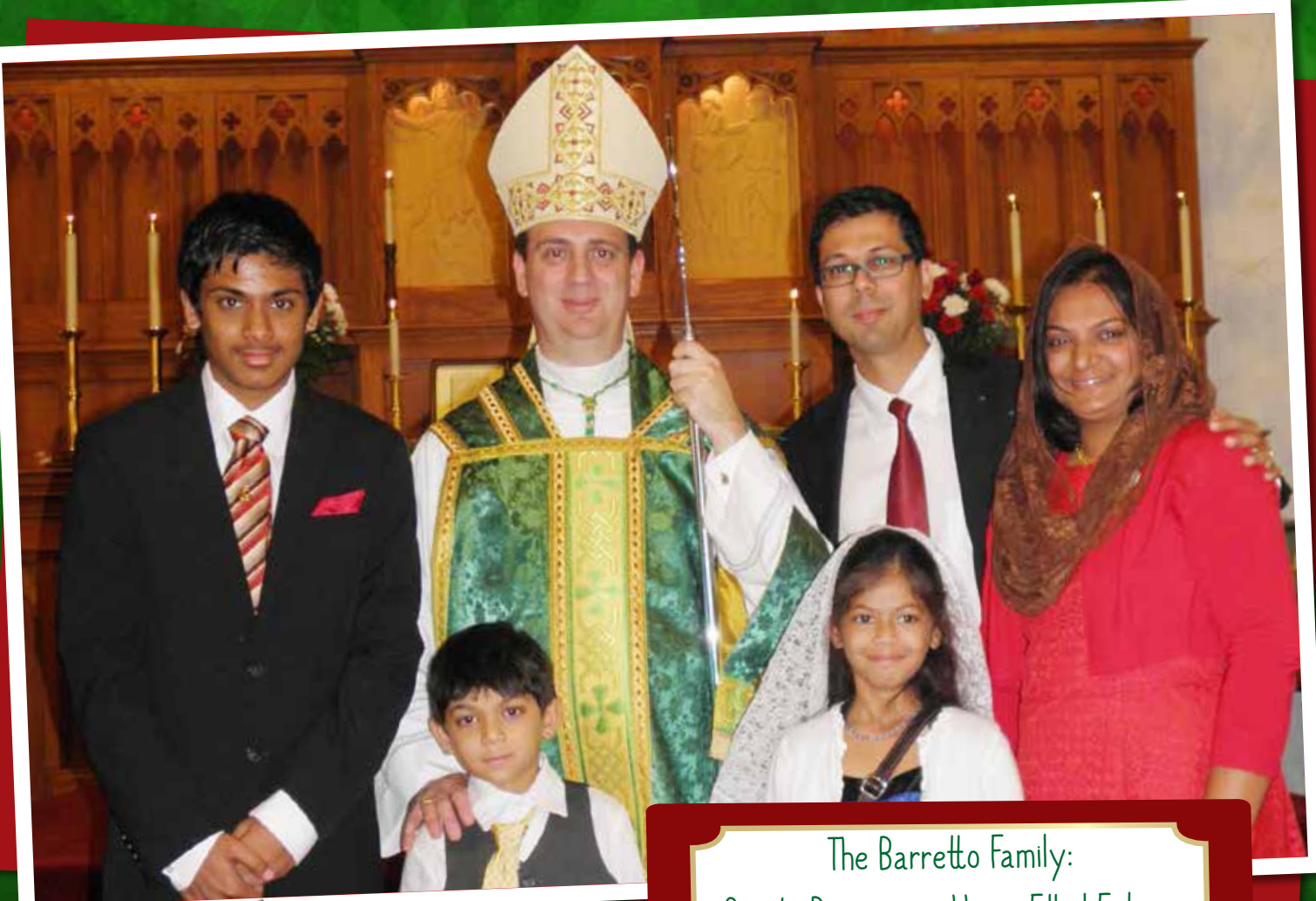


# Seton MAGAZINE

Under the Magisterium of the Catholic Church SETONMAGAZINE.COM | NOVEMBER / DECEMBER 2019



The Barretto Family:  
Simple Beginnings, Hope-Filled Future  
pg 8

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COVER PHOTO

The Barretto Family



LETTER FROM THE EDITOR



Dear Readers,

My mother had a great love of Our Lady, a love learned at her own mother's knee. That dear lady, my nana, had a small miraculous medal that she wore daily without fail. When she passed away, my mother received it and wore it faithfully.

Now, that medal hangs around my neck. It reminds me not only of my mother and nana, but also of the great love my heavenly mother has for her children. Therefore, I am delighted to point you towards Dr. Clark's article about the miraculous medal and her reminder of how important this sacramental can be in our salvation.

This issue is filled with so many beautiful articles, all written in the hopes of inspiring and encouraging you this holiday season. Nick Marmalejo's challenge to "embrace the holiday spirit for education's sake" may have you considering new ways to educate this season.

Here at *Seton Magazine* we want to wish you the happiest of times in these coming celebratory days. This Thanksgiving, our Seton families will be front and center on our gratitude lists, and in Advent, our prayers for a reverent and peaceful season will be with you.

Please share with us any photos or memories of the season's celebrations. We love to hear from you!

Happy Thanksgiving, Blessed Advent, and Merry Christmas from us all!

Blessings,

*Mary Ellen Barrett*

Mary Ellen Barrett

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MISSION STATEMENT

The mission of Seton Home Study School, an international Catholic institution, is to ensure that all of its students thrive intellectually and spiritually using a Christ-centered, educational program that empowers them to live the Catholic Faith while embracing the academic and vocational challenges of the twenty-first century.

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## THIS IS WHY WE HOMESCHOOL



I never pictured myself as a homeschooling mother, but during the year that I spent discerning between homeschooling and public school, I felt the Lord put the desire in my heart to homeschool and be with my children during the day.

In the end, I had more peace with the idea of homeschooling than public school and answered the call of what I feel ultimately fulfills my vocation as a mother - to be with my children and teach them daily.

– Joanna Velasquez



SHARE YOUR "WHY WE HOMESCHOOL" ON **FACEBOOK**



# The Miraculous Medal

BY DR. MARY KAY CLARK



“An oval frame seemed to form, and in its upper portion, the following words were inscribed in semicircular form about the upper part of Our Lady’s body: O Mary, conceived without sin, pray for us who have recourse to thee.”

“Once again, the Voice made itself heard within my heart: Have a medal made after this pattern. Those who wear it, blessed, about their necks, and who confidently say this prayer, will receive great graces, and will enjoy the special protection of the Mother of God.”

“The frame reversed itself to show the other side of the medal. A large M, surmounted by a cross having a double bar under it. Beneath this M, the holy hearts of Jesus and Mary were placed side by side, the first being crowned with thorns, the other pierced by a sword. And around about were twelve stars.”

## God Wishes to Entrust to You a Mission...

With these words, Catherine Laboure, a young French nun, describes her encounter in 1856 with Our Lady. As the Blessed Mother appeared sitting in a chair next to the convent altar, St. Catherine was told that Jesus wants the world to know that His Blessed Mother is directly involved with Him in helping people who need to believe that Jesus cares

about them and their problems, especially for those who are sick.

“The Blessed Mother spoke to me of the manner in which I ought to behave,” Catherine reported. “... She told me how to act in time of distress. Pointing with her left hand to the altar steps, she told me to come there to refresh my heart, and she said that it was there that I would find all needed solace.”

## ...Come to the Foot of This Altar; Grace Awaits All...

“My child,” the Blessed Mother continued, “God wishes to entrust to you a mission. ... do not fear, grace will be given to help you. ...once more, have confidence and do not fear. In your prayers, inspiration will be given to you. The times are very evil. Great misfortune will come to France: her throne will be overthrown. The whole world will be upset by evils of every kind.”

“But come to the foot of this altar; grace awaits all, whether they be great or little who ask for it fervently and with confidence...guard against bad reading matter, against loss of time, and against useless visiting.”

While these words were given by the Blessed Mother to a nun in Italy long ago, these words of the Blessed Mother surely were meant for all of us. We need to protect ourselves and our children against potentially sinful

reading matter, against the loss or waste of time, and against “useless visiting.” Today, useless visiting could include “visiting” with modern technology.

## Do Not Forget About the Miraculous Medal.

Along with our daily Rosary prayers and meditations on the lives of Jesus and Mary, and doing our best to attend daily Mass with our children, we should give serious consideration to wearing the Miraculous Medal.

The Miraculous Medal... Do we hear much about the Miraculous Medal anymore? Does anyone remember seeing one lately? How many of us have forgotten or perhaps never learned about the Miraculous Medal? While all the medals from saints are wonderful, none can be as powerful as The Miraculous Medal, given by the Mother of God to St. Catherine Laboure, the young French nun in a little unknown convent, almost 200 years ago.

## For more information about Miraculous Medals visit:

[www.setonbooks.com/miraculousmedal](http://www.setonbooks.com/miraculousmedal)



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 Homeschooling: A Handbook for Parents*.



# Family Traditions

Our Facebook families offered some favorite Christmas memories to share with you.

That year the house was stuffed full of people and you slept where you found space. Six adults, nine kids and three bedrooms!

But we all learned a lot about each other and grew closer that Christmas. It was the last Christmas I got to spend with my dad, and I couldn't imagine a better memory as the last. - **David C.**

We had the whole extended family sit together for an informal photo. As we counted down, we said, "1, 2, 3, we're pregnant!" and took a photo of their reactions. Sweet Mae ended up being our 5th daughter - **Katie F.**

Going to the Family Mass on Christmas Eve, especially when my son was little, and could participate in the Christmas Pageant as a shepherd!

Afterward, we would go to my parents' house for our traditional Christmas Eve dinner that my family has been doing since my mom was a girl! - **Donna M.**

I love watching "It's A Wonderful Life" with the family. I love lying on the floor looking up at the Christmas tree with the kids playing "I Spy" with the hundreds of different ornaments amid the glowing rainbow lights. And I love getting the mail each day and finding beautiful Christmas cards and letters from friends and family across the country. But the best Christmas memory I have was nursing our newborn girl Katie (born 12/19) on the living room couch - the room decorated with all the sights, sounds, and smells of Christmas - some carols on my Christmas playlist bring me back to this magical time and always put a smile on my face. - **Kim P.**

# your Questions ANSWERED



BY DR. MARY KAY CLARK

## How much time should we spend each day for schoolwork?

Parents need to decide how much time should be spent each day for schoolwork. It depends so much on the age, and the needs and the abilities of each child. Young children should be taught in short time frames, perhaps 20 minutes per subject, while high school students certainly should take 30 to 40 minutes per subject.

Of course, reading for a book report should be done outside that “work” time, which is normal procedure for junior high and high school students.

A student who can finish up his math in a short time may need to spend more time with his English or book report. When I taught my sons, anything that was assigned during the week and was not done, had to be done on the weekend. This way, we “kept up” with what I considered appropriate time for assignments.

## I understand you recommend siblings taking courses together. Ours are only one grade level apart. Suggestions?

Seton officially encourages parents to combine students in the same courses if at all possible. For instance, students can

take the same art, music, and P.E. Students also can easily be combined for the science and history courses. Many new families combine students in English, because older students have had no English lessons in previous schools. Obviously, students in high school need “credit” for their courses, so they may need to “learn” the concepts at the lower level before doing high school level assignments.

## Some of our family relatives are upset about our home schooling. How do I deal with this?

You are responsible for your children’s education. It is your primary God-given duty. With prayer and sacrifice, you are giving your children the very best in Catholic education. With all the problems going on in the schools today and in the society, I cannot believe anyone would question the great sacrifice that parents are making to teach their children at home. On the contrary, friends and family should all be praising such parents who are giving up extra jobs and personal activities. Frankly, family members and friends should be offering to help!

## “CONNECT WITH SETON FAMILIES” OVER 1,000 JOIN IN SEVEN MONTHS



We are thrilled to report that over 1,000 Seton families have reached out to connect with other Seton families in their area,

Academic Counselor Cecilia Sauer, explains that these connections allow parents to trade questions and answers about their homeschooling, and to offer one another support and guidance. In addition, this support system allows families to discuss the homeschooling laws in their state.

Some families participating in the program have also given permission for prospective Seton homeschoolers to contact them and ask questions about Seton Home Study School.

Whether or not you decide to add your family to the contact list, we can generate a list for you of other families in your area.

To learn more about the program, your MySeton page: click on the box on the right-hand side of the page titled “Want To Meet Seton Families In Your Area?”

## With Thanksgiving and Christmas coming, how can I keep up the home schooling pace?

You may not be able to keep up with the usual schedule, but perhaps the children can do the assignments a little differently. If possible, keep your children reading and doing writing assignments.

If any of the children are struggling with math or English, they could be doing a few assignments every day, even if for only half an hour. Spelling and vocabulary could be done at least twice a week during the holidays for students needing continuous practice. History and science are two subjects you can put aside temporarily; the children can catch up later.

High school students definitely should continue their studies, especially in areas such as English, the foreign language course, and math. Assign any subject which could become a problem if your child does not do assignments continuously. Subjects like science and history could be delayed in most cases.

## How do I know which assignments to send to Seton?

The four Quarter Report Forms, found in your lesson plans, are very clear about which assignments parents are to grade and to submit grades to Seton. The items

on the top half of the QRF are specific for your grade. The bottom half of the QRF lists the specific assignments which are to be submitted to Seton for grading.

Some of the Seton-graded tests or assignments [such as book reports] may be sent to Seton by mail, or if you prefer, you may upload them through MySeton.

## Can I have my teenagers help teach the younger children?

We believe that older children can and should help with teaching the younger children. In a few families, the older children delay college until after they have spent a year helping to home school the younger children. In some cases, an older student will enroll in an online college course while staying home to help with the home schooling of the younger children. In some of these cases, the older student also finds a part-time job to help pay for the upcoming college expenses. By the way, we hear from the colleges that home school students do very well as they have developed independent study skills!



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 Homeschooling: A Handbook for Parents*.



## Need help using Seton's online tools?

**Seton's new online support page features many resources to help you make the most of Seton's online tools, including:**

- Clear instructions for both MySeton and SetonOnline
- Helpful video walk-throughs demonstrating common tasks
- Easy contact form to easily request technical support from Seton

Available at [www.setonhome.org/online-help](http://www.setonhome.org/online-help)



The Seton College Partner Program is a way to encourage students to continue their Catholic education by attending solidly Catholic Colleges after high school.



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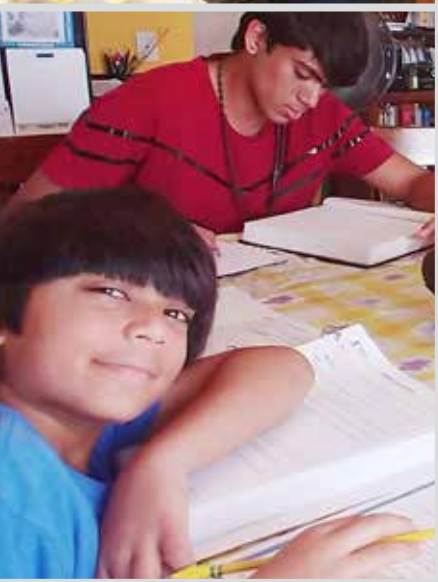


THOMAS AQUINAS  
COLLEGE



OUR LADY  
SEAT OF WISDOM  
COLLEGE

[setonhome.org/colleges](http://setonhome.org/colleges)



# Simple Beginnings, Hope-Filled Future

BY ANITA BARRETTO

*“For All Things Work Together for Good to Those Who Love God and Are Called to His Purpose” Romans 8:28*

My husband Renden and I were both born and raised in strong Catholic families in Mumbai, India. Our parishes were within a mile in the same town. We were both members of the Legion of Mary, and we met through a Catholic Charismatic prayer group.

We have been happily married for eighteen years and have three children. Cherub, our oldest son, is a seventeen-year-old high school senior. Seraphina is eleven and in sixth grade. Elijah will be eight soon; he is in the third grade and will be receiving Confirmation and First Communion this year!

Renden, our son Cherub, and I arrived in Florida from India in 2003 for employment. We fell in love with this beautiful country, and it has been our home for the past 16 years! Both Renden and I had studied in Catholic schools. Renden received his Computer Engineering degree from a Catholic college, and I became a teacher in the same Catholic school that I had attended.

We wanted to give Cherub a wholesome Catholic education. When two parochial schools failed us, we turned to homeschooling, which is all the Lord’s doing and is marvelous in our eyes! We registered with Seton in 2010,

and have benefitted very much from it all through the years! Seton has motivated our family to live our lives according to God’s will and plan. The children have profited tremendously by the curriculum, which helps inculcate and build virtue, discipline, perseverance, confidence, and intelligence. In the spring of 2019, Cherub scored a 1460 in his SAT, and Seraphina, once a timid person, won a trophy for achieving a superior rating at the piano competition three years in a row!

## Nurturing Faith and Family

A day at the Barretto household starts with morning prayers, and then Renden makes us a hot breakfast and homemade bread. The children help in cleaning up thereafter, and then follow Seton’s lesson plan to do their schoolwork for the next few hours. Later, the kids help mommy cook lunch, as our meals are made from scratch. After lunch, back to some more school work and chores before the doorbell rings, as the neighborhood kids look for them to come out and play.

Prayer and Bible discussions are the pillars of our home. We have a small altar in our home where we gather for saying the Rosary. Our growing zeal for the Faith led us to a gem nestled in Orlando called Incarnation Catholic Church, which belongs to the



Personal Ordinariate of the Chair of St. Peter. Cherub regularly serves as an acolyte. With the help of our loving and supportive holy pastor, we introduced the Legion of Mary to the parish, through which we serve and evangelize together as a family.

*“We went through fire and water, but you brought us to a place of abundance.”  
(Psalm 66:12)*

The Catholic curriculum intertwines our Faith with our life. Our Faith was soon tested through a fiery ordeal. In 2012, my father developed brain cancer and was given only a month to live, but suddenly, his health deteriorated overnight. I had to leave within three hours for Mumbai. As legal residents of the U.S., every time we traveled abroad, we required a special document with the current date to re-enter the US. I made sure I had that travel document with me, and I left for Mumbai, leaving behind my husband and kids. My stay in India was supposed to be for a week, spending quality time with my father.

A week later, at Mumbai airport, while waiting to board my plane back to the U.S., I received the most devastating news: my travel document had expired and I would not be permitted to take the flight home. We were in a shockingly impossible situation. My travel document could not be renewed from outside the U.S., and staying abroad meant abandoning my Permanent Resident application! Unfortunately, Renden couldn't travel to India unless he renewed his document.

After a painful three-month wait, Renden and the children came to me in Mumbai. While I waited for a miracle, I thanked God for homeschooling, for despite our ordeal, my kids' schooling did not suffer. Thanks to Seton, we could continue schooling from thousands of miles away from our home! This was the only silver lining in the dark cloud. After six months, in May 2013, through God's miraculous intervention and Renden's relentless efforts, it became possible for me to step back into my home in Florida, with a grateful heart and tears of joy. This reminds me of a quote from St. John Neumann: “O, what emotions were mine when I set foot on American soil.”

## *Seton for All Occasions*

Homeschooling with Seton is a tremendous blessing not just in times of crisis, but also when planning a vacation. The textbooks display lovely pictures, stories, and information about saints and cathedrals which inspire us. Seraphina has started making a list of all the places we should visit or to make a pilgrimage.



In this country, we take many things for granted, such as highways and rest stops, the varied terrains, even the history that makes this country so great. Recently, we went on an impromptu road trip with no specific plans, only prayers and Seraphina's list. We headed north from Orlando, Florida, to Niagara Falls, Canada, and back via Philadelphia, Baltimore, and Washington D.C. We attended Latin Mass in a 200-year-old church in Kentucky, venerated the relics of St. John Neumann at his Shrine, and saw St. Katherine Drexel's crypt. We visited Baltimore's first Cathedral where the fathers of the Baltimore Catechism celebrated Mass, and we saw the lately-discovered underground chapel.

Our family cherished every moment on our trip, and blessed and thanked God for this gorgeous and great country where we are privileged to live. From our ordeal and our road trip, we have understood not to take things for granted, but to cherish and to be grateful for all gifts, big and small, that God gives us, and to keep trusting the Lord even in uncertainties. God's Will for us is always marvelously perfect!





# Lighting Up The World: The Children's Rosary

BY SETON STAFF



Seton Home Study School seeks to educate children but also encourages children to grow in holiness. One of the ways children can grow in their relationship with Our Lord is through prayer. Pope St John Paul II shared how the Rosary in particular can sanctify souls in *Rosarium Virginis Mariae*. He quoted Blessed Bartolo Longo: “Just as two friends, frequently in each other’s company, tend to develop

similar habits, so too, by holding familiar converse with Jesus and the Blessed Virgin, by mediating on the mysteries of the Rosary and by living the same life in Holy Communion, we can become, to the extent of our lowliness, similar to them.”

There are also special graces that come when children come together to pray within a prayer group. “Where two or three are gathered in My Name,

there am I in their midst.” (Matthew 18:20) Adults for centuries have found support in their prayer lives by praying together in prayer groups. There is the familiar sight of several adults staying after Mass to pray the Rosary. But what about children? Does such a thing as a prayer group exist for kids? Absolutely,



and a Seton Mom is the founder of the international prayer group movement, “Children’s Rosary.” This summer, Blythe Kaufman, her husband, and three children traveled to East Africa. They spent the month of June visiting Children’s Rosary prayer groups in Kenya, Tanzania, and Uganda. The solitary prayer group that began in Connecticut in 2011, has now reached more than 30 countries on six continents.

Blythe shares some of what she witnessed visiting children who are part of the Children’s Rosary in Africa: “The testimonials we frequently heard from priests, parents, and children were so powerful. One pastor in Africa shared how many families in his parish were broken and after the Children’s Rosary began, they started to come together.

One 13 year old boy, shared: ‘I was undisciplined and now I am a disciplined boy.’ Indeed, this was a theme we heard. The children who participated in the Children’s Rosary developed self-discipline. They thought about their actions and made better choices. Another recurring observation was that the children were comfortable leading prayer. They were developing leadership skills and even felt comfortable leading prayer at home since they had experience leading prayer in their prayer groups. We also heard testimonials from parents and kids about how their prayers were answered. The kids took all that worried them to Our Lord and their Heavenly Mother and they found solace and assistance in their needs.”

We would like to share with Seton families an exciting way to participate in this international prayer group movement.

**First, consider starting a Children’s Rosary in your parish.** Homeschooling families have more flexibility in choosing meeting times. They could hold meetings during the week before a Mass or in conjunction with social time with other children. Permission from your pastor is needed to begin a group. Each new group should register on the website [www.childrensrosary.org](http://www.childrensrosary.org). Seton Educational Media carries the Children’s Rosary, a book that explains how to begin a group and which can be used by the children in the prayer group.

**Second, consider making rosaries** and sending them to the Children’s Rosary to help children around the world begin Children’s Rosary prayer groups. So far this year, the Children’s Rosary has sent out 31,351 rosaries. Almost all of these were handmade. Consider also sponsoring the postage for a box to be sent to children in another country. The Rosary is changing lives.

**Third, join in prayer from your home.** The Children’s Rosary has a “View from Heaven” map on their website: [www.childrensrosary.org](http://www.childrensrosary.org). When a Children’s Rosary prayer group is meeting, a blue twinkling light flashes on the map. Individuals and families also can click the button “Join in Prayer” to add their gold light for 30 minutes. In this way, kids around the world can see each other’s lights and feel connected in prayer.



For more information about  
**The Children's Rosary**

[childrensrosary.org](http://childrensrosary.org) or [childrensrosary.blogspot.com](http://childrensrosary.blogspot.com)

860-785-3340 | [blythe@childrensrosary.org](mailto:blythe@childrensrosary.org)

**Children’s Rosary**

PO Box 271743

West Hartford CT 06127 USA



# The Queen Mary

BY BRUCE CLARK

By the middle of the Nineteenth Century, ocean-going cargo ships had begun carrying eager passengers from Europe to America, or from America to Europe. Many of these cargo ships were spartan vessels which offered only a minimum of food and a hard cot. Enterprising shipping companies, however, realized that carrying passengers could be a gold mine. And so it was that passengers started traveling on cargo ships, though according to a graduated scale.

Those who paid less fare often were packed into areas below the decks, and were required to consume only the rations they had brought with them. Well-to-do passengers who paid more enjoyed glitch and glamour, such as excellent meals, small bands and dancing in the moonlight, and games for all ages.

Two of the finest ocean cargo shipping companies were Cunard and White Star, which merged in 1934 and became Cunard White Star. By then, the construction of a 1020 foot long luxury liner, which had begun in 1930, was nearly complete.

The ship had not yet been named, but whatever the name chosen, it had to end in the letters "ia", like the shipping company's other ships, which were named Aquitania, Sumaria and Carpathia. The board of directors finally decided that Victoria, after the British queen, was a perfect name for the new great ship.

Legends tell us that one of the directors on the board of the Cunard White Star shipping company, who was a good golfer, managed to arrange an invitation to the next golf tournament at the Balmoral Scotland Golf Course. Somehow, the "right people" had managed to get the shipping company director into a foursome golf game with British King George V. The shipping company director was careful to "play down" his golf so he would not obtain a better golf score and embarrass the British king.

As the two were walking up the fairway on the final golf hole, with his time running out, shipping company director said to the British King, "With your permission, Sire, we will name the grand new Cunard White Star ship after your wife, Britain's greatest queen."

The king replied "Of course you have my permission! My wife will be delighted."

Thus the magnificent new ship, the Queen Mary, was named by a Director and a King on a golf course!



This story is especially meaningful to me. In 1954, my Mom, my Dad, and I sailed to Europe on the luxury ship the Queen Mary. I was 18, in a moral culture where kissing a girl after three dates was daring. There were about a dozen girls and guys of my age on board the Queen Mary, so we made friends on the first day. One afternoon was especially meaningful.

All the passengers were advised that we would be passing another ship at dusk. The ship we would be meeting was the Ile de France. That evening, as the sun was going down on the horizon, we passengers on the Queen Mary watched as a magnificent gold and white ship, with all of her lights aglow in our darkening world, moved slowly toward us. Our rapture was broken by our captain's loud announcement to us all: "We have sent this radio message to the Ile de France: "You are a gracious and lovely lady." Immediately, the Il de France replied loudly: "But you will always be a Queen."

I have a number of memories tucked into the special places of my heart, but near the top is remembering one night at sea, when a lovely lady met a queen.



**Bruce T. Clark**, has been the Seton Historian since 1989. A homeschooling father of seven, Mr. Clark served as a Green Beret Captain in U.S. Special Forces and is the author of five historical novels: *The Custer Legacy*, *The Castro Conspiracy*, *The Blood-Red Flag*, *Redcoats and Rebels*, and *The American Renegade*.

# SETON FAMILY *Spotlight* - The Hicks Family



## **1. What do you love most about homeschooling?**

I love the ability to spend time learning and growing together as a family.

## **2. What inspired you to begin homeschooling?**

I wanted to be with my children, and began to research methods that would enable me to do this. I had wanted to send my children to the private Catholic school I had attended but that was a bit of a drive. It also only went to 6th grade so eventually I would be looking at homeschooling, as the local public schools were not appealing to me. (I had attended some of them!)

## **3. What have you found to be the greatest benefit of homeschooling?**

I love reading, so spending time reading books and learning together with my children has been a tremendous blessing.

## **4. How has homeschooling allowed your children to develop their potential?**

Our six children learn entirely differently from one another. Each has their unique learning style and homeschooling has allowed them to move through each subject at their own pace. Some excel at English, others at math.

## **5. Why did you choose Seton?**

I wanted a Catholic workbook style learning approach for the convenience and neatness. Seton's workbooks are so beautiful, the images in each one and on the cover were so lovely to look at. I had researched Seton academically years before and knew they were a good program.

## **6. What do you love most about Seton?**

Being able to upload work directly for marking really speeds up the process, and allows me to do everything from home. I also still really love the beautiful workbooks.

DO YOU LOVE HOMESCHOOLING?  
WOULD YOU LIKE TO SHARE THAT LOVE WITH THE  
COMMUNITY OF SETON FAMILIES?  
Details at [www.setonmagazine.com/spotlight](http://www.setonmagazine.com/spotlight)

## **A DAY AT THE FAIR**



Kyle (13), Arianna (10), Maria (8), Rebekah (7), Theodore (5), and George (2) entered their ducks and chickens at the Fall Fair. Kyle won first for his chickens 'King Arthur' and 'Sir Lancelot', Maria placed third for her duck 'Toad', Rebekah placed second for her duck 'Pebbles', and George placed third for his rooster 'Robin Hood'; and all the children had lots of fun!

# Making a Welcome Home for the Holidays

When I dropped my first daughter off at her wonderful Catholic college several years ago, I spent the ride home planning her return for the holidays. It took about ten minutes for me to start missing her, and when she did arrive home a few months later, laden with dirty laundry and three extra people who could not get all the way home but needed some “home” time, I could not have been happier.

It has always been our custom to practice hospitality here, and I’ve written often in this space about the importance of home. Making a home welcome for your guests can be extremely overwhelming for a homeschooling mother whose plate is already too full of domestic responsibilities.

The whole idea can create stress and anxiety, and make what should be a lovely time of celebration into a dreaded time of extra work. If the idea of having guests, overnight or otherwise, creates that sense of dread within the pit of your stomach, please know that no one is coming to your home to criticize your housekeeping. I spent far too many years stressing about my ugly couch,

## *No One is Coming to Your Home to Criticize Your Housekeeping.*

Formica countertops, and the spill du jour. What I have found is that people just want to be welcomed and fussed over. They enjoy good food, laughter, games, and music. People want the comfort of immersing themselves in your family life, and yes, that means baby messes, toddler messes, and teen messes because that is what a home filled with people and love looks like; it can be messy.

To prepare for the invasion, I begin in the kitchen, as does Seton mom Carolyn Smith, “Two weeks before, I completely get rid of all the old food in the freezer and fridge. I make sure the pantry food is not expired, and I organize it. I shop

## *People Just Want to be Welcomed and Fussed Over*

to the day in the remaining week, and finally do a big shop of plenty of food and ingredients, and make sure I have the stuff for planned meals and snacks and drinks, so that nobody has to leave the guests or returning kids, and everything is ready. I know it sounds mundane, but my association with being welcoming is feeding people, and it makes a huge difference.”

This approach makes great sense to me. I too tend to focus on the food and gatherings that will take place, and when you have a large family and then add additional people, this type of planning is essential. Making a list of meals and snack times, and then from there planning what is needed for each meal and grocery shopping (or ordering) takes a great deal of stress out of the visit.

Next up: where do we put all of these people? If you are fortunate enough to have a dedicated guest room, it’s time to thoroughly dust and vacuum, freshen the sheets and blankets, and see that all the lightbulbs work. I like to make sure there is a side table that can act as a night-stand, and that it’s cleared off to make space for a guest to use for glasses and their phone. Having a nice bottle of water and a package of fancy cookies to welcome your guests is a lovely touch that costs very little.





If you don't have a guest room, a comfortably made up couch, an air mattress, or even a cot can be made lovely with sheets, pillows, and soft blankets. It's not about hosting people in a fancy way, but making sure they know they are welcome and loved.

### *An Act of Love...*

What about that college student who is returning to hearth and home? Even though they are returning to the place that is most familiar to them, it warms a mom's heart to make them as welcome as anyone who does not live in the house. One way I learned to do this was to make sure I was entirely caught up with the household laundry. This sounds strange, but when the college kid returns for the holidays it is usually with a mountain of dirty clothes, and having a free laundry room helps get the process of catching up started pleasantly.

I would also freshen up her room in the same way I would for any guest, freshly washed sheets, a good dusting and vacuum, as well as a small treat to be enjoyed her first night home.

Opening your home to guests in the holiday season is an act of love, sacrificial for some to be sure (especially us introverts), but one which blesses both your family and your guests. If you relax and focus on the enjoyment of your friends and family and not worry about the dust bunnies under the couch, you will create an atmosphere that emulates the season: peace, love and the sharing of gifts. Who knows? You may even entertain an angel or two!



**Mary Ellen Barrett** is mother of seven children and two in heaven, wife to David and a lifelong New Yorker. She has homeschooled her children for eleven years using Seton and an enormous amount of books. She is editor of the *Seton Magazine* and also a contributor to *The Long Island Catholic*.



# HOMESCHOOLING

IN THE *Holidays?*

**A**s I write, summer is winding down and the holiday season approaches. This time of year can be a blessing, a cross to bear, or more than likely a combination of both for our particular homeschool. In my experience, the holidays—that period of time roughly between All Hallows Eve and Candlemas—has a tendency to dominate our attention and daily interactions.

Okay, at least my attention.

Certainly, a holiday fascination here in the U.S. is more than strongly encouraged by the world around us—from store shelves and Christmas ads, to the Hallmark Channel, and folks on social media parading out their Christmas ornaments in July. We are inundated. By the time one is an adult, the annual ethos of “this is what we do right now” has been drummed into us. Avoid these cultural rituals at your own peril, lest you fail to celebrate the season successfully and thus fail to be a complete human being—or so the implication goes.

All of this has the potential to derail or enhance our homeschool.

## DERAILED

“Leisure” comes from the Latin word *licere*, which means “to be allowed.” Interestingly, this Latin root also provides English with the word “license.” After even a few holiday seasons in our culture, especially as a kid, a belief naturally emerges in us that, once this time zone is entered, we come to believe that the holidays are a license for leisure. We feel entitled to it. Work? That is for the puritanicals and should be shunned, at least avoided.

When faced with Fundamentals of Grammar or Math 6, the obvious choice is that snowball fights and hot chocolate are preferred. The excuse to prepare for or embrace the particular holiday celebration or seasonal moment continually looms, and as parents, it is difficult to stay on track. Add in the pressures of family coming from out-of-town and the local social gatherings, and school often seems only to inch forward. Its importance dims, and the penitential character of Advent takes on different dimensions.

Of course, two answers to all of these exterior pressures are discipline and fortitude. Leisure is a good, but in its proper place. Much like wine or any other beverage of choice, sip too much of it



and things begin to spin out of control. Balance is required. Yet something of a reactionary spirit is needed to maintain this posture in our cultural climate. Few of us want to be labeled an old curmudgeon who can't enjoy himself, especially by our kids. Few of us want to miss out on the fun. So what to do?

## ENHANCED

With a little creativity and additional legwork, the positive aspects of society's popular feelings about the holidays can be harnessed and enjoyed. They can become a time for education, a study of the traditions of our Faith and country. In fact, that is one thing culture is supposed to do—educate.

The study of history and seasonal practices seems like an obvious example here, or simply learning more about the processes involved that make it holiday celebrations possible, such as baking and animal husbandry. Granted that is not greatly enriching for subjects like Math 6 or Advanced Algebra, but some forays into the real world from the theoretical are appropriate, even for the math-science folks. As it happens, that is where the theory gets applied.

I suppose the main consideration here is to look for opportunities to embrace the holiday spirit for education's sake. This has worked well in my own homeschool. It keeps learning fresh, exciting, and relevant, and the imagination primed. It also provides personal context for what is being learned. It is one thing to read about historic mills in a history book. It is another to visit one in the late Fall, see it in action, and taste what will become the Yuletide product.

A deeper understanding of seemingly mundane processes can imbue your seasonal celebrations with greater meaning. At Seton, we encourage you to remember that the many exterior pressures or stresses we experience uniquely as homeschooling parents should not overshadow the coming of the Christ Child. All things are passing, and regardless of how things go, when this season ends and fades into the folds of time, the only thing that ultimately matters is whether or not we remained focused on Christ.



**Nick Marmalejo**, a history major, graduated from Christendom College in 2001. He holds a Virginia Teacher Certification and lives in the Shenandoah Valley with his wife and four children.

# STAFF SERIES

*A chat with those who serve you!*



## Karen Eriksson-Lee Special Services Counselor



Seton Special Educational Counselor Karen Eriksson-Lee has deep roots in Front Royal, VA.

After her father left the Air Force, the family settled in Maplewood, NJ, but would spend the summers and many holidays on her grandparents' farm near Front Royal. That connection led Karen to apply to the nearby Shenandoah University, where she majored in dance and minored in psychology.

For over three decades, Karen studied, brought her ballet students to study, and then was asked to join the faculty at the prestigious Central Pennsylvania Youth Ballet in Carlisle, Pennsylvania.

After obtaining her Master's in Education in 2016, she returned to Front Royal, and joined the Seton Home Study School staff. She is the mother of three amazing grown children, two daughters and a son, mother-in-law to a wonderful young man, and grandmother to an adorable six-month-old baby boy.

When asked about the specifics of her work for Seton, Karen said, "I work with parents to design a curriculum tailored to each student's strengths and weaknesses, making accommodations that address their specific needs."

Karen's main goal, like others on the Seton staff, is to help students become life-long lovers of learning. Karen's task is to teach parents and students that there are many roads to learning and enable them to find the path of education that best fits their child's temperament and ability levels. Karen said, "Seton's Special Educational Services Department makes sure that there is success for ALL learners, and our department makes it possible to make any number of accommodations for students needing adaptations."

Dancer, mom, and educator, Karen Eriksson-Lee brings enthusiasm, empathy, and wisdom to the aid of families needing support in finding the right educational path for their child.



# What's the Perfect Gift This Year?

BY JOHN CLARK

Every Christmas, we spend considerable time, energy, and/or money trying to locate the right gift. But the ideal gift—the truly perfect gift—is not found online or at Wal-Mart or Target or even Neiman Marcus. It is found within your own heart, soul, mind, and strength. It costs no money. It makes the world a better place. And, if used properly, it lasts forever. It's called forgiveness.

If you're a Christian, you've heard plenty of sermons about the need to forgive, and maybe you've done a good job forgiving others in the past. But I'd be willing to wager that, for many of us, there is one nagging offense that we find terribly difficult to forgive.

Maybe it was a humiliating comment someone made about you; maybe it was a lie someone spread against you. Maybe it was something far, far worse.

Maybe it was something done or said not to you, but to someone you love very much. For instance, some of us parents find it easy to forgive transgressions against ourselves, but find it darn near impossible to forgive injustices committed against our children.

Maybe it was a transgression committed by someone you deeply love, like a close friend or a brother. Why did he do

that? Doesn't he know how much I love him? Didn't he love me? Why didn't he stand up for me when it really mattered? Perhaps this is why William Blake wrote, "It is easier to forgive an enemy than to forgive a friend."

Maybe it's something that has caused you enormous pain, but the perpetrator isn't the least bit sorry. In fact, the other person might deny your pain, refuse to recognize your pain, or even mock your pain—thereby intensifying the original offense. Why can't she just say "I'm sorry"? It would make life so much more bearable for me. But she won't. And she probably never will.

Maybe it's a combination of these factors, as well as others.

How can you just forgive them? I wouldn't even suggest that I had all the answers, but I'd like to suggest two ideas.

First, ask God to help you forgive them. Don't forget: God is the expert on forgiveness. My departed friend Father Constantine used to say that if you desire to forgive, that's enough—at least for a start. Forgiveness is an act of the will; in fact, forgiveness is the act of a strong and resolute will. It's also the result of grace. Speaking from personal experience, it's surprising how quickly God answers this prayer. Sometimes, He doesn't even wait until I'm finished with my words. He sees me begin my little prayer and He runs out to the road to greet me before I can even say Amen.

Second, think about what forgiveness is and is not. Forgiveness does not mean that we have come to realize that the transgression was OK or even understandable. C. S. Lewis wrote a wonderful essay in which he drew a contrast between forgiving and excusing. Lewis clarifies that "excusing says 'I see that you couldn't help it or didn't mean it; you weren't really to blame.' If one not really to blame, then there is nothing to forgive. In that sense forgiveness and excusing are almost opposites."



But can we forgive that which cannot be excused? Lewis says yes: “To be a Christian means to forgive the inexcusable, because God has forgiven the inexcusable in you.”

One last point. Even after you read all this, it might still seem like too much to ask to forgive a person who hurt you. In fact, the notion of giving them a Christmas gift seems absurd. Remember that I began by speaking about giving the perfect gift, but I failed to mention whom the gift is for. You might have been thinking that the gift of forgiveness is for the person who wronged you. It isn't. It's not his or her birthday. Make no mistake: forgiveness of others is a gift to God and for God. You see, the lack of forgiveness of another hasn't just driven a wedge between yourself and the other person; it has created an obstacle between yourself and God.

Unforgiveness is a wall between you and God, littering your soul with graffiti. This year, tear it down. For Christmas this year, give Jesus the perfect gift. “Forgive those who trespass against you.” And embrace the Child Jesus anew.



**John Clark** is a homeschooling father, a speech writer, an online course developer for Seton, and a weekly blogger for The National Catholic Register.



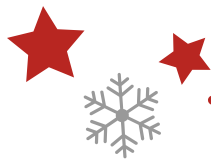
**Amani** | Amani won 2 gold medals in Equitation and Dressage for the Special Olympics. She wants other girls to follow her example and go for their dreams.



**Charlie** | A busy year for Charlie; Little League State Champions, Taekwondo black belt, and a bronze medal with his team at the 2019 USA Nationals Championships.

Submit your photo, your achievement, and how homeschooling has helped you succeed!

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# Homeschooling from the Trenches

BY CHERYL HERNANDEZ

**M**erriam Webster dictionary defines “trench” as “a narrow ditch dug by troops to provide a place of shelter from enemy fire”.

Some might say it’s a bit over dramatic to say we are homeschooling from the trenches, but I really don’t think so. One only needs to look at the latest headlines (or simply walk down the street) to know we are in a battle for our children’s souls — from the “world”, often even from our own family and friends.

Many of us are well into another school year, perhaps having done this for a very long time (this is our family’s 23rd year). Some of you are homeschooling for the first time, perhaps recognizing the school system has failed your children. Others have known all along you would homeschool, and are so excited your child has finally reached kindergarten and you can begin.

Whether you are new or a veteran, all of us need to power up, make a plan, and have a clear sense of direction before we move forward. There are a few things we can do to help us carry out this awesome and important calling God has given us.

## *Mission Statement*

When people ask us or our spouse why we homeschool, are we confident in our reply? Is this something we have spent time discerning and know so well that we can confidently answer back, and our spouse and children can as well? If not, we might consider taking a few minutes to think about — and then write down — why we think God has chosen our family to homeschool. Ask your spouse and your children to give their input. Having a purpose, a shared mission, unites the family and putting it in writing and makes it tangible and helps everyone to be on the same page.

Before the going gets rough, before serious problems weaken our resolve and we are tempted to throw in the towel now is the time to have a firm grasp on why we have said “Yes” to God in this calling to homeschool. The temptation to give up can happen to even veteran homeschoolers. A few years after our 8th child, who has Down Syndrome, was born, I panicked and seriously questioned my ability to teach her at home. Without letting my husband know, I made plans to go to the open house of a local school which had a program for special needs children. When I finally told him I was going to do this, he

implored with me to remember why we were homeschooling, that just because she had different abilities and challenges from the other children, that did not change our goal and purpose for her education. His understanding of our mission, his strength, and his desire to continue in this same path with our daughter, gave me the courage I needed.

## *Sacramental Graces and Prayer*

There will be times when we want to jump ship (or throw them off the ship). But just as when there are difficult moments in our marriage, and we look at our spouse and ask ourselves, “remind me again why I married him?” our vows bring us back to reality. The graces we need to educate our children are pulled from the graces from the Holy Sacrament of Matrimony. Ask for these graces, beg God for them on a daily basis, and they will be freely and generously given.

The graces our families can receive from frequent reception of the Holy Eucharist and frequent confession are abundant and just waiting for us. There is no better way to “power up” than by obtaining these graces, the more often the better. If your family has not yet discovered the beauty of going to daily Mass, why not make this the year to begin? Frequent confession, at least once a month, will aid in fighting off the temptations to fall into sin, and also give us and our children the fortitude to stay on the right path.

Pray the rosary with your family every day. This is the weapon of the saints to battle against evil. Kneel together as a family and unite yourselves with God in prayer each evening. When we center our lives around God, and recognize it is He we are fighting for, our family will be strengthened.

## *Make your Home a Holy Haven*

Is it possible to be in the trenches and live in a haven, a place of safe refuge, at the same time? I think so! Our home should be a place where anyone who enters will know this is a truly Catholic home, a place where Our Lord is honored and obeyed.

My husband and I tell our children nothing that is offensive to God will be allowed in our home. That means books, music, movies, whatever we do on the computer, our speech, or how we act toward one another. Philippians 4:8 gives us a good perspective, “Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable--if anything is excellent or praiseworthy--think about such things.” We have to constantly evaluate if what we are doing is pleasing to God — or not. If it's not, get rid of it.

Soldiers in the trenches have drilled together, lived in close quarters together, laughed and cried together. They are united in the same goal, and are willing to lay down their own lives for their fellow soldiers. The family is no different. Our families grow stronger when we work together, play together, sit around the dinner table and talk together, and serve God together. The

more we build unity within our family, the stronger we will be.

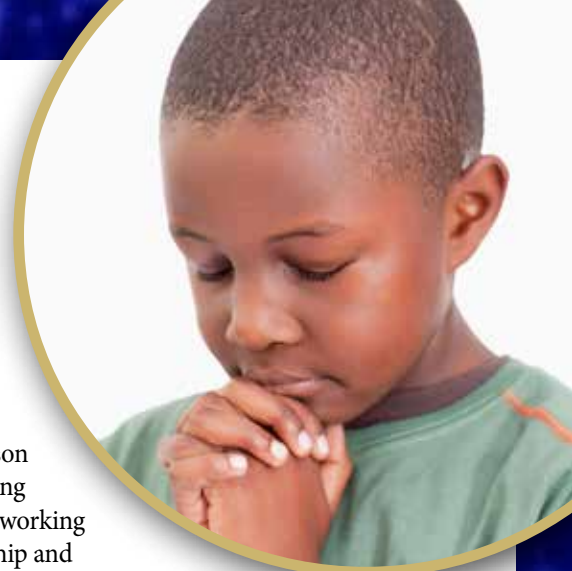
## *Time is Precious*

My college age son lived at home during this past summer, working a full time internship and taking three online classes. As he tried desperately to fit in a few moments of “free time” between work and study, he lamented how there just needed to be three more hours in every day — then he could fit it all in. We all have felt this way, and I could certainly sympathize. But God has given us all 24 hours. That's it, and in His perfection, no more is needed. The key, my son has often heard me say, is knowing and living by our priorities and learning how to manage the time He has given us. Not an easy task, but a vital one if we are to succeed in this battle.

Here's a sobering thought: You and your spouse will have one chance — and only one — to raise your children right. Everything else in our lives — jobs, accomplishments, social life — are far less important than raising and forming the children God entrusts us with to become responsible adults of strong moral character who live by Christian principles. Since homeschooling is part of this path, we certainly have our work cut out for us to fit it all in. This thought alone should keep us in check when we are tempted to get caught up in endless Facebook political discussions, or volunteer for the third year in a row as president of the women's council.

There is good reason members of the Catholic Church here on Earth are called the Church Militant. We struggle with the world, the flesh, and the devil, working out our salvation. While we are in the trenches, fighting for our children's souls and educating them for Eternity, discernment of our priorities and the courage to live them is essential.

As Fr. John Hardon said, “only heroic Catholic families will survive.” Be assured that God is on our side, right there in the trenches with us, and He will give us the graces we need to fight the good fight. Ask for them.



**Cheryl Hernandez** and her husband live in Florida with their 9 children. They have been homeschooling with Seton for 21 years. Their four oldest are Seton graduates with the fifth graduating this year. Born in California and raised in Europe, Cheryl has a BFA in Graphic Design.



in  
the

# Schoolroom

BY MARY ELLEN BARRETT

Where We Share Our Best Tips for Homeschooling with Seton

Counting down the days of Advent can be difficult for small children. There is so much excitement involved: feast days, presents, food, and family. It's all very exciting, but can create a lot of anxiety. I've used a few methods over the years to combat this anxious anticipation. Paper chains, purchased Advent calendars, and the Jesse tree have all made appearances in my home with varying degrees of success, but nothing has worked so well as my Advent activity calendar.



I shouldn't call it **my** Advent calendar since it was the idea of a friend of mine, a popular blogger named Dawn Hanigan. A few simple materials help create the blessed air of anticipation for which I have been striving for years in my busy homeschool.

A large piece of poster board, a package of library pockets, a glue stick, stickers, and a marker are all that is needed.

I ordered the library pockets online and used the glue stick to attach twenty-five of them to the poster board. I date each pocket and decorate with stickers. Most years I use purple with pink accents, but this year, I couldn't find any so this has more of a Christmas feel than an Advent one. It is important to recognize that each year is different, and has its own particular flavor, not getting too caught up in details like purple and red.

Each week, I evaluate what our week is going to look like and, depending on the activity level, I write out an activity on an index card and stick it in the dated pockets. Some days, it's as simple as baking cookies and delivering them to neighbors. Other days, it's praying a rosary or going to confession and then stop for hot cocoa on the way home. Feast days have their own special activities. On the feast of St. Juan Diego, we read a book about this wonderful saint, watch the CCC video called *Juan Diego, Messenger of God*, and celebrate with a feast of tacos and guacamole.

Each morning, one of the children pulls out the card of the day and eagerly reads what is to come. It's fun to watch them get so excited.

I think this method has been successful because it's so flexible for me. I can evaluate what we can manage in the way of observing Advent, while still getting our Seton work done. There have been days when I've unobtrusively switched cards around due to a switch in the workload.

I hope this inspires you to make your own way to observe Advent, and if you do, we would love to see what you have come up with. Please email photos to [mbarrett@setonhome.org](mailto:mbarrett@setonhome.org).



**Mary Ellen Barrett** is mother of seven children and two in heaven, wife to David and a lifelong New Yorker. She has homeschooled her children for eleven years using Seton and an enormous amount of books. She is editor of the *Seton Magazine* and also a contributor to *The Long Island Catholic*.

PATRON SAINT OF BAKERS, BRIDES, AND CATHOLIC CHARITIES



# SAINT ELIZABETH OF HUNGARY

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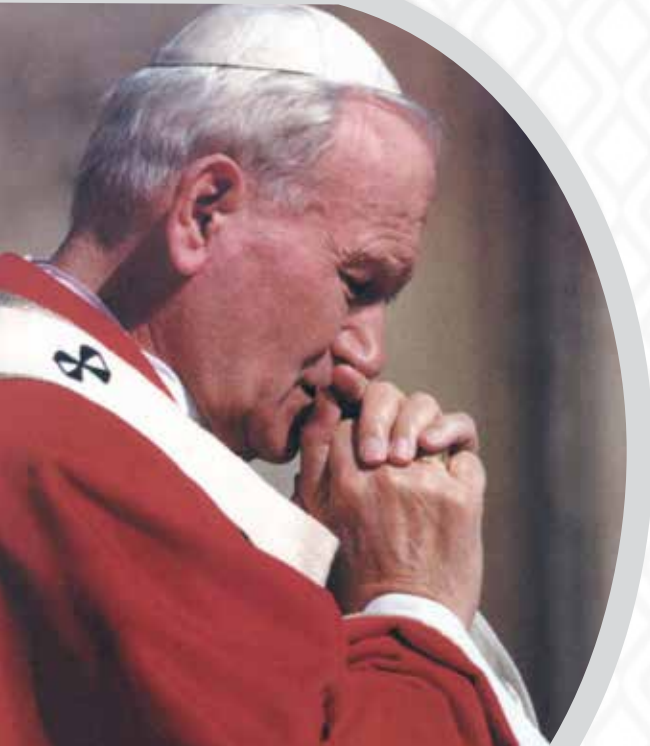


# Seton

*Educational Media*



See inside for **CHRISTMAS SPECIALS**



## *Family, Become What You Are*

The family finds in the plan of God the Creator and Redeemer not only its identity, what it is, but also its mission, what it can and should do.

The role that God calls the family to perform in history derives from what the family is; its role represents the dynamic and existential development of what it is. Each family finds within itself a summons that cannot be ignored, and that specifies both its dignity and its responsibility: family, become what you are.

***Familiaris Consortio***

On the Role of the Christian Family  
in the Modern World  
Pope St. John Paul II  
22 November 1981