

Seton



MAGAZINE

"Under the Magisterium of the Catholic Church"

JUNE 2012

We HOMESCHOOL *for* LIFE!



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We Homeschool for Life!

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*“With you every day,
every step of the way”*



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Did you know? The Shepherdess was the name of the ship that carried Elizabeth Ann Seton, her husband William, and their daughter Anna to Italy in the hopes that William’s health would improve there.

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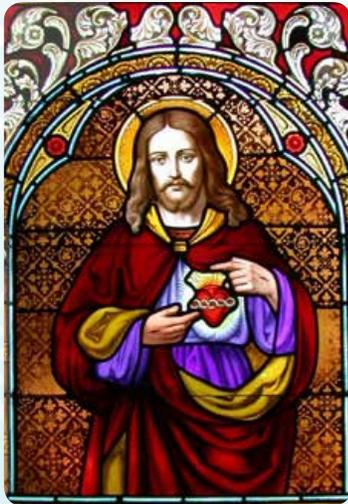
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Letter from the Director of Seton Home Study School

Dr. Mary Kay Clark



If we truly want our home to be the “domestic church” which we are asked to do by the papal encyclicals, our family activities and home should reflect our devotion to the Sacred Heart.

The Sacred Heart

Devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus began with the early Church Fathers and has grown to be a favorite devotion among Catholics.

The Church Fathers believed that when young St. John, the Beloved Disciple, reclined upon the heart of Jesus at the Last Supper, he was allowed somehow to drink in the “secrets of His Heart.”

The Church Fathers often wrote about the Sacred Blood and Water flowing from Christ’s side. They often referred to “the Heart of the crucified Savior as the Source of the fountain of infinite graces.” They referred to the Church as Christ’s spotless Bride, born of His Heart. They wrote about the Eucharist and the other sacraments as “flowing from His opened side as streams of blood and water...”

From the 1200’s to the 1400’s, devotion to the Sacred Heart “was spread to the laity through their contact with the monasteries and convents,” especially through more than 100 Dominican monasteries in Germany, as well as the Benedictine monasteries. Many saints promoted this devotion to the Sacred Heart throughout the Middle Ages. St. Francis de Sales established the Order of the Visitation of the Blessed Virgin in the 1600s. Devotion to the Sacred Heart was popular and strong in this order.

St. Margaret Mary Alacoque entered the Visitation Convent in France in 1671. Margaret began having revelations from the Sacred Heart even before entering the convent. In 1673, on the Feast of St. John the Beloved Apostle, Our Lord appeared to Margaret and gave her the mission of spreading devotion to the Sacred Heart. He said to her the following:

“My divine Heart is so passionately fond of the human race, and of you in particular, that it cannot keep back the pent-up flames of its burning charity any longer. They must burst out through you and reveal My Heart

to the world, so as to enrich mankind with My precious treasures. I am letting you see them now, and they include all the graces of sanctification needed to snatch men from the very brink of hell.”

Our Lord appeared to Margaret again in 1674 and in 1675. In one apparition, Margaret described Our Lord as “a blaze of glory... His five wounds shining like five suns, flames issuing from ... His divine breast which was like a furnace, and which He opened to disclose His utterly affectionate and loveable Heart, the living source of all those flames. ... He revealed to me the indescribable wonders of His pure love for mankind: the extravagance to which He’d been led for those who had nothing for Him but ingratitude and indifference.”

In June, 1675, Our Lord gave Margaret Mary the famous Promise:

“I am asking you to have the Friday after the Octave of Corpus Christi set apart as a special feast in honor of My Heart, a day on which to receive Me in Holy Communion and make a solemn act of reparation for the indignities I have received in the Blessed Sacrament while exposed on the altars of the world. I promise you too that I shall open My Heart to all who honor Me in this way, and who have others do the same; they will feel in all its fullness the power of My love.”

During June, this month of the Sacred Heart, and especially on June 15th, the Feast of the Sacred Heart, let us rededicate ourselves to the Sacred Heart. If possible, perhaps our family can add the Litany of the Sacred Heart during our prayers. Certainly, we all need to try our best to attend Mass on the First Fridays of each month.

If we truly want our home to be the “domestic church” which we are asked to do by the papal encyclicals, our family activities and home should reflect our devotion to the Sacred Heart.

We HOMESCHOOL for LIFE!

BY DESSI JACKSON

“Therefore choose life, that you and your descendants may live...” Deuteronomy 30:19

One afternoon, while I was sitting outside watching my last brain cell fly away hand in hand with my last nerve cell, my neighbor came by. She sat beside me and asked me the most-asked question of the century. She asked me why I don't send my kids to school. Well, with no brain cells left, it was a hard thing to deal with. So I began to tell her my recorded speech. “We like the time we have together...they learn better...we have a wonderful support group.” Satisfied, my neighbor then asked the second most common question: “Why do you have so many children?” Sadly, the second question, posed by many well-meaning Catholics, asked me why I do everything that I do...what a deep question for a mother of four little ones with another on the way.

Why do I do what I do? Why do I live the way I live? Why have I chosen a harder path when an easier path was available? Why have I decided to live on this farm with this family? I don't say it to my neighbor, but in my heart I know the answer: I could have chosen an easier path, but I could not have chosen a better path.

Of course, as the sun peeks over the treetops each morning, it can be difficult to remember the whys of life. I start the day half asleep, half awake. I don't believe I have slept an entire night in 7 1/2 years. Anyway, early in the morning I am awakened by the inhuman screeching sounds made by my two beautiful sons. They have found something to fight about even before they fully awaken...that is genius! I, their loving mom, fly out of bed, glamorous as always, and in a loving tone of voice explain to them that our family's Bulgarian roots provide a personal connection with the Gypsies. At that point the boys decide that they enjoy their own company far better than the Gypsies', and they

go downstairs haunted by my beautiful visage. By the time I get my teeth brushed, my youngest is in frantic search of his human bottle. I scoop him on my lap to nurse, and after a few grunts he is satisfied.

Soon I hear tiny steps up, followed by whispers and warnings of this sort: “Thomas, be careful! She'll hear you!” Or “Peter, come with me. I'm scared she'll look at me!” My boys have ventured up in front of me. The fear of the Gypsies had given in to a basic human need - hunger. I set the table in a manner befitting an “I Love Lucy” episode. After all, I am still trying to catch some sleep. Somewhere in between, my precious daughter has gotten up and is now informing me that if she were a fairy she wouldn't have to do schoolwork. Love of learning is a force that drives my fairy to tears. The table is cleaned, the boys are playing and fighting at the same time, the baby is walking around with a huge blob of oatmeal on his head. (I figure that if oatmeal is good for your skin then it must also be good for your hair.) Left to beautify himself, the baby wanders off to somewhere in his sister's room. I am afraid to say we have lost a kid or two in that ever engulfing mess!

I give my daughter her school instructions and just in time, because now I have a fight to stop. I put the pasta drainer (helmet) on my head, pick up my biggest pot lid (shield) and a wooden spoon (sword), and go after the two gladiators. To all of you out there, I can survive a fight between a Spartan and a Persian better than one between two boys before the age of reason. While I am washing the baby and now lecturing the boys in a loud voice, my daughter is having major bodily function failure. Her eyes are rolling back, her hair is standing up, her body is convulsing, all from the pain of writing the letter “P.” See, if I was a fairy mom I would



just have to put some fairy dust on her. But being a Catholic mom I run for the holy water. I think I might need a priest.

Now it is lunchtime and I just found out that Marco Polo is so boring and Nicolas needs a new diaper. While I change his diaper (which could be used as a lethal weapon in war), I try to explain that Marco Polo isn't boring and that learning is always fun. The boys are starving already, Maria's eyes are permanently stuck in the back of her head, and I am cooking mac & cheese with a baby attached to my hip. Lunch flies by quickly and I mean that literally. There is macaroni stuck on my ceiling, and by now the baby is wearing his lunch on his lap as a kilt. The boys are done fighting over who can

eat faster, and I am told for the 100th time that Marco Polo is just no fun. As I try to clear the table, Nicolas is ready for a nap. With a loving voice I tell the children that if they wake him up I will lovingly give all their toys away, and then I go lie down to nurse Nicolas.

And so goes my life until my husband comes home from work. He opens the door cautiously. After all, he knows the dangers that lie behind it. Lego pieces, blocks, paper, shoes, and toys are all weapons, lurking everywhere trying to trip us. I then serve the grand dinner - hot dogs! Now my daughter falls into a seizure because we are starving her. She doesn't like hot dogs...at least not today! While we ignore our starving child, my husband and I scarf down our first meal of the day. Let me tell you, we are both very fast eaters! Before the boys' or the baby's tantrum (or whatever), which is usually about 10 minutes into dinner, we are both done. Knowing my Balkan blood, my husband quickly removes the kids to the yard or bathtub. I can't talk, I am exhausted, and I don't remember what I did that day. Did I feed them? School? By all the chaos lying around, it's evident that I did a lot, and yet nothing at the same time.

So why do I do it? For the evenings when I can snuggle my children, see them, hug them, and realize that I am the richest, most blessed woman in the world. I do it for their smiles and their sleepy eyes. I do it for life. That's it. That's the answer to all of my neighbor's questions. Life. Choose life...that you may live!

About Dessi Jackson, contributing author:

It's no coincidence that my name rhymes with "messy." My life is full of beautiful messes. I have 6 beautiful children: the oldest is 11 and our baby is 8 months old. Every day is full of books, toys, food, pets, our garden, chickens, and ourselves. To anyone else, it might look like a mess, but to me it is a beautiful mess. I'm a 31-year old immigrant from Bulgaria, in Eastern Europe, who now lives in the countryside of Maryland. I enjoy the homeschooling lifestyle because it keeps us together between school and play. I like knitting, cooking, reading, gardening, and sewing. Best of all, I like occupying my home.



Photo (above): **Maria (11 years old)**, my lovely, vivacious child who never stops talking; **Peter (9)**, the "baby-whisperer"—he can put any baby to sleep, any time; **Thomas (8)**, just as his patron saint, St. John Bosco, he has a heart of laughter and is the clown of the family; **Nicolas (5)** is content, to the envy of the rest of us— his brothers and sisters call him a "Little Saint." After this article was written, we have added **Julia (3)**, who is the most caring little helper that a mother could wish for;



Photo by Ervin Pospisil

Interested in having
your family featured?

Contact us at jshanley@setonhome.org

Your Questions...

answered by Dr. Clark

Virtual Views

On Facebook we posed the question “What were the events or circumstances that made you decide to homeschool?” We thought our readers would like to read what parents shared:

Susan: Everybody’s doing it. Just kidding. First and foremost, to protect my children from all the harms that are inevitably found at institutionalized schools. Secondly, to be intimately involved throughout the day with each child - to really KNOW my children, and thus to know how best to teach them - something they can never get in a classroom with a dozen other students.

Vickie: When we were on our third child, it was not easy going to work, having my mother sit, and having my husband away for sometimes three months working. I felt guilty leaving our children in the care of someone else, so we discussed our options, and my husband was wonderful enough to support the need for me to be at home if it was what I wanted. Once at home, I had an inspiration to teach our children, since teaching was something I always wanted to do. It worked out perfectly. All four of our children have been homeschooled and I have been blessed to be able to do this since 2000. We are and should be our children’s first teachers! God has guided us well, and I answered a call I never expected to receive.

Jennifer: Knew I wanted to homeschool when my kids were toddlers. They are now 17 and 15, and I have no regrets.

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Why do you have specific books assigned for the first and second quarter book reports in the elementary grades?

Since our graders cannot be familiar with every book that might be chosen, we have assigned ones we consider very good for our Catholic students to read for their book reports or book analyses. By choosing the books, we can help the students better to understand the story or characters by providing chapter notes online. In the first two quarters, we even provide the topics or topic sentences to help the students focus on the theme of the books. We are hopeful that with this kind of help with the first two books, the students will be better able to write their reports on the third and fourth quarter books about the lives of the saints.

We still have not finished this year’s book reports. Can our children be excused from these assignments?

Education is really about thinking skills, not just memorizing facts. The book reports demand a greater level of thinking, choosing relevant facts from the book, putting facts together to prove a point, and writing a clear and logical presentation of examples or reasons for the thesis.

This kind of analytical writing and thinking has been an essential part of Catholic education and has resulted in some great Catholic American thinkers and writers. If we are to convert our country in these dire times, we need to raise well-educated Catholic thinkers. We pray our Seton students will be among them.

How can I combine my children in some courses?

It would be best to call an elementary or high school counselor to discuss what you would like to do since they are familiar with the demands of each course. Usually combining high school students in the same course is not a problem. Obviously, certain courses must be taken in order, such as foreign languages and math. Science and history courses often can be taken at different grade levels.

An 8th grade student can join a high school sibling in some courses, but the demands at the high school level will be greater. The 8th grader may struggle and perhaps not achieve the high grades to maintain the Grade Point Average (GPA) which you want for the high school transcript for the purpose of obtaining college scholarships.

Please contact an elementary or a high school counselor for advice for your students. Of course, you as a parent must make the final decision.

Is the CAT, or any standardized test, required by Seton?

Seton encourages, but does not require, a standardized test for entrance into the Seton program. We also provide, but do not require, a yearly standardized test. Many states require standardized tests for all the students in the state, but usually not every year. (To check the test requirements for your state, go to the Seton website and under the Home Menu click on Parent Resources, then click on State Laws.)

Even in states which do not require testing, many parents like to have their students take a standardized test every year, as a sort of progress report. Some parents like to have an objective standardized test as an answer for anyone who might question the effectiveness of their homeschooling.

Whether or not our high school students take the standardized test Seton offers, it is vital for high school students to take the ACT or the SAT. Many colleges base scholarships and even entrance requirements on standardized test scores. We recommend that high school students start taking the ACT or SAT tests as early as possible so they become accustomed to the test requirements as well as to the rules and the timing of the tests. (Students may also take the PSAT test, which is used to determine eligibility for the National Merit Scholarship Program.)



either to attend classes for help in taking the SAT test, or to purchase practice books. Seton sells *The Official SAT Study Guide*, which shows students test questions from past tests, answer keys, and how to go

about answering different kinds of questions. We recommend that students go online for SAT Essay Topics and other articles related to writing essays for the SAT test. You will find Essay Topics listed from past years. Here is an essay assignment from the 2010 SAT Essay:

Many powerful leaders throughout history have considered themselves above the law and acted in ways that violated the laws or guidelines of their own country or group. People are quick to condemn these leaders, but shouldn’t leaders be held to different standards? If what a leader is doing benefits the majority of the people in a country or group, does it matter if a law or guideline is violated? Should leaders of a country or group be judged by different standards? Plan and write an essay in which you develop your point of view on this issue. Support your position with reasoning and examples taken from your reading, studies, experience, or observations.

What should we expect in the progress of our children's reading at the kindergarten, first grade, or second grade levels?

There is a big push for young children to start reading at earlier ages. The problem is that children's reading skills at these young developing ages can be very different due to their differences in physical and mental development. There should be no rush, nor serious concern for a child who is not reading until even second grade.

Reading is a skill that sometimes lags behind what parents think it should be, but once something "clicks" in the student's mind, rapid progress can be made. Just like a child might struggle terribly on Monday to ride a bike but by Tuesday is riding perfectly, so a very poor reader can quickly become a very good reader.

If a child is in second grade, however, and does not understand the concept of the sounds of letters, there may be some learning issue. In that case, you may want to contact our Special Services department.

In most cases, young children need to play outside and develop physically and mentally by interaction with family members and playmates. Parents, older siblings, or grandparents should be telling stories and reading stories to the young children. Most young children learn early about stories in books, and words in books. At some point, children start asking questions about letters and words. Many educational games, some sold by Seton, featuring sounds of letters, are available for pre-school children. Parents can usually determine when a child is ready for particular concepts.

Is it okay for me to go over the tests my children take and tell them they should correct some answers?

We recommend that you look over your children's tests before they take them to make sure they have studied properly. We also recommend that you look over your children's tests after they have taken them and before sending them to Seton. Sometimes children may have accidentally skipped some questions, or misunderstood a question. If you see an obvious problem, you should tell them to redo a test question without being specific about what the answer should be; simply tell your child to rethink and rewrite the answer.

If your child does not do well on a test, you may need to tell your child to go back and restudy or relearn the chapter and learn the concepts well enough to obtain a better score. You do not want your child to think that careless or poor work is acceptable.

Unless a student has received a failing grade, we do not encourage retaking tests graded by Seton. We sometimes receive tests or assignments for regrading where a student has received a grade in the mid-nineties, or an A-. Retaking a test should be an extraordinary circumstance, not simply an ordinary action for every test that is not perfect. It is not good for students to grow up thinking that they can have a second chance to take a test. Life is not like that, and college is certainly not like that. Students need to do their best work the first time, because they usually will not get a second chance.

Why allow alternate books in math and not in other areas?

As an accredited school, we want to be sure that we are doing what we say we are doing: providing a Catholic curriculum. We have made exceptions in the area of math and foreign languages mainly because we have not produced Catholic books in these subjects where we can include Catholic ideas, viewpoints, or stories. However, in math, we do have Catholic books in grades K through 4, but obviously, the Catholic presentation is minimal. We have allowed alternate science books in some grade levels when the alternate book is Christian.

It is important to note that the Seton curriculum—like most curricula—builds upon itself from year to year. Fifth grade students need to know what they learned in fourth grade, and so on. By using the Seton books and lesson plans, you know that you are using a planned curriculum that covers all the necessary subjects in a systematic way. Using alternate textbooks does take away from the overall cogency of the curriculum.

When we allow alternate books, we ask the parents to submit graded tests so we have the documentation to show that the student has been learning appropriate grade-level material, that the test itself is on the appropriate grade level, and that the student has been successful on the parent-given tests.

I had a baby this year and am having trouble with my fourth and sixth grade children finishing up for the summer.

Regarding children in the elementary grades, you could probably go more quickly with the subjects which each one is best at doing. For instance, you may have a young girl who knows many of her spelling words before she even begins. Have her study the words one day and give her only one of the workbook assignments, and then give her the chapter test. You should be able to have her do a chapter every two days until she finishes. This may be true of Vocabulary as well.

Think about each child and think about what subject or subjects each one could move on more quickly, perhaps giving them only two days for studying and taking a chapter test. Some students may move ahead more quickly in Religion or History, some in Science.

However, don't neglect basic subjects they need to know well to advance in the next grade level, such as Reading, Math, and English, especially paragraph writing. It is better to take the time the student needs, even to go into the summer for subjects that the student must "conquer" to be successful in the next grade level.

You might want to contact our counselors for more specific suggestions.

How can I help my high school boy finish up his courses?

You might consider having your high school student finish up one or two courses at a time. Instead of doing five or six courses a day, have him do only one or two courses a day until those two are finished. Then have him move on to two more courses, until those two courses are finished. Concentrating and focusing on only one or two courses a day will give him an incentive to finish up and earn a grade in a short time, maybe only a few weeks or a month.

Be sure to have him start with the easiest course for him, or with the course most nearly complete. Your son needs to feel success quickly to be encouraged to continue at this quick pace.

Give your son the opportunity to do some of his studies at the local college library. Some high school students do well in a quiet environment, in a study carrel, for instance, in a college library. The college library is quieter than the local public library. There are great opportunities for looking for more information on his study topics.

A study carrel may be a good investment for some students in a busy home situation. Take a look at what is offered online.

If you have any questions, or need help, or if your son needs encouragement from us, please call or have him call one of our high school counselors. Gene McGuirk is the head of our high school counseling department, and can be reached at our regular phone number, at Extension 117. Each counselor has his or her own extension. You can check out their extension numbers in this newsletter.



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Homeschooling has been a huge blessing! My main reason for homeschooling was to provide my children with a solid Catholic education—I homeschool to pass on the faith.

Linda: I was a special ed teacher and knew my youngest daughter would need support. I didn't want the bully "teachers" being able to hurt her, so we homeschooled. Turns out, she got a diagnosis of Asperger's syndrome. The advantages to homeschooling: she has self-confidence, less anxiety, a broader education, and LOVES God and the Catholic Church. She wouldn't have gotten any of those in any system - public or Catholic.

Beverly: I decided to home school my granddaughters when it was time for the oldest to attend Junior High School. It is such a pivotal time in a girl's life, and there are a lot of drugs and anti-Christian elements in our small town school. I never knew how much we would all love the one-on-one interaction and learning together. The whole atmosphere is so much more conducive to learning. I could give a million and one reasons why this is the only way that children should be schooled today. It is a different world than when I was in school. God help the children who have both parents working and not a grandparent at home to welcome them either...so sad! Praising God for our blessings with Seton Schooling!

According to Dads



BY JOHN CLARK

Obstacles

As readers of this column know, I recently wrote a book called *Who's Got You?*, in the hopes of reminding Catholic fathers that theirs is a great calling. As part of my book tour, I was recently asked to be on EWTN's Women of Grace show to talk about fatherhood with host Johnnette Benkovic. Since I don't fly, I drove down to Birmingham, and arrived at the EWTN campus at about 11PM the night before the show. I hadn't slept well the night before, so I went right to bed. But, whether I'm staying at the Ritz Carlton or the Super 8, I can't sleep well apart from my own bed--which is ironic, since I can't sleep well in my own bed, either. After a bad night's sleep, I decided to wake up and try to spend a little time reviewing my book. (It sounds funny, but when you do book interviews, you have to occasionally remind yourself what you wrote.)

I arrived at the EWTN set a little before 9 AM, a bit tired, and a lot nervous, hoping and praying that the Holy Spirit would guide me to say the right things. On the EWTN set, everything is very professional: they have a top-notch camera crew, editors, and directors. And, of course, Johnnette Benkovic is not only a very special and devout woman, but also a consummate professional. I, on the other hand, am a bit of a klutz. When you watch the show, you will notice that a mug of water is provided between the couches for the guests. However, after I was "miked" and they were ready to film, I reached my arm back, and accidentally spilled the water onto the pristine carpet. That was a little embarrassing, and frankly, it would hardly be worth mentioning, except for one thing: I did it again. I told Johnnette that, with 9 children, I perhaps felt out of place unless something was spilled on the floor. (It's also true that most of the cups that I drink from have a lid...by design.)

Everyone agreed that the show went very well, and when it was over, I apologized for the carpet, thanked everyone for their hospitality, and walked back to my car. But as I did, someone mentioned that there was a series of tornadoes on the way, which would dissipate in about four hours. I decided to stick around and watch Father Mitch Pacwa's show, and at 9 o'clock, I began my trip home.

Since my daughter Veronica has always wanted to go to Nashville, I figured I would drive a little out of my way, spend the night in Nashville, and buy some trinkets for her the next day. I arrived in Nashville at around 1:30AM, and got to sleep at 2AM, completely exhausted by the events of the last two days. It would have been nice to sleep about six hours, but alas, it was not meant to be. At 6AM, lightning struck a power source near the hotel, which completely shut off power to the hotel.

Well, not completely. One thing did work: the alarm clock. Somehow, the alarm clock was programmed to go off when it lost electric power. So at 6AM, I got up to walk across the room and hit the snooze bar. Only it didn't work—the alarm kept ringing. I tried to find the light switch, turn on the light, climb under the table, and unplug the alarm clock. But I realized that it wouldn't matter if I unplugged it—it just kept beep-beep-beeping for about five minutes whatever I did. By this time, people were making noise in the hallway, with childlike excitement that the power had just gone out.

"Alright, now what do I do?" I thought. "I can't watch television; I can't read the paper, even if they brought one to my door, because there's not enough light." I couldn't even take a shower because not only was there no hot water, but there was no light in the bathroom. And the idea of a cold shower in the dark after four hours of sleep seemed more than I could bear.

Luckily, some things run on battery power, so I decided to grab my iPhone to see what was going on in the world. After looking at the depressing news of the day, I logged on to look at my credit card account, and was shocked to see that someone had made a series of unauthorized charges to my card. (At least someone seemed to be having fun with my money—and he was probably going to have a nice, warm shower.) This meant that I had to call to cancel my credit card. Only one problem. For the most part, Lisa and I only use two credit cards, and I left the other one with Lisa, meaning that I had to make it back home with the cash I had in my pocket. Now, I don't normally carry much cash, but I figured I'd be OK.

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Positive Changes

A big benefit of home education is the opportunity to make sensible changes or additions to the curriculum to accommodate a particular child's learning needs. Of course, the wise homeschooling mom realizes that modification needs to be implemented to enhance the child's overall educational experience, not simply because the child is resisting assigned work. Sometimes curriculum changes are called for when parents are unable adequately to teach the planned curriculum, or to meet a legitimate educational need, or to provide true enrichment to students' education.

For years I have been asserting that the greatest qualifications for homeschooling parents are the graces from the Sacrament of Matrimony and the love they have for their children. Am I contradicting myself to say that there are some educational jobs that they simply can't handle? Not at all! Sometimes a prudent mom carefully considers her own limitations and gets just a bit of extra help.

At times Mom simply does not have the background in a particular subject – upper level math, science, and foreign language come to mind. Some parents solve this problem by buying program add-ons like Saxon Teacher. It is not at all unusual for a homeschooled high school student to have a dual enrollment in community college to study chemistry or Spanish. Many local support groups and some homeschool-friendly parishes sponsor group co-op classes which offer educational opportunities along with the chance to mingle with other Catholic homeschooled kids. All of these may be legitimate methods for customizing the curriculum.

Although resistance alone is not sufficient reason to modify a curriculum, some children do have special educational needs. Little boys often struggle to form letters and numbers in the early grades because they lack small motor coordination. That is not a reason to label them dysgraphic, and allow them to do all their assignments orally. Most children will improve over time with handwriting practice. On the other hand, you may feel that delayed penmanship is actually holding them back in other subjects. For example, if a 2nd grader needs to practice arithmetic facts, but takes forever to write the answers on a drill page, get creative. You might set an egg timer and tell him you will write any correct answer he gives you orally in the next three minutes. He has to write the rest.

Perhaps primary boys can be allowed to type some compositions on a computer (fun

and write others by hand (less fun). They can recite history or science facts out loud, and practice spelling and vocabulary words by repeating them as they march up and down the hall. These accommodations will allow Junior to continue to make academic progress until his penmanship catches up. Of course, his handwriting will catch up best if he practices it everyday.

As a general rule of thumb, I am not a big fan of moving high-achieving children to higher grade levels, but rather to provide enrichment. If little Johnny or Janey finishes American history early, get biographies of famous Americans from the library. Get a map book and have the little one memorize the names and locations of all fifty states, their two-letter postal abbreviations, and capitols. If science is a breeze, take trips to zoos or museums, or get in-depth library books. Children who finish the reading curriculum for the year should read some, or even all, of the books on Seton's recommended reading list. If a vocabulary lesson teaches that a sow is a female pig, challenge the straight-A student to make a chart of the names of male, female, and young animals.

While the possibilities for enrichment are almost endless, the exception is math. Unlike other subjects, math does not really lend itself to enrichment, only to advancement. Some students just "get" math. If your student zooms through the grade level, there is no reason not to order the next level. A child who finishes Math for Young Catholics 4 without problem can skip Saxon Math 54 and move right into Saxon Math 65. If that same math whiz has no problem with Math 65 in the 5th grade, and Math 76 in the 6th grade, there is no reason to do Math 87, which is pretty much a remedial book anyway. That student can finish Algebra ½ in 7th grade and get a head start in high school credit by finishing Algebra 1 in 8th grade. Take more time with students who need it, but do not be afraid to move children ahead in math.

Any student following the Seton curriculum is receiving a prep school education. Secure in that



Saxon Math books are available from
www.setonbooks.com



BY GINNY SEUFFERT

knowledge, parents can be free to add enrichment to enhance the child's education. Many homeschooled students take instrumental music lessons, but there are other opportunities to give them a greater appreciation of music. Look in the calendar section of your local newspaper for performance opportunities. Many churches offer high quality sacred music presentations for free or for a nominal fee. Local theaters and dance academies host reasonably priced shows. If professional opera, dance, or symphony performances are outside your price range, call the company. Ask them if they have any scholarships or special pricing for students and teachers.

Seton meets national standards by mandating two years of foreign language study in high school, but learning a conversational language is best done years before that. If Grandma is bilingual, ask her to speak only her native language to your children. Several video programs teach young children vocabulary in a different tongue. Your public library may have CDs or DVDs you can borrow for free.

Many of the previous suggestions focus on enrichment, but what about those of you who have children struggling to keep up with Seton's basic curriculum? First, try to ascertain if your child is simply too young or lacks maturity for the grade placement. Never forget that these grade levels are a bit arbitrary. Some children, often but not always girls, can function a full year ahead with little problem. Other children, especially younger boys, would benefit by working six months or a year behind level.

The second consideration is if the struggling child has legitimate unmet educational needs, versus needing a firmer hand. A child who truly lacks the ability to focus on schoolwork, for example, would also struggle to watch a 30-minute TV program. If you are not sure if your child has ADHD or just needs more structure, start by becoming more disciplined in your schedule and your expectations, and see if there is any improvement. If you are having a tough time with homeschooling, your best course of action is to call a Seton counselor who can advise you based on your specific circumstances.

The basic principle behind modifying a curriculum can be summed up as follows: Any changes should be implemented to enhance my child's educational attainment.



Fatima and Lourdes

BY DEACON GENE MCGUIRK

Many Catholics know about Our Blessed Mother's apparitions at both Fatima and Lourdes. Many also believe that the message of Our Lady of Fatima is of vital importance to the world today, almost 100 years after she came to the little mountain village in Portugal. There is a similarity in the two appearances in that the Mother of God called for penance and reparation in both Fatima, Portugal and in Lourdes, France.

What most Catholics probably don't know, however, is the similarity in the pre-apparition history of both locations.

There is a story told about George Washington during the War of Independence in which he is entering his tent with one of the foreign generals. When General Washington's servant bows deeply to welcome him "home," the general bowed even more deeply in reply. The visiting general asked Gen. Washington why he showed such courtesy to a servant. To which Gen. Washington replied, "I cannot allow him to be a better gentleman than I am." This seems to be part of the theme of the visit of Our Blessed Mother to Lourdes in 1858. In 1854, Pope Pius IX made the dogmatic declaration that Our Blessed Mother was conceived without sin, and was therefore always Immaculate. At Lourdes, Our Lady declared herself to be "the Immaculate Conception" and left the gift of the spring of Lourdes with miraculous healing powers. This was both a thank you, and a way of showing that Mary could be more generous in response to the Church's declaration than the Church could be in making the declaration.

The appearances at Fatima have a much stronger sense of a worried mother calling out a warning to her children as she observes great danger approaching. There is no sense of returning a favor here. At Fatima, Mary warned of significant danger to many nations and to souls, and she left a spiritual plan to help mankind avoid the coming storm. Many Catholics believe that these warnings have gone unheeded.

However, both Lourdes and Fatima have a pre-history that involves the invading forces of Islam, and conversions to the Catholic Faith. Many people know that the Koran declares that the daughter of Mohammad, whose name was Fatima, to be the greatest woman in Heaven behind only the Blessed Virgin Mary. The village of Fatima was named after a Muslim princess who was captured by a Christian knight in 1158 AD. Princess Fatima fell in love with the knight, converted to the Catholic Faith, and married him. In Baptism, she took the name Oureana. The city of Ourem, Portugal was named after her, as was the village of Fatima.

What many Catholics may find surprising is that there is a similar story about Lourdes, France. When Charles Martel defeated the Saracens at the Battle of Poitiers near Tours, France, not all of the invading Muslims left France. One group took control of the castle near Massabielle, by the river Gave, in what is now Lourdes, France. In 778 A.D., the grandson of Charles Martel, Charlemagne, attacked the Muslims under the command of a leader named Mirat. Mirat could not defeat Charlemagne, so he retreated into the castle, which even Charlemagne could not conquer. Therefore Charlemagne put the castle under siege and tried to starve out his enemy. Mirat had taken a vow never to surrender to any mortal man. When his men were very low on rations, an eagle flew over the castle and dropped a fish at the feet of Mirat. He sent the fish to Charlemagne as his way of indicating that the castle had sufficient provisions to outlast the siege of the Christians. Charlemagne and his men were discouraged and were ready to lift the siege and leave the area to the invaders. However, the bishop of Le Puy-en-Venlay, a friend and advisor to Charlemagne, sensed a deception and he arranged an audience with Mirat. During the audience, the good bishop noted Mirat's vow, but asked if he could instead "surrender to an immortal woman," and he showed Mirat a statue of Mary with the child Jesus in her arms. At this sign, Mirat surrendered. He converted to the Catholic Faith, and became a knight in the service of Charlemagne. His baptismal name was "Lorus." The city of Lourdes is named after him.

The pre-histories of both Lourdes and Fatima show the warmth that our Holy Mother in Heaven has for her children on Earth, and the preparations that she makes before coming to visit us. Let us respond with gratitude and by honoring her requests of us. At Lourdes, she asked for Penance, Penance, Penance, and at Fatima she asked for the daily offering of the Rosary, and for the holy practice of the Five First Saturdays. Let us respond with the prayer and reparation that our wise mother knows will help in the salvation of our souls, and the souls of many around us.



Homeschool Conferences

MN, St. Paul June 1-2, 2012 (Fri.-Sat.) 14th Annual Minnesota Catholic Home Educators Conference and Curriculum Fair

University of St. Thomas
2115 Summit Avenue, St. Paul, MN 55105
Fri.: 4 PM – 8:30 PM, Sat.: 8 AM – 5 PM
Info: Deb at info@mnconference.org or debandbradnelson@msn.com or www.mnconference.org

LA, Lafayette June 8, 2012 (Fri.) Immaculate Heart of Mary Lafayette Homeschool & Parent Conference

Cajundome and Convention Center
444 Cajundome Blvd, Lafayette, LA 70506
2 PM – 8 PM
Info: (540) 636-1946, info@ihmconference.org or www.ihmconference.org/lafayette

KS, Kansas City June 15-16, 2012 (Fri.-Sat.) Kansas City Conference for Catholic Homeschoolers 2012

St. James Academy
24505 Prairie Star Pkwy, Lenexa, KS 66227
Fri.: 3:00 PM – 9:30 PM,
Sat.: 7:30 AM – 4:30 PM
Info: Maribeth at 816-454-3729
www.kccatholichomeschooler.org

MI, Lansing June 15-16, 2012 (Fri.-Sat.) "It's Great to be Catholic" Family and Home Education Conference

Lansing Center
333 E. Michigan Ave, Lansing, MI 48933
Fri.: 6:00 PM – 9:30 PM,
Sat.: 8:00 AM – 4:30 PM
Info: mchemails@gmail.com or www.homeschoolcatholic.org

VA, Fredericksburg (*Note new location*) June 22-23, 2012 (Fri.-Sat.) The 11th Annual Immaculate Heart of Mary National Homeschool and Parent Conference 2012

Fredericksburg Expo & Conference Center
2371 Carl D. Silver Parkway,
Fredericksburg, VA 22401
Fri.: 9 AM – 9 PM, Sat.: 9 AM – 4:30 PM
Info: 540-636-1946 or info@ihmconference.org or www.ihmconference.org/national

CA, Alhambra June 23, 2012 (Sat.) Southern California Catholic Home Educators (SCCHE) 13th Annual Conference & Curriculum Fair

Sacred Heart Retreat Center
920 E. Alhambra Rd, Alhambra, CA 91801
After 8:30 AM Mass – 6 PM
Info: www.scchehomepage.com or Rita at (714) 998-7515 or Sandy at (909) 590-7224

OH, Cleveland June 29-30, 2012 (Fri.-Sat.) Immaculate Heart of Mary Cleveland Homeschool and Parent Conference 2012

St. Adalbert Church – Keller Center
66 Adalbert Street, Berea, OH 44017
Fri.: 4 PM – 9 PM, Sat.: 9 AM – 4 PM
Info: 540-636-1946 or info@ihmconference.org or www.ihmconference.org/cleveland

FL, Tampa July 6, 2012 (Fri.) 4th Annual IHM Tampa Homeschool & Parent Conference

St. Lawrence Catholic Church – Higgins Hall
5225 N. Himes Ave, Tampa, FL 33614
9 AM – 5 PM
Info: (540) 636-1946, info@ihmconference.org or www.ihmconference.org/tampa

OH, Dayton July 13-14, 2012 (Fri.-Sat.) 2nd Annual IHM Dayton Catholic Homeschool & Parent Conference

St. Peter Catholic Church Family Life Center
6161 Chambersburg Rd, Huber Heights, OH 45424
Fri.: 2 PM – 8 PM, Sat.: 9 AM – 4 PM
Info: (540) 636-1946, info@ihmconference.org or www.ihmconference.org/dayton

IL, Chicago July 20-21, 2012 (Fri.-Sat.) 4th Annual IHM Père Marquette Homeschool & Parent Conference

North Central College – Residence Hall/Recreation Center
440 S. Brainard Street, Naperville, IL 60540
Fri.: 1:00 PM – 9:00 PM,
Sat.: 8:30 AM – 4:00 PM
Info: (540) 636-1946, info@ihmconference.org or www.ihmconference.org/chicago

TX, Arlington July 27-28, 2012 (Fri.-Sat.) 5th Annual Immaculate Heart of Mary North Texas Homeschool and Parent Conference

Arlington Convention Center
1200 Ballpark Way, Arlington, TX 76011
Fri. 2 PM – 8 PM, Sat. 9 AM – 4 PM
Info: 540-636-1946 or info@ihmconference.org or www.ihmconference.org/northtexas

NY, Tarrytown August 3-4, 2012 (Fri.-Sat.) 2nd Annual Immaculate Heart of Mary New York Catholic Homeschool and Parent Conference

DoubleTree Hotel Tarrytown
455 S. Broadway, Tarrytown, NY 10591
Fri.: 4:00 PM – 9:00 PM,
Sat.: 9:00 AM – 4:00 PM
Info: 540-636-1946 or info@ihmconference.org or www.ihmconference.org/newyork

Key Event

FREDERICKSBURG, VA
(*Note new location*)
June 22-23, 2012
(Fri.-Sat.)
The 11th Annual Immaculate Heart of Mary National Homeschool and Parent Conference 2012

Fredericksburg Expo & Conference Center

2371 Carl D. Silver Parkway
Fredericksburg, VA 22401

Fri.: 9 AM – 9 PM
Sat.: 9 AM – 4:30 PM

Info: 540-636-1946
info@ihmconference.org or
www.ihmconference.org/national

WHY

should I visit a conference?

Meet and greet your friends at Seton

Save on your shipping costs

Get exclusive **enrollment discounts**

Get to know **homeschooling families**

Learn great new homeschooling tips

Find inspiration for your homeschooling life

Return the gift by helping a homeschooling family! Bring your old books to your local conference, and we can provide them to other families at discounted rates.

From our Families: Discipline Secrets

Our question today is brought to you from a homeschooling mom: “*What do you do with unmotivated kids, who try to beg and plead their way out of doing school work?*”

Share your motivation and discipline secrets!



Cristina: “Behavioral Management Chart: It uses green, yellow, orange, and red cards. Each subject has its set of cards. If he gets three red on three different subjects, there are no electronics after school work is done.”

K. Ann: “I simply set daily and weekly goals. If someone wanted off early, they might work on material the day before or start earlier and when that day’s materials were finished, that day was done and the rest of the time was their own. Also, I would drive them to extra activities if the work was done. In short, there were concrete and limited materials that HAD to get done each day and each week, no limits on doing more if a child chose to do so, and rewards of time, freedom, and rides to other activities if they did their material in time.”

Aimee: “We try not to make it a discipline issue and realize that everyone has bad days. If it is ongoing, I will take it to mean something needs to change in the way of curriculum or teaching style.”

Jennifer: “A little bribery works well, too. Not all the time, mind you. Just to shake things up a little sometimes. :) Meant to add, I have charts for a couple of my kids. They get a sticker for every day they do school without complaining or whining. Then after a certain number of stickers they get a trip to the Dollar Tree or Five Below. Something inexpensive, but that they don’t normally get to do. It’s amazing how much a buck or two can motivate a kid!”



Adam: “The best motivation, for myself at least, is remembering that I don’t want to be in high school forever.”

Lisa: “Since I am doing what I like to call before and after schooling and Montessori at that I always give my daughter choices with what lessons she chooses and some days have set lessons, like poetry is always done on Tu/Th and reading and literature is daily. Math is M/W/F. Works well for us. We also have daily Bible stories and prayers and then add some sensorial and geography and history on the other days.”

Colleen: “When the kids get the doldrums, I try to incorporate games into the lesson plans. When we are studying synonyms and antonyms, we may skip the workbook lessons and play “Password” instead. When studying the civil war from our textbook gets a little dry, some days we use a board game called “Game of the States,” using only the states during that time period. We changed the rules a bit so in order to “win” a state the player had to name something important to the civil war having to do with that state (a general born there, famous battle, etc.). If the kids don’t know their math facts, they can easily get bogged down. We will occasionally take a day off from “regular” math to play multiplication games with dice or dominoes. Adding a time can really get things going. We also take time for following step by step directions (legos and origami are good for this). Here’s my last hint. My kids HATE spelling. We turn it into a game by going outside and spelling with sidewalk chalk (we’re in Texas, so we can do this all year round), doing jumping jacks while spelling (good for boys, especially), spelling at the top of our lungs (yelling spelling), hopping in one sidewalk section for each letter. Inside we use Boggle and Scrabble for practice.”



Shannon: “Colleen also turned us onto a video game called Timez Attack (bigbrainz.com) that teaches multiplication facts in a 3D game environment. My kids love it. My 8-year-old just finished all the levels (2’s through 12’s) last week. :)”

<http://www.bigbrainz.com/>”

Meg: “What about unmotivated moms? I find, this time of year, it’s actually the kids trying to motivate me!”

Stephanie: “Time for a field trip!”

Kristin: “Nutella sandwiches after school....:-)”

Amy: “Nutella works great for the kids...and mom.”

According to Dads, continued from pg. 8

I got in my car and proceeded to drop my car charger in a day-old, half-consumed Wendy’s Frosty, rendering it inoperable. As soon as I went to the store to buy another one, I grabbed a cup of coffee, and headed for downtown Nashville, excited at the prospect of getting Veronica some memorabilia. What I didn’t know was that there was some big event downtown, and I had to pay \$20 to park somewhere that was normally free. Nevertheless, I secured some Nashville mementos, and got in my car to drive the rest of the way home.

The iPhone GPS application I bought has a setting to emit a loud “ding-ding-ding” whenever you go five miles over the speed limit. I normally drive the speed limit, but it’s surprisingly easy to go 70 for a split second in a 65 MPH zone. That thing must have gone off a mind-numbing two hundred times during my drive.

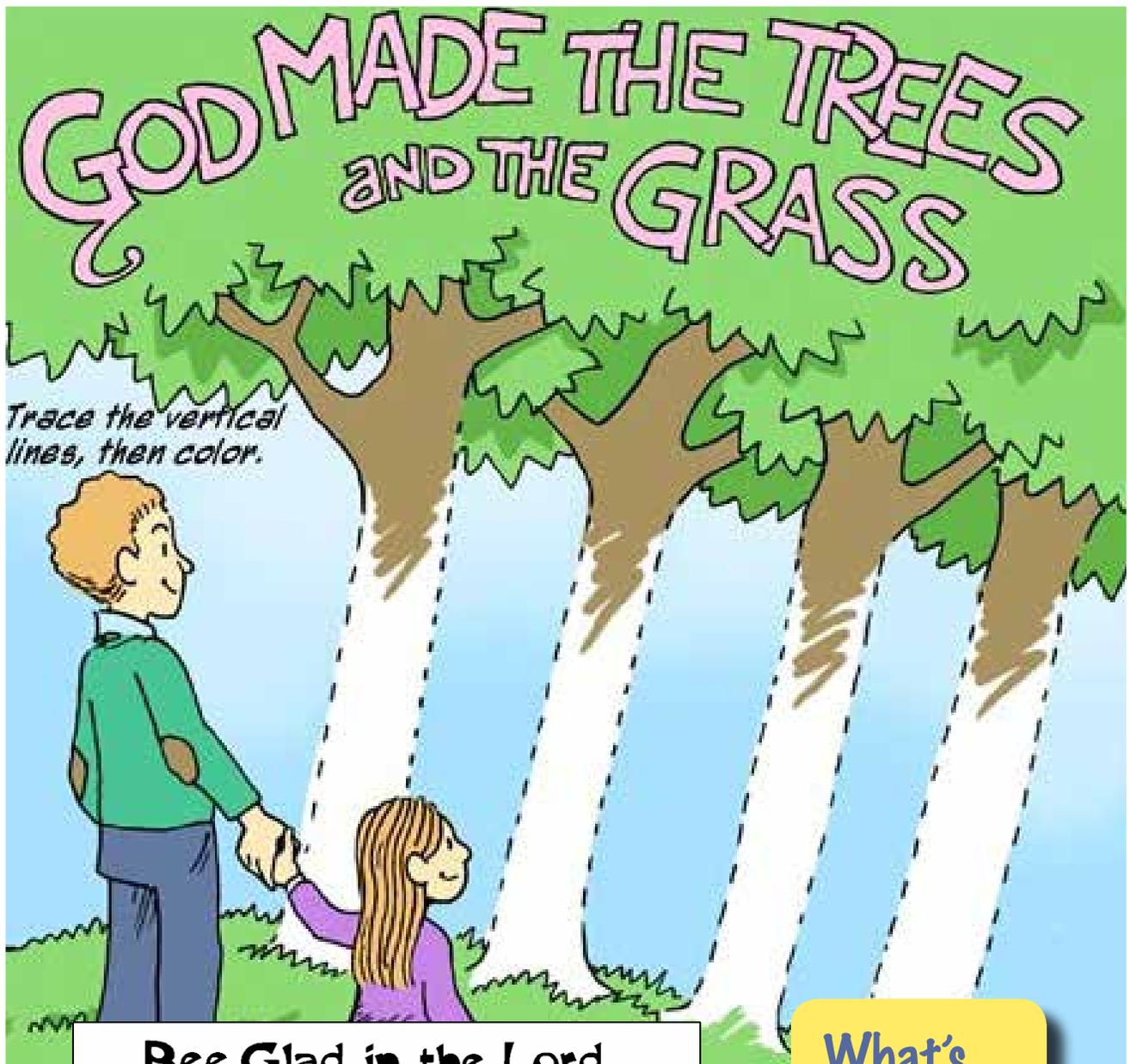
So after spending about 25 total hours in a car in two days (much of it through a rainstorm), having embarrassed myself in front of half of the EWTN staff, with almost no sleep, not showering for two days, with a “beep-beep-beep” and a “ding-ding-ding” sound stuck in my head, and in need of borrowing five dollars from my eight-year-old daughter, I arrived home. And when I walked in the door, Lisa asked me, “How did it go?”

“Fine, honey. How did everything go for you?” I answered.

We often think that when things don’t go our way, we are doing something wrong. In homeschooling, we have the equivalent of spilled water, tornadoes, money troubles, and alarm clocks. But that doesn’t necessarily mean that we’re doing something wrong; it might mean that we are doing something right. And, to be honest, the obstacles often provide the laughs along the journey. Maybe that’s one of the reasons that God allows these hurdles—so we can laugh a little as we make our way home. The man with tons of obstacles and an enormous sense of humor can go a lot farther than his counterpart with few of either. And in the end, he’s usually a lot happier.

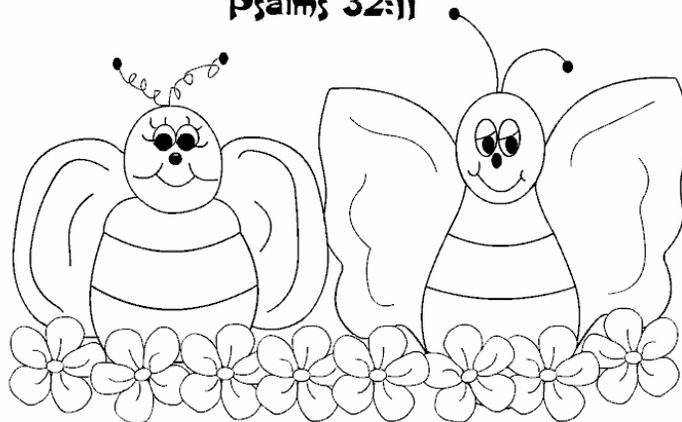
Especially if he uses a “sippy-cup.”

Kid's Corner



Bee Glad in the Lord

Psalm 32:11



© akidsheart.com

What's Inside

Fruit of the Spirit
Word Find

Coloring Activities

Fun with Science

Star Hop

Jokes for Kids

Fruit of the Spirit

For the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness and righteousness and truth; ~Eph 5:9

S	U	L	E	E	C	G	G	E	S	U	S	T
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E	T	G	E	P	E	G	E	O	N	C	T	G



"Star Hop" around the Big Dipper

To be a good star gazer, you don't need any special equipment except a book in which you can record the stars and constellations that you see. If you like, make a sketch of each star or constellation you see, and note the date and time. You can purchase a little notebook from your local store for these recordings.

Step 1: When it is dark, go outside and face north. You should soon be able to make out a group of stars shaped like a bowl with a handle. Seven stars make up the Big Dipper: three for the handle and four for the cup.

The two bright stars at the ends of one side of the cup are called Pointers. An imaginary line drawn through them and carried on to the north leads to another bright star called the North Star. This star is almost due north in the sky.

Step 2: Look at the second star in the handle of the Dipper. This star is called Mizar. It is really two stars together. You can see both stars on a clear night. An imaginary line drawn from Mizar through the North Star leads to a W-shaped group of five bright stars. You have "star hopped" to the constellation of Cassiopeia.

Step 3: Follow the line of the handle of the Big Dipper as far again as its length. You will come to a bright, faintly orange star called Arcturus. You have now "star hopped" to the constellation of Bootes, the Herdsman.

When you look at the sky on a clear night to find the Big Dipper, it appears that the Earth is surrounded by a great dome. This dome is called the Heavenly Sphere. If you watch the Big Dipper over a few hours, you will see the Heavenly Sphere rotate about you. It rotates in the same direction that the sun travels across the sky.

Did the stars seem to be little points of twinkling light that are mounted on the dome, and go round with it? The stars you see near the horizon change from season to season. After a year has passed, you can see the same stars again.

The Big Picture

Looking at objects closely is an important part of science, and a magnifying glass lets us see things we don't even know are there. It also helps us see how objects are similar or different from each other.

Let's ask our guardian angels to help us to see things in nature that we did not realize or know about before. Ask your guardian angel to help you to appreciate all the gifts of nature that God has given us for our pleasure and enjoyment.

What you'll need

A magnifying glass

What you'll do

- Use your magnifying glass to see:
 - What's hidden in soil or under leaves
 - What's on both sides of leaves
 - Your fingerprints
 - Butterfly wings
 - Different objects in the soil
- Draw pictures of what you see.



What you'll learn

Using the magnifying glass, carefully examine your fingerprints. Look at your right thumbprint and compare it with your left thumbprint. Did you know that no two fingerprints are alike? They are so unique to each individual person that fingerprints are used for identification.

Grace before meals

The Catechism teacher asked Kim, "Do you say your prayers before eating?" "No" she replied, "I don't have to. My Mum is a good cook!"

A leaf out of a book

A little boy opened the family Bible, and looked at the old pages as he turned them. Suddenly, something fell out of the Bible.

He picked it up and looked at an old leaf from a tree that had been pressed in between the pages.

"Mama, look what I found!" the boy called out.

"What do you have, dear?" she asked.

With amazement in his voice, the boy replied, "I think it's Adam's suit!"

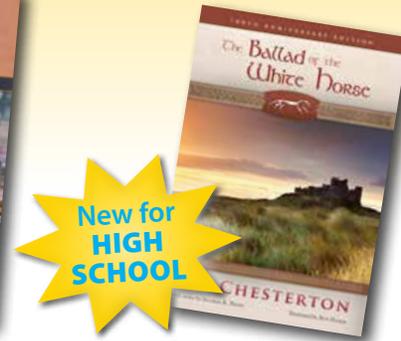
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New Look!

Same great content, plus new features!

Your monthly newsletter has had a makeover. We hope you will find the new format inviting, informative, and enjoyable to read!

PAPAL WISDOM

It is no exaggeration to say that providing young people with a sound education in the faith represents the most urgent internal challenge facing the Catholic community in your country. The deposit of faith is a priceless treasure which each generation must pass on to the next by winning hearts to Jesus Christ and shaping minds in the knowledge, understanding and love of his Church. It is gratifying to realize that, in our day too, the Christian vision, presented in its breadth and integrity, proves immensely appealing to the imagination, idealism and aspirations of the young, who have a right to encounter the faith in all its beauty, its intellectual richness and its radical demands.



Pope Benedict XVI

Address to Bishops of the United States, May 5, 2012

