

Seton



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Under the Magisterium of the Catholic Church

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Every day at Seton, gathered before the altar at our noon Angelus, we offer prayers for our families and friends. We encourage you also to pray for other homeschooling families, especially those who may be suffering from illness, unemployment, or other crosses.

We are all united in the Communion of Saints, and God allows us through our prayers to uphold, support, and console other members of His Church. Let us, then, remember to pray for one another as we all walk the path of homeschooling, so that we may all join together in prayer, one day, in Heaven.

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The Mystical Body of Christ

BY DR. MARY KAY CLARK

We celebrate All Saints' Day on November 1st, and All Souls' Day on November 2nd. These two holy days serve as a reminder of the purpose of our earthly lives, and the consequences we face after death, based on how we lived.

On All Souls' Day, we pray for those who, when they died, still retained sins on their souls, and/or still needed to suffer for a time as punishment to cleanse their souls. On All Saints' Day, we remember those who attained Heaven, most of whom likely spent time in Purgatory first.

The Mystical Body of Christ, the Church, is composed of those of us still on Earth, those in Purgatory, and those in Heaven. We on Earth are encouraged by the Church to pray for those in Purgatory, and to ask those in Heaven to pray for us. Those we prayed for when they were in Purgatory will certainly pray for us when they reach Heaven.

All Saints' Day and All Souls' Day are a reminder of the purpose of our lives, not only what is our ultimate goal, eternal life in Heaven, but also how we should be praying for those who are suffering in Purgatory. These feast days should remind us that those we loved in life could be desperate for our prayers to release them from their sufferings in Purgatory, or at least to shorten their time there. Father Hardon, a now-deceased priest, told homeschoolers in a speech that he was afraid no one would pray for him after he died. If a priest who is being considered for canonization

needs prayers, then surely everyone needs prayers.

Many of the saints, such as St. Thomas Aquinas and St. Augustine, have encouraged us to pray for those in Purgatory. They have said that when the second Great Commandment instructs "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself," we must include the suffering souls in Purgatory. In fact, we have an obligation to pray for our deceased family members



who have died. This should include not only relatives we remember, but relatives in the distant past. Truly, we should pray for all members of our family back to Adam and Eve! This prayer, even a brief Hail Mary, could be included in the prayers we say after Holy Communion, or included in our Rosary intentions.

Several saints were allowed to see Purgatory. One such saint was St. Magdalen de Pazzi, a Carmel-

ite nun whose body is incorrupt in the church of Carmelite nuns in Florence. St. Magdalen was given a "tour" of Purgatory, witnessing the sufferings of several people there. After that, she encouraged people to bear their earthly sufferings, offer them up for the sins of the world, and avoid committing sins for which they must suffer in Purgatory.

St. Francis de Sales, a Doctor of the Church, considered one of the greatest of confessors or counselors of the Church, wrote about Purgatory. He wrote that while there is suffering in Purgatory, there is also a peace and happiness. Those suffering are aware that they will attain Heaven, and that their suffering is God's way of preparing them, of cleansing them for the incredible joys and happiness of Heaven. In Purgatory, they cannot commit any sins, even the sin of impatience. They love God with a perfect love, and have their guardian angels by their sides.

One of the recurring topics of the saints who have written or spoken about those in Purgatory is the overwhelming awareness of not being with God in Heaven. This suffering of loss, though temporary, is worse, say the saints, than the pains of suffering of fire. St. Teresa of Avila, in her book *Castle of the Soul*, wrote:

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Dr. Mary Kay Clark has been the Director of Seton Home Study School for more than 30 years. She writes two columns for the Seton Magazine and is the author of *Catholic Home Schooling: A Handbook for Parents*.

your Questions ANSWERED

BY DR. MARY KAY CLARK

What advice do you have for homeschooling several children at once?

If you are only homeschooling one child, you might be able to get by without a high degree of organization. With several children, organization is imperative.

Homeschooling mothers need to think of themselves as managers of their families. They need to develop schedules for themselves and their children, and give responsibilities for each child to help with the home making, so as to organize the home to run efficiently. There are many resources available to help with home management. One of the best is the book *Home Management Essentials* by Ginny Seuffert, which can be purchased through Seton Educational Media and is available as an ebook for Kindle and Nook.

Many families teaching several children have found it helpful to assign older children to help with homeschooling the younger children. A fourth grader can benefit from listening to a first grader read her book. In fact, an older child who needs to review math concepts might be assigned to help a younger child in math.

Homeschooling moms certainly have many challenges, but the results of homeschooling are astounding. It allows us to keep our children from the ravages of a dysfunctional secular society, especially evident in schools where children are daily pressured to conform.

I have discovered that my son does not learn like my daughter did.

There is no question that children have different ways of learning. Some children like the exactness of math and phonics, but not the process of comprehending a whole paragraph, or putting together ideas in chapters and reaching a conclusion. Some like to memorize and can do it easily, while others struggle with it. Some learn more quickly by

listening, some by reading. Some like to learn by pictures; some learn sufficiently by reading.

Usually children learn similarly to their parents. One child may take after his father in certain interests and learning styles, while another may take after his mother. This shows how important it is for both parents to be involved in the teaching. In most families, the mother is more active in the teaching process, but it can be extremely helpful for fathers to explain certain concepts, because a child's learning style may be more in tune with Dad than with Mom.

Each person, not just children, has certain abilities and interests. We homeschooling parents and grandparents just need to adapt our teaching to what is best for each child. This is really a process of trial and error, but over time parents should have a pretty good idea of what works and what does not work. It can take a while, but by the time a student reaches 9th or 10th grade, the student usually has figured out his best learning techniques. So hang on!

Why can't my son read any book he wants for a book report?

The problem is that in order to grade a book report, the grader needs to be very familiar with the book in question. If a student could use any book for a book report, then obviously the grader would not be able to read all the books. However, please do encourage your son to read other books. We have a list of books in the Reading lesson plans for students at each grade level. Some books are out of print, but may be found on the Internet and printed out.

These days, many "children's books" reflect the current secular culture. Try to give your son books of some worth which reflect positive Christian values. If you look on our website and click on our book catalog, you can find good fiction as well as historical novels. We try to buy wholesome books with traditional, strong family values, many from Catholic booksellers.

Why can you not give partial credit for my son's math test answers?

We have a problem with giving partial credit because online tests cannot be scored except right or wrong. Some students take paper tests and send in the work, but it takes a rather long time for a grader to "follow" the working-out of each and every problem and then figure out what percentage of the process is correct. We do our best to make comments and show where mistakes are made, but there is a limit to how much we can do.

Remember that the point of taking the math class is to learn math, not to pass tests. Passing the tests is the result of achieving the goal of learning math. If your student does not know the concepts, there's not much point in taking the tests and simply failing. If your student is having difficulties, then, as the parent, you should look over the work and suggest that the student redo more carefully some of the problems before sending it to Seton. If your student is having trouble with algebra or geometry, and you don't believe you can recognize the mistakes, you might ask someone with a strong math background

Each person, not just children, has certain abilities and interests. We homeschooling parents and grandparents just need to adapt our teaching to what is best for each child.



to look over your student's work and make suggestions.

Seton offers math tutorial disks for sale, which might help your son to understand some concepts a little better because he can replay the lessons until he understands the concepts.

What does an *Incomplete* mean on my daughter's book report?

An Incomplete means that the grader cannot give a grade for some reason, and the book report, or paragraph, or test needs to be redone. It is not a failing grade, or any grade; it is simply a "notice" that the assignment needs to be redone because something is missing or needs to be corrected.

The most common Incompletes are given because the book is not on the approved list of books, as noted in the lesson plans. A second reason is because the student used a different topic sentence than the one given by Seton. Seton chooses certain topic sentences for some reports to encourage the student to think about and write about the main theme of the book, usually, or the main characteristic of a character. If the student chooses another topic, the grader is not prepared to grade it, not to mention that the other topic was not the one assigned.

Sometimes an Incomplete is given because the report contains fewer paragraphs than assigned, or simply because the grader wants to give the student another chance.

We want the student to learn the lessons and to do well on tests and assignments. While there should not be continual "second chances," we know that in many cases, students are not reading the lesson themselves or are misinterpreting the assignment. We encourage work be sent to Seton over the Internet so that if a parent or stu-

dent phones a counselor, the counselor can access the work on the computer and give specific advice.

Some home schooling moms are starting their children with home schooling at 3 or 4 years old? Do you have materials for children this young?

Seton does sell Pre-K materials. Visit our website to see what we offer: www.setonhome.org/prekenrollment. We parents want to teach various things to our young children, but we need to be careful not to push them so much that they become unhappy. Young and old are constantly learning; after all, every day we learn something new. But very young children should not be pressured to do math problems or to read or to do certain activities some "expert" has said "every" child should do.

There are many ways we can and should teach very young children. We teach them how to dress, to put their dirty clothes in the basket, to not touch the dials on the stove, to be obedient when parents give instructions, to be satisfied when they cannot play with an expensive violin, to not scream when they don't get their way.

The best way to help prepare your young children for school is to read to them often, and to run your finger along the words as you read them. Children quickly learn that words have sounds, and that letters make words, and from one line to another are sentences, and whole ideas are between capital letters and the period. It all comes together naturally, and usually at the rate that the child can comprehend.



Dr. Mary Kay Clark has been the Director of Seton Home Study School for more than 30 years. She writes two columns for the Seton Magazine and is the author of *Catholic Home Schooling*.

ANNOUNCEMENT

As a Catholic organization, Seton Home Study School has always had a code of conduct. We all know this code as the Ten Commandments. We have always relied and continue to rely on you, the parent-teachers at home, to ensure that the students live and learn according to the Commandments, even as we work to infuse our teaching materials with the faith and morals of the Catholic Church.

Over the years, Seton has included an Honor Pledge on some of the courses and/or assignments the students are required to submit. However, owing to a recommendation by our accreditation committee that we incorporate an honor code in all our courses, and following in the footsteps of the Catholic schools of our diocese, Seton Home Study School is implementing an Honor Pledge based on the Arlington Diocesan honor pledge. The Seton Home Study School Honor Pledge is as follows: **On my honor as a child of God, I state that I have not received unauthorized help with this assignment.** Beginning January 1, 2014, all students in grades seven through twelve will be required to write or validate this pledge on all submitted assignments.

Seton Home Study School trusts its families, of course. In a culture where honesty means less and less, it behooves us as Catholics to be explicit and conscientious about living virtuously and to set an example of honorable behavior. Full details of the Code of Conduct and Honor Code will be published at www.setonhome.org in December 2013. If you have questions, please contact Christopher Smith at 540-636-2238 or csmith@setonhome.org. We thank you in advance for your support in this matter.



From England, with Love

by Monica Berghout

“Look at those huge rain clouds!” I said to my sister Molly as we scrambled up the wide, sloping green hills of Uffington in our search for the famous 374-foot White Horse carved into the chalky ground. By the time we reached the prehistoric figure, the skies had grown incredibly dark for a British summer afternoon, and deep rumbles of thunder echoed across the hills.

Unruffled, Molly and I traipsed excitedly about the White Horse, carefully inspecting the white chalk, picking our way over the curved strokes, and imagining King Alfred surveying his soldiers. Our mom, looking apprehensively at the ever-darkening sky, suggested we hurry while our dad, his t-shirt a blue speck against the enveloping green, snapped pictures with expert precision. As we were heading down, however, the dark sky opened to release a torrent of water

lot and sopping-wet clothes on the long car ride back home to London, we were enthusiastic about having experienced Chesterton’s lines so literally on our expedition to the White Horse.

Born State-Side

Molly and I were born in Seattle, Washington, and our parents decided to homeschool as soon as I was old enough for Kindergarten. Both my parents wanted to ensure that, above all else, their daughters grew up in a thoroughly Catholic home with a deep love for their faith. They chose Seton primarily because of the excellent textbooks, greatly appreciating both the academic challenge and the genuine Catholicism they provided. I grew up loving my schoolwork, feeling as though my Seton books opened an exciting adventure to me, with each subject a new world waiting to be explored. My parents would sometimes tease Molly and me, threatening to put us in school if we did not finish our assignments on time, to which we responded with frantic promises of assiduous diligence if we could continue being homeschooled!


In 2006, when I was fourteen and Molly was twelve, circumstances of my father’s job gave our family the opportunity to move to London, England. At



first, we were unsure – leave all our family and friends and the only life we had ever known to move to Europe? But our dad, as head of the house, felt strongly that this would be a good experience for our family, and in the end, we could tell that the Holy Spirit was leading us to take this adventure. One detail that made the decision easier was that Molly and I would not have to change schools! We could continue being Seton students and not have to worry about adjusting to the British school system, which could not be more different from the American one.

Ex-Pat Adventures

Life as ex-pats proved to be quite an adventure indeed. Our dad learned to take the tube (London Underground) to work,

The sky grows darker yet
And the sea rises higher
- G.K. Chesterton

in the heaviest British rainstorm I have ever seen. Despite our shrieks and giggles on the fifteen-minute walk to the parking

Travelling with Seton

Living in Europe, we have been able to travel easily to famous Catholic shrines. In France, we filled numerous plastic water bottles at the miraculous spring in Lourdes, were mesmerized by the stained glass windows of King St. Louis IX's chapel Sainte Chapelle, increased our devotion to St. Michael at Mont St. Michel, and gained new appreciation for the Miraculous Medal at the altar of St. Catherine Labouré in Rue de Bac. In Italy, we waved excitedly to Pope Benedict in Rome, gazed in speechless awe and wonder at Michelangelo's masterpieces in the Sistine Chapel, and contemplated the life of St. Padre Pio in San Giovanni. We felt close friendship with the three little shepherds in Fatima, honoured the Divine Infant at His Shrine in Prague, and admired the courage of St. Patrick and Red Hugh O'Donnell in Ireland. These trips continually re-emphasized the deep Catholicism Molly and I were learning in our Seton studies, and we profoundly felt the union and universality of our Catholic Church as well as the richness of its heritage. Visiting Rome last year remains the supreme highlight of my life; I dubbed this city "the most beautiful place in the world" and realized more intensely than ever before the great treasure of the Catholic Faith.

England itself proved to go hand-in-hand with our Seton studies, and

our parents have taken us on many "homeschool field trips" to places connected with our schoolwork. I enjoyed supplementing my study of *The Merchant of Venice* and *Macbeth* with Shakespeare performances at the Globe Theatre and trips to Stratford-Upon-Avon, Shakespeare's home. Visits to Jane Austen's houses in Chawton and Bath and her grave in Winchester Cathedral made my experience of *Pride and Prejudice* much more interesting. My entire family developed a deep love for St. Thomas More both from visiting the places where he lived, worked, was executed, and is buried, and from studying *A Man for All Seasons*. Day trips to Canterbury and G.K. Chesterton's house, sites associated with Chaucer, DeFoe, Gerard Manley Hopkins, Oscar Wilde, T.S. Eliot, and Francis Thompson, and that memorable adventure to the White Horse greatly increased my appreciation for the outstanding education I was receiving through my Seton studies. Perhaps the writers who have meant the most to me, though, are J.R.R. Tolkien and C.S. Lewis. Visiting their colleges and homes at Oxford, Tolkien's birthplace and Oratory in Birmingham, and his inspiration for "the Shire" has made me feel a close kinship with my favourite authors; their work has meant much to me and often has provided the encouragement I need in times of challenge.



our mom drove on the other side of the road, and Molly and I got used to people complimenting us on our "accent." We became accustomed to living in a hundred-year-old house which, understandably, always seemed to need some sort of repair, passing historically significant places labeled with a "Blue Plaque" every day, and replacing the letter z with s (except in our Seton assignments!).

For us, however, the most important part of our move to England has been the rich Catholic heritage that we have discovered here, which has strengthened and inspired our Catholic Faith. Our beloved parish church, the Brompton Oratory, has been another source of continual consolation and inspiration for my entire family. The Italian Baroque architecture, wealth of stunning statues and artwork, rich sacred music, beautiful reverence of both the Extraordinary Form and Novus Ordo Masses, and most importantly the authentic Catholicism taught and upheld by the nine Oratory Fathers have encouraged in each member of my family a firm love and dedication to our Catholic Faith.

My sister, Molly, has always

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The Christmas Star
a poem from the Bracy Family

As I clasp my hands together and pray,
I closed my eyes and wish that today,
Will bring forth good memories.
From Christmas days I've celebrated,
Not so long ago—as a child.

As the Christmas music begins to play,
It suddenly feels just like yesterday,
A bright Christmas Tree, sparkling with lights..
Both big and small colored baubles,
Capturing my heart's delight!
At the top of the tree, there shines a star,
Signifying God's guidance
and His love from afar.

Beneath the tree,
Mysterious presents await.
Curious children, who did their best,
To keep themselves awake till late!
Hoping to catch a glimpse,
Of a jolly old man, they were told.

As we opened the gifts,
With the people we hold most dear,
We must always remember our God most sincere.
This same God in His love,
Gave us His only Son, Jesus, from above,
That all folks, in all nations, may see
True light, which leads to eternity!



Our Christmas Village
from the McWilliam family

Christmas is a time of traditions – unique to each family. Many years ago Katie's grandmother started a Christmas Village under the tree; this village grew over the years as Katie's mother added her magical touch. She passed along pieces of the village to her children hoping they would continue the tradition.

With this seed of a village that has blossomed into an international mountain hamlet, combined with the charm of Chay's antique American Flyer trains, which he started collecting when he was three years old, and a touch of Jamie's Lego world, we enjoy the enchantment of creating the Christmas village each year. As we've sailed around the world, we have celebrated Christmas in New Zealand and Thailand, but nothing is quite the same as celebrating the miracle of the birth of Our Lord at home with family and the magical memories of our Christmas village.



Merry Christmas from our Featured Families

What is a Felsheim Family Christmas?

It looks like... White blankets of snow, sparkling Christmas lights on the front porch, and a tall, fully decorated tree;

It smells like... Fresh pine needles, vanilla candles, and the aroma of homemade Christmas cookies;

It sounds like... Christmas CDs, family music concerts, boisterous laughter, and the crinkle of wrapping paper;

It feels like... Heavy packages in the mail, Grandma's smooth Christmas china, and warm fuzzy blankets;

It tastes like... Steaming hot chocolate, Grandma's fudge, and buttery spritz cookies;

The highlight... Participating in Midnight Mass at our home parish of St. Joseph the Worker Cathedral in La Crosse, WI, to celebrate the most important part of Christmas: Christ's Birth!

Warm wishes from wintery Wisconsin!
Jack, Joyce, Elizabeth, Emily,
Mary, and John



from the Berghout Family

My family loves the British Christmas tradition of miniature mince pies, which consist of tiny butter pie crusts filled with mincemeat, a combination of dried fruit, candied peel, spices, and brandy.

Mince pies flood shops and cafes in England during the Christmas season, and making homemade mince pies for events, parties, and get-togethers is very popular. Several Christmases ago, one of the priests at our parish, the Brompton Oratory, informed us that mince pies actually have a Christian significance and background.

Originally, the little pastry pie crust was supposed to represent the Child Jesus' cradle, and the sweet mincemeat inside was to remind us of our sweet Saviour. Now, not only do we appreciate the delicious taste and Christmas feel of mince pies, but also the unique reminder of the gift of our redemption.





Sitting at the Kids' Table

BY JOHN CLARK

I always seem to wind up at the kids' table. Until recently, I thought this happened by pure serendipity, but I'm beginning to wonder if it occurs by my own subconscious design.

On a Sunday morning in late September, my family ate brunch at Christendom College after Mass, as part of the "Parents' Weekend" festivities. (My oldest son, Athanasius, is now my entry ticket to such assemblies and events where I rub shoulders with the beaux esprits of our little hamlet of Front Royal.)

After navigating the food line, I went back to sit down with my children, breakfast in hand. When I looked around the circular table, I noticed Mary Katherine (4) building a pretend doll house with her scrambled eggs and hash brown square, and Immaculata (6) eating the whipped cream off her waffle (carefully making sure that she did not actually consume any fruit).

Curiosity getting the better of me, I began to look around at the other tables to see what events might be unfolding. Lisa was no longer at our table; she had already gone off to speak with another mom about kids, or fashion, or shoes, or some other very important thing. The priests were eating breakfast with various dignitaries, and some of the teachers were sitting together talking about...whatever teachers talk about when they get together.

It all seemed very intellectual.

Then, as I looked back to my own table, and observed Bonaventure (8) applying strawberry cream cheese to his bagel with a level of precision that would

have made a neurosurgeon proud, it dawned on me: I was once again at the kids' table. I wistfully thought back to my younger years, during which epoch I was forbidden to sit with the adults at my grandmother's house at Thanksgiving and Christmas dinners.

Before age sixteen or so, my younger brothers and cousins and I were told to sit at the "kids' table." Being told to sit at a kids' table at age fifteen is akin to receiving the maximum possible sentence for a crime in which the charges are never announced. I thought there might be two possible reasons for the adult/child conversation segregation.

First, it could have been that the children's dialogue was so unsophisticated that the adults simply could not lower themselves to partake in it. Second, it could have been that the adults' colloquy was so avant-garde and noteworthy that it simply could not be interrupted by the enfant terribles of Cleveland, Ohio.

Still, the adult table struck me as fascinating. "What secrets does it hold?" I pondered.

As I took a little trip down the memory lane of my mind, I started to explain to my little children that, although I was 42 years old, I had never quite "graduated" from the kids' table. At first this bothered me, but I had come to respect the camaraderie, the conviviality, the esprit de corps, if you will (readers, please forgive all the French idioms in this essay—I sat in on Athan's French class that same weekend), of the kids' table. I informed my children that I actually grew to prefer the kids' ta-

ble over adult dining options, but I didn't quite know why.

At this point in the conversation, Dominica (10) put down her fork, and announced the answer, as though she were providing the great reveal in the final chapter of a Dashiell Hammett whodunit.

"I know why you like the kids' table, Daddy," she announced.

"Why is that, Dominica?" I asked her.

"Because at the kids' table, we talk about unicorns and lollipops and monkeys and coloring books."

"What do they talk about at the adult table?" I asked her.

She said: "They talk about money and paying rent, and bills. That just makes you worry. That's why you like it better here."

Many true words were spoken that day, but none truer than these. As Matthew 11:25 reads: "At that time Jesus said, 'I praise You, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that You have hidden these things from the wise and intelligent and have revealed them to infants.'"

We live in a sad and unnecessarily serious world. It is a world ruled by many of those whose "growing up" process meant rejecting the wonders, the innocence, the happiness, and the truths so natural to childhood. Maybe it's time we pulled the

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John Clark, a Christendom College graduate, holds a degree in Political Science and Economics. He is a popular writer and speaker at family and homeschooling conferences.

Surviving Christmas

BY GINNY SEUFFERT

Sometimes it seems like the work for Mom is never ending in our large Catholic families. By Thanksgiving, the first quarter assignments have been completed and the homeschooling is clipping along nicely. Then Bang! Along comes the Christmas season, doubling the work load but halving the class time! It's more than a little discouraging!

I struggle each year to keep Christmas a joyous and holy season, and not just another reason to work even harder than usual because of shopping and entertaining. Here are some ideas I have tried to ease the stress during the Christmas season.

A big part of Catholic family life is family togetherness. Christmas is an ideal opportunity for families and friends to share good times and to build lasting memories. On the other hand, we moms dread the very thought of having guests visit because we lack the time to clean the house or cook the food for company.

Although I give public lectures on home management, I still say that we Catholic homeschooling moms must put the physical state of our homes in proper perspective. I have often remarked to my husband on the way to a visit with family or friends: "I just can't wait to see John and Mary and catch up with their family events. It's been such a long time!" I have no memory of ever saying, "I am so excited to get a chance to check under their couch for dust bunnies!"

Our guests come to see us and our children, not to look critically at the state of cleanliness or neatness of our home. Just do the basics: Straighten up, mop, vacuum, dust, get the kids to help with the surface cleaning. I have found that one of the few times my kids are enthusiastic about cleaning is when company is coming. Often they are actually excited to polish up and set a really formal table with cloth napkins.

Let your children plan and put up the holiday decorations. They may surprise you with the lovely job they do, and are far more likely to keep the house tidy if their own handiwork is being showcased.

Holiday menus do not need to be a big deal, and need not involve planning and cooking a sit-down dinner. A terrific and relatively inexpensive way to entertain is to host a late morning brunch after Mass. Buy some bagels, muffins, or doughnuts; add a fruit tray; serve coffee, tea, and juice. If friends and relatives offer to bring something, agree immediately. Most people, including me, tote only their best baked goods, so generally these offered foods are a real treat.

Friends and relatives can plan a pot luck dinner so that no one household must bear the financial or work burden of hosting a large get-together. As most families supply only one or two dishes, and moms make their best recipes, the holiday spread will be top shelf! Consider hosting an after-dinner wine and cheese or veggie platter party, with families each bringing their own

favorite crackers, chips, and dressing dips. One family planned such an event and the children performed by playing musical instruments, as well as singing Christmas carols and reciting poetry.

Here are a few other ideas: Order Christmas gifts on the Internet to save time traveling and shopping. Purchase tickets for the family to local Christmas productions, sometimes homeschooling families. This promotes seeing friends during the holidays and encourages family closeness through shared experiences.

Consider giving shared family gifts, such as a short family trip to a museum with special Christmas decorations. Buy gifts that encourage family members to do things together, such as playing board games or basketball in the driveway!

Consider buying how-to books for children, such as a cookbook or a sketch book or how to celebrate religious feasts with special home-made decorations. You might consider making an Advent Wreath with your family that can be



Holiday menus do not need to be a big deal, and need not involve planning and cooking a sit-down dinner.

continued on page 12



Ginny Seuffert has been a leading writer and speaker about homeschooling and family management for more than two decades. She has given hundreds of talks at conferences and has written scores of articles on everything from discipline to home management.



Christmas Time in High School

As we move toward December, we all think about Christmas. It's a busy time, and it's easy to put off schoolwork. However, students in high school don't have as much leeway as elementary students. High school courses are serious, requiring consistent attention. Skipping any lessons, or working lightly in foreign language courses, for example, can result in lower grades on tests, which ultimately affects test scores, even standardized test scores. This could be a problem when trying to find financial aid for college, since scholarships usually depend on standardized test scores. Thus, it is important for high school students to consider an organized and prudent approach to the holidays.

If the assignments you originally scheduled up to the holiday season are finished, then take time off from schoolwork as scheduled. However, if those assignments are not complete, it would be well worth it to finish them, even if on a part-time basis, during the usual "holidays." If you planned to finish the year on a certain date in May or early June, it will be frustrating in summer not to have met your goals. In fact, in the late spring, students upset with being behind tend to do poorly on their tests.

Take a good look at each course and determine where you want to be before starting again in January. Some subjects will allow shortcuts, while other subjects will need full daily attention between now and Christmas. If necessary, go to the local college library, find a quiet study carrel, and stay there to work without interruption.

Christmas trees and nativity sets are beautiful and inspiring, but can be distracting for students who need to finish work before vacation. Moms should consider delaying the Christmas decorations until certain assignments are completed. Families will be able to celebrate Christmas without a worry if only they wait until pending assignments are finished. Consider taking only a two week break from home schooling, from Sunday, December 22, when your family puts up the Christmas tree, until January 7th, the day after Epiphany. Everyone will feel much better and won't have the frustration of trying to "catch up" in January.

Finish your work and have a Happy and Holy Christmas season!



Mystical Body of Christ

continued from page 3

"The pain of loss or the privation of the sight of God, exceeds all the most excruciating sufferings we can imagine."

Father Schouppe, who compiled the book *Purgatory*, a collection of the writings of the saints about Purgatory, concluded: "They wish to be there in the state wherein God pleases, and as long as it shall please Him. They cannot sin, nor commit slight imperfection. They love God more than they love themselves; they love Him with a perfect, pure, and disinterested love. They are consoled by angels. They are assured of their eternal salvation, and filled with a hope that can never be disappointed in its expectations. Their bitterest anguish is soothed by a certain profound peace. It is a species of Hell as regards the sufferings; it is a Paradise as regards the delight infused into their hearts by charity... Such are the teachings of the doctors [of the Church], from which it follows that if the pains of Purgatory are rigorous, they are not without consolation."

*O Lord God Omnipotent,
I ask You by the Precious Blood
of Your Divine Son Jesus, that
was shed in His bitter crowning
of thorns, deliver the souls in
Purgatory, and among them all,
particularly that soul who is in
the greatest need of our prayers,
in order that the soul may not be
delayed in praising You in Your
glory and in blessing You forever.
Amen.*

Sitting at the Kids' Table

continued from page 10

plug on the TV news, put down the political journals, and turned to our children for some wisdom and insights on the way things ought to be. And the beauty of the way they are right now. As homeschooling parents, with the time spent with our little ones, maybe it's time we allow ourselves to learn that the most important lessons come from the hearts of our own children.

Maybe it's time we all grab a waffle, and sit at the kids' table.

Surviving Christmas

continued from page 11

pulled out every year. Consider other projects for the whole family, such as making a stable for the Nativity figures, and adding to it each year.

The most important thing to remember is that Christmas is primarily a religious celebration. Let's make sure that we give the Nativity set a place of honor and even say the daily family Rosary and other prayers near it. As we shop and make plans for family and friends, let's remember to give to those less fortunate. Most parishes have projects to help the poor in the community.

Scripture reports that when the pagans saw the early Christians, they marveled and said, "See how they love one another!" This Christmas, may the same be said for each one of us! Merry Christmas to all our Seton families!



From England, with Love
continued from page 7

dreamed of a career in music, expecting to pursue the piano. The majestic and lavish sounds of the organ at the Oratory, however, left her with a love of this kind of instruments and the sacred music of the Church. She switched from the piano to the organ, taking lessons with the organists from the Oratory, St. Paul's Cathedral, and the Royal College of Organists School; currently she is completing her last year of Seton high school and auditioning for admittance to a college program in the organ at the Royal College or Royal Academy of Music. She hopes one day to bring the wealth of sacred music she has discovered here in England back to the United States as an organist, organ teacher, and choir director, inspiring the next generation to preserve the traditional music of the Church.



As for myself, I am 21 now, have just graduated with a university degree from the Royal Academy of Dance, and have embarked on a year-long apprenticeship with a Christian dance company here in London. I sincerely believe that I owe my academic success at university (I graduated with First Class Honours) to the excellent education Seton gave me. I also attribute my future "mission" - being a Catholic voice in the world of dance, and using dance as a means with which to evangelize - to growing up in a deeply-committed, Catholic homeschooling family and receiving such a rich and thorough Catholic education through the Seton curriculum.

Molly and I know full well the challenges we all face as homeschoolers and as Catholic young people. Any Seton student who has ever felt overwhelmed, lonely, isolated, or insufficient, I sympathize with you. I also champion you. My sister and I are here to tell you that, no matter what, it's worth it. Hold onto your identity as a



homeschooler, as a Seton student, and as a Catholic. If you let it, this identity will take you on an adventure of beauty, truth, and meaning greater than anything you can imagine. May we all go out in courage with hope and faith to carry on King Alfred's fight for truth, goodness, and beauty in our own generation.



*"For a child has been born for us, a son given to us; authority rests upon his shoulders; and he is named Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace."
Isaiah 9:6-7*

Holiday greetings – from our family to yours! Our hearts anxiously await the coming and birth of the Messiah, Christ our King, this Christmas and also the birth of our seventh child this Thanksgiving! May your holidays be merry and bright as laughter, warmth, and the richness of family traditions fill our homes, our hearts, and our lives!



Merry Christmas!

The Madrid Family
Jon and Kelly
Audrey, Monica, Blaise,
Maximilian, Paul, and Michael



Elements of the Domestic Monastery

BY FATHER PABLO STRAUB

At first it seems contradictory that there would be similarity between those who marry and those who go into a monastery or the priesthood. Can there be any two things more unlike? But there is a great, great similarity between the Sacrament of Matrimony and the Sacrament of Holy Orders. When a person chooses one man or woman with whom to enter into Matrimony, he or she is giving up every other man or woman. When a person enters a seminary or monastery or convent, he or she is giving up marriage with every man or woman, but choosing to live entirely to please one Person, God.

Everyone has a “vocation” to seek God. When God is calling a man to the religious life or the priesthood, God is saying, “Give Me your heart. Everything, all happiness I could have given you through a sweet lady companion, I will give to you directly.” A woman may search for happiness in marrying and loving a man. But Jesus might say to her, “I am calling you to give all of yourself to Me directly. I will make you happy directly.” On the other hand, God may call a man and a woman to find Him by seeking together.

People call priests “Father” because, in a way, as he helps people grow in the spiritual life, he is like a father of a family. Many sisters or nuns are called “Mother”; they are like mothers because they serve

others. In some countries, even young novices are called “Mother”. In Mexico, I saw a very old lady pass by a very young nun, and she called the young nun “Mother”. Those who are called to the convent or monastery or seminary know life is all about fatherhood and motherhood, caring for others and their spiritual and temporal welfare.

Priests are continually happy for their spiritual children, just as parents are happy when teaching their children about Jesus, and when they show signs of growing in the Faith. Priests and parents both have a deep sense of the beauty of what Jesus is doing, seeing how Jesus draws people to Himself, and how Jesus makes them holy. This is the mission of Jesus, to draw souls to Him. He does it his chiefly through priests, nuns, and parents, and this is why you can talk about a domestic monastery.

Monastic life is characterized by poverty, chastity, and obedience. Monasteries started out with religious men gathering in caves and living in extreme poverty. St. Benedict and other saints who started monasteries drew their inspiration from the life of Jesus. They

wanted to be imitators of Christ. Jesus said, “If anyone would come after Me, let him take up his cross and follow Me.” We know we are all called to follow Jesus and to imitate Him. Some follow Him as priests or religious, but some follow Him in marriage. We are to imitate Him in whatever way He calls us. To follow Jesus is to imitate His virtues and His way of living in the way that we live, whether in a convent or in a family.

Whichever way we are called, in the monastery or convent or family, we are to be poor in spirit, pure and chaste, and obedient to Jesus. We should choose detachment from things, like those in the monasteries choose poverty. Jesus chose poverty by being born in a stable, by being chased into Egypt on the order of a minor king, by being

buried in a borrowed hole carved out of a rock. Families must follow Jesus in poverty by being detached from things, by not falling into the “consumer society,” by not being so concerned about what they own. Don’t “get hooked” on luxuries; don’t “get hooked” on the computer. Teach your children to have the spirit of poverty. Teach them to be detached

We are to imitate Him in whatever way He calls us. To follow Jesus is to imitate His virtues and His way of living in the way that we live, whether in a convent or in a family.

from the owning of things. Teach your children to give to charities, to help with charitable events. Teach them to tithe with their allowance and learn to give to Catholic causes.

In addition to poverty, the men and women who choose the priesthood or religious life or the convent have chosen the virtue of chastity. To follow Jesus, members of the family also need to be chaste. Indeed, there is not a Catholic on the face of the Earth who is not called to closely follow Jesus in being chaste. The junk on television is not pleasing to God. Don't let your children be destroyed in your own home by this junk. Your domestic monastery must practice chastity and purity in all things, rooted in a chaste marriage. The chastity of a married person consists in loving one's spouse with a whole heart, devoting oneself to one's family, practicing vigilance, and not allowing one's eyes or minds to wander over anything that is not in line with what Jesus Christ wants us to see or think about.

In addition to poverty and chastity, the monastery and the family should practice obedience. Teach your children to be obedient to you and to the laws of God. Help your children to develop a well-formed conscience. Your children need to learn that if others tell them to

do something wrong, it is not required to do that thing. It is never consistent with obedience to do something that is not respectful of Jesus; rather, such is vice. We must always be obedient to the Church. We must always be respectful of Jesus, and of those He has placed in proper authority over us. Foster obedience in your children, especially in church.

The Holy Eucharist is the heart of the monastic life, and must be the heart of family life. All children should love the Eucharist. In the Eastern Rite, when a baby is baptized, the baby also receives his First Holy Communion by receiving the Blood of Christ. Those Eastern Rite babies and little children regularly receive Jesus at the liturgy after being Baptized. I see little children only two or three years old, coming from homeschooling families, and they ask questions like, "Mommy, when is the priest going to make Jesus come down from Heaven?" And I hear them ask, "Mommy, tell me when the bread becomes Jesus!" In the Roman Rite, we say that at the age of reason, or at seven or eight years old, children should receive their First Holy Communion, but many little ones learn very early from their parents about Jesus and have a good "sense of Jesus." I once heard a little one say, "Why does Jesus have nails in His hands and feet? Can I take

them out?" All children should love the Eucharist.

Where there is love, where there is charity, there God is. Help your children to learn love and forgiveness. Teach them not to be hurtful. As parents, make a constant effort not to annoy one another, to live charity between yourselves, and foster it among your children. Teach your children to share everything and to help each other all the time, with consistency. We are working on a new world, and it starts at home, in the domestic monastery.

Of course, everything begins with prayer. Jesus said, "Without Me, you can do nothing!" Remember that; teach your children that: "Without Me, you can do nothing!" St. Paul wrote, "I can do all things in Him Who strengthens me." Without constant prayer, you can not receive the strength from God to do the impossible, to bring up saintly children in this world. That strength can come only through prayer. Pray constantly with your children. Pray in love and with love. Do not let prayer be just a formality but pray with your whole heart and soul. Pray always.

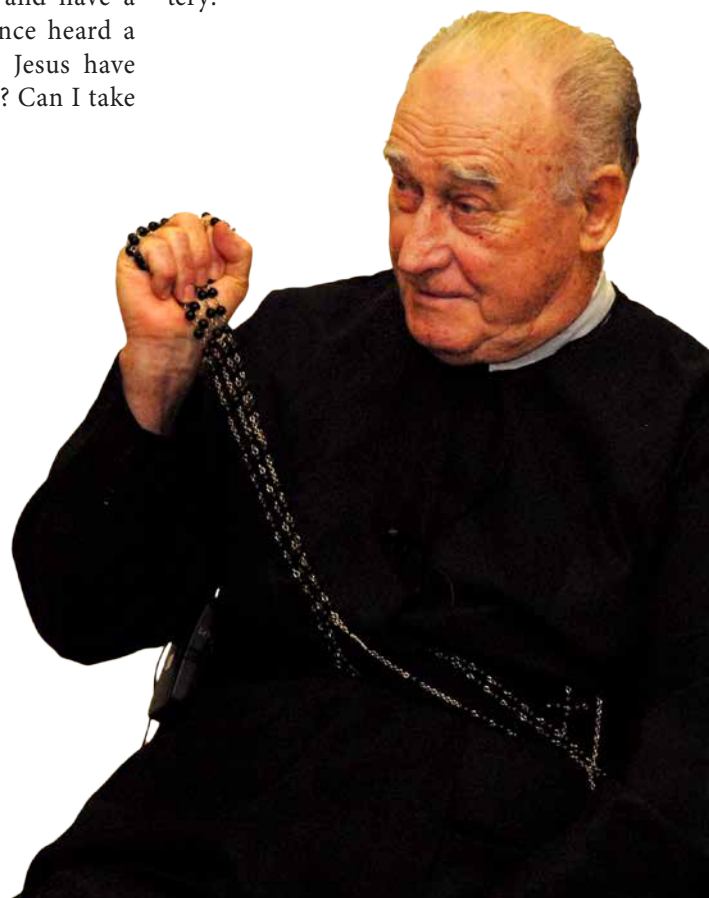
Be happy in your beautiful monastery!

Fr. Pablo Straub

Founder of the Mission Helpers of the Holy Savior
and strong advocate of Catholic homeschooling.

October 21, 2013

Father Pablo Straub passed into eternal life on October 21. He was a Redemptorist priest for 55 years, devoting his life to missionary work in Puerto Rico, the Philippines, Peru, and most recently to working with the people of rural Mexico. Fr. Straub was passionate about the Faith, loved the common man, and could be all things to all people. He moved thousands with the uncompromising faith, unconditional love, and compassion he demonstrated in the countless appearances he made on EWTN, at retreats, and on missions. Even when aged and infirm, Father Straub never ceased his tireless preaching of Christ and the Gospel, so moved by the fire of God's love that in the act of preaching, he was seen more than once to grow suddenly vigorous and healthy again. A proponent of homeschooling and friend of Seton from the earliest days, he gave numerous talks at homeschool conferences. This article is based on a talk he gave for homeschooling families in 2007.



A Letter Home from College after Homeschooling

Dear Mom,

You were my only teacher in high school, but I couldn't have asked for a better one. You taught me more than you'll ever know and much more than I could ever ask for. By homeschooling me, you changed the very core of my being from a lost and bewildered little girl into the strong woman I am proud to be. It was through your example and growth that I have become the only thing I have ever wanted to be – I have become me.

I remember my reaction to your telling me you were homeschooling me (and my brother and sisters). I remember that I fought you tooth and nail with every breath in my thirteen-year-old body. I simply couldn't see how removing me from mainstream society was good for me in any way. I saw only my isolation and loneliness, and I saw myself unable to ever regain any semblance of normalcy.

It makes me laugh now to think about just how ridiculous I actually was. Your brave decision to homeschool all of us changed my life forever. You removed us from the grips of public opinion, peer pressure, and high school drama. I remember initially wanting to be a part of the drama instead of just looking at it from the very distant outside, and then I remember shaking my head as I watched my friends slowly go downhill.

Without the distractions of peers and appearance and the "drama" I had wanted so badly, I was able to truly become the person that I was meant to be, instead of a carbon copy of a typical high school student. You gave me the gift of individuality and a freedom from peer pressure. I was able to grow and learn and apply the morals and virtues and characteristics that you instilled in me.

But most importantly, I was able to

learn more about you. I had loved you my whole life as my mother, but it was not really until we began homeschooling that you became my best friend. I learned more about your opinions, and it was then I began to fully realize just how alike we are. I learned that I was able to talk to you about almost anything, and you were always there when I needed you.

Perhaps no one can ever truly understand how much you have taught me, but to say that you taught me how to be me through your love and example is probably the simplest explanation. You gave me the gift of myself and the gift of the greatest friend anyone could ask for. And for those gifts I will perhaps never truly be able to find the words to thank you enough.

Love, Jacqui



Wesołych Świąt! That's Polish for "Merry Christmas!" from the Gowans family.

In Polish culture, Christmas Eve is the highlight of Christmas, and is celebrated with prescribed traditions and dishes of *Wigilia*, the Christmas Eve vigil supper in Poland. "*Wigilia*" comes from the Latin verb *vigilare*, "to watch", and literally means "eve". *Wigilia* consists of a meatless meal, all-white table, and sharing of the *oplatek*, a Christmas wafer symbolizing bread and our Christian and familial communion.

Christ's birth remains the much anticipated focal point in *Wigilia*. Strands of hay are placed underneath the tablecloth, where Christ in the manger is the literal centerpiece of the

Wigilia dinner table. The Gowans' Christmas centerpiece is a simple and humble clothespin, one that our son Hugh made as a toddler. Each Christmas Eve, it adorns our table, accompanied by our enduring love.

The *oplatek* is broken and passed to everyone at the table. Everyone breaks off a piece of their *oplatek* to share with everyone else. The man of the house leads the prayer, which includes wishing luck and joy in the coming year, for Christ has been born.

This Christmas Eve, we raise our *oplatek* to each of you, including you in our prayers for good health, good family, good homeschooling, and a very joyous and blessed Christmas!

The Gowans Family

A la ru

Translated by
SISTER M. LAURENT, C.S.J.

SPANISH FOLK SONG FROM ARIZONA



1. "Go to sleep, Lit-tle Je-sus." Ma - ry soft - ly sings to you. —
2. An - gels hov - er a - round you, Shep - herds look with won - der too. —



Ev - er so gen - tly she rocks you As she sings to you, a — la ru.
Ma - ry so lov - ing - ly guards you As she sings to you, a — la ru.



A la ru — a la me, — A la ru —



a la me, — A la ru, a la me, a la ru. —



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**CATHOLIC
CROSSWORD**

The First Christmas

1					2				3													
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		6																				
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10									11													
12																						
									13													

ACROSS

- 1 This deacon was the first martyr; his feast is December 26.
- 4 Catholics celebrate the feast of the Immaculate ___ of Mary on December 8.
- 7 The feast mentioned above means that Mary was conceived without ___ sin.
- 9 The holy season of prayer and penance before Christmas
- 10 When Our Lady appeared in Mexico, she appeared to Saint Juan ___.
- 11 Mary laid Jesus in this.
- 12 Three ___ Men came from the East to pay homage to the Baby King.
- 13 Jesus was born in this town.

DOWN

- 1 These were the first people who visited Mary, Joseph, and Baby Jesus.
- 2 He was the wicked king who tried to kill Jesus and ordered the death of the Holy Innocents.
- 3 The beloved disciple; he wrote a Gospel, and his feast is December 27.
- 5 On the third Sunday of advent, the candle is ___ instead of purple.
- 6 The feast of the Holy ___ is celebrated on December 28.
- 8 On December 12, Catholics celebrate the feast of Our Lady of ___, who appeared in Mexico.



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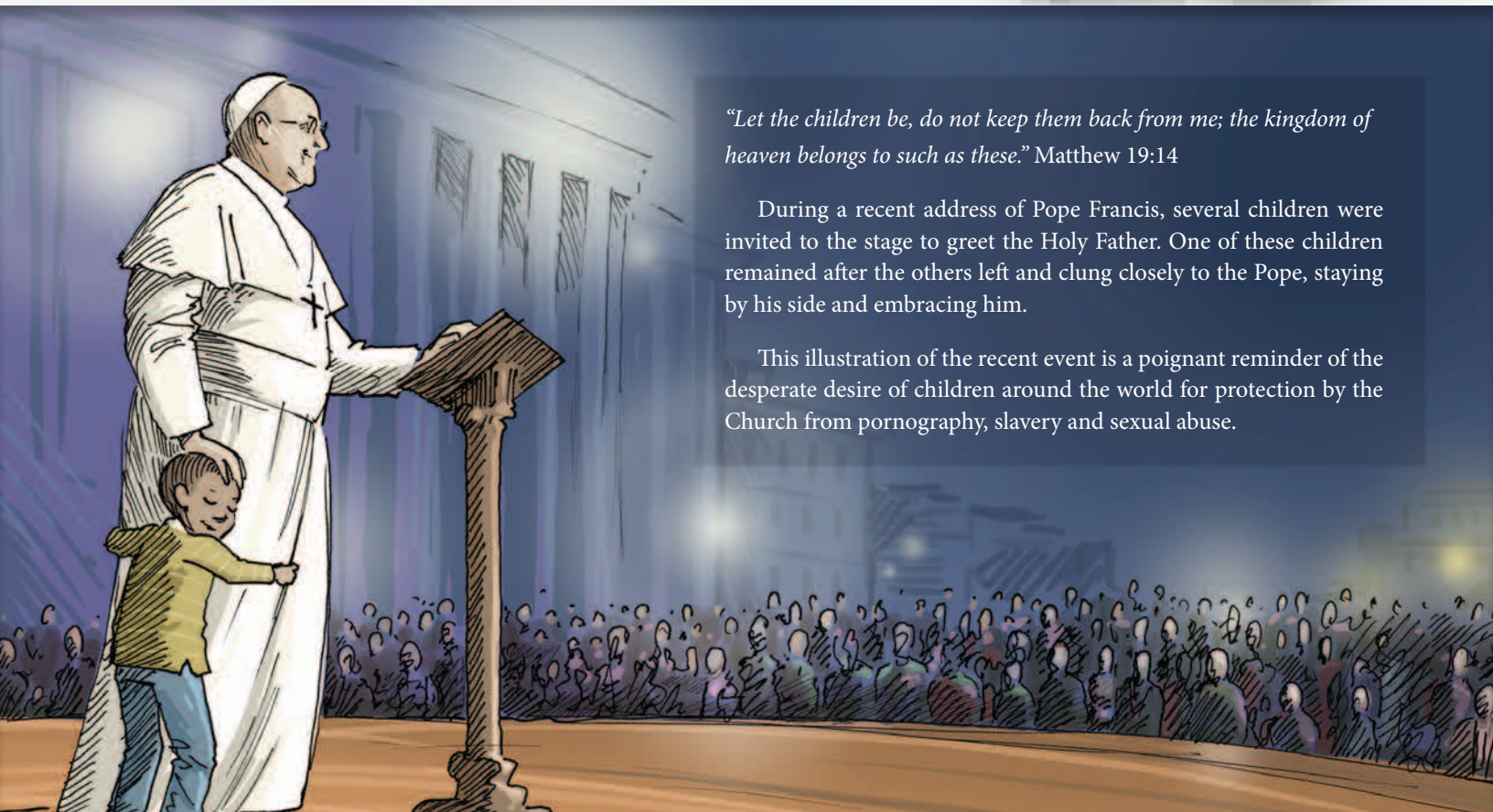
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“Let the children be, do not keep them back from me; the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these.” Matthew 19:14

During a recent address of Pope Francis, several children were invited to the stage to greet the Holy Father. One of these children remained after the others left and clung closely to the Pope, staying by his side and embracing him.

This illustration of the recent event is a poignant reminder of the desperate desire of children around the world for protection by the Church from pornography, slavery and sexual abuse.