

Seton MAGAZINE

Under the Magisterium of the Catholic Church

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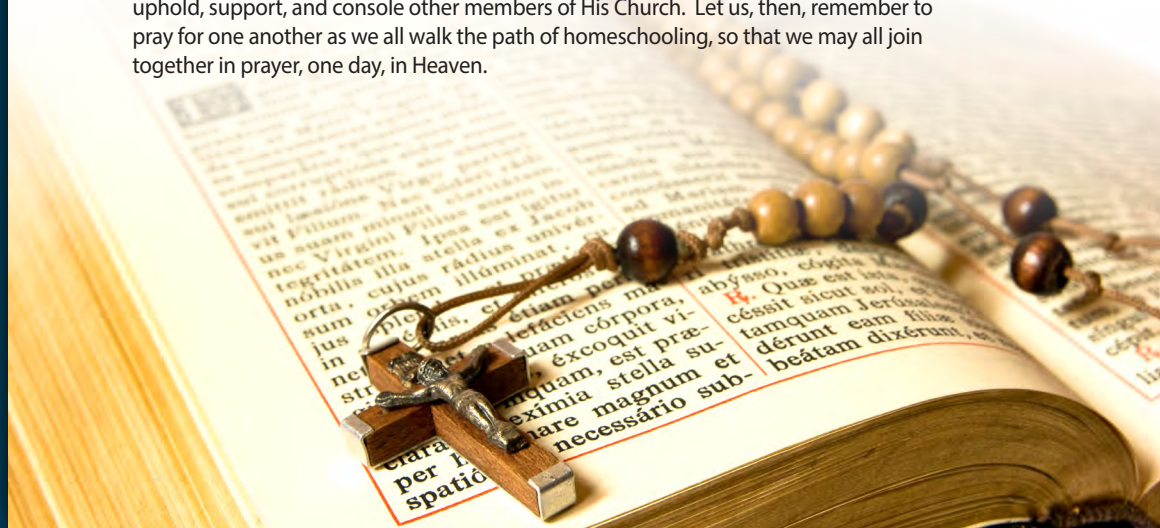
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Every day at Seton, gathered before the altar at our noon Angelus, we offer prayers for our families and friends. We encourage you also to pray for other homeschooling families, especially those who may be suffering from illness, unemployment, or other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



SAINT JOSEPH

MODEL FOR FATHERS, PROTECTOR OF FAMILIES

BY SARAH ROSE

The month of March is dedicated to Saint Joseph. Chosen by God to be the foster-father of Jesus, Saint Joseph is perhaps the greatest saint, the one person, after Mary, closest to the Heart of Jesus. Scripture refers to him as a “just man.” Saint Joseph’s justice is clear in his relationship with God, with his family, and in his work.

Joseph showed great trust in God and faithful obedience to His Laws. He trusted God’s messenger, the Archangel Gabriel, when told to take Mary as his wife. Joseph probably did not understand God’s plan fully, but he trusted and obeyed without question. He trusted God again when he was told to take his family to Egypt to save Jesus from Herod. Joseph was also faithful to the law of Moses. He took the Baby Jesus to be presented in the Temple, “as it is written in the law of the Lord” (Lk. 2:23).

Saint Joseph’s actions are meant to be imitated. Fathers, ask yourselves, “Do I trust God to help me provide for my family, even when I don’t see His Will clearly, and when my family’s security and livelihood are in danger? Am I faithful in obeying God’s Laws, down to the small details?”

Saint Joseph is a model of justice in his relationship with his family. He had an incredibly demanding vocation: to protect and provide for the Son of God and His Mother. Which father would not tremble at such a responsibility? Today, our society and even our nation’s laws deny the value of fatherhood. It is hardly surprising that men listen to what is told them—that they are unnecessary

in the lives of their children—and act accordingly. Our world is full of irresponsible fathers and broken homes.

Today, more than ever, men need to turn to Saint Joseph for inspiration. Joseph accepted his responsibility as head of the Holy Family. He had free will; he could have said “no.” He could have said that the Child was not his, and refused to spend all his energy and money to provide for Him. Many of us in Joseph’s position probably would have made the excuse: “I didn’t choose this; it is not my responsibility; I want to live my own life, with children that I can call my own.” But he did not. Saint Joseph did what God asked of him and took Mary and her unborn Child into his home.

There is another lesson here. As good as he was, Joseph was not as holy as Mary. Yet, God chose him to be the head of the Holy Family. Mary and Jesus followed him and submitted to him. God has ordained that the husband should be the head of the family. This is not because men are better or wiser than their wives. God gave men and women different strengths and different roles. He chose men to be leaders, not to fulfill their own selfish desires, but that they might serve those entrusted to their care and even be willing to die for them, as Christ died for His Bride, the Church. We can be sure that Saint Joseph would have died for his Family.

Finally, Joseph is the model for all workers. He is Saint Joseph the Worker. Often, work can seem like mere drudgery. The Catechism of the Catholic Church, however, tells us that work



is not only necessary, but good and even sanctifying. The Catechism says, “Work honors the Creator’s gifts and the talents received from him. It can also be redemptive. By enduring the hardship of work in union with Jesus, the carpenter of Nazareth ... man collaborates in a certain fashion with the Son of God in his redemptive work” (2427).

Saint Joseph certainly made good use of the talents God gave him. The items he made in his carpentry shop must have been valued for their quality craftsmanship. Joseph endured the hardship of work, as well. His hands must have been rough and covered with cuts and scrapes. He was a poor man, but he labored honestly.

We homeschooling families should pray to Saint Joseph for guidance and protection. Fathers especially should take him as their model. When faced with poverty, unemployment, temptation, or doubt, turn to Saint Joseph. Saint Joseph the Just, pray for us!



Sarah Rose is Copy Editor for Seton Magazine. She graduated from Christendom College in 2008 with a B.A. in Philosophy. She and her husband Matthew were married in June 2013, and are expecting their first baby in April.

your Questions ANSWERED

BY DR. MARY KAY CLARK

What do you consider the most important factor for successful home schooling?

Living a life of prayer is the single most important factor for successful homeschooling. Living a life of prayer is also the single most important factor for a happy Catholic family life and a happy marriage. Prayer helps us to understand the importance of daily self-sacrifice, patience, and understanding. Children must sometimes be pressured to join in family prayer, but ultimately, the graces from Jesus and Mary do touch their innocent hearts. The graces that your children received at Baptism are still within your children, helping them to be ready to receive the Catholic teachings. Your daily Catholic lifestyle gives the witness to your children that appeals to their hearts and souls. The family that prays together, stays together, as Father Patrick Peyton of the Family Rosary Crusade taught. The family that prays together can withstand the difficulties that inevitably come into all our lives. Our homeschooling families can progress in the spiritual life, often because of the Catholic homeschooling studies which are permeated with the messages of Jesus and His saints. Don't let anything interfere with your daily family prayer life.

My young son in first grade is doing his math work so quickly, I would like to advance him to the next grade level. Would you recommend that?

Is he anxious to keep moving ahead at a quick pace? Some young students think they would like to "advance" to the next grade level. However, while moving to the next grade level gives them a great feeling of success, many quickly become "tired" of the more difficult or time-consuming longer problems. You could start him on those particular subjects or kinds of problems for which he seems to want to move ahead, but be cautious and don't pressure him. Be alert to a situation where he might become frustrated or uninterested. Often young

children find the next level moves at a pace that is just too much in time and/or in effort. You don't want your son to lose his ambition because he suddenly needs to apply himself more than he anticipated. More students benefit by repetition than by moving ahead to an advanced level. See what kinds of interesting math "games" and other activities you can find to keep him interested and practicing the concepts he has already learned.

May I have the answer keys to the tests so I am sure my son has learned all the concepts?

We cannot supply the keys to tests which the students take to be graded by Seton, but certainly as the parent-teacher, you should look over your child's work and encourage him to review his test answers or compositions before sending them to Seton. In fact, we encourage you to do that, especially to make sure that the student is doing good work. Too many students in the schools today are rushing through their work and not adequately preparing themselves for the work which will be required in later grades. With homeschooling, parents should encourage their children to take the necessary extra time to do the best work possible.

My high school student wants to know, what is the best preparation for college, or for obtaining a great job in the future?

The best preparation for college or obtaining a great job is reading and writing. We could put it this way: read, read, read, and then write, write, write. Reading helps a person to become educated about a great number of things, while writing helps a person to develop analytical skills and to advance new ideas.

In addition, do as much as you can to learn all you can from the high school courses you are taking. Not only are good grades important to the colleges, but high SAT or ACT scores are important to them as well. High school is not a time to relax in regard to your studies. You need to see high school as a practice field, a serious preparation for college courses.

College grades on a transcript are important for future jobs. Potential employers like to see good grades for college, but the best preparation for good college grades is good study habits in school.

Don't forget that Seton offers all kinds of additional resources for many of the high school courses.

Don't forget that Seton offers all kinds of additional resources for many of the high school courses. Be sure to look on our website for what resources are available for each course. Seton has both audios and tutorial videos available for several high school courses, and we are adding more on a

regular basis. Seton is working on online high school courses as well, especially in the area of science.

My high school son likes to work on the computer, but I am nervous that he will not get his work done.

Seton has many good online helps for high school students, but it is easy for young people to get distracted and not focus on what needs to be done on the computer. Keep the computer in a main room, the family room or the dining room, so that you know when he is doing research or educational work, and not skimming through the Internet where trouble lurks! Some parents limit the amount of time a student can spend on the computer so it does not become addictive.

We have reached a time when high school students do need to know how to find educational material on the computer, but they also need to learn how to control what they are looking at. Cell phones that have access to the internet are dangerous for elementary and high school students, not to mention for everyone else. The dangers lurking on the Internet are so extreme that we all need to use strong will power to stay off the Internet except when necessary. I can testify to crying mothers and wives because of this problem.

Why do you teach phonics up to and including 5th grade? My son is a good reader!

It has been traditional for young American students to learn phonics, even up to 5th and 6th grades. At this stage of our American educational culture, the use of the computer has undermined success in spelling, reading, writing, and vocabulary. The more courses we can teach to strengthen fundamental reading, thinking, and writing skills, the more our students will succeed in all their academics. Seton believes that the very youngest students, even in first grade, should be learning to write sentences and even three or four sentence paragraphs. While we don't know what elementary courses will be taught in future American schools, Seton intends to continue with our strong reading, thinking, writing, grammar, and phonics curriculum for which the American Catholic schools were famous!

We encourage you to purchase a good dictionary, perhaps even a picture dictionary, and encourage your son to be interested in words. A great dictionary and a great thesaurus can be gifts that are appreciated for years to come. Crossword puzzle books also help with thinking, spelling, and phonics. Encourage students who are interested in a particular area of history or science to find books at the library which contain indexes and glossaries which they can review for their knowledge of the topics.

Where can I obtain information on the national public school Common Core program to hand on to my friends?

An organization that is run by Catholics and that has been in the forefront regarding education issues has produced numerous articles and pamphlets on the Common Core program. You can go on

the Internet to Phyllis Schlafly's Education Reporter at <http://www.eagleforum.org/topics/common-core.html>. Much of the material is free or available for only a couple of dollars. Catholic parents need to be concerned with the Common Core program which has been accepted by many Catholic dioceses. We believe most Catholic parents are not aware of the secular textbooks being used in the Catholic schools that are promoting the current "social" agenda.

Sometimes I feel alone in my home schooling. What do you suggest?

Contact someone you know who is homeschooling, and see if there is a support group in your neighborhood. Contact people in your parish and tell them that you are looking for a Catholic homeschooling support group. Contact Cecilia at Seton (540-622-5526) who keeps a list of families who have agreed to allow us to give out their names to other families in their area. Ask relatives or close friends if you might "talk over" ideas with them from time to time. Ask relatives if anyone might be willing to come and help you a few times a week, either teaching or baby-sitting or even grocery shopping or running errands. Find a "retired" homeschooling mom who might be willing to help, or even talk on the phone to offer ideas. Consider starting your own support group with even just one other mother; you could have breakfast or lunch maybe one or two days a month. Consider having a field-trip day once a month with another Catholic homeschooling family. Read the Seton Magazine and online blogs and join the discussions.

The Seton staff prays every day, and our staff priest says Mass every day for our Seton families. We encourage our families as well to pray not only for their own families, but for each other. Start your day with prayer, asking the Blessed Mother and your patron saint to help you throughout the day. Pray with your children every morning before you begin, asking their patron saints to help.



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

GPA CHANGE CLARIFICATION

Dear families,

When you make a mistake, it's best just to acknowledge it and move on. So, we want to tell you that Seton made a mistake in trying to implement a new 4-point GPA system. Although we thought the new system would be fair and helpful to our students, it quickly in practice turned out to be unworkable. Effective immediately, we are reverting to the old system of generating 4-point GPA's which we have had for several years.

If you didn't receive a grade report or transcript during the couple of weeks we used the new system, your 4-point GPA will be the same one you have seen in the past.

Remember, a student's 100-point GPA is the student's official Seton GPA, and is the GPA which we use for college applications, etc. Student 100-point GPA's have not been affected by any of the changes.

For a full explanation of how Seton calculates a student's 4-point GPA, you may go to the web page: www.setonhome.org/gpa. If you have any questions about high school GPA's or grades, you may want to contact our high school guidance department.

We apologize for any inconvenience or confusion in this matter.

Schooling in Four Seasons with Seton

"He is like a tree planted by streams of water that yields its fruit in its season, and its leaf does not wither.
In all that he does, he prospers."
Psalm 1:3

Jim & Betsy Shanley



Jim

This past February, our daughter Katie married her fellow Christendom graduate, Peter Spiering. It was one of those joyful rest stops on our family's journey of life. In the whirlwind of such a milestone day, you just have to pause and take it all in; as you've heard, and maybe said yourself, "Children grow up too fast."

Remember how it was as new parents? You're so concerned about every little thing. What the baby eats or doesn't eat, when she sleeps/doesn't sleep, and so on. Remember her first sneeze, when you leaped for the phone and speed-dialed the pediatrician? Fast forward a few years, and maybe a few babies, and then a



sneeze elicits only a "cover your mouth!"

In our early days in Florida—the pediatrician on speed-dial period—we came across some disturbing news. It was a story in our local paper about a trading card company promoting cards that featured criminals, some rather gruesome. I was unsettled for days, but it gave me the germ of an idea. Could a trading card be promoted that featured good and holy role models for children? The idea took shape, and two years later, we launched the Holy Traders, trading cards that feature saints.

The cards were a hit, particularly with homeschoolers. Seton Home Study School was one of our first customers. We found out later that Seton is always



looking for sound materials to help Catholic families raise their children strong in the Faith.

As we were starting our family, we learned about Seton and the integrity of their program. After that, the decision to homeschool with the Seton curriculum became an easy choice.

As the kids were growing up and the years began to move faster, we wanted to introduce the family to the four seasons. The logic was that, if you can't slow the passage of time, at least you can break it into four observable units! I loved south Florida; I grew up there and have many wonderful memories. But our dream was to find a location that had three elements: a strongly orthodox diocese, a vibrant homeschool community, and four seasons. So, for the next four years, we searched for this dream location.

I'll let my better half take up our story from here...



Betsy

Homeschooling? Eighteen years ago when we started considering it, that word always elicited a raised eyebrow. Back then, before it became quite the fashion, it seemed to go hand-in-hand with my Catholic conversion, and my open-to-life kind of lifestyle. But the alternative? The thought of sending our precious little ones to the public school seemed frightening. So Katie turned five, and thus we began...

For the first two years, I improvised with early learning books from the local K-Mart. Meanwhile,

we moved to Front Royal, Virginia, where my husband Jim had been offered a position with Seton Home Study School. You guessed it, we started the Seton curriculum that fall.

Katie was in second grade, Emma in kindergarten, Clara and Sam were preschoolers, and I was pregnant with Richard. Jim suggested that I try the full curriculum for Katie. I told him that I would give it a try. It wasn't long though before I found some subjects a bit challenging, if not overwhelming.

I spoke with a Seton counselor about my





struggles, and she suggested that I focus on assignments and material relevant to the final exams. I adopted the strategy of reviewing the quarterly tests ahead of time. This way I would know what in the lesson plans were the most important concepts to ensure my children mastered.

Math and religion were straightforward. Simply teach one lesson each day. *Check.* Science and history were simply books to read. *Check, check.* Spelling, and vocabulary were done with weekly tests according to the Seton lesson plans. For reading, we focused on the assignments required for a grade. To write a book report, we needed the lesson plans, and I very much appreciated the help there. I was especially grateful to have someone else grading my children's reports rather than have my own A++ on each one of them!

Jim and I found this method of homeschooling to be quite productive for years. We are grateful that Seton provided the flexibility we needed for our family.

Katie made it successfully through elementary school, and as she entered her high school years, she took charge of her lesson plans. She moved forward at her own pace, coming to me when a question or problem arose. She developed an independence and self-confidence that she carried with her as she moved on to Christendom College. I'm happy to share that Katie graduated from the college last spring and married her beau and fellow graduate Peter in February.

Proximity to Christendom was one of the factors in choosing

Front Royal as our home, and over the years we have been enriched by participating in so many aspects of the Catholic community here. Our boys serve at Mass at our parish, St. John the Baptist, and at Human Life International. The children participate in town, community, and parish sports, the award-winning parish drama club, Little Flowers, Trail Life USA, K of C Squires, and ballet. For the latter, Isabella is following in her older sisters' dance steps!

A few years ago, we made the decision to send our youngest son to public school in order to take advantage of their special education services, which he really needed at the time. He was blessed with good teachers, and we feel that we made the right decision for him. But almost every day that I dropped him off, I walked to the car with tears in my eyes.

Now, two years later, he has progressed so far that he is at home again, using the Seton curriculum and enrolled in the Padre Pio Learning Center, a tutoring co-op at our parish. I no longer feel the need to drench him with holy water when he leaves the house in the morning! It is also wonderful that we no longer have to worry about the bullies at the public school. Yes, all of the kids at the co-op are sweet, well-behaved children from our parish. How impressive!

So this is where we are now! After Richard was born came Peter, John, Philip, and Isabella. Isabella is four years old and works in her early learning books. Here we go again...



Is a Homeschool Co-op in your Future?

The Padre Pio Learning Center is open Tuesday -Thursday from 9:30 to 1:00, and uses the Seton curriculum to teach Math, English, Reading, Spelling, Vocabulary, Science, History, and Religion. For us, it's been the best of both worlds.

Our children are learning from the trusted curriculum that Seton Home Study School provides, but we do not have to shoulder all the responsibility for organizing and teaching. The kids build friendships with sweet children in a small classroom setting for just three half-days a week and are at home for the remainder. I'm convinced that this is a model that could be fashioned in many parishes.

If you are interested in starting a program like ours in your parish please contact me,

Jim Shanley
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4 Ways to Turn Spring Fever

into exciting Homeschooling Opportunities!

BY CHRISTINE SMITHA

Without fail, it happens every year at just about this time. The Christmas holidays are a memory, winter seems to be lasting forever, and school has been in session since before you can remember. At least, that's how it feels when March rolls around and all we want is to be sipping iced tea with a novel in the backyard while the kids play in the sprinklers.

The winter blues are tough for all of us; it doesn't matter if we're homeschooling moms, dads at the office, or children at our schoolbooks. We're all tired, full of cabin fever, and desperately in need of some Vitamin D from that sun we haven't seen in weeks—especially this year!

So, when the first thaw sets in, and the temperature finally rises over 50, and green starts creeping over the yard, it's no wonder that the first thing kids want to do is escape out that back door. Schoolwork is just too complicated and requires far too much sitting still to be appealing this time of year. The problem is that life, work, and school wait for no one. We need some way to handle this spring fever. Fortunately, the counselors at Seton Home Study School have quite a bit of experience handling the winter doldrums and spring fever, and are happy to share some of their advice with you.

1. Prayer: First Things First

The first thing to remember is: Stick to a prayer schedule. There's no situation in life that can't be made better with prayer. Indeed, beginning and ending each day with prayer helps you to stay focused and organized, provides opportunity to collect your thoughts and balance your life, and generally acts as a calming influence. This is so important for everyone, but it might be most important for moms, who need that quiet time to prepare for everything expected of them over the course of the day. Oftentimes, the moments spent in prayer are also the moments filled with the most practical inspirations, so taking your troubles to the Lord is likely to be a good strategy in battling spring fever problems.

2. Plan Ahead

The second thing to do is plan ahead. Since you know this happens every year, expect it and plan how you'll handle it before it comes. Spring fever is a good time to focus on subjects such as science, geography, and history. If you plan your year accordingly, you might actually take care of two problems at once. Many moms wonder where they can cut back earlier in the year because they begin to feel overwhelmed with so many different subjects. Our message to the families is always focus on essentials first, and save less fundamental lessons for later. Religion, English, and math must take place every day, but you can save science for later. The advan-

tage to this is that if you focus on fewer subjects at a time, most of the work in these essential areas will be completed by the time spring fever sets in, and all you'll have left will be things like geography and social studies, which can be learned in creative and active ways at the fidgety end of the year.

When those winter doldrums start getting you low, invest in a season pass to a local museum, zoo, or aquarium.



Take your science and history books to these sites, and do your reading right there next to the relevant exhibits. If the kids simply cannot get any work done inside, get out in the fresh spring air and take nature hikes to identify the flora and fauna studied in those science books. When the sun comes out, visit national battlefields, historic landmarks, reservations, and national parks and talk about how these places played a role in American history.

Of course, these are all just examples of another important rule, which is to be creative. Find ways to incorporate activity into the school day. Have your daughter jump rope as she recites her times tables. Have the boys plot out an important battle from their history studies in the back yard. Turn spelling lessons into a spelling bee for the whole family. Call local businesses to arrange tours and field trips for your children and some of their friends. Local business owners are often happy to tell children about what they do, and it is edifying for these same individuals to see children who are genuinely interested in what goes on around them. So call your local bank manager when your daughter is working on her economics class. Local newspaper and television stations often offer regular tours, or they will schedule a tour specifically for your homeschool group. Many factories also have tours, and if the factory makes a food product, you might even get a sample when you're done. (To find factory tours near you, go to www.factorytoursusa.com or search the Internet for "factory tours in [your state].")

3. Don't Fight It!

The next important principle to bear in mind is "don't fight it." Rather than waste valuable energy trying to overcome spring fever, find ways to work with it and turn it to your advantage. For instance, if the children just aren't paying attention inside, take the

classroom outside. Schedule more breaks than you might earlier in the year, maybe every half-hour, instead of every hour. When you do this, be sure to enforce the working time; the likelihood is children will be committed to their work when they know they only need to concentrate for another half-hour before getting to play ten minutes of catch, or basketball, etc.

Combine typical spring activities with lessons in religion and science. Many families begin planting a garden in the spring. That's the perfect time to study the chapters on botany from the science books and a great way to get the children involved in the gardening work. How about using spring cleaning as a way to learn about some of the virtues or the Sacrament of Confession? When doing a lesson on charity, have each child clean his closet (drawer, toy chest, shelf, etc.) by sorting through it for some items to give to a homeless shelter or Good Will or the children's hospital, or any other similar places. In one day the children will have done their lessons without feeling caged by their books, exercised the virtue of charity, and accomplished an important aspect of the annual spring cleaning!

Now it is possible that, for one reason or another, you feel you need to do a little catching up, and a big part of your spring fever is feeling the pressure of summer's approach when you haven't finished second quarter. Organization is absolutely essential here. A whole new article could be devoted to that topic, but suffice it to say that the important thing is to focus on the Seton-graded assignments, and make a point of steadily working through one assignment at a time, beginning to end, so you can start crossing items off the to-do list. Consider blocking, or working on only one or two subjects at



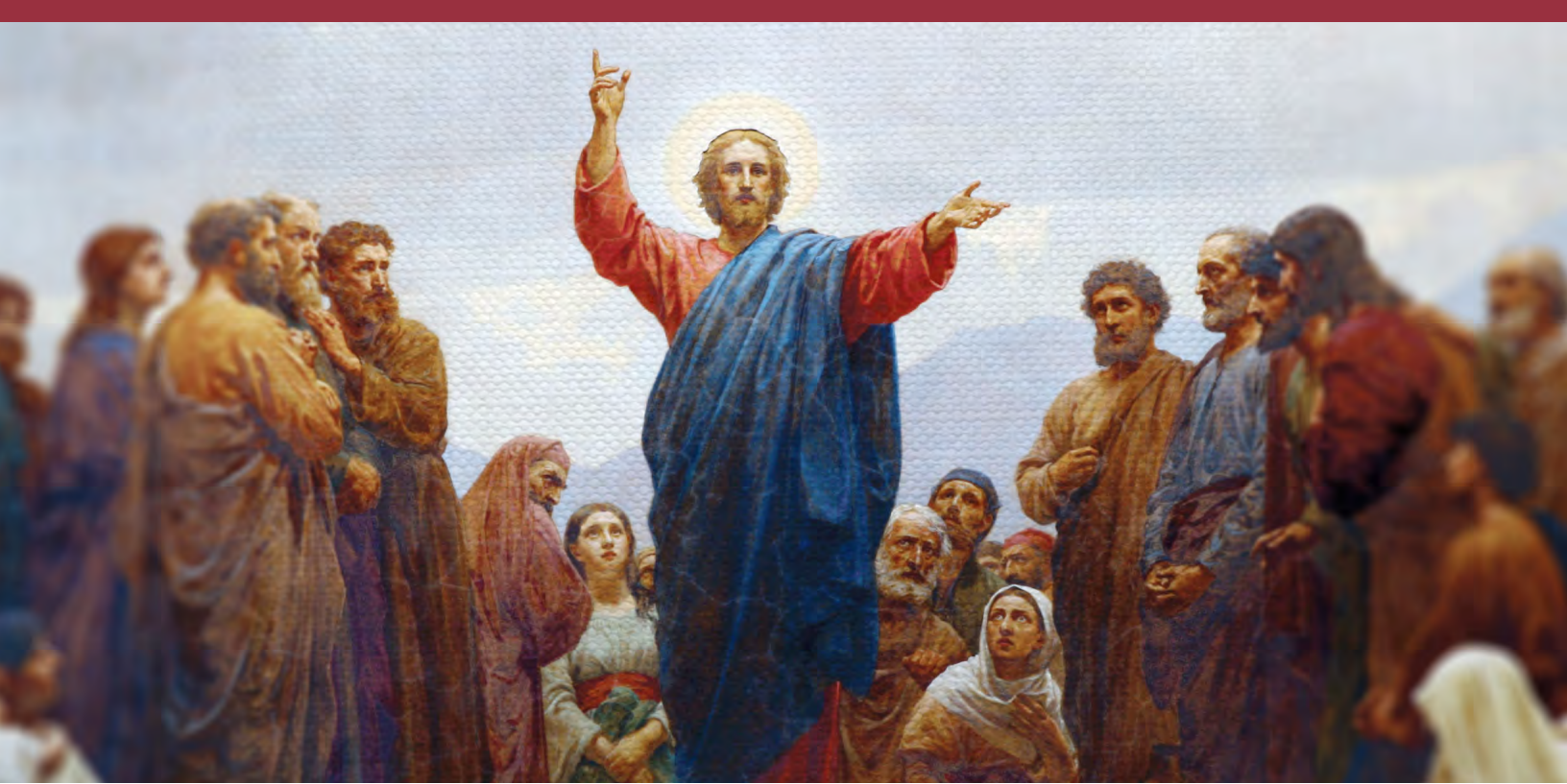
a time. When the entire school day is spent on just one or two subjects, the work gets completed at an astonishingly quick rate by comparison with a typical day that is split many different ways. Before you know it, you'll have entire subjects crossed off the to-do list. Be careful, though, not to try to do too much in a single day. More time on task helps, but only up to a certain point. Pushing beyond a student's limit just results in frustration.

4. Keep a Positive Atmosphere

Last but not least, remember to keep the atmosphere positive. Use lots of incentives at this time of year. When major assignments are accomplished, students each in turn get to pick a movie for a family movie night, or go out for breakfast on Saturday with dad, bake something of their choice with mom, pick the menu for dinner, or any of a host of different things that are exciting for the kids in your family. Play good, uplifting, and happy music in the household. Cook favorite dishes or maybe something new for the fun of it. Make sure everyone is getting plenty of exercise to keep the blood flowing and spirits high. Get to Mass as often as possible. Mark the feast days with small celebrations. Go out of your way to be encouraging and complimentary. Your kids will follow suit. Finally, remember that this too shall pass. Spring fever isn't forever; it's just for the spring!



Christine Smitha holds a B.A. in English and Literature from Christendom College. She has taught Literature for nine years, and enjoys dabbling in journalism when she gets a chance. She is currently Seton Home Study School's Accreditation Manager.



The Beloved Beatitudes

BY FR. ROBERT SKERIS

The Gospel of the eight Beatitudes is surely one of the best-loved passages in all of Holy Writ, and deservedly so. For the fact is that men of all climes and times have regarded the Beatitudes as the ladder, so to speak, or the staircase by which the saints ascend to Heaven. And if we desire to be with the saints in Heaven, then each of us must also mount these same rungs, patiently and perseveringly, hand-in-hand with our Divine Master. Let us therefore take each Beatitude in turn, and reflect upon its meaning briefly, asking Almighty God to enlighten our minds and our hearts as we do.

BLESSED ARE THE POOR IN SPIRIT, FOR THEIRS IS THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN.

They are poor in spirit who, like the Apostles, leave all temporal things for Christ's sake and become poor; they who have lost their property by misfortune or injustice, and bear this loss with patience and resignation to the Will of God; they who are contented with their poor and lowly station in life, do not strive for greater fortune or a higher position, and would rather suffer want than make themselves rich by unlawful means; they who, though rich, do not love wealth, nor set their hearts upon it, but use their riches to aid the poor; and especially they who are humble, that is, who have no exalted opinion of themselves, but are convinced of their weakness and inward poverty, have a proper estimate of themselves and therefore feel always their need, and like poor mendicants, continually implore God's grace and assistance.

BLESSED ARE THE MEEK, FOR THEY SHALL INHERIT THE EARTH.

He is meek who represses every rising impulse of anger, impatience, and desire of revenge, and willingly puts up with everything that God, to prove him, decrees or permits to happen to him, or that men inflict upon him. He who thus controls himself is like a calm and tranquil sea, in which the image of the Divine Sun is ever reflected.

BLESSED ARE THEY WHO MOURN, FOR THEY SHALL BE COMFORTED.

The mourners mentioned here are not those who weep and lament over the death of relatives and friends, or over misfortune or loss of temporal riches, but those who mourn that God is so often offended, so little loved and honored by men, that so many souls, redeemed by the Precious Blood of Christ, are lost. Among these mourners are also those who lead a strict and penitential life, and patiently endure distress. Sin is the only evil, the only thing to be lamented, and only those tears which are shed on account

of sin are useful tears, recompensed by everlasting joy and eternal consolation.

BLESSED ARE THEY WHO HUNGER AND THIRST AFTER JUSTICE, FOR THEY SHALL HAVE THEIR FILL.

Hunger and thirst denote the ardent longing for those virtues which constitute Christian perfection. He who seeks such perfection with ardent desire and earnest striving will be filled, that is, will be adorned by God with the most beautiful virtues, and will be abundantly rewarded in Heaven.

BLESSED ARE THE MERCIFUL, FOR THEY SHALL OBTAIN MERCY.

They are merciful who assist the poor according to their means, who practice every possible spiritual and corporal work of mercy, who as far as they can, patiently endure the faults of others, strive always to excuse them, and willingly forgive the injuries they have received. They especially are truly merciful who are merciful to their enemies and do good to them, as it is written:

Love your enemies, and do good to them that hate you. Well is it for him who is merciful, for the greatest rewards are promised him, but a judgment without mercy shall be passed on the unmerciful.

BLESSED ARE THE CLEAN OF HEART, FOR THEY SHALL SEE GOD.

They are clean of heart who carefully preserve the innocence which they received in Baptism, and keep their heart and conscience free not only from all sinful words and deeds, but also from all sinful thoughts and desires, and in all their omissions and commissions think only and desire only good. These, while yet on Earth, see God in all His works and creatures, because their thoughts are directed always to the Highest Good. And in the other world, they will see Him face-to-face, enjoying in this contemplation a unique pleasure which is reserved for pure souls only; for as the eye that would see well must be clear, so must those souls be immaculate who are to see God.

BLESSED ARE THE PEACEMAKERS, FOR THEY SHALL BE CALLED THE CHILDREN OF GOD.

They are peacemakers who guard their improper desires, who are careful to have peace in their consciences and regulated tranquility in all their actions, who do not quarrel with their neighbors, and are submissive to the Will of God. These are called children of God, because they follow God Who is a God of Peace, and Who even gave His only Son to reconcile the world, and bring upon Earth that peace which the world does not know and cannot give.

BLESSED ARE THEY WHO SUFFER PERSECUTION FOR JUSTICE'S SAKE, FOR THEIRS IS THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN.

They suffer persecution for justice's sake who by their words, writings, or by their lives defend the truth, the Faith, and Christian virtues; who cling firmly to God, and permit nothing to turn them from the duties of the Christian religion, but on its account suffer hatred, contempt, disgrace, injury, and injustice with joy. Then they will become like the saints and like them receive the heavenly crown. And if we wish to be crowned with them, we too must suffer with them, as St. Paul wrote to Timothy, "And all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution."

The rungs of the ladder formed by the eight Beatitudes can also be described and thought of in terms of the virtues; let us therefore beseech Almighty God, that He grant us all the grace to serve Him in sanctity and justice, in poverty and humility, in meekness and repentance, in the ardent desire for all virtues, by mercy, perfect purity of heart, in peacefulness and patience, following in the footsteps of the Divine Master, His only Son Our Lord Jesus Christ, to Whom be honor and glory, now and forever, and to the ages of ages.



Fr. Robert Skeris was ordained Roman Catholic priest in 1961. Well known as a theology and church music educator, Fr. Skeris served as Prefect of the Pontifical Institute of Sacred Music at Rome between 1978 and 1990. A founding member of the Church Music Association of America, Fr. Skeris was President of the organization from 1996 to 2004, and edits the continuing series *Musicae Sacrae Meletemata*. In addition to his duties at the Catholic University of America, he has regularly been invited to lecture and teach master classes and summer courses in Portugal, Hungary, and Lithuania.

2014 Conferences

The following is a list of Catholic homeschooling conferences where Seton will offer materials for preview and sale, as well as a \$30-per-child enrollment discount (grades 1-12).

For additional conferences, venues, vendors, and contact information, visit:

www.setonhome.org/conferences

TN, Nashville - March 14, 2014 (Fri.)

IHM Tennessee Homeschool & Parent Conference
Aquinas College

NY, Long Island - March 21, 2014 (Fri.)

IHM Long Island Homeschool & Parent Conference

LA, Covington - March 29, 2014 (Sat.)

Roman Catholic Homeschool Association of Louisiana
"Catholic Homeschooling: A Way of Life"

FL, Jacksonville - April 3, 2014 (Thurs.)

IHM Jacksonville Homeschool & Parent Conference

GA, Atlanta

April 10-11, 2014 (Thurs.-Fri.)

IHM Georgia Homeschool & Parent Conference

MO, St. Louis

April 11-12, 2014 (Fri.-Sat.)

2014 St. Louis Catholic Homeschool Conference

AZ, Phoenix - April 12, 2014 (Sat.)

2014 Arizona Catholic Homeschool Conference

TX, Houston

April 25-26, 2014 (Fri.-Sat.)

IHM Houston Homeschool & Parent Conference

CA, Santa Clara

April 25-26, 2014 (Fri.-Sat.)

NCCHC

(Northern California Catholic Homeschooling Conference)

WI, Milwaukee - May 2, 2014 (Fri.)

IHM Wisconsin Homeschool & Parent Conference

IN, Indianapolis

May 2-3, 2014 (Fri.-Sat.)

2014 Quo Vadis Catholic Homeschool Conference

MD, Mt. Airy

May 16-17, 2014 (Fri.-Sat.)

IHM Maryland Homeschool & Parent Conference

NC, Charlotte

May 23-24, 2014 (Fri.-Sat.)

IHM Carolina Homeschool & Parent Conference

NJ, Berlin - May 24, 2014 (Sat.)

15th Annual CHAPLET Catholic Homeschool Conference



Many Are Called

BY JOHN CLARK

Like many Catholic fathers, I often pray that if my boys have vocations to the priesthood, they accept their callings. Sadly, as Jesus told us, many do not. The corollary to my prayer is the additional plea that I be given the graces to properly assist them along their way.

There are some obvious ways to do that: talk about my (very imperfect) love of God, pray with them, and take them to liturgy and the sacraments. But I also believe that part of that grace is the ability to explain the priesthood in a positive and encouraging light. Historically, we fathers might not be too good at this.

Given the dearth of seminarians in America, I wonder if we fathers are presenting the priesthood to our children in the right way. I'm guessing that, far too often, we begin with talking about the perceived negatives of the priesthood. Specifically, we may not be doing justice to the vocation by starting with saying that, as a priest, "you are giving a lot up." This has become a Catholic cliché. "You're thinking about becoming a priest, Billy? Sounds great, but just remember, you're giving a lot up to become a priest!"

It's odd that, with all the magnificence of the priesthood, we begin so many discussions—not with what the priesthood is—but with what it isn't.

My sixteen-year-old son Demetrius and I were talking about this recently. And I explained to him that every

commitment involves giving up something else. Even on a natural level, things like becoming a good basketball player require the time and effort of practice. Shooting one-hundred free throws means giving up something that might be more fun. But if you hadn't given those things up, you wouldn't end up hearing too many cheering crowds.

I explained to Demetrius that when his mom and I were married, we both gave things up, too. We were giving up regular sleep (although we didn't quite understand how much at the time). We were giving up many freedoms. For instance, once you have children, your freedom of travel is quite restricted. You can no longer hop in a car and drive to Atlantic City for the weekend. You are also giving up a lot of time you used to spend with your friends—time that is now devoted to your family. You are giving up the financial rewards known largely to the single life. Had I never gotten married, for instance, I could easily have afforded to travel the world and drive a Mercedes. But, as I explained to Demetrius, his mom and I don't sit around and wonder what it would have been like if we had never surrendered those freedoms.

We believed that we were receiving something better in return: the unique form of friendship that is found only in marriage, the cooperation with God to create life, and the love and happiness of children. And that is what we received.

We call that fulfillment.

I would conclude that, for their own states of life, priests have that feeling of fulfillment, too. I am not a priest, so I can't speak as though I am. But I can speak as a man who seems to be gaining an increasing understanding of what it's like *not* to be a priest.

I'll never know the joy of forgiving the sins of the penitent.

I'll never know what it is like to regularly bring babies into the state of sanctifying grace in Baptism.

I'll never know the unique intimacy with God that is accomplished in confecting the Eucharist.

I'll never know what it is like to comfort one in death with the Sacrament of Anointing of the Sick.

I'll never know the happiness of helping husbands and wives unite in love before God in a wedding ceremony.

Men do give up a lot to be priests, but we married men give up a lot not to be priests. Yes, priests give up many goods by taking their vows, but I stand in awe of what they gain. So should we all.

Here begins the discussion.



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.

The Real Reasons Why I Homeschool

The reason I began to homeschool is not a single reason. I was disheartened at the level of education my eldest son was receiving in the public school. In addition, we were staunch fighters against the so-called “family education,” which was nothing more than a cover and masthead for sex education. And, in our local parish, our son’s CCD education was quite the joke.

I happened to meet some homeschooling families. They gave me all sorts of reasons to homeschool, and I had all sorts of reasons not to. One of the biggest arguments to homeschool came from one friend: “Oh sure, opt him out of all those sex-education classes. But what do you think the other students will be talking about on the playground during recess?”

When we decided to homeschool, we did so because we really wanted to prepare our son for battle in the world. Homeschooling became a spiritual and family issue, and the fact that my children would be educated along the way became a bonus, not the central reason to homeschool.

So we approached homeschooling as a spiritual undertaking. We sent off to the best Catholic program we could find: Seton Home Study in Front Royal, Virginia. Wow! When we got that first box of books, to say we were overwhelmed was an understatement. The educational materials were tough, but they were also infused with a Catholic flavor in every subject. Spelling and phonics, reading and writing, history and art – all were Catholic to the core. I loved that!

After the first few months, we didn’t seem to advance as far as I would have expected. A serious review of the case made me realize that I was always adapting our school schedule around other things – the laundry, a clean house, a birthday, the opportunity for a park day, the dentist – and school came in second place. That was my first error! School should be our first priority.

Yes, [homeschooling] is to be a part of family life, but it should be the main focus of each and every day. Family life should center around homeschooling. And there should always be deadlines... bus schedules, project schedules, the starting time for a factory,

airline schedules... life is about scheduling our time and using it wisely. I have failed in bringing that to my sons. And I plan to rectify that!

I made schooling too much fun. My sons love homeschooling and that is partly because I am still a kid at heart and I love to learn ... teaching your children lets you learn over and over again... and for me, it never gets dull! But I sort of slipped over some basics ... I will not do that again!

It is important for their future ... to be able to conjugate verbs; they need to know simple fractions and algebraic equations; and they need to know the truth when it comes to the history of this country. All these subjects are crucial to their successful future out in this world of ours. And I am afraid I made it so much fun, their formal understanding of some things was lacking.

I would never change the fact that I am a homeschooling mother. I would never want to go back and put my sons in school. I will rearrange my approach and [keep in mind] what I am doing it for. Spiritual

strengthening is the primary reason. I was given custody of these souls and God will hold me accountable in how I deal with them. But He also expects me to carry out that job as much vigor as I approach their spiritual education.

God has given me the graces to accomplish this through the sacraments. He has given me Baptism, Confession, Communion, and Matrimony. The promises inherent in those sacraments are mine for the asking. All I need to do is pray for the graces to accomplish the tasks before me.

I am sharing all this in order that others may perhaps learn from the mistakes I have made. I struggle with the sin of sloth, and I think it has crept into my homeschooling. Lent has been a good time for showing me how deeply inherent sin can be.

Only through grace can we parents accomplish what Our Lord has set before us. Only through continually relying on Our Lord and His Blessed Mother can we truly teach our children and prepare them for the battles they will face as adults.

I would never change the fact that I am a homeschooling mother.



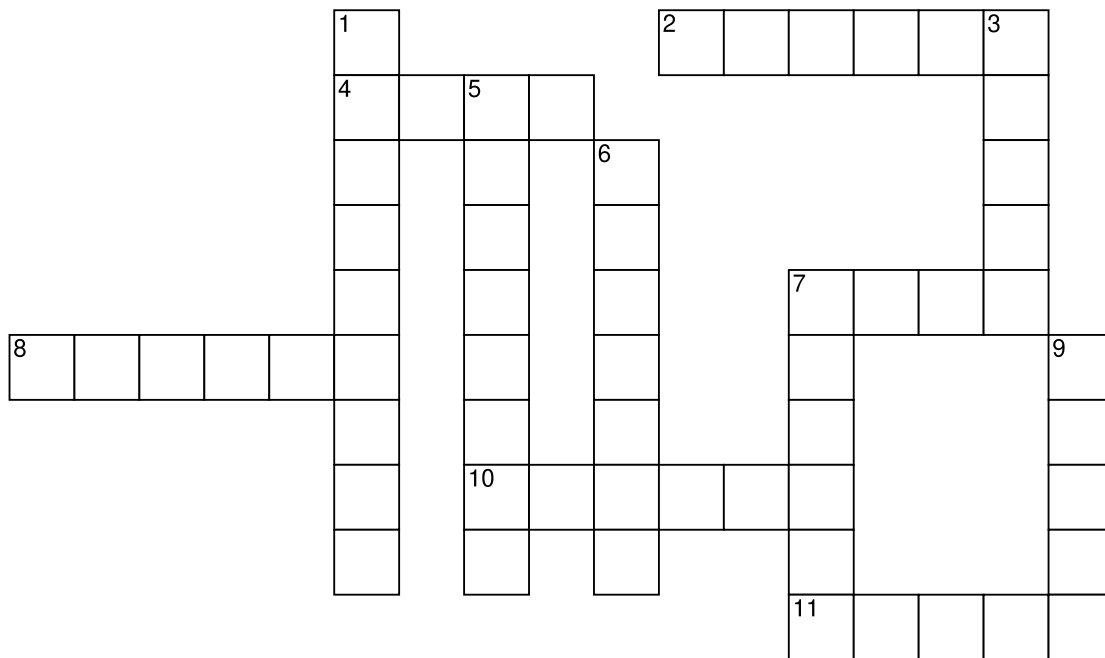
From a Homeschooling Mother.
Seton received her letter expressing what she learned as she taught her children at home. This article is a selection of what she wrote.





**CATHOLIC
CROSSWORD**

SAINT JOSEPH



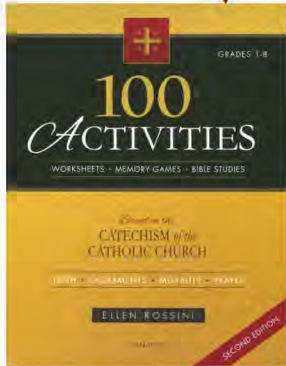
ACROSS

- 2 After three days, Mary and Joseph found Jesus in the ____.
- 4 She was an old woman, who witnessed the Presentation.
- 7 The Bible says Joseph was a ____, or righteous, man.
- 8 At the Presentation, this man blessed Jesus.
- 10 When Jesus was ____ years old, He went with Mary and Joseph to Jerusalem to celebrate the Passover.
- 11 Evil king who tried to kill Baby Jesus

DOWN

- 1 This was Joseph's profession or job.
- 3 An angel told Joseph to take his family and flee to this country.
- 5 Joseph raised his family in this town.
- 6 This angel appeared to Joseph in a dream.
- 7 He was the foster-father of Jesus.
- 9 Joseph was descended from this great king.

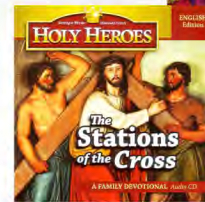
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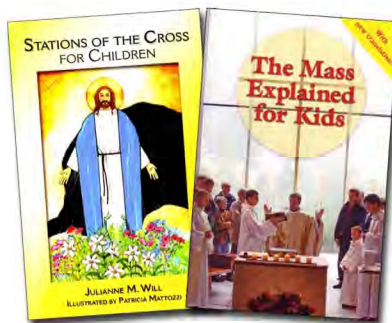


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PAPAL WISDOM



Preparing the Soil

Children are not capable of accepting the faith by a free act, nor are they yet able to profess that faith on their own; therefore the faith is professed by their parents and godparents in their name. Since faith is a reality lived within the community of the Church, part of a common “We,” children can be supported by others, their parents and godparents, and welcomed into their faith, which is the faith of the Church....

The structure of baptism, then, demonstrates the critical importance of cooperation between Church and family in passing on the faith. Parents are called, as Saint Augustine once said, not only to bring children into the world but also to bring them to God, so that through baptism they can be reborn as children of God and receive the gift of faith. Thus, along with life, children are given a fundamental orientation and assured of a good future; this orientation will be further strengthened in the sacrament of Confirmation with the seal of the Holy Spirit.

Pope Francis, *Lumen Fidei*