

# Seton



# MAGAZINE

Under the Magisterium of the Catholic Church

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

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





# St. Clare of Assisi

BY DR. MARY KAY CLARK

Those in the Franciscan Order, as well as lay people who are in the Franciscan Third Order, will be celebrating the feast of St. Clare of Assisi on August 12.

Clare was born into a noble family in Assisi in 1196. Her mother, Countess Ortolana, was deeply religious. Ortolana had a vision from an angel about her unborn child and told her to name the baby Clare. The angel said "God is sending you an infant daughter whom he wishes you to call 'Clare,' because when she grows up, she will be as a clear luminous light shining in a dark world."

Clare and her two younger sisters were homeschooled by their wealthy parents, all three growing up in a well-to-do manor house. Both the Count and the Countess dedicated themselves to helping the poor. The family was known and respected for their religious practices and their generosity toward others. Clare's mother was described as a "pious gentlewoman," who dedicated her life to teaching her daughters to serve God through prayers as well as service.

Countess Ortolana emphasized to her three daughters, Clare, Agnes, and Beatrice, to keep pure and to practice a life of dedication to the Blessed Mother. The family respected their neighbor, Francis, who gave up his financial inheritance and depended solely on God. Clare was attracted by his message of repentance, renunciation, and following God's will.

Francis was impressed by Clare's deep spiritual life. He went to the local bishop to obtain permission to establish an order of nuns who would stay in prayer for the work of Francis and his followers. He told the bishop that young Clare, only 18 years old, should become a nun and lead the new order.

On Palm Sunday, in 1212, the bishop handed out the palms in the church, but Clare stayed in her pew in deep meditation.

The bishop walked down the aisle to her pew to give her the palms, and his contact with her eyes, and surely the Holy Spirit, convinced him that Clare should be the "mother" of the new order of nuns.

Clare then walked alongside the Franciscan brothers to the convent of the Benedictine nuns where she would stay until a convent would be built for new Franciscan sisters. Immediately, Clare's mother, father, and sisters supported her. Eventually, both her mother and her two sisters joined Clare's order of nuns. Soon they would become known as the Poor Clares.

Over the years, Mother Clare and her nuns practiced great fasts, a serious prayer life, and true poverty. Many miraculous cures were attributed to blessings by Mother Clare.

## *Saint of the Eucharist*

The most well-known story about St. Clare is the event in 1244 when the army of Emperor Frederick II, at war with the pope, sent his army to attack the town of Assisi. Though Clare was sick in bed, she asked the priest to bring her the ciborium which held the Hosts of Jesus Christ. As the soldiers approached the wall surrounding the convent, Clare raised the ciborium and prayed, "I beseech Thee, Good Lord, protect these whom now I am not able to protect!" The soldiers fell back as if struck by lightning and fled from the convent walls.

The story of St. Clare is especially inspiring for homeschooling families. The family prayed together, learned together, worshipped together, helped the poor together. Mother and daughters even joined the convent together! In one of his talks before homeschooling parents, Father Joseph Fessio stressed the fact that homeschooling families must be like little monasteries, living the Catholic Faith and preserving the Faith in their homes. Like



cc Lawrence OP

the monasteries of old, which were like little enclaves of Catholic faithful, homeschooling families today must recognize that the American culture in general is antagonistic to the Christian life.

Catholic homeschooling families must strengthen themselves, strengthen each member, for the anti-Christian attacks around us. Catholic homeschooling families must stay in daily prayer, attend Mass every day if at all possible, say the daily rosary, go to Confession frequently, and pray for our country and other countries in such desperate need of the teachings of Jesus.

*Blessed St. Clare, whose very name means light, illumine the darkness of our minds and hearts, so that we all may see what God wishes us to do, and perform it with a willing and joyful heart. Before your birth, a Heavenly voice foretold that you would be a light illuminating the world. Be a light to us and to our country and to the world, in the sorrows and anxieties of this earthly life, and lead us into the eternal light and joy of our home in heaven. Amen.*



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*.



# your Questions ANSWERED

BY DR. MARY KAY CLARK

**Would it be okay to have two of my children in adjacent grades take the same courses whenever possible? My husband thinks each child should take all the courses at his own grade level.**

Most busy homeschooling moms with several children like to have children in adjacent grades take some of the subjects together. This works easily with subjects like religion, science, and history. Depending on the children's skills, other subjects may be combined if one of the children is a grade level above, or a grade level below in a particular subject. This happens most frequently with math, but also happens with spelling, vocabulary, phonics, and reading.

An advantage to children working together at the same grade level is that they work out problems together, have fun talking about their lessons, sometimes learn from each other, and discuss the issues they find in their analysis books.

In a school, authorities need to make practical decisions. The most simple "yardstick" to organize classrooms has been determined to be age. It often happens that immature boys of 5, the first born in a family who do not know letters yet, end up in a classroom with mature girls of five, the youngest in their families, who learned to read with older siblings at 4. Some children spend years and years of frustration and unhappiness, either because of a constant struggle or because of a constant boredom. Most of these children and their parents never understand why they are so unhappy in school.

We don't need to replicate the rigidity of the school system in our homes. Homeschooling helps children to learn and to be happy when their parents adjust the program to fit each child.

**I would like my children to do their schoolwork in the morning so we have the afternoons free. Some friends say that is impossible. Do you think that is possible?**

Parents can certainly arrange their homeschooling day to suit the needs and abilities of the children, as well as to suit the situation in the family. Half-days of homeschooling sometimes can work for families with young children. However, for middle grades and high school students, it may not be possible to do the necessary work in a half day. High school students, looking forward to graduation, want to finish each grade level in no longer than a calendar year. With five or six courses, this would be difficult with schooling only a half day. You may want to be prepared for longer days as the children start into the middle grades, and beyond.

That being said, you need to find what amount of time works best for your family. When we ran a survey a couple of years ago, we tried to learn whether spending more time home schooling translated to more successful homeschooling. We found that more time does mean more success, but only up to around six hours a day. If you try to have your children do schoolwork for too much time in a day, they can become burned out.

One thing you might want to try is to find out how much time the schooling really takes, and how much time is wasted. You can run an experiment by telling your children they will receive some kind of reward if their schoolwork is completed

(well) by a certain time. This can be a financial reward, such as a dollar or two, or something like a trip to the park or swimming pool. By doing this on a few occasions, you can gauge how much time subjects take when the children really apply themselves.

**My son has a perfect score on the standardized achievement test. I would like him to skip a grade level so he is not bored! What do you think?**

Our experience for more than thirty years is that children should not skip a grade level. A standardized test does not cover the information that a whole year's worth of schooling covers. Children who skip a grade often fall behind at the higher

grade level, many attain lower grades though they work longer hours, and some become frustrated and unhappy.

We suggest that you enroll your son in the next grade level. He can do the assignments as quickly as he can, successfully, through the various courses. While some

material may be repetitious, it is likely that practicing over or repeating some lessons is still greatly advantageous. His skills will be increased. At least some material or information will be new.

Most importantly, you will have a child who will be happy with his success. And remember this: if your son moves ahead quickly with good understanding and achievement in any subject, he can advance to the next grade level, one subject at a time. This makes for a happy student!

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**Do you have any tips as I start the school year, tips that the counselors regularly give to new homeschooling parents? I am not new, but I need to be reminded!**

1. Before the school year starts, take a good week to look over all the courses, the textbooks, and tests. Take the time to become familiar with how it all should work. Make a plan and a schedule about who will take which subject and when, who will need you for a certain subject, and who can do some assignments on his own.

2. You don't need to do everything in the lesson plans. The daily assignments are a suggestion. You may want to do some more quickly and some more slowly, depending on your child's ability or interest. You may want to skip some things or add some of your own ideas. Of course, if you want grades on the report card, your student does need to take the tests.

3. The first quarter is usually the hardest because it sets the pattern for the other quarters. Once your child understands the weekly pattern, you do not need to oversee everything. Many children learn the pattern of assignments for their spelling, vocabulary, and reading workbooks without too much extra help.

4. As you go along, you will learn about which subjects are easy and which are the difficult ones for each child. You will learn to spend more time with one child on his English and less with his math, while his sister needs more time with her math and less time with her phonics.

5. Don't get discouraged on your first day, or first week, or first month. Give yourself and your children time to adjust to

a different way of life. And be confident that homeschooling is a better way of life.

6. Some may tell you that homeschooling is not a bed of roses, but those special moments of insight by your children regarding the deeper issues of life and love will make your heart jump with such sweetness and delight that you will be happy to endure the few thorns that are sprinkled among the flowers.

7. Pray with your spouse and children every day. No matter what happens, or what does not happen, pray with your spouse and children every day. Try to attend daily Mass. Homeschooling is a spiritual journey for your family!

**A group of homeschooling families have started a homeschooling co-op. They offer classes two or three times a week. Should I consider it?**

Seton is certainly not opposed to co-ops. In fact, we work with many co-ops to provide curriculum materials. A co-op can be very good in a lot of ways. First, it can be a great way to teach a subject which the parents might not know or might have trouble with. For example, a child might be able to take a foreign language or an advanced science or math course from an expert. Second, a co-op can help some students keep on track by providing a bit more accountability, in that students need to finish certain work by a certain day.

What you might want to shy away from is using a co-op to recreate a school situation. One of the main reasons parents homeschool is because of the Catholic family life they want to live together with their children. Most homeschooling parents

are not homeschooling because they think they are better teachers, but rather because they believe it's better for children to be taught by their parents and that they will have better children by teaching their Catholic values at home in the daily family interaction. A teacher at a co-op may have greater expertise in a subject area than a parent, but only the parent receives the sacramental graces of matrimony to help raise the child.

Of course, educational decisions are up to the parents, and the parents should decide what is best among all the educational options available.

**Would Seton or my local school district be upset if I don't follow the lesson plans exactly? My daughter is easily upset by some stories about animals.**

The Church teaches that parents are responsible for the education of their children. If you believe that your daughter would be upset by animal stories, such as of animals being mistreated, then it is your right and your responsibility to do what is best for your child. One benefit of homeschooling is that you can make the best decision for your child and that your child need not be unnecessarily upset. Unless a story is involved with a test, simply skip it. If it is involved in a test or book report, phone one of our counselors for another option.



**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*.





## Homeschooling from Our Domestic Shrine *in Puerto Rico*

by the Pérez Family

Being a homeschooling family is not coincidence. We believe that through the intercession of the Blessed Mother, God in His merciful plan for our family has given us the mission to educate our children and ourselves.

This story goes back to 2009, just before our older son Tiago was about to start Pre-kindergarten (K4). Our younger son, Jairo, had been diagnosed with a speech deficiency, and the doctors recommended that Jairo should interact with kids his own age in order to improve his condition. For this reason, we started to look for a school.

Our baby boy was just 2 years old and it was very difficult to find a place where not only both Jairo and Tiago could fit in but where they could receive a Catholic education. After we researched many schools, we decided to enroll the boys in a Catholic school that offered both day care and Pre-kindergarten.

A few weeks after the kids started their school year, we felt that something was wrong. We could not identify exactly what it was, but there was something that bothered us as a Catholic family. At first we thought it was just the normal feeling of parents who must take both of their children to school; but as the weeks and months passed, we increasingly felt there was something more significant. It was then that we started to pray intensively to Mary under her title Mother Thrice Admirable to help us find the path that God had planned for our family. We must confess that we had an internal battle because on the one hand, we thought that traditional school was needed in order to help our younger son Jairo overcome his speech problem, but on the other hand, we believed a change was necessary. Without ever being able to identify a solid reason why, the whole question of the boys' school continued to be a source of anxiety and unrest for us.

In May 2011, after the boys finished their school year and Tiago graduated from first grade, we decided to go to the Schoenstatt shrine in Cabo Rojo, Puerto Rico. We came to the shrine to thank our Blessed Mother for the graces she had given



**Tiago**, our older son, loves to draw and to play outside in the park. He especially enjoys soccer with his dad. Tiago is very creative, and he enjoys designing his own spaceships with Lego blocks. He likes reading—favorite topics include animals, superheroes and especially earth science, since Tiago is also fond of exploring nature. Tiago is fond of music and enjoys trying to invent new melodies with his violin.



**Jairo** loves to read. His favorite classes are Phonics and Math. He enjoys playing with planes and spaceships, and his favorite sport seems to be biking. Like his older brother, Jairo is also a music enthusiast. He loves to listen to music and to sing. He also enjoys cooking, but most of all, he always has a good joke and loves to find ways to make us laugh.

## Our Typical Day with Seton

Our day starts at 6:00 am with breakfast. When we finish, we do our morning prayer. Immediately after that, Dad goes out to work and our school day has officially begun. We typically start with Reading, followed by Religion and English. Around 10:00 AM, we take a recess for snacks and play outside, usually using this period to include physical education. After recess is over, Mom prepares lunch and then continues with the remaining classes for the day.

We have decided to incorporate Spanish and Music as additional classes to the curriculum. Spanish is taught on Fridays and Music (violin) is daily practice. We have found it useful to schedule these as part of the regular homeschool day schedule. It helps us to keep track and be accountable for those extracurricular activities.

us during the school year. It was then, at that particular moment of grace, that our Mother Thrice Admirable awakened in us the desire to homeschool our children. Homeschooling was not entirely new to us, since some of our friends that we knew through the Schoenstatt movement were homeschooling. We had admired the profound love and respect each member of those families always professed toward one another, and it was the first thing that we liked about homeschooling.

After doing research and praying constantly, we decided to start with Seton Home Study School. It is worth mentioning here that at the time we made this decision, our children were already enrolled for 2nd grade and Kindergarten in the Catholic school they had attended for the past 3 years. In fact, all the books and uniforms were ready at home, waiting for the school year to start. That didn't matter, however, and we didn't consider it an obstacle; we had prayed for many

years and God had clearly answered our prayers. It was now our responsibility to obey His will and to follow that path that He was leading us to take. It was a leap of faith, no doubt about it, but we took it.

As we began with the homeschooling, we noticed that the first individuals in need of education were ourselves, not only with regard to academics and the business of education, but more profoundly, we needed to be educated as a Catholic couple. How could we teach our children if we hadn't first learned ourselves? It seemed divine coincidence that this very question became the main topic of one of the bi-weekly meetings in our local Schoenstatt couples' group. God was giving us a pretty strong hint of what He really wanted from us.

Our ultimate goal has become to have what Schoenstatt calls a Home Shrine. To do this, we have invited our Blessed Mother to become part of our little family and to live among us as her own. Through the pedagogy of the domestic church as espoused by the Schoenstatt movement and our adoption of homeschooling, our family has been given a new and full Catholic identity.

Academically our children are doing wonderfully. They have learned so much. Our younger son Jairo has improved immensely academically and has overcome his speech deficiency. We are very proud of their accomplishments but the core of our happiness resides in the fact that we are living a true Catholic life at home. We could never describe how blessed we are to homeschool our children and to have our blessed mother



As a family, we love to have outdoor adventures, visit historic places, play music together, pray the rosary and visit our aunt Sister M. Taqui at her house in Schoenstatt.

## What is the Schoenstatt Movement?

From [www.schoenstatt.org](http://www.schoenstatt.org)

In its German roots, "Schoene Statt" means "beautiful place." The original Schoenstatt shrine lies near Koblenz in the heart of the Rhineland. First inhabited by Augustinian nuns, it was named by the Archbishop of Treveris, who had given the nuns the land. At the beginning of the 20th century, the property was acquired by the Pallottine fathers. In 1912, a small house of studies was begun at Schoenstatt with Fr. Joseph Kantenich as its spiritual director.

With the dawn of the First World War, Fr. Kantenich saw the need for union with God through Our Lady as a means of safeguarding the faith in dire times. In October of 1914, Fr. Kantenich and his students entered into a "Covenant of Love" with the Blessed Mother under the title Mother Thrice Admirable.

This original Schoenstatt soon became a place of pilgrimage, and in 1947, Pope Pius XII granted an indulgence to all visiting the shrine. Since that time the Schoenstatt movement has spread around the world.

Schoenstatt spirituality is characterized by a childlike dependence on the Blessed Mother, who is our intercessor with the Holy Trinity, and the dispenser of God's graces; practical trust in Divine Providence and God's Will; sanctification of the workday; and a firm sense of rootedness in one's spiritual home, which gives us the confidence to go out and meet both life and death with joy, hope, and love.

Image cc Jerjes Medina Albino



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# HISTORY at Seton

**H**istory has always been a favorite course at Seton. Dr. Anne Carroll who founded Seton School in Manassas, Virginia, and her husband, Dr. Warren Carroll, who founded Christendom College in Front Royal, were two avid lovers of history as well as authors of several history books.

Dr. Anne Carroll gave a great speech at a Catholic homeschooling conference, in which she said, "Everything we teach our children should have as its ultimate purpose the glory of God and the good of souls. History is no exception. It is through history that we learn that Jesus Christ is the most historically important Person Who ever lived, and that the Incarnation, Redemption, and Resurrection are the most important events in history."

"Christianity transformed civilization," she continued. "Christianity introduced the concept of limited government, the idea that the king or ruler was responsible to God, and that

the legitimacy of governments depended on whether or not they were in harmony with God's laws. Absolutist, unlimited governments are pre-Christian or anti-Christian."

Long ago, publishers produced history books for Catholic schools, but when they went out of print, Seton started writing history textbooks. As an extension, Bruce Clark, the head of the history department, often writes interesting "sidebars" in the lesson plans, or presents little-known events in his audios.

Both Mr. Clark and Mr. Nick Marmalejo are currently producing history videos.

Mr. Marmalejo, the Seton assistant history counselor, and graduate of Christendom College, studied under Dr. Warren Carroll. Other historians at Seton are Dr. Bernie Way, political science professor at Christendom College, and Mr. Andy O'Neill, a graduate of Christendom College, who also studied under Dr. Carroll.

All of the history staff have worked to design the curriculum and tests, and answer questions on the Seton History message board. Some of the message board posts have reached over 30,000 hits. This past year, one of our Seton graduates wrote the following on the Seton Message Board to encourage others with her experience at Seton:

Dear Mr. Clark and Seton staff,

I am a Seton graduate in my first year at a state college, studying liberal arts. Even after only two months of college, I can already see the countless ways in which the Seton program has prepared me for academic success.

One of my courses this semester is a survey course of early western civilization. I recently took my first in-class exam in this course; it was composed of objective questions and an essay. The professor admits to being a harsh grader, so I was absolutely stunned when she returned my graded test and announced that I had received a score of 100. Apparently I am the first student in four years to achieve a perfect score on one of her tests!

I could not have achieved this level of success without Seton's rigorous history program. I want to extend my hearty thanks to Mr. Clark and to the rest of the Seton staff. Seton Home Study School was truly a great blessing in my life. To current Seton students: The work may seem impossible and endless, but it is worth it! Study hard and pray! God bless all of you!

-Maria



**Mr. Nick Marmalejo and Mr. Bruce Clark** discuss American History during a recent video recording for Seton students.



# SETON'S HISTORY CURRICULUM

Seton's History Curriculum includes eight original titles and two titles authored by Mrs. Anne Carroll.



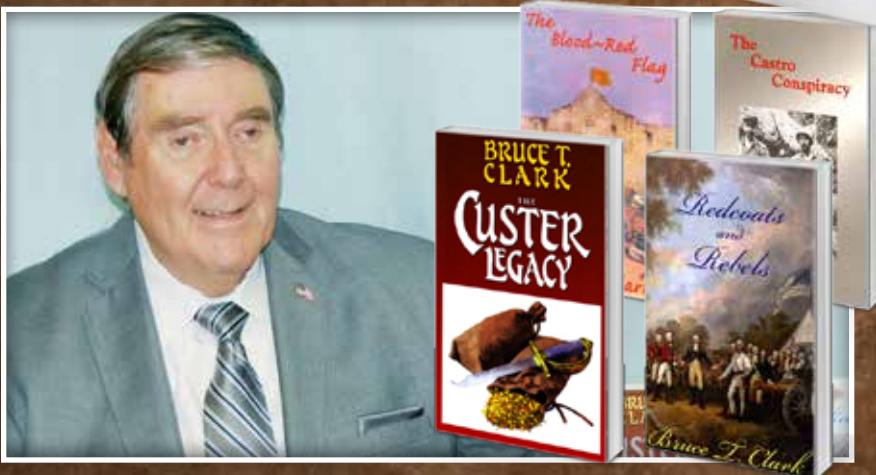
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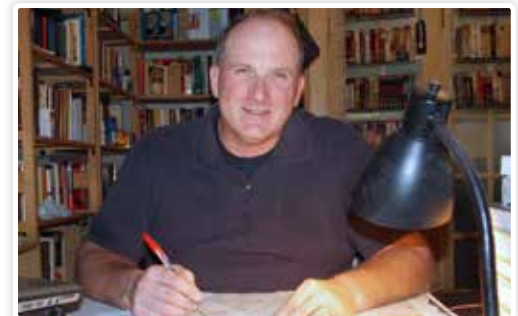
**Mr. Bruce Clark** records a lecture for students enrolled in Seton's History Program. He has recorded over 100 to date!



**Mr. Nick Marmalejo** responds to student questions and grades electronically-submitted student papers and assignments.



**Mr. Bruce Clark** has authored two history textbooks used in Seton's curriculum and four popular historical novels.



**Dr. Bernard Way** grades papers sent to Seton by mail from his home office.





# Teaching Active Boys

BY DR. MARY KAY CLARK

As a homeschooling mother of seven sons, and growing up as the oldest in a family with five younger brothers, I had a good amount of experience with active boys. Mothers of active children must learn pretty quickly about the ways such boys learn and about the ways to adapt teaching methods to active children, both boys and girls.

Active boys and girls need movement while they are learning. They like moving at the same time they are studying. They like to bounce a ball or even roll a ball back and forth while they are doing their memory work. Sometimes as they do their schoolwork, they continuously tap a pencil or shake a foot. My boys sometimes would jump-rope while they were memorizing math tables or spelling words, or answering catechism questions.

## Start by Standing

Most active young boys and girls don't like the process of handwriting or printing because their fingers are not quite adept at writing small letters on a piece of paper and they don't want to take the time! Have your child stand as he is learning to write large letters on a large surface, maybe on a white board. Start your children writing letters even earlier than kindergarten, if possible. Use colored markers to attract the active student. As soon as your child has learned enough phonics to write a single word, have him start printing the word on a board, and then write lists of other words that he learns to read.

Hopefully, by the end of first grade, your child can write a sentence on a board using the words he has learned in his spelling and phonics lessons. Encourage your child to make up sentences using the words he

knows. Give your student a sentence and ask him to write his own second sentence which might logically follow the first sentence. You want to encourage your active child to be interested in developing his own ideas and put them into "action" on a board.

The first three or four years, from Kindergarten through Grade Three, are critical to develop the proper attitude toward writing as well as to develop a confidence in the ability to write and to think creatively. If we neglect teaching our young children to write, there can be serious difficulties in logical thinking in all subjects in the years to come.

In the second and third grades, your child should be writing three to five sentence paragraphs. He can write his own complete paragraph, or you can give him a first

*There is nothing better for active boys and girls than to have Dad interested enough to take them fishing or hunting or to baseball games, or whatever activity they enjoy together. They can play cards or chess, even standing up. This kind of close relationship makes boys and girls become more accepting of Dad teaching them some of their academic courses, but Moms sometimes need to accept Dad's "active" methods of teaching!*

sentence and then ask him to write logical following sentences. You need to insist, or pull or push or reward or whatever it takes so your young student writes every day, at least one paragraph each day. This develops his thinking skills more than we can know. Help your active child to be proud of his original ideas in his paragraphs. Give him an activity when he completes a sit-down assignment; for instance, he can ride his bike five times around the basement or house for every paragraph he produces.

## Attention-Spans

Active boys and girls like to get things done quickly, and often don't worry much about being accurate or writing legibly; they just want to get it done! Consider allowing your active boys and girls to grade their own work; they may discover they cannot read their own writing. We can allow them to work quickly, but we should insist that their work must be done accurately and neatly.

Consider this: Have your students grade their math and other answers as they finish each problem. Impatient students who have several wrong answers are frustrated and unhappy when they must go back to redo several problems, and often become even more careless. It is more difficult to re-learn the correct concept if the student has repeated the incorrect concept for a whole page of problems. It is better for your student to correct misunderstandings immediately.

Since most active boys and girls have a short attention span for their bookwork, recognize just how long your son or daughter can stay focused. Consider breaking up a subject into two class times a day. Assign reading or studying a subject in the morning,



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as our educator. We are convinced that homeschooling is the best thing that has happened to us, and are extremely grateful to God for his blessings on every member of our family.

Every day, we pray for all Catholic homeschooling families, especially for Seton's families. May God in his mercy help us all to persevere in our mission to educate our children. Please keep us in your daily prayers and be sure that we are always praying for you!



for instance, for only fifteen or twenty minutes, and then assign the written work for the same subject in the afternoon.

Many active boys and girls like looking at pictures, graphs, and diagrams, but don't want to take the time to read the text. Before your student begins a new chapter in any textbook, join your student in looking at the illustrations, but read some interesting related sentences from the text. Help your active student develop a curiosity in the subject and become interested in some specific ideas in the chapter. And think about this: There is no rule against reading while walking around the dining room table!

## ***Making Learning Fun***

Because boys tend to use fewer words than girls, both in speaking and in writing, Moms must do whatever it takes to help their sons and daughters become better speakers, better readers, and better writers. Challenging crossword puzzles will help develop vocabulary and improve reading, writing, and thinking skills. Word games, like Scrabble and Word Find, can develop speaking, reading, writing, thinking, spelling, and vocabulary skills.

Many active boys and girls like the challenge of quiz games, especially if they can be on their feet while they answer questions. Help your active sons and daughters to a challenge with fast, objective, one word answers while they stand or "take a giant step forward!" For instance, read a definition from a science book and ask what it defines; or read a description of a battle, and ask who beat the enemy. See who can answer questions first. If you don't

have time, ask your husband to help out with these one-word-quick-answer games.

Some homeschooling support groups have spelling bees or geography bees, or debate clubs that offer a challenge for active boys and girls. Encourage your son or daughter to participate. Such activities help students gain confidence in public speaking and learn leadership skills. Active students love science projects and often will find rather unusual projects of their own making in your basement or garage. This is just what is wanted by many active boys and girls with a natural bent for an active challenge.

Playing a musical instrument is important for active children because it teaches patience while being active. Music lessons teach listening carefully to notes and rhythm. They teach active students patience as they learn adeptness with fingers, which ultimately helps with small muscle skills for handwriting. Playing a musical instrument teaches concentration and paying attention to very small details, such as quarter notes and half notes, and reading notes on a musical scale. Statistics show that public high schools which require music classes graduate 20% more students than high schools which don't require music classes.

Active boys and girls can be a challenge for homeschooling moms, but once you discover how to entice them into using their minds with their natural active dispositions, they will be successful students for you, and for their future.



## **College: Culture Matters!**

by Bob Wiesner

There is an old joke that young women go to college in pursuit of the MRS degree. Of course, this is not entirely true. Women obviously have an interest in their own intellectual development! Still, there is a certain truth in the saying. Probably a majority of young people meet their future spouses at college, and this would point to an important consideration in one's choice of school.

Colleges in the United States have long been in decline in respect of both education and atmosphere. Serious students must conduct a careful search for campuses which would afford them worthwhile intellectual training and an atmosphere which fosters responsible student behavior. For the most part, this combination is ever more likely to be found among only Catholic institutions.

So here is the point: young people going to college with a mind to find a suitable life partner as well as to grow intellectually would be well-advised to think about where they are likely to find a good Catholic spouse. Catholics have an obligation to avoid the near occasions of sin, after all, and a college given over to unbridled hedonism should thus be ruled out immediately. There is a positive corollary to the moral principle, as well. Catholics have a further obligation to seek out occasions for virtue!

The whole point of life is to continually improve our spiritual state and this is a great deal easier to do if one is surrounded by like-minded others. A good Catholic college should afford practically unlimited opportunity for spiritual growth. Choosing such a college greatly improves the chances for finding a life-partner who will be just as interested in a mutually growing, Christ-like, and sacramental state of Matrimony.



## 'Heresy Check' ONE APP I REALLY WANT MADE

BY JOHN CLARK

For those of you about forty-years-old or older, you can probably remember a time when there was neither internet nor cable. There was no TV recording capability: if you wanted to watch *Donny and Marie*, you watched it Fridays at 8:00PM or not at all. If you were playing home video games in 1978, you were playing *Pong*. Yes, life was hard. And for young authors like myself, technology that would have assisted you in writing was almost nonexistent. Remember that this was an era in which a mechanical pencil was considered pretty cool. "Cutting and pasting" required scissors and *Elmer's*. If you were lucky, you had a typewriter; if you were even luckier, that typewriter had a correction ribbon. For me, "grammar check" meant simply reading a sentence aloud and waiting for my Mom to correct me. "Spell check" worked like this: "Mom, how do you spell *snickersnee*?" Mom: "Look it up, Johnny!" (As an entire generation of kids observed—and an entire generation of parents did not—"looking it up" implies the prior knowledge of the spelling.)

Life has gotten easier since then, and writing has become almost too easy. (Of course, good writing is almost impossibly hard, which is why you see so little of it anywhere, including this monthly column.) Writers have an embarrassment of riches at their disposal, so I feel a little funny demanding even more, but I have a request. I have grammar check. I have spell check. Those wonderful add-ons tend to keep me out of spelling and grammar trouble, but really, how much trouble can you get into by using improper grammar or spelling a word incorrectly? What I really need is a "heresy

checker." (I'm not sure who first thought of this idea, but I've been kicking it around in my head for decades.)

As you smart homeschoolers know, there is a difference between material heresy and formal heresy. *Material heresy* occurs when you hold a condemned position but, through no fault of your own, you don't know that it's heretical. *Formal heresy* occurs when you are aware that you hold a heretical position, and obstinately maintain your heretical position anyway. Material heresy is not that difficult to fall into; for instance, the Church does not expect the average layman to be an expert on the nuances of the doctrine of grace. Formal heresy? Well, once you fall into that, there's only one thing you can do: receive tenure at a prestigious university.

Here's how heresy check would work. In the same way that grammar check works, heresy-check would "flag" your materially heretical statements and only "unflag" them when corrected. For instance, the other day, I sat down to write an article about grace. And my basic point was that while God gives sufficient grace to everyone, it follows that *your* level of sufficient grace may differ from my level of sufficient grace since (among other things) some are more affected by The Fall than others. I never wrote it because I was concerned about whether that was correct.

(This might seem strange to you—this idea that I sit around and think about grace, The Fall of Man, etc. But I've got a four-year-old and a twenty-year-old in the house, and while questions about the Fall of Man

may seem theoretical to you, they seem very practical to me. No offense, kids.)

I don't want accidentally to espouse Jansenism or Nestorianism. I've got enough problems without that. So I need help. Up until now, I've been Facebook-messaging my brother Tim with those types of questions. (If you knew Tim, you'd understand why I do. My brother Tim is so smart that if I find out that he and I disagree on something, I make an effort to find some "quiet time" to try to figure out where I went wrong.) But he and my sister-in-law, Yvonne, have a family to raise. It's not fair to burden them with questions about semi-Pelagianism while they're changing diapers. With heresy check, my problems—and Tim and Yvonne's—would be solved. Except for the diapers.

I am half-serious about this. Actually, I'm completely serious about the need for such a product. I'm just not sure if it's possible. Presumably, you would need to find some way to enter in dogmatic data from the fathers, doctors of the Church, and councils to your word processor. If you found some way to cross-reference Ludwig Ott's *Fundamentals of Catholic Dogma* and the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, you might be onto something. In fact, you'd be a hero to Catholic scholars everywhere.

Consider this a formal challenge, programmers! Go make us proud!



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



# Living the Faith as a Family

## *Our Lady's Guide*

BY FR. ROBERT LEVIS

Several years ago, Father Robert Levis, from Erie, Pennsylvania, spoke at a Catholic Homeschooling Conference in the Washington, D.C. area. Father Levis was a frequent speaker at homeschooling conferences for many years. He spoke about the Message which the Blessed Mother gave to the world when she appeared six times in 1915 in Fatima, Portugal, to three children: Jacinta, Francisco, and Lucia.

The Blessed Mother told the three children that while the current war would end, "If [people] do not stop offending God, another and worse war will break out in the reign of Pius XI. When you see a night illumined by an unknown light, know that it is the great sign that God gives you, that He is going to punish the world for its crimes by means of war, hunger, persecution of the Church and of the Holy Father."

The Blessed Mother explained: "I come to ask for the consecration of Russia to my Immaculate Heart, and the Communion of Reparation on the First Saturdays of the month." In every apparition of the Blessed Mother, she asked the children to say the Rosary. When crowds of people came to see the three children pray and speak with the Blessed Mother, the people would join them in saying the Rosary.

### *The Lady of the Rosary*

At the Sixth and final appearance, the Blessed Mother announced, "I am the Lady of the Rosary. Continue to say the Rosary every day." There were several apparitions in the sky seen by the crowd of thousands: St. Joseph appeared holding the Child Jesus; Our Lady stood in blue and white robes as Our Lady of the Rosary; Our Lord appeared dressed in a bright red robe as the Divine Redeemer. Then Our Lady appeared as Our Lady of Sorrows, and finally, she appeared dressed in the brown robes of Our Lady of Carmel.

After all this, the sun changed colors and seemed to whirl and even to fall down to the earth. People started screaming in fear, but then they discovered that many were cured of various diseases and afflictions.

Because so many have forgotten about the message of Fatima, we have entered a terrible dark time in the world. The Blessed

Mother had descended from Heaven to defend the world from a loss of Faith in God. She had warned that with the loss of Faith, there would be wars, persecutions of Christians, and the disappearance of nations. This is what is happening today. Nothing in history equals what we are experiencing now.

The saintly Pope Pius XII believed that Our Lady's appearance at Fatima was a great merciful intervention by God in human history. Jesus sent His mother to warn mankind against the terrible dangers to the world unless people repented of their sins. Pope Pius strongly promoted the daily Rosary as well as the Blessed Mother's request for Mass and Communion by families on the first Saturday of each month.

Families, we are in a worldwide situation where consumerism, secularism, and abortion are rampant throughout the world. The culture of death permeates the world. Russia is still not converted and we certainly do not have world peace.

### *Called to Live Our Faith*

Homeschooling families must consider the message of the Blessed Mother at Fatima, and must follow her plea to attend Mass, as a family, on the First Saturday of the month. My family attended Mass every day, and Confession every Saturday. Homeschooling families,, try to do the same, at least attend Mass as a family on the First Saturday of the month as requested by Our Lady of Fatima. Take the children to Confession also on the First Saturday of the month.

Catholic parents, you must take seriously their obligation to teach religion to your children, but it is just as important to actually live the Faith. Frequent Mass and Confession is living the Faith. If parents did that, I guarantee that your children



would have a deeper Faith. Faith is taught by watching Mom and Dad. Many Irish children grew up watching their father kneeling every night saying the Rosary.

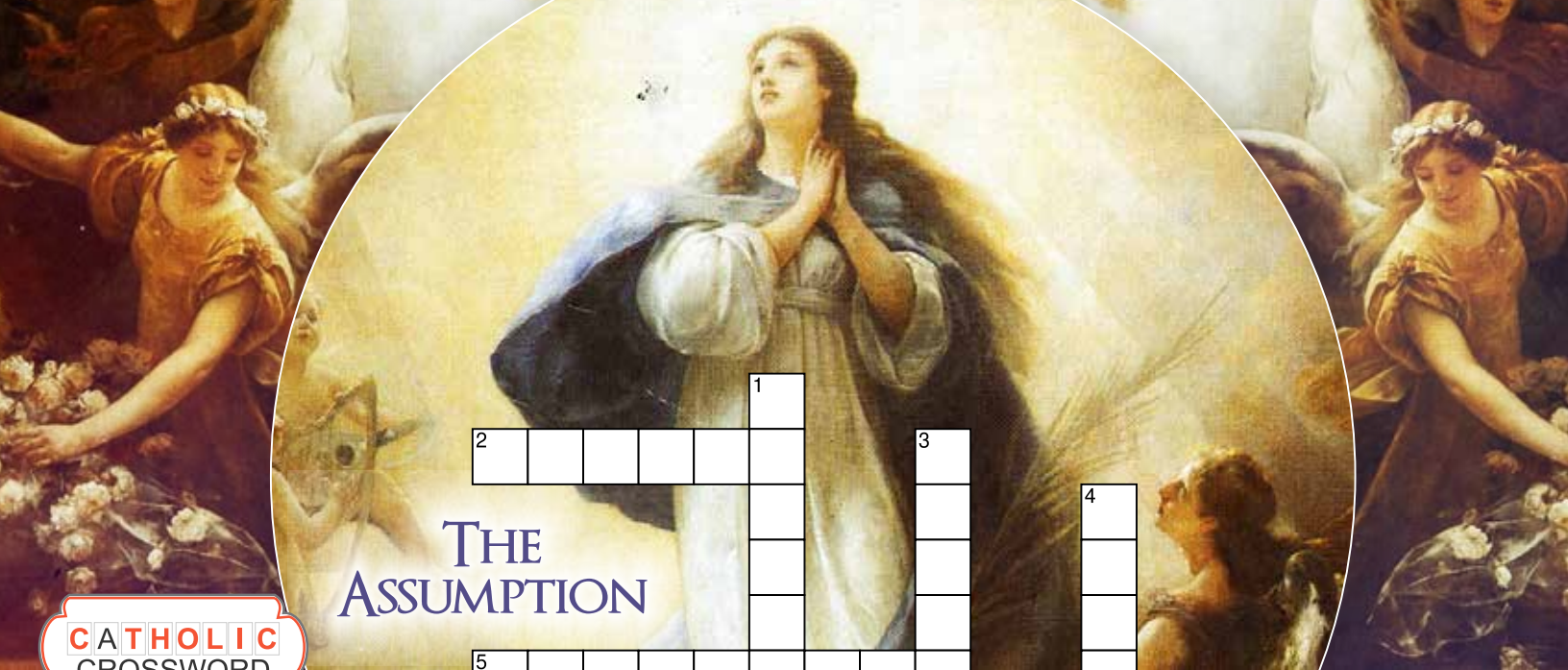
Priests can't do what you parents can do. Priests can teach religion, but parents teach how to live the Faith. You parents have a grave responsibility to live the Faith and thus teach your children how to live the Faith. Go to Confession as a Family; go to Mass as a Family.

Catholics today must be counter-cultural. Please take me seriously. In addition to Sunday Mass, go to Confession and Mass on the First Saturday of the Month as requested by the Blessed Mother.

Of course, going to Mass and Communion every day is best. *This is living the Faith.*

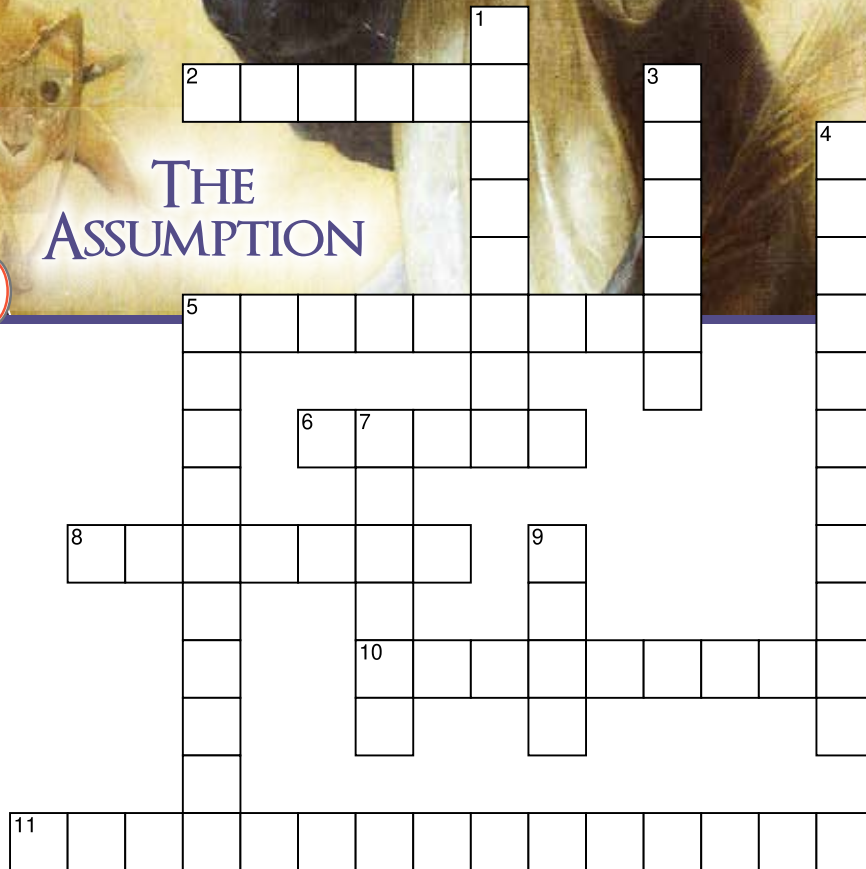


Fr. Robert Levis is the founding director (emeritus) of the Graduate Catechetical Institute, a pontifical institute at Gannon University. He has produced several resources to teach the Faith to young people.



## THE ASSUMPTION

CATHOLIC  
CROSSWORD



### ACROSS

- 2 She was the holy mother of (10 Across).
- 5 St. \_\_\_\_ Liguori, bishop and Doctor of the Church
- 6 This Apostle said, "Lord, it is well that we are here."
- 8 Founder of the Order of Preachers
- 10 This saint and doctor of the Church was a terrible sinner before his conversion; he wrote an autobiographical book called *Confessions*.
- 11 This feast celebrates the occasion when Jesus took three of His Apostles up a mountain and His appearance was gloriously changed.

### DOWN

- 1 This deacon of the early Church was martyred on a grill.
- 3 St. \_\_\_\_ Benedicta of the Cross, also known as Edith Stein, was killed by Nazis.
- 4 This Apostle was skinned alive.
- 5 This feast celebrates the fact that Our Lady was taken, body and soul, into Heaven at the end of her life.
- 7 Moses and this prophet appeared and spoke with Jesus on the mountain.
- 9 (5 Down) was infallibly declared a dogma of the Church by Pope \_\_\_\_ XII.

SOLUTIONS: Alphonse, Assumption, Augustine, Bartholomew, Dominic, Elijah, Lawrence, Monica, Peter, Pius, Teresa, Transfiguration.





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## PAPAL WISDOM



Today our gaze on the Holy Family lets us also be drawn into the simplicity of the life they led in Nazareth. It is an example that does our families great good, helping them increasingly to become communities of love and reconciliation, in which tenderness, mutual help, and mutual forgiveness is experienced. Let us remember the three key words for living in peace and joy in the family: “may I”, “thank you” and “sorry”.

Pope Francis, Angelus message, Dec 29, 2013