

Seton MAGAZINE



Under the Magisterium of the Catholic Church

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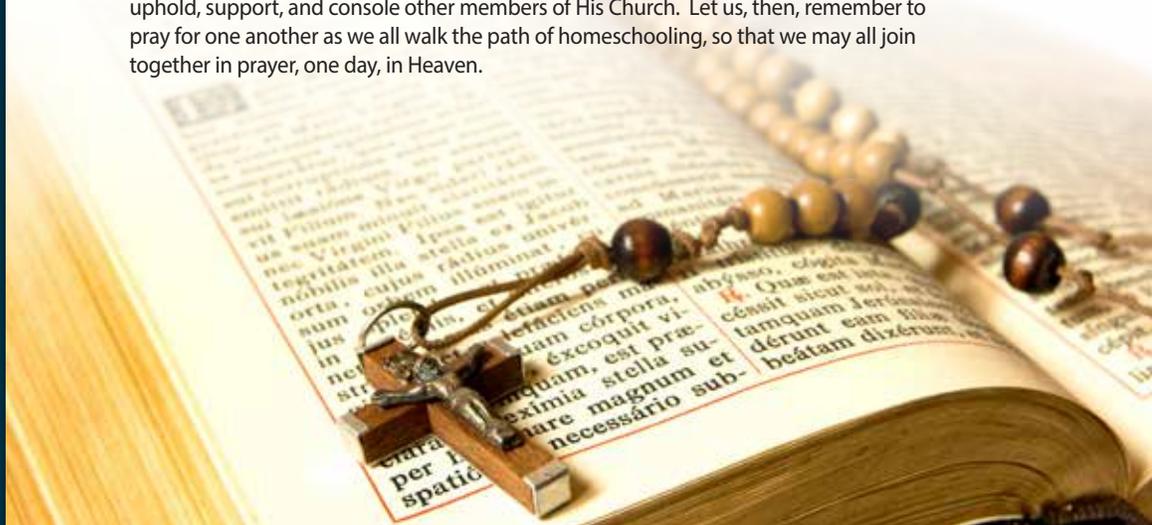
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Every day at Seton, gathered before the altar at our noon Angelus, we offer prayers for our families and friends. We encourage you also to pray for other homeschooling families, especially those who may be suffering from illness, unemployment, or other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

Patroness and Model of Homeschooling

BY DR. MARY KAY CLARK

Many years ago, a group of about forty Catholic homeschool state support group leaders gathered in Chicago for two or three consecutive years, in the month of April, to discuss the growing Catholic homeschooling movement. It was not an easy meeting to attend as we all had children and not much money for such trips.

We discussed the issues that Catholic homeschooling families were facing and how each of us tried to help the families in our respective states. There was one thing we all agreed on, and that was to ask a special saint to help us in our discussions. That saint was St. Catherine of Siena, whose feast day fell on the day or the week we had our meetings. We dedicated our meetings to her, called her our patroness, and asked her help as we discussed the important issues for the Catholic homeschooling families we represented, as well as those who could not be represented.

St. Catherine of Siena is a Doctor of the Church, and she is a wonderful model for our homeschooling children and parents as well as those in homeschooling leadership. Catherine was the twenty-third child of a family of twenty-four children. The whole family must have been exceptional in their practice of the Catholic Faith because Catherine was devoted to Jesus when she was still a toddler. It was reported that she prayed devoutly when she was only three years old.

Like the older sisters of St. Thérèse of Lisieux, Catherine's older siblings taught her prayers and told her stories about Jesus--obviously a homeschooling family teaching by example! When Catherine was only seven years old, she had a vision from Heaven and, at that young age, dedicated her life to Jesus.

Those of us with many siblings or

many children realize that growing up in a large family teaches sharing and generosity. In a large family, children learn to help others and to work together. Members of a large family learn respect for the common good of the family as well as respect for the unique personality of each member. Dinner table conversations teach patience to express ideas and patience to listen to other opinions from those who share the same values.

Holiness comes through the family. Family members teach each other not to be selfish but to share, whether it is toys or clothes, food, or money. Family members teach us how to be humble, as they are concerned enough about our welfare to tell us our faults so that we may work to improve. Family members demand that we give our best regarding family and home responsibilities, yet they still give us love when we sometimes don't measure up.

Family members support us when we return from our not-so-successful ventures into an unsympathetic society. Family members give us love and encouragement to

help us persevere in difficulties outside the home.

Frequent Mass and Confession and the daily family Rosary provide the means for each family member to grow in holiness. The home becomes the domestic church, which so many popes have encouraged in their writings. The homeschooling family life becomes an extension of the Church because of the many opportunities to grow in grace. St. Catherine of Siena saw her home as a convent, a place of spiritual retreat, a place for service as well as prayer.

As Catherine grew older, she realized that God called her to extend herself outside of her family, so she regularly volunteered at



the local hospital and even the prison. She attended Mass every day, yet she did not neglect the concerns of her town and often visited both Church and political leaders to give them advice.

Catherine was not awed by the powerful of the world, and even had the confidence of her faith to visit the pope in Avignon, France, where he was living in fear. She talked to him about his responsibility to the Church to be a fearless leader in spite of political turmoil. St. Catherine is known for convincing Pope Gregory XI to return to Rome in 1378, thus ending the 70 years of papal residency in France.

St. Catherine, pray for us to raise our family in a home which can honestly be called a domestic church because of our religious practices and concern for each other. St. Catherine, pray for us to model our family after the Holy Family in Nazareth. Pray for our family members to remain faithful to the teachings of Jesus while helping those in need of consolation and truth in our community. Amen.

The homeschooling family life becomes an extension of the Church because of the many opportunities to grow in grace.

your Questions ANSWERED

BY DR. MARY KAY CLARK

My 7th grade boy has read his book report book, but wants my help with giving him some ideas for his report. Is that acceptable?

What is acceptable - and encouraged, in fact - is discussing with him the various aspects of the book. You should be asking him questions which help him to think out various ideas. If he is supposed to write about the traits of the main character, ask him to defend his points with specific words or actions or thoughts of the character. After he defends his points orally, then he should make an outline, which you can review. Finally he should write his paragraphs based on his outline.

Certainly you should then make comments of encouragement, but also point out any examples which are weak or which do not prove his topic sentence, and he should reconsider a stronger example. You should not, of course, give him a specific example, but encourage him to find one on his own that is strong enough to prove his point. We do encourage you, however, to point out any grammar or punctuation errors in his report.

You will be a vendor at a free Catholic homeschooling conference about an hour's drive from my home. What might I gain from attending?

There are about as many different reasons to attend a Catholic homeschooling conference as there are families attending. One common reason is that parents want to see what books are for sale that could be helpful for teaching their children, or could be an added resource in their current program. Some come because they are curious about the Seton program. Some enrolled families bring friends or relatives to see the Catholic materials to encourage them to consider homeschooling.

Some moms come to meet other Catholic homeschooling moms, especially if there are only a few in their immediate area. Some come to talk with other

parents for suggestions for teaching tips. Sometimes moms hope to meet other moms with children who could become friends with their children. Some come to get "revitalized."

Some parents attend to listen to the speakers who have some encouraging words for parents who dedicate their lives and time to educating their children. Most conferences have at least one priest as a speaker, which helps parents who need some consolation. Some priests will hear confessions during the conference.

It would be worth your time to attend at least one conference to find out if there might be some kind of help or support which you could use. Perhaps you have an idea you would like to share with other moms.

To find out the specifics of a conference in your area, go to the Seton website, click on the Home Page, then click on Conferences to see the speakers and vendors at the conference in your area. To encourage attendance, Seton offers a discount on the enrollment tuition for those who enroll or re-enroll at the conference.

My husband has reluctantly agreed to homeschooling our children, but he is definitely not happy, and I'm afraid he won't agree next year.

If you think that homeschooling is God's plan for your family, then start praying about it. What God wants, God can bring about. Start a novena to St. Joseph as well as to your husband's patron saint. Try to go to Mass together as a family on five first Saturdays as requested by the Blessed Mother in one of her visions to the three children at Fatima. Your children's prayers carry much weight in Heaven!

Try to understand why your husband is opposed, but have a conversation only if it can be without bitterness or argumentation. He

may be opposed because he thinks you are not qualified to teach, or because the children are not being "socialized," or because the children do not have opportunities for sports activities. Whatever the reason, try to become more informed about reasonable answers: you are using an accredited curriculum or you will have the children participate in activities with other homeschooled children.

Ask your husband to attend events with you where he can meet other homeschooling fathers, such as a homeschooling conference.

If he won't attend, purchase some audios or videos of homeschooling fathers speaking about their experiences with homeschooling. Purchase books by homeschooling fathers, such as John Clark's book of easy-reading,

humorous short chapters. It is entitled *Who's Got You?* and is available through Seton Educational Media.

Be sure to show your husband the work your children are doing every day. Post their spelling tests or math pages on the refrigerator or a cork board. Try to involve him in something he would like, such as taking the children to a science fair or a history museum. Ask him to listen to one of the children read or to help one of the children do an assignment.

Keep your monthly Seton magazine available on the coffee table, especially the center section which shows pictures of families who use our program and write about their homeschooling. You might put one of those picture pages on the refrigerator door!

My daughter has been doing very well in 4th grade. I think she could skip 5th and start 6th in September.

There are many problems with skipping a grade level. We never recommend

Keep your monthly Seton magazine available on the coffee table.



skipping a grade level, even in only one subject. The reason is that courses proceed step by step, even sometimes very small steps at a time. These small steps may seem “too easy,” but that is because the student IS learning step by step and not skipping steps. Skipping a whole year of steps is likely to be a disaster. It is likely to cause unhappiness and frustration.

In a regular school, a student only has two choices: stay at the current pace or skip to the next grade level. In homeschooling, a student can proceed at his or her own pace. Instead of skipping a grade level, the student can simply forge ahead more quickly. If your daughter learns quickly and easily, and finishes a particular subject a few months ahead of time, she can move on to the next grade level for that subject.

When should I order a standardized test from Seton?

The schools usually give the tests in March or April, but we believe that May is a better month since it is closer to the end of the school year. Of course, the standardized test should be given in whichever is the last or near to last month of the actual schooling “year.” As you know, Seton provides the California Achievement Test as part of the tuition cost for enrolled students, but Seton has a few other tests available at an additional cost (due to higher costs by companies). One of the tests being readied now may be taken online by the students. This is great, especially for overseas families. For further details, visit us online at www.setontesting.com to see all the various kinds of standardized tests offered by Seton. Seton Testing provides all these tests to all families, not just those enrolled with Seton.

I have been asked to join a group of mothers who are fighting the Common Core curriculum in our parish school.

You may certainly add your name in support of those mothers, but be aware that these decisions about the choice of textbooks for Catholic parish schools and high schools are usually made at the diocesan level, by the diocesan boards of education. I don’t know how much freedom an individual school would have, but I suspect very little. In addition, in most (if not all) Catholic schools, the school is not fully supported by the parish congregation but is helped considerably by the diocese, which receives state funding for their schools. State funding will pay for only the secular textbooks, which, at the present time, are following the Common Core agenda. This is all a long way of saying that it’s going to be a difficult battle for you.

What is your thinking about what happened to the German immigrant homeschooling family?

You can find out more details at the HSLDA website at www.hsllda.org. It is their front page story, and it is important we read all that HSLDA has written to prepare our families for the future. While the decision by the Department of Homeland Security was wonderful for that family, with no ruling from the Supreme Court, the situation could happen again. In fact, I understand there is already another similar case in progress.

It is also quite troubling that in their writings in this case, the Justice Department stated that the right of society to fight “intolerance” trumps the right of parents to pass on their beliefs to their children. Since our society increasingly views any and all religious beliefs as “intolerance,” religious believers will need to protect their rights with renewed vigilance.

HSLDA has done fantastic work for homeschooling in this country, and we encourage all our families to join HSLDA, not only for possible help in the future for their own families, but to support the work they do to support any family in trouble with authorities because of their homeschooling.



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*.



Armed Forces Accept Homeschool Enlistees on Equal Terms

For many years, the U.S. military has made it difficult for homeschooled high school students to enlist. They were often considered to be “non-graduates.” Seton has had many calls from families over the years about our graduates whom some branch would not permit to enlist. In recent years, the Department of Defense (DOD) has been running an ongoing test of new homeschooled recruits to see if they could fit in. During this test, they limited the number of homeschoolers they would accept each year; those that applied at the right time of the year would be accepted, but once the test number was reached, no others would be considered. This caused much heartache.

However, there has been a breakthrough, and it was announced by the Homeschool Legal Defense Association (HSLDA) on March 18th. The military will now treat homeschooled students just like students who attended a school. However, the family will need to provide some documentation to “prove” that the student was educated at home. The article points out that “...the military is looking for high school diploma graduates. If you present a GED certificate it will cause unnecessary complications in the enlistment process. The military has almost completely eliminated accepting GED certificate holders in all but the rarest of circumstances.” The military is looking for high school graduates only, so do not contact your local recruiter until you have graduated.

The HSLDA article can be found online at www.setonmagazine.com/enlist-news. Please review the full article to understand the requirements.

Let the Children Come to Me

How my children converted me to Catholicism

Michelle Bosso

I am currently in my third year of homeschooling with Seton Home Study School. This year my preschooler attends a private half-day program. While Brycen is at school, we complete the majority of the work for my 1st, 4th, and 6th graders. Breelyn, my beautiful new baby girl, joins us as we go through the boys' lessons. Some days are cozy, heavenly days, when all the stars align and the angels sing over us. Some days are tough days—days when I find myself fantasizing about running back to the public school and dropping off the boys.

However, I receive strength knowing that this is God's Will for our family. Even on a tough day, I find God's grace. I find my older sons helping a younger son. I find them reading their Seton books together, asking questions and seeking answers. My baby daughter took her first steps from Tyler's arms to Dylan's arms during public school hours. What a special moment for all of us, and one we could not have had without Catholicism and homeschooling in our lives.

Turning Away

I've always known that I was going to be a mother. My fiancé, Todd, and I had it all figured out. We would have two, maybe three children. I would settle on a major and finish college before we started our family (I chose Elementary Education so I could have the same schedule as my future children). We'd have our last

child before I was 30 years old. I would stay at home with the children while they were small and return to work when our youngest started preschool.

Todd was a cradle Catholic and I was Lutheran, but we both wanted Todd's uncle, Monsignor Bosso, to perform the marriage ceremony. I remember the sunny day when Todd and I pulled up to a beautifully landscaped Catholic Church to meet with his uncle. We were there to discuss our engagement and fill out paperwork. At the end of our meeting, Todd's uncle handed us a form to read and sign. We had to promise in writing to raise our children Catholic! We signed the form and promised to give the Catholic Church a chance for the sake of our future children.

We did give it a chance, a very short chance. There were traditions I didn't understand, and I felt like an outsider during Mass. Why couldn't I accept Holy Communion? I wasn't familiar with words like the Eucharist or homily. Why do they talk about saints and why is there so much focus on Mary? My husband struggled to answer my questions and ease my hurt feelings. We ended up seeking a different denomination, one in which we could both be comfortable.

A few years later, according to our plan,



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I graduated college with my B.S. in Elementary Education. I was elated as I walked down the aisle to accept my diploma. I put my hand on my stomach, excited to have our first son, Tyler, walk with me. I was four months pregnant. We had found a lovely Lutheran church for Tyler's baptism. By Tyler's first birthday, I was five months pregnant with our second son, Dylan. Fast forward two more years, and I was pregnant with our third and final child, according to our plan.

I lost that baby when I was approximately six weeks pregnant. I was devastated. I had already become so attached to that little being. How was that so? The child wasn't even born yet. A dear friend of mine, a Catholic convert, brought me a sweet gift and a handwritten card that spoke of my "angel baby." That was the first time I had ever heard of an unborn baby being referred to as if he or she actually existed. It brought me an immense amount of comfort and, I think, planted a seed as well.



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A Still, Small Voice

Nine months after the miscarriage, I was pregnant with a fourth child, our son, Cayden. His arrival prompted the decision to move an hour away and build a larger home. We visited many churches but didn't feel called to become members; I did notice, though, that our town had a Catholic Church. In the past, my Catholic "knowledge" had been derived from opinions and perspectives of non-practicing Catholics. Over these next months, however, I began to learn about the Catholic Faith on my own, and honestly, I became intrigued.

At 30 years old and blessed with an amazing husband, 3 beautiful children, and spacious brand new home, I still felt something was missing. Our days were full, but I felt a void. Our family was complete (I thought), but I often found myself looking in the rearview mirror of my 8-passenger SUV and imagining another beautiful baby in the vacant seat. What was wrong with me?! I found myself purposely driving by the Catholic church. I continued reading about the Church and asking questions of devout Catholics who truly loved their faith. I would think back to that sunny day, and the promise we made to raise our children Catholic kept whispering in my mind. A seed was trying to bud in my heart.

Not My Will

In the meantime, life was busy. I was entering that phase of parenthood when you run, run, run all day—school to doctor, back to school to volunteer, errands, back to school to pick up the kids and then... HOMEWORK! I would think of friends who homeschooled and I figured they were all nuts. After all, I couldn't even get through the homework part without getting frustrated. Then the kids needed a snack before we rushed to their extracurricular activities and then hurried home for a late dinner. They had to finish any remaining homework and then bathe and go to bed later than we wanted. It was exhausting. Weekends came and went, and then I was sending the kids off to school on Monday morning, just to do it all over again and again and again. This was the norm; this is what everyone was doing, but something didn't feel right.

Another year went by, and while many of my friends celebrated that they were almost out of the diaper phase, I didn't feel



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the same. I still had a strong desire for more children. But this feeling went against our plan! Having 3 children was normal, but once you had 4, you started walking a fine line. Todd listened to my struggle, but it wasn't long before I was ready to try for another child. Todd agreed. A few short weeks later, we were pregnant with our fifth child, another son, Brycen.

This fifth pregnancy carried me to the Church. Although my pregnancy had been greeted with love by many, it had also been greeted very negatively by a few. The negative opinions always weigh the heaviest! I desired to walk away from the negativity and walk towards Jesus. I also felt the need to be a part of a faith that valued every life conceived. With the impending arrival of our newest child, a thirst for the Eucharist also began to develop within me. Thus, on many days, I would find myself sitting in my car in the parking lot of our local Catholic church. That little seed from the marriage vows had finally sprouted.

Our family began attending our little town's Catholic church. I began RCIA classes. What I thought would be a joyous time ended up being very stressful, as there were several traumatizing events that happened, shaking my soul to its depths. The harsh realities of how other people's choices could directly affect our family placed us in some difficult positions. I found myself always feeling sick. In addition, I started suffering from anxiety. It was debilitating. The children were incredibly sick that year as well.

I cried out, asking God why this was happening now, when I had looked to His

Church with so much hope and trust. I prayed a lot. The seed of faith grew bigger and made me realize that I had to let go of MY plan completely. God had always had a plan for me, and it included Him being in my plan, but I hadn't been responding with openness. He deserved more than I was giving. I knew it was time to start putting God first.

Resting in the Lord

Todd and I were on the same page. We decided I would not go back to work anytime soon. We decided to list our home and downsize. We decided to start budgeting and live a more frugal lifestyle. We decided to become more involved in our church, and we decided to homeschool.

Seton came highly recommended by the same friend who had touched my heart with the card. It didn't take long to learn that homeschooling is a lifestyle and doesn't just begin when the books come out and end when they are put away. Homeschooling is an integration of life and education, where learning happens always. Together, my children and I learn about Catholic culture, and learn to incorporate our faith into each thread of our day. It is such a gift.

The kids are still very involved with

...Story continues on pg. 13



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4 Steps to Reach Your Educational Goals

BY CHRISTINE SMITHA



Some families engage in year-round schooling, but for those of us who like to have a summer break, spring can be stressful as we try to ensure work is completed at summer's beginning.

Here at Seton, we like to tell families that sometimes, when you think you're behind, you're actually right where you're supposed to be. After all, lesson plans are just a means to an end; they aren't an end in themselves. You know your children and you know what they are capable of doing. In the big picture, if you are progressing toward giving them a solid spiritual and intellectual formation, then you're not behind, no matter what page you are on in the math book.

Homeschooling is about having the flexibility to learn at the student's pace in a way that works best for your particular family. However, it is true that scheduling can be pretty important at various times in life, especially if a new baby is on the way, or a high schooler needs to graduate, or a special family reunion is planned. If you haven't reached the goals you set for your family when the school year started, having the family ready for such events can be a challenge, not to say a significant source of anxiety. Rest assured, however, there are many strategies for moving through courses a little faster. Here's how:

1. SET GOALS

Manage by objectives.

Work out a plan with each student for handling workloads and deadlines. Assign very specific rewards to each goal achieved, with maybe a bonus for progress that happens early. This should be done with the input of the student, who then feels invested in the plan and has real motivation to achieve the goals he himself set.

Have a precise daily goal.

As a precursor to #1, and a way to test if that system will work for your family, work on creating a goal just for today. If the student can achieve that, set a new goal for the next day, and so on for a week or two. Once the student has that experience of consistent daily achievement under the belt, it will be easier to commit to a long-term plan.

2. BE FLEXIBLE

Consider working on Saturdays.

This recommendation may elicit a groan, but if a student can commit to working just three hours each Saturday, she can quickly make up lost ground. Three hours does not kill the weekend, especially if she commits to getting up early. Starting work by 8 AM means that three hours of work are over at 11:00, leaving plenty of time for typical weekend activities.

Alternatively, work an extra hour each day from Monday through Friday.

For high school students, commit to one hour per course per day as the normal school day; then add an extra hour for one course at the end of the day. Slowly but surely, students will start catching up, and eventually, they'll even be ahead of the curve. Be careful with this one, though, because there is a diminishing return if students simply aren't able to focus for a long period of time.

Turn required reading into bedtime reading.

Students can get their book report assignments finished much more quickly if they read their books outside of regularly scheduled school hours. That way school time can be spent focusing on written work.

3. USE A SUCCESS STRATEGY

Don't sweat the small stuff.

If your high school student needs to complete some courses to receive credits, then focus on the work required for a Seton grade. If a student is strong in certain areas, cut the daily home-graded work in half. In such disciplines, have students do odd or even numbered problems/questions instead of whole exercises. Schoolwork will proceed much more quickly with this approach.

Use incentives.

Everybody needs regular positive reinforcement, but the reality is that once kids get past toddler-age, they don't get a great deal. We sometimes focus on everything that's wrong, forgetting to praise what's right. Make a point to keep the incentives and positive feedback going. One mom uses this method to great effect. She motivates her kids "with small prizes. Every day they finish on time, they get a star. Every five stars gets a prize. It is surprisingly motivating for them."

Another mom recognizes the need for rewarding everyone. She says, "When my kids fall behind, it is often a shared fault—so I motivate us all by scheduling a field trip on a Friday if we work really hard and get the job done. My kids love our zoo and the mu-

seum, but the big cookie is going downtown to meet Daddy for lunch.”

Regarding incentives, it may seem a little crass, but money often works. Kids are always asking for things, so why not tie their spending money to getting their schoolwork done?

Use disincentives.

While positive reinforcement typically works better, it may not hurt to have a system of disincentives to support the reward system. If a student fails to complete his work according to the agreed-upon timeline, consequences should come into play. Reduce access to entertainment, extracurricular activities, friends, etc., until the student has recommitted to getting his work done. Two of our moms recently mentioned that they do a “complete black out. No electronics of any kind, and no going anywhere/doing anything.” According to both moms, their kids “get back on schedule in record-breaking time.”

Turn written work into oral work.

Outside of Seton-graded assignments, there are a number of home-graded assignments that typically require use of pen and paper or a computer. Work with your children to do some of these assignments orally. An added benefit might be that you get help with the chores. A literature quiz could be handled while setting the table for a meal. Discussion questions and spelling tests

could take place over a basket of laundry. An assignment that might otherwise take an hour because of lack of motivation or struggles with writing may take only 15 or 20 minutes because of the shift to oral work and the involvement of Mom or Dad.

4. ORGANIZE NOW

Have a functional plan.

Progress is much harder when there is no order in the home life, so don't get carried away attacking all the schoolwork at once, to the detriment of everything else in family life. Have a plan and stick to it, and make sure that plan can function within the overall system of your family life.

Have an accountability partner for each student.

This could be a parent, older sibling, or a member of the extended family, someone who wants the student to succeed, whom the student respects. This accountability partner works with the student to encourage, motivate, and assist with school planning, identifying reasons for falling behind, and helping overcome trouble spots. Regularly scheduled check-ins with an accountability partner are often all it takes to get school moving again.

Keep it steady.

Take it one step at a time in a committed and focused drive to the finish line. You'll get there if you just keep on keeping on.

5. A DIFFERENT APPROACH FOR HIGH SCHOOL

Switch to the “block” system. Take 6 hours for school, but instead of 1 hour per course for 6 courses, do 3 hours of one course in the morning and 3 hours of a second course in the afternoon. If a student can complete 5 lessons (a week's worth of classes) in the morning and again in the afternoon, then she can absolutely complete a course in just two months. If there are 6 courses, this means that in two months she will have two credits and only 4 courses left to finish. This sort of tangible progress usually results in a big boost to self-motivation, which then spurs further achievement, and is a primary reason why we recommend the block system.

If you need more proof, take a look at these numbers: A typical school year has 180 work days. If a textbook has 540 pages, then the 180-day plan would require about 3 pages of study a day. If you do 5 lessons in a day, then you have to cover 15 pages, perhaps a chapter or half a chapter. By doing 5 lessons per day in one subject, you cover a week's worth of lesson plan work in one day. There are 9 weeks in a quarter, so in 9 days (two weeks), you will cover a quarter's work, and in 4 weeks (one month), you will cover a semester's work, and thus in 2 months, a full high school course. Sounds good, doesn't it!



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.

Composition Assignments and the Importance of Writing Well

Students and parents often call about the composition assignments, asking for advice about what to look for in reviewing a composition. Seton's English lesson plans give specific guidance on grading compositions, which can be found in the Introduction and first quarter of each lesson plan. We encourage parents to use these guidelines to edit and correct their student's book reports and other compositions. In the near future, we will be producing a video tutorial for analyzing compositions and improving writing skills. In the meantime, here's some perspective on writing a good essay.

Outlining

The most fundamental and important step for writing a paragraph, an essay, a book report, or any composition is to write an outline. Teachers who score the SAT essay have reported that the biggest reason why students do poorly on the essay question is because the students never write an outline first. Hence, their essays are poorly written and difficult to follow.

The importance of outlines cannot be overstated. For instance, colleges often ask students to submit an essay as part of the entrance procedure, or when applying for financial aid. Without an outline, such an essay may be disjointed, which reflects poorly on the writing skills of the student, and could mean the difference between a positive and negative decision. Moreover, college professors sometimes require an outline before students start writing a paper so they can approve it first. This is especially true of major papers, such as the thesis required for graduation.

If your student has never written an outline, or has never developed a good outline, find articles in magazines or newspapers or the encyclopedia, or even print an article from the Internet. For a young child, provide a simple fairy-tale or Bible story. Then have your student write an outline of the main topics and the main

points which support the main topics.

Be sure your student understands that an outline does not consist of sentences, but rather words or phrases. Have your student practice doing outlines, maybe five or ten or more, until he or she has an excellent understanding of what an outline should be. Only after students have learned to write correct outlines that reflect the important points of an article, should they start writing their own compositions based on an outline.

Why is an outline so important, you might ask? The outline gives order to the topic that will be covered in the composition. Whether it is for one paragraph or for a ten-page research paper, the outline explains how the topic will be presented throughout. It is like a roadmap that shows the precise route



you must take to reach your destination. It doesn't matter whether the topic will be organized according to chronology, importance of ideas, or something else. What matters is that the order is logical; the way to ensure that is to use an outline.

Editing

Just as lack of outlining causes problems at the beginning of a composition, so lack of editing causes problems at the end of a composition. Any good writer knows that a composition needs to be reviewed and rewritten. Professional writers average eight rewrites before they submit their composition. They might change the order of words, add more precise words, shorten sentences for emphasis, improve a long sentence with a couple of hard-hitting short sentences, combine some sentences, or totally drop some sentences. The point

is: never let the first draft be the last draft. Always encourage students to review and revise.

Reading to Writing

A great way to learn to write well is to read and read and read, and then read some more. The more a student reads, the more he becomes familiar with good writing, the more vocabulary words he learns, the more he learns about a logical presentation in a paragraph and essay. In fact, you might consider having your student read from history and science books, or even a chapter from literature, and identify such things as method of organization, effective word choice, and interesting sentence structure. A steady diet of good reading will teach your students and budding writers how to express themselves well. Don't forget the thesaurus. Good writers make frequent use of a thesaurus to ensure that words chosen say precisely and exactly what was intended.

Encourage your children to write every day. Give your students a notebook or journal that can easily be carried. Encourage students to use these notebooks, writing something, no matter how little, each day. The writing could be about something that happened or some thought that left an impression during the day. Writing reflections on the events of the day develops analytical and thinking skills, which will, in turn, add greater joy to the experience of remembering and writing, as deeper meaning and connections are revealed by the process.

Perhaps the best part of learning to be a good writer is the realization that when your student wants to express himself on a topic which is personally very important, he can be persuasive and effective at helping others understand a subject or even convincing someone to change his mind about something. For Catholics, being a good writer can actually help others learn and love the Catholic faith. Now that is something to get excited about, and even to learn to write well about!

THE RIGHTS OF PARENTS AS PRINCIPAL EDUCATORS

The primary role of parents in their children's education, especially in their religious education, comes from the importance of children in Christian marriage.

The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* says of children in Christian marriage, quoting the Second Vatican Council:

“By its very nature, the institution of marriage and married love is ordered to the procreation and education of the offspring, and it is in them that it finds its crowning glory.” “Children are the supreme gift of marriage, and contribute greatly to the good of the parents themselves” (CCC 1652, quoting *Gaudium et Spes*, 48, par. 1, and 50, par. 1).

The *Catechism* continues with what follows from children being the crowning glory of marriage:

“The fruitfulness of conjugal love extends to the fruits of the moral, spiritual, and supernatural life that parents hand on to their children by education. Parents are the principal and first educators of their children” (CCC 1653).

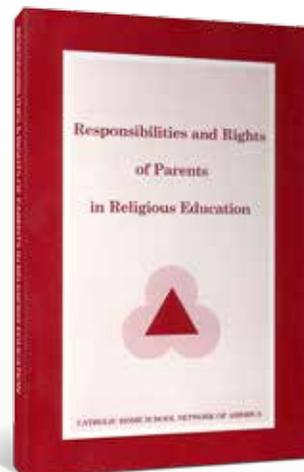
The last point clarifies that parents are primary educators of their children, not only because they are the first educators of their children in time, but also because they are the principal educators across time.

As principal educators of their children, parents are the most important and chief educators of their children until the latter enter their legal majority. Parents have the greatest responsibility

in the education of their children and, therefore, the greatest authority and freedom to exercise that responsibility.

As a practical matter, parents usually are not the sole educators of their children because the complexity of modern life requires assistance from others, such as the Church and the state and other education providers, in this important task. However, while parents are not usually the only educators, they are the only principal educators of their children.

Parents always remain the principals or headmasters of their children's “schools of faith and life.” As principals, parents have a large measure of authority and freedom of choice in the education of their children. Other educators have authority and power only because parents authorize and empower other educators to be their representatives.



This article was taken from pages 8 to 11 of the 54-page pamphlet *Responsibilities and Rights of Parents in Religious Education*, written by a Canon Lawyer for the Catholic Homeschool Network of America, now available from Seton Educational Media for \$2.00.





Walking through Wardrobes

BY JOHN CLARK

We've all probably been in conversations in which a parent will comment that his child spends too much time on the computer or iPad, as though the parent had no control at all over his children. That's pretty sad for a number of reasons, beginning with the fact that it alludes to a relationship breakdown. But it also strikes me that we parents have collectively lost sight of those things that often draw families together, rather than apart. And perhaps we have lost sight of the most basic one: reading to our children.

I have some of the typical American hi-tech wizardry in my house: MacBook, iPad, and televisions. But with all the electronic distractions that surround them, there is one thing that our children will drop everything to attend: their parents reading a story to them.

Yesterday morning, Lisa sat down to read a book to Mary Katherine on our couch. As I was finishing my oatmeal, I sat down on the couch and watched the children, one after another, compete for Lisa's lap to hear the story. As she read the words, I looked over at little Mary Katherine, looking pensively at the words and pictures, listening to the sound of her mother's soothing voice. The other children had similar expressions, with mesmerized looks that deepened with the turning of every page. Heck, as I ate my kibble, even I wanted to hear the story unfold, which says a lot considering that Lisa was reading *Curious George Learns His ABC's*. (I was pretty sure I knew how this

one was going to turn out.)

I'm not completely sure why it is magnetizing, but I am sure that it is magnetizing to listen to someone read to you. It is a surprisingly personal experience. It's also true in reverse: it is a very personal experience not only to listen, but to read to someone. Whenever I write something, I'm always happier to read it to Lisa than to print it out and hand it to her to read. And I don't think I'm alone in this. Whenever my dad, a professional author, writes something that he is particularly happy about, he'll call me and say: "Let me read you something I just wrote." At the age of 43, I guess I still find comfort in the fact that my daddy reads to me.

Psychologists tell us that reading to children creates a bond between parent and child. When we hear that, we tend to think of the good that it does for the child. Maybe that is because it is so obviously efficacious to them. But it's also good for us parents to go on these reading and learning adventures with our children.

Since our earliest days of home-schooling, Lisa has read the daily Bible readings to our children. As a child, it's hard to put a value on hearing the Word of God read to you by your mother who loves you. But I also think that it has helped Lisa understand the importance of her maternal pedagogic mission. Of all the things we have accomplished in homeschooling, nothing

has been more valuable than this devotion to Scripture.

For my part, I am usually given fictional reading assignments. When my oldest children were growing up, I used to read them the C. S. Lewis *Narnia* books. We'd eat dinner, say the Rosary, and then I would read them a chapter from *Prince Caspian* or *The Magician's Nephew*. Everyone, including me, looked forward to it. The children didn't ask if they could watch television instead—they wanted to hear me read the stories. And I think in some ways, it went beyond that. We uncovered a world to which we were all transported together. Every night, when Daddy opened the cover of that book, we were there—we were together in Narnia. We had walked through the wardrobe, together.

I know that many of us fathers have very little time these days. Many of us are working more than one job to support our families. And if you're anything like me, when you're not working, you are tempted to think about your job. But reading to your children can be a ten-minute escape for all of you. It may be an experience that bonds you together forever.



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.



Register for Graduation 2014!

"This is our second time, and we will do it again. The children worked so hard to finish high school that they deserve the privilege of walking with their classmates. Thank you, Seton, for the opportunity for them to do so."

"I hope that you continue to offer this! It's a great way to connect with fellow grads and families of like mind."

"It was very nice and relaxing. Enjoyed meeting the instructors we have been talking to on the phone. Great area for the kids to play and get to know other students!"

"Truly enjoyed touring the building and meeting staff we have spoken with over the years!"

"It was a pleasure attending our daughter's graduation from Seton this May. The graduation ceremony was just beautiful and the speeches were inspiring...particularly yours [Dr Clark's]!"

Register online for Seton Graduation 2014 before April 15th
www.setonmagazine.com/graduation2014

Continued from pg. 7, The Bosso Family

their extracurricular activities. They attend a homeschool PE and homeschool art class. They have piano lessons, and a speech pathologist comes to the home once a week. Todd is very active with the children after work. He is a Cub Scout Den Leader and coaches their sport teams. The children have many activities affiliated with our church such as altar-serving, Squires, and Faith Formation. We also have three different co-ops in which we occasionally participate.

My children are growing academically, domestically, physically, socially, and spiritually. They talk to people of varying ages now. They are learning to work as a team so that we can get from point A to point B more quickly. They help me tend to the house now that I am helping them as their teacher. I have grown and continue to grow as a Catholic but also as a mother and as a wife. I am proud to be a witness to God's graces. I can't thank Him enough for letting the promise we made for our children bring us back to the fullness of His truth in the Catholic Faith. We took the plunge and stepped outside of the cultural norm of our society, and our family is stronger because of it. That feels right!

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

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

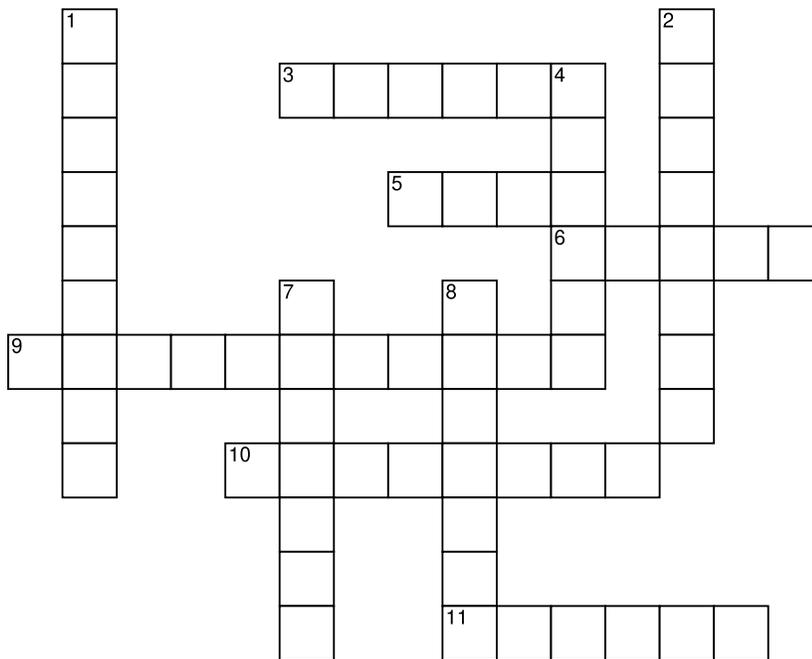
NY, Buffalo - May 30, 2014 (Fri.)

IHM Buffalo Homeschool & Parent Conference



THE PASSION & RESURRECTION

**CATHOLIC
CROSSWORD**



ACROSS

- 3 After His Resurrection, Jesus appeared to two disciples on the road to this town.
- 5 He was the only Apostle at the foot of the Cross.
- 6 On Good Friday, we remember Jesus' ____.
- 9 We celebrate ____ Sunday the week after the Feast of the Resurrection.
- 10 When Jesus spoke to Mary Magdalen after His Resurrection, she thought He was the ____.
- 11 Jesus celebrated the Last ____ on Holy Thursday.

DOWN

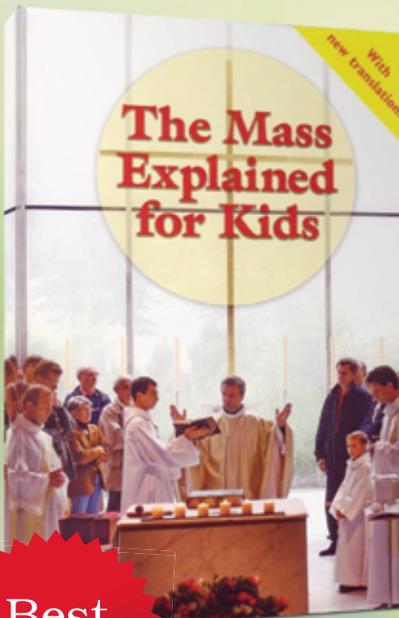
- 1 The Most Blessed Sacrament; Jesus instituted this sacrament the night before He died.
- 2 Mary ____, who had been a sinner, was at the foot of the Cross.
- 4 Jesus rose from the dead on this day of the week.
- 7 Jesus instituted this sacrament, also known as Confession, on the day He rose from the dead.
- 8 Jesus made the Apostles ____ when He said, "Do this in remembrance of Me."

SOLUTIONS: Emmanus, John, death, Divine Mercy, gardeners, Supper, Eucharist, Magdalen, Sunday, Penance, priests



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The Mass Explained to Kids

Enable children to understand what we do and say at Mass and why. Liturgical texts are linked with corresponding explanations. Help kids become fully active and enthusiastic participants! Features the official texts of the new translation.

Recommended for ages 7-11. Copyright 2011. Dimensions: 5.5 x 8.5 inches. Soft cover. 31 pp.

Stations of the Cross for Children!

Follow Jesus through fourteen stations -- fourteen moments -- on His journey with the cross. This beautiful, ancient devotion guides children to ask for God's strength and forgiveness, to praise and thank Jesus for giving His life for us, and, ultimately, to find great hope. With moving full color illustrations and real-life prayers.



Recommended for ages 6-12. Copyright 2005. Dimensions: 5.5 x 8.5 inches. Soft cover. 32 pp.

Both books are geared toward children for growing in holiness during Lent and beyond!

Student Achievements



Nikolai | With the cooperation of my pro-life friends, I am proud to have created one more video to advocate life. The video is on Youtube: "The Pro-life Generation: Your Voice Matters."



Emily | A 12th grader in Seton, competed and won first place at the Skills USA Commercial Baking Regional Competition in Michigan on February 7th, 2014.



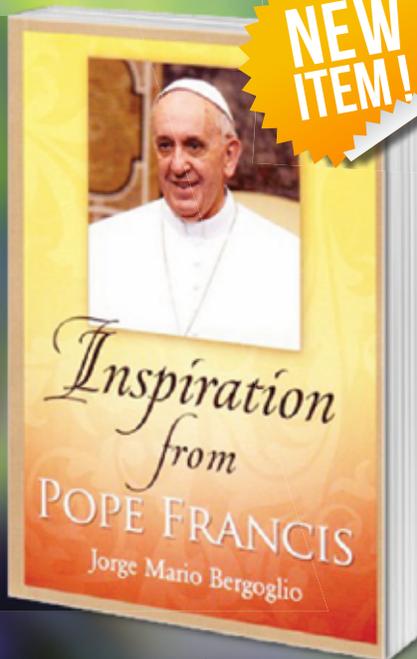
Mary Grace | I am a Level 10 gymnast and will be signing a NCAA Letter of Intent next year to compete in gymnastics at the University of Missouri on a full scholarship.

Inspiration from Pope Francis

This collection of homilies written by Cardinal Jorge Bergoglio between the years 1999-2013 offers you a unique glimpse into Pope Francis's character and nature. Selected excerpts contain his inspirational, pithy thoughts on a wide array of topics, ranging from Jesus Christ to the Holy Spirit, to education and family. Capturing his concerns related to humanity, these homilies particularly reveal the roots of Pope Francis's commitment to social justice. By reflecting and praying on his words, you are inspired to transform his thoughts into concrete actions.

Copyright 2013.
Dimensions: 4.25 x 6.125"
Soft cover. 148 pp.

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Visit the Featured Family article online to see a professionally made video of the Bosso family. For the first time, see on video how a family lives Seton!



In the family, faith accompanies every age of life, beginning with childhood: children learn to trust in the love of their parents. This is why it is so important that within their families parents encourage shared expressions of faith which can help children gradually to mature in their own faith. Young people in particular, who are going through a period in their lives which is so complex, rich and important for their faith, ought to feel the constant closeness and support of their families and the Church in their journey of faith. We have all seen, during World Youth Days, the joy that young people show in their faith and their desire for an ever more solid and generous life of faith. Young people want to live life to the fullest. Encountering Christ, letting themselves be caught up in and guided by his love, enlarges the horizons of existence, gives it a firm hope which will not disappoint. Faith is no refuge for the fainthearted, but something which enhances our lives. It makes us aware of a magnificent calling, the vocation of love. It assures us that this love is trustworthy and worth embracing, for it is based on God's faithfulness which is stronger than our every weakness.

Pope Francis, *Lumen Fidei* (The Light of Faith, 53)

Pope Francis Image Credit: Catholic Church (England and Wales)