing up and in the formation of good prayer habits in later years. It certainly created a strong sense of the sacred.

WHAT WAS THIS ICON-CORNER LIKE?

When I was eleven years old, my mother decided to build an altar. I could still envision my mother in the backyard nailing planks of wood together as I was giving her the wood. I never forgot that backyard incident. It was a joyful experience to help my mother build this altar.

Lo! And behold! When the altar was completed, we brought it into the home and we placed it in the corner of her bedroom. She dressed up the altar with linens, and placed icons, holy pictures, statues, relics of Saints, the cross, and other religious items. Our Lady of Czestehova was the central icon on the wall just above the altar. In the center of the altar was a seven day vigil candle which would be burning constantly never to be blown out.

My mother spent many hours every day praying before this altar, and I along with my brothers John and Amil (all of us later to become priests) had to pray our night prayers at the altar before going upstairs to bed. Whenever I tried to sneak upstairs to bed without praying before the altar, I would hear a voice, "Walter, pray" the result; I was praying at the altar my night prayers. Until this day, this altar exists at the homestead with Our Lady of Czestohova Icon with an electric vigil globe constantly lit.