

# Seton MAGAZINE

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## It's Impossible, Right? **Not with God!**

BY GARY ZIMAK

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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.



# Faithful and Free

## *Celebrating Mary, Most Faithful Virgin*

On September 8th, we celebrate the birthday of the Blessed Virgin Mary. She was given the unique gift of being conceived without Original Sin. She was born full of grace. Nevertheless, she still had a free will, just as we do. Unlike us, however, Mary remained faithful throughout her life.

Artistic works of Mary as a little girl show her with her head uplifted, listening to Good Saint Anne as she learns the Old Testament stories and the predictions about a Messiah. St. Anne wanted her daughter to have the benefit of learning more about God from the Temple priests, and so enrolled her in the Temple school.

The beautiful miraculous painting Mother Most Admirable shows the young Virgin sitting in the Temple with her spinning staff at one side and the spindle in her hand, faithful to her domestic duties. With her hands at rest and her head gently bowed, she seems to be in quiet meditation as she offers herself to obey God's will.

When the angel Gabriel appeared to her, she wanted to be faithful to her duty in the Temple and faithful to her vow to remain a virgin. When the angel Gabriel spoke to her, she realized instantly that God was calling her to be faithful to His Will, to His plan, and not to her own will. Yet she was able to remain a virgin and become the Mother of God, as He willed.



The Most Faithful Blessed Virgin Mary remained faithful as she made the difficult trip to Bethlehem, followed by the difficult trip to Egypt. She and Joseph were faithful in teaching their God-Son, not only by good example but also by living out God's Will in their family. Jesus grew in experiential knowledge, wisdom, and grace before God and Man.

The Most Faithful Virgin stood at the foot of the Cross during the terrible sufferings of her Son. She

BY DR. MARY KAY CLARK

remained faithful to the Apostles and disciples after the crucifixion and was with them on Pentecost Sunday.

The Most Faithful Virgin has remained with us, her Son's present-day disciples, for more than two-thousand years, appearing many times to children and adults, priests and laypeople, monks and nuns, soldiers and housewives!

We homeschooling Catholic mothers and fathers pray to the Blessed Mother Virgin Most Faithful, to help us be faithful to Jesus and to the graces we received at the Sacrament of Matrimony. We pray to the Virgin Most Faithful to help us be faithful to our primary duty as parents, to teach our children to be faithful to the Christ-given teachings of the Catholic Church. God will not be outdone and will be faithful to His promises by repeating to us the words "Well done, good and faithful servant. Because you have been faithful over a few things, I will place you over many. Enter into the joy of the Lord."

*Virgin Most Faithful, pray for us and our children! 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

## **What are your favorite tips for organizing the home for schooling?**

First, throw away or give away everything you can. You need the space for teaching. If you haven't used something in the last ten years, what are the chances you will ever need it again? If something is in very good shape, you can try selling it on eBay. If it's not in great shape but serviceable, you can try giving it away. But if you don't need it, and you can't sell it, and you can't give it away, it's time for it to go in the trash can.

Regarding where and how to study, some families like to use actual school desks. Otherwise, the best thing is a good solid table at the right height for the children to sit with their feet on the floor. Teach in rooms with good sunlight, or should I say, great sunlight! On warm days, the children could do schoolwork on your deck or on the picnic table in the backyard. Make home schooling the daily "business" of the day.

Be sure your children have enough exercise between classes. They should not sit all day long. Some schoolwork can be done at a whiteboard where the children can stand while diagramming sentences or working on math problems, or outlining a chapter. Household chores can be done between classes rather than at the end of the day; this gives the children exercise during the day.

If you have a relative nearby who would like to help out, ask for the help, even if it is only an hour or two once a week. The relative might be great at teaching science or a foreign language.

Strengthen your family. Keep reminding your children about members of the family who may not be present. Especially relate stories about members of the family who have lived in the past and

made personal sacrifices for their family. Tell about family members who worked on a farm or who worked in a factory, or who served Mass while as a boy or who served Mass when he was elderly. Show pictures from family scrapbooks. Being a part of the family history can mean a good deal to influence children to want to do better.

## **My child was in an accelerated program at the local school. Can he skip a grade?**

We never recommend skipping a grade, no matter what the test results might be. Too many times, students who skip a grade have problems on one course or another. Students and parents usually regret whenever a grade is skipped.

If you have a bright child, let the student go through the next grade level at a faster pace than usual. When the student finishes it, even if in half the time, he or she can advance to the next grade level. You don't have to think of a grade level taking a year, as it would in a brick and mortar school. We believe students should keep moving ahead, subject by subject, as they successfully complete courses or grade levels.

## **How long should study time be for a high school student?**

No one can answer this question for someone else. It is different for different people. Some students can review their math or work their assignments in half an hour, other students may take an hour. Some students can study more effectively in the sciences and foreign languages, but struggle

with English. The time of day also influences a student's ability for effective study.

Good study skills which are appropriate for the particular student are really learned from experience, and they are not the same for each subject.

As a rule, we have found a correlation between more time spent studying and being more successful at home schooling. However, this is only true up to a certain point. When a student studies too much, it can lead to fatigue, frustration, and burnout. The real trick is to find the proper studying time that's not too much or too little.

In general, since home school students can use their daytime hours for studying, study time after daytime hours should be shorter than those for students enrolled in a traditional school. Usually that time is spent for reading book report books.

Ultimately, it is up to the parents working with their child to determine what amount of time is needed as well as what exactly needs to be done efficiently after the regular "school" day.

If you feel a student is not using time wisely, the Seton Study Skills course (available on the

front page of the Seton website) may be helpful.

## **My friend is thinking about sending her high school boy back to a school. What advice can I give her?**

It's human nature to think that the "grass is greener" on the other side of the fence. It's also human nature to focus on any current problems we might be having, without thinking about problems we might incur if we do something else.

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Your friend presumably made a conscious choice to homeschool. Sending children off to a school is the more normal, matter of course, thing to do. She must have had reasons for choosing homeschooling. Whatever those reasons were, are they still valid? Was the boy having trouble in school and not making educational progress? Was the school not the safe and welcoming place the parents wanted for their child? Was the environment hostile to the Catholic faith? Or did the parents simply think they could do a better job passing on facts, as well as the Faith, than the local school? Whatever the reason was, have things changed?

Sometimes, it is a good idea for a parent to make an extended visit to the proposed school. If possible, a parent might spend a day or two at the school: attending classes, walking through the halls, watching school activities, even riding the bus. Once the parent sees the school, he or she should ask, "Is this a place where I want my child to spend 7 or 8 hours a day, 5 days a week? Is this a place where I would want to spend that much time?" The answers to those questions will go a long way toward

making a decision about what is the best educational choice for a child.

### **I'd like my husband to be more a part of our homeschooling. What do you suggest I do?**

The first thing you might do is consider the situation objectively, and ask yourself what you might reasonably expect from your husband. If your husband works a desk job five minutes from home, you can reasonably expect more than if he works a tiring construction job or if his commute to work every day is two hours in each direction.

The next thing is to find a time when your husband could help out. Some fathers help with home schooling for an hour or a half hour before they go to work. Some fathers help on a weekend when they are more relaxed.

It doesn't have to be a lot of time. Even an hour or two on a weekend can be a big help for mom and the student. Most dads enjoy a special time to interact with their children, and children love having Dad's attention.

See what interests Dad and the children have in common and build from there.

Lots of activities are not only great bonding opportunities, but learning experiences as well. Does Dad like woodworking? Perhaps he can teach it to the children. Does Dad have a particular interest in the Civil War or aviation? Maybe Dad and the kids can go a battlefield or museum.

It's great to work your husband into family activities, even when they are not specifically school activities. For example, say the daily family rosary at a regular time as a family, especially when Dad is home. If you are all going to the park or the library, encourage your husband to come along. Sometimes, it just takes an invitation.

### **Where can I find the list of videos and audios available for my son?**

Seton lists these under Course Resources under My Seton. Most are for high school students. Both parents and students should go on the Seton website and look at everything Seton offers to help students in the particular grade level or courses. Seton has produced nearly 300 videos, mainly for English courses, and nearly 300 audios for English, History, and foreign languages.

## **SETON'S 2014 ACT SCORES.**

Dr. Mary Kay Clark is pleased to announce Seton's 2014 ACT scores. The scores continue to be well above the the national average across each subject.

	English	Mathematics	Reading	Science	Composite
National Avg	20.3	20.9	21.3	20.8	21.0
Seton Avg	26.4	23.4	26.7	23.0	25.0





# It's Impossible, Right? **Not with God!**

BY GARY ZIMAK

“That’s impossible!” How many times have you spoken those words over the course of your life? If you’re like me, the number is probably in the hundreds or thousands.

What’s interesting is that those two words directly contradict what the Lord tells us in the Bible. In the meeting between the Blessed Mother and Gabriel (Luke 1:26-38), Mary was told that “with God nothing will be impossible”. Why then, do we have such a difficult time believing that inspired message?

As I look back over my life, I lose count of the many “impossible” occurrences that did come true. I never thought I’d have a girlfriend, get a job after graduating college or be able to earn enough to move out of my parents’ house. Unfortunately, after each of those things happened, I still found myself doubting the angel’s message. In His endless mercy, however, the Lord continued to reach out to me with one incident after another.

I was in my early thirties and still unmarried. I rarely dated, didn’t have much of a social life and had pretty much resigned myself to remaining a bachelor. However, I began attending meetings of a young adult group at my parish and met a wonderful

woman named Eileen. We hit it off instantly and were married soon after. God had made that possible!

We immediately started trying to have children, but had difficulty. I came to feel that it was impossible for us to have a family. The Lord thought otherwise, however, and Eileen eventually became pregnant. Sadly, I still didn’t understand that God could do all things, so He had to show me in an unforgettable way.

During a routine ultrasound, it was revealed that we were having twins.

Eileen and I were ecstatic! Unfortunately, our excitement was short-lived, as it was determined that our twins were suffering from a very serious medical condition known as twin-to-twin transfusion syndrome, a condition that is usually fatal for one or both of the children. Banking on the hope that God would perform a miracle, Eileen and I began to pray like never before and asked many others to pray. Although we had many ups and downs over the next few months, Mary and Elizabeth Zimak defied the odds and came into the world three months premature on October 27, 1997. The doctors and nurses were amazed. They called it a “miracle.” Once again, God did the “impossible” in my life.

Although these events helped me



to understand that all things really are possible with God, I was again put to the test in 2010. After several years of ignoring homeschooling because it would be “impossible” for us, Eileen and I felt the call to homeschool Mary and Elizabeth. When the girls were in the sixth grade, we began to “wish” that they were homeschooled. The only thing standing in our way was the idea that it would be “impossible.” Looking back over some of the previous events in our lives reminded us that God has done the miraculous in our lives before, so we began to pray for direction.

## Called to Homeschool

In 2011, we attended a local homeschooling conference and something incredible happened. After listening to some of the speakers and talking with the representatives from Seton, we felt a deep sense of peace, and believed that if God was calling us to do this, He would find a way for us to succeed.

As the big day drew near, I'd be lying if I said we weren't nervous. There's no doubt homeschooling was a radical move for us. As we continued to pray, however, the peace kept returning and it just felt “right.” The girls too were excited about starting our new adventure.

The first day of school started off just as I expected, and I left for work with a memorable picture etched into my mind. Eileen, Mary and Elizabeth were seated around the table with huge smiles on their faces. It looked like a Norman Rockwell painting. As I sat in the office performing my project management duties, I anxiously awaited a report from home. When I couldn't control myself any longer, I phoned home. Immediately, Eileen's quivering voice

told me things weren't going as smoothly as was expected.

Summoning the courage to ask how things were going, I heard, “It's horrible!” Before I could ask Eileen to elaborate, she followed with “Why would God trick us like this?” Well, to make a long story short, He didn't trick us. After calming down and catching our breath, we recalled how much effort had gone into making this decision. Just as St. Peter was able to walk on water only while focused on Jesus (Matthew 14:28-33), Eileen and I had made the mistake of focusing on our problems instead of on the Lord. Once we began to pray and stopped panicking, the feeling of peace returned and homeschooling became the great experience that we thought it would be.

As a Seton homeschooling family for the past 3 years, I can honestly say that homeschooling has been one of the best decisions we've ever made. Not only are Mary and Elizabeth getting a solid Catholic education, but the experience is drawing our family closer together. Plus, when we have run into bumpy roads, the Seton staff has always been there to guide us. Have I finally learned that with God all things are possible? I'm pleased to answer with a resounding “Yes!”

## A New Road

After being laid off from my project management job in January of 2012, I followed the Lord's call and became a full time Catholic evangelist and author. I have written 3 books, appear frequently on Catholic radio and present talks at Catholic parishes and conferences around the country. Whenever possible, Eileen and the girls accompany me to my speaking engagements and we're pleased to be able to

share our message with everyone... “With God, all things are possible!”

We love homeschooling. It's been a great blessing for our family. However, that doesn't mean that every day is perfect! Some days just don't go as planned, but that's OK. We have a great daily routine that works for us, but we have encountered problems along the way. Math was one of those problems. Both of our daughters were struggling and we were at a loss. Finally, we called Seton and spoke with a counselor. He gave us advice that really helped! He suggested that we just take it a little slower. Instead of doing a chapter a day, we take two days (or longer if necessary). That's the beauty of homeschooling and Seton – you can go at your own pace. The counselor's advice has helped us immensely.

Recently, Seton has come to the rescue once again. During the past school year, our girls completed their first year of Spanish. Although they did well, Eileen and I didn't think we were capable of teaching Spanish II. We weren't sure what to do. We knew we couldn't afford a tutor, and weren't sure about other options. We contacted Seton, and they suggested using “Rosetta Stone” as an Independent Study Course. The girls can't wait to get started! We really appreciate how Seton is flexible and works with whatever your needs might be. It is such a good feeling to know that we are not alone. Seton is always there to help.



## A Day in the Life

This month we begin our fourth year of homeschooling. Our daughters will be starting 10th Grade. Our day begins around 8:15 a.m. with prayers or daily Mass, depending on our work load for that day. We begin our day with Math, as it is our most challenging subject, and so it's good to tackle that while we are all wide awake! Math is a one-on-one subject for us, so while one daughter works on Algebra with my wife,

our other daughter works on something like Spanish by herself. Then they switch. Once Math and Spanish are done, everyone is ready for a ten-minute break!

Then come English and Science, after which we take some time for exercise. Oftentimes, this means taking our Siberian Husky, Gracie, for a two-mile walk. After our walk, Gracie joins us in saying the Angelus, and then she knows it's time for lunch! The afternoon session usually

involves Religion and History.

Our typical school day ends no later than 3:00 pm. Any extra work that needs to be completed is done in the evening. That's the basic schedule, but homeschooling provides flexibility to deviate from the schedule when necessary. The girls work very hard during the week so that on Fridays, they can attend a local homeschool co-op. There the girls can enjoy all kinds of activities, including choir and acting classes.



# 5 Steps to a Better School Year

Whether summer seemed to drag for you, or whether it flew by at the speed of a runaway train, every summer must come to an end. At this time of year, most schools are starting up, or have already begun. Whatever your situation, we at Seton hope the following tips will aid you at the beginning of a new homeschooling year.

1

## PRAYER GOALS

Whether you are beginning a new assignment or a new year, begin with humility, trusting that God will provide everything you need to complete the task at hand, and complete it well. Parents choose homeschooling for any number of reasons, but one of the most important reasons is so that they may give to their children the inestimable gift of the Catholic Faith and virtues. If this was a factor in your decision to homeschool, trust that you are doing God's Will and that He will therefore help you. This does not mean homeschooling is easy. Worldly temptations abound in our society. Therefore, renew your family prayer life this September.

Make a prayer schedule, writing down your most important spiritual goals. If possible, Mom and Dad together might attend a day-long spiritual retreat (bring your nursing baby along, if you have one), or perhaps send your teenagers on a retreat or a short mission trip. Try to attend daily Mass with your whole family. Pray the Rosary every day, as Our Lady of Fatima requested. Instead of watching that sitcom, turn the TV to EWTN. In the car, put on sacred or Christian music or listen to a religious talk, perhaps from the Institute of Catholic Culture or Lighthouse Media.

2

## PLAN AHEAD

Think about what you want to accomplish this year. If you homeschooled last year, think about last year. What did the kids (and you) enjoy? How did they learn best? What did not go well? Above all, what can you do as a family to make this year the best ever?

When that box full of new textbooks arrives in the mail, kids often get excited and want to open it right away. We recommend, however, that Mom or Dad be there when they do to make sure nothing gets misplaced, especially the packing list that shows everything that is in the boxes (you will want to hold on to that in case one of the books you ordered is on backorder or in case something needs to be returned to Seton).

The older students, together with Mom or the primary teacher, should look over all the lesson plans a week or two before classes begin. Familiarize yourself with each course, its objectives and its textbooks. What assignments must be sent to Seton for grading? What assignments are optional? Remember the lesson plans are meant to be a guide only. Adjust them as you see fit.

If your children learn quickly, they may be able to skip some of the drill work, as long as they prepare well for the tests. Make a daily schedule for each member of the family, including every subject. Plan chores around the class schedule, and consider making a daily or weekly chore schedule for the family. For Mom's sake, make sure everyone helps with the cooking and cleaning, even the youngest members.



3

## BE CREATIVE

As part of your planning process, be creative. Think outside the box. If your child loves art, make time for a short art class every day. If your child wants to be a veterinarian, add biology or zoology lessons to your class schedule. Teach what your child loves to learn. Allow him or her a little more time on favorite subjects. Try a different approach with the subjects that your child does not like, perhaps more oral work and less written drills. Every child has unique talents and learning styles, and you might consider giving your child less monotonous homework, as long as he learns the essentials of every subject.

The beginning of the year is the best time to plan field trips. When leaves are changing color, schedule a hike at a state park and learn about local flora and fauna. Plan a trip to an art or history museum in the winter when there will be fewer crowds. Visit a zoo or an arboretum in the spring when the weather is nice.

4

## ORGANIZE

If possible, begin organizing your home as soon as the textbooks arrive. Give each child a special place to keep his own books and other supplies, whether it is his own shelf on the bookcase or a box in his room. Purchase supplies that can make homeschooling easier, such as desks, shelves, tables, bins, or closet organizers. If money is tight, look for these at yard sales or on Craigslist. Give each student a binder for each subject. Have a daily planner for each student. Make sure each student has plenty of paper, pens, staples, highlighters, etc., at the beginning of the year.



5

## STAY FLEXIBLE

After a week or a month of homeschooling, you might find that your original goals were a little unrealistic. Do not allow yourself to become discouraged! Be hopeful and optimistic. There is a saying that if you want to make God laugh, tell Him your plans. Sometimes our plans do not work out. Sometimes everything seems chaotic and the children do not seem to make any progress. At times like these, pray and trust that God has better things planned for your family. Continue to make plans, but adjust your class or chore schedules, if necessary.

Always remember, textbook knowledge is less important than virtuous living. It is good for your children to memorize the times table, but not as good as knowing that they are loved by God and by you. Take time to have fun with your children. Tell them every day that you love them, and try to show it by how you teach them.



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





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# HOMESCHOOLING IN AFRICA

MEMORIES FROM A MISSIONARY OF THE WHITE FATHERS, WHO SERVED IN AFRICA FROM 1954 UNTIL 1965.

“Home Grown” is one of the claims that farmers make to assure people that the crops they produce are carefully and tenderly raised in a clean and healthy environment. So it is with homeschooling.

In the States, homeschooling is sometimes regarded as being alien and parents who have chosen to homeschool are sometimes looked upon with suspicion and viewed as anti-social.

Not in Central Africa, not so! From womb to tomb, homeschooling is the name of the game. Only a small percentage of children can go to school and fewer still graduate. Many of the existing schools were destroyed or closed by the ravages of incessant war and banditry.

## EVERY CHILD IS WANTED

The public schools faltered but homeschools did not and education continued. In Bantu Africa, it really takes and needs a village to educate a child. Every child is wanted, cherished and immensely precious in every village. Any new child in the village is an asset, its survival, a triumph; its death, a tragedy.

Once the child is born, his education begins. He learns that there is a host of people willing and ready to help. The village midwives give place to new-mother care-givers and nourishment providers. When the baby moves from his mother's back to his own two little feet, he is provided with a small head-ring (a rolled banana stalk

leaf) and taught to carry little pots of water and light loads of firewood on his head.

The three Rs. are not neglected and the best schooled people – those who have finished fourth or fifth grade – teach the children to write and count and calculate with a twig as a pen and the dusty ground as a slate.

Health education begins at an early age. First hygiene, where lack of soap and water is a problem. But trips to the streams and rivers serve for an occasion to learn to bathe, wash clothes and fill large water pots. Healthful herbs and plants are identified and gathered. Poisonous plants and herbs are also noted and avoided.

Children of five and up are taught how to be shepherds of goats and sheep and even pigs. Every child has his own poultry and not too frequently eggs. Children are taught how to plant and maintain coffee and coconut trees, and banana plants. They learn how to save and recognize the various seeds and how to plant and harvest wheat, maize, beans and rice.

The culinary arts are instilled and boys as well as girls are taught to boil the inevitable bananas and beans which are the staple diet of the people, as well as to roast or boil the little meat they may



have. They are taught to guard the crops from ravagers such as monkeys, chimpanzees and baboons and the flocks from leopards, jackals and hyenas and themselves from poisonous snakes, stinging mosquitos and hungry rats. The boys are armed and instructed in the use of sharpened sticks, spears and bows and arrows.

## A SEASON FOR WEDDINGS

As they approach puberty, the parents, helped by groups of married men and women, teach them the marvels of their bodies. The importance of virginity is emphasized and the biggest disgrace for a family is to have a daughter who is even suspected of being unchaste. Youthful boys and girls are kept strictly separated, they always travel in groups everywhere and a young man must never be seen alone with a young woman or her reputation is ruined. Engagements take place at an early age, usually to a partner who lives in another village. In the last two years before marriage, the instruction about the importance, responsibilities and joys of marriage are intensified and transmitted by a committee which organizes the village weddings. There is a season for weddings, when the harvests are saved, when the young men come back from the diamond or silver mines and



family hut is time for instruction in history, geography and general knowledge. No one leaves the house or village after dark, unless they are up to mischief or going to consult with witchdoctors who operate only in the dark. When night falls and the small entrance to the hut is sealed tight and the fire in the middle of the floor is doused, the children are instructed and entertained with lists of their ancestors and their lives, with stories of their derring-do and calamities, and their struggles against the Arab slave-traders, and how they treated their friends and foes. These narratives are repeated night after night until they are lodged deep in the memory of the fascinated children.

would lead morning prayers and evening prayers publicly in the village and every midday would intone the Angelus while the village drums beat. He instructed the catechumens, young and old, in religious knowledge and helped them to learn the entire catechism and fifty hymns by heart. This was not too difficult a task, as the people had vicelike memories and it was a necessary requirement to be baptized at the end of a four year catechumenate.

Such was homeschooling in Central Africa some years ago, and not much has changed. Wars and want continue, famine and disease devastate, but strong families, strong villages and strong homeschooling persist.



coffee and rice plantations where they have earned the cash needed for the bride price and when there is leisure time for dancing and music and *pombe* (banana beer).

Night in the

## FAITH-FILLED VILLAGE

Finally religious education is paramount. Each village has a spiritual leader in the person of a Catholic Catechist, trained and supported by the local Catholic parish, which could consist of up to a hundred villages. The Catechist would spend some time every week at the local parish to report and pick up religious articles and instructions. Every day, he





# 4 REASONS WHY HOMESCHOOLING IS THE EXACT OPPOSITE OF COMMON CORE

BY JOHN CLARK

I had the misfortune lately of researching the topic of Common Core learning. Though I would have rather been attempting to repair my weed-whacker for the nineteenth time or cleaning out my septic tank, I knew that I had to delve into this topic, like it or not. And the more I researched, the more I realized something: homeschooling is the exact opposite of common core learning. Here are just a few observations to illustrate my point.

## 1) Common core is about testing. Homeschooling is about learning.

From the first day of school to the last, common core academics focuses on “teaching to the test.” Teachers know this and must focus on tests, rather than on their favorite teaching methods.

By the way, this is not a criticism of teachers by any means. Common core is unfair to students, but it might be more unfair to teachers. In fact, understandably unwilling to teach using common core methodology, an increasing number of teachers are simply leaving the profession. Heartbreaking letters abound from teachers who are forced to leave their field because of these changes. One such letter observes:

*“...‘data driven’ education seeks only conformity, standardization, testing and a zombie-like adherence to the shallow and generic Common Core...”*

*After writing all of this I realize that I am not leaving my profession, in truth, it has left me. It no longer exists.”<sup>1</sup>*

Contrast this with homeschooling, which allows parents to continually adopt

methods that prove successful for teaching each individual student, and it allows them to learn.

## 2) Common core decisions about curriculum are made at the national levels. Homeschooling decisions about curriculum are made at the “localest” of levels: your living room.

Most of the crucial decisions for the common core curriculum are made at the federal level. They are made by panels often composed of bureaucrats who, among other things, seem hell bent on expanding sex-education into a thirteen-year (K-12) course. By contrast, my wife and I make our educational decisions based on...(GASP) *our actual children*. Most of the decisions that my wife and I make for our children occur over hazelnut java in our living room. I like our system better, and not just because of the coffee.

## 3) With common core, creativity is snuffed out in favor of egalitarianism. Homeschooling allows the highest levels of creativity.

In many ways, common core is constitutionally opposed to independent thinking. (It’s also constitutionally opposed to *The Constitution*, but that’s another matter.) It specifically disallows creativity. Much like Keynesianism did to the financial world, stifling the creativity that supply-side economics would have fostered, common core does the same disservice to academic creativity. As the ability of parents to avoid

common core diminishes every day, it is becoming less *demand-side education* than it is *command-side education*. Yet, we are constantly told how great it is.

One website claims: *“It’s a Common Core Revolution — Ensure complete coverage”*.<sup>2</sup> It’s as though Common Core is a sunscreen, protecting all from the carcinogenic rays of competing pedagogic methods. No thanks. I need the vitamin D that homeschooling allows. By contrast, one could cite many studies that show how homeschooling produces natural leaders and entrepreneurs.

## 4) Homeschooling involves parents. Common Core precludes parents.

The fact that homeschooling involves parents is about as self-evident as it gets; and if you let them, homeschooling Moms, Dads, and children will spend an afternoon spelling out these benefits for you. There are the benefits they expected (stronger academic performances) and the ones that were unexpected (stronger marriages).

What about common core: does it







encourage parental involvement? Many say “no,” and with good reason. As one author recently observed:

*“Since most parents don’t understand the Common Core techniques, students are becoming more dependent on their schools and teachers for their education, and less on help from their parents. This is like a dream come true for progressives who hope to continue to minimize the role of parents in the lives of their children.”<sup>3</sup>*

As the author suggests, parents who used to help with their children’s homework are increasingly unable to do so, marginalizing them from their children’s lives.

Isabel Paterson once wrote:

*“There can be no greater stretch of arbitrary power than is required to seize children from their parents, teach them whatever the authorities decree they should be taught, and expropriate from the parents the funds to pay for the procedure.”<sup>4</sup>*

Well said. Welcome to Common Core.

1. <http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/answer-sheet/wp/2013/04/06/teachers-resignation-letter-my-profession-no-longer-exists/>

2. <http://www.hmhc.com/shop/education-curriculum/math/secondary-mathematics/on-core-mathematics/why-on-core-math>

3. Beck, Glenn (2014-05-06). Conform: Exposing the Truth About Common Core and Public Education (Kindle Locations 1330-1333). Threshold Editions. Kindle Edition.

4. Paterson, Isabel. God of the Machine. Transaction Publishers. 1993, page 255.



**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.



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OF LIBERAL ARTS



## Take Time to Rest!

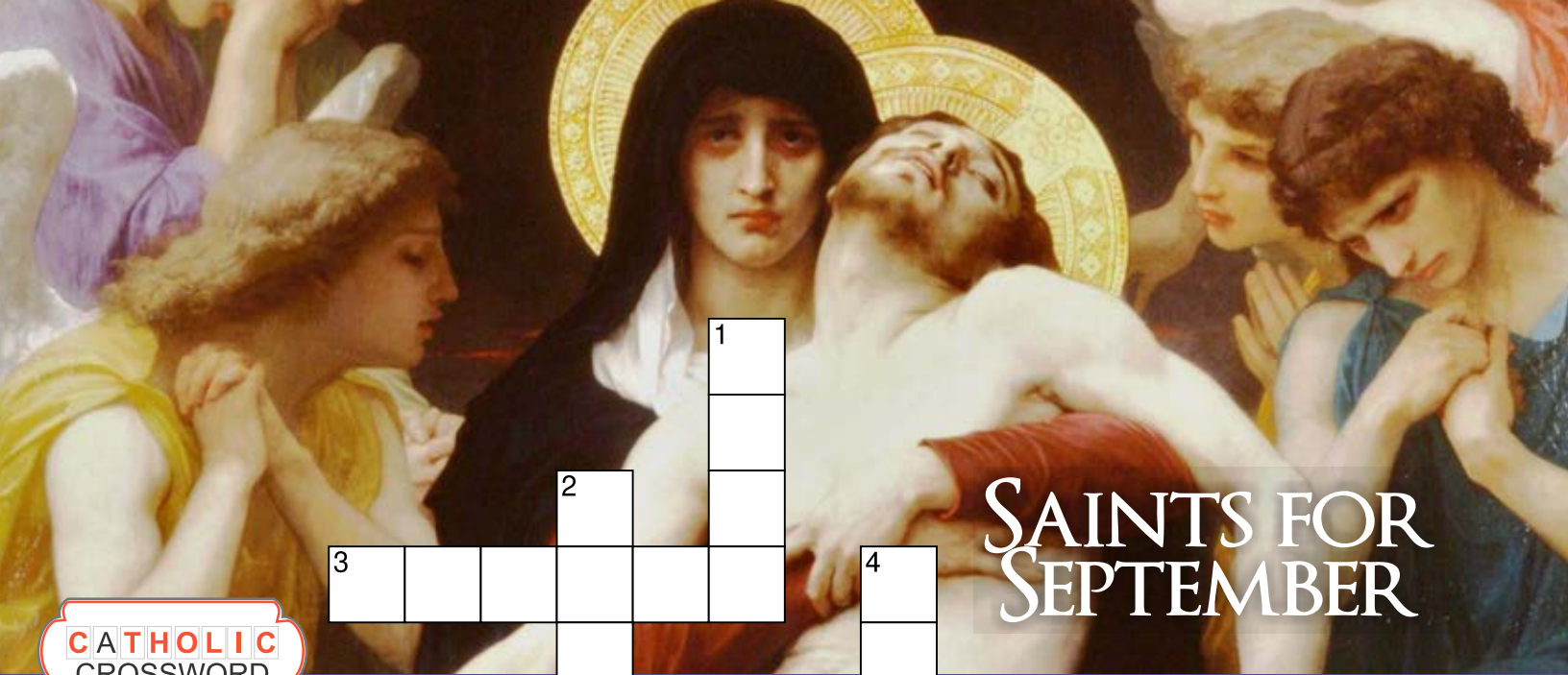
by Bob Wiesner

College life can be hectic, even frantic at times. Collegiate studies demand a great deal of time and energy. Sometimes the round of research papers, cramming for exams and endless reading lists can seem overwhelming. Burning the candle at both ends can easily result in a severe case of academic burn-out. The danger must be minimized, even if it cannot be eliminated entirely. A student must take some time to step back, take a deep breath and just simply relax.

A good notion to keep in mind is the fact that God ordained one day a week for rest and recuperation. A student would be well-advised to keep that day holy and reserved as much as possible for personal refreshment. So, what to do?

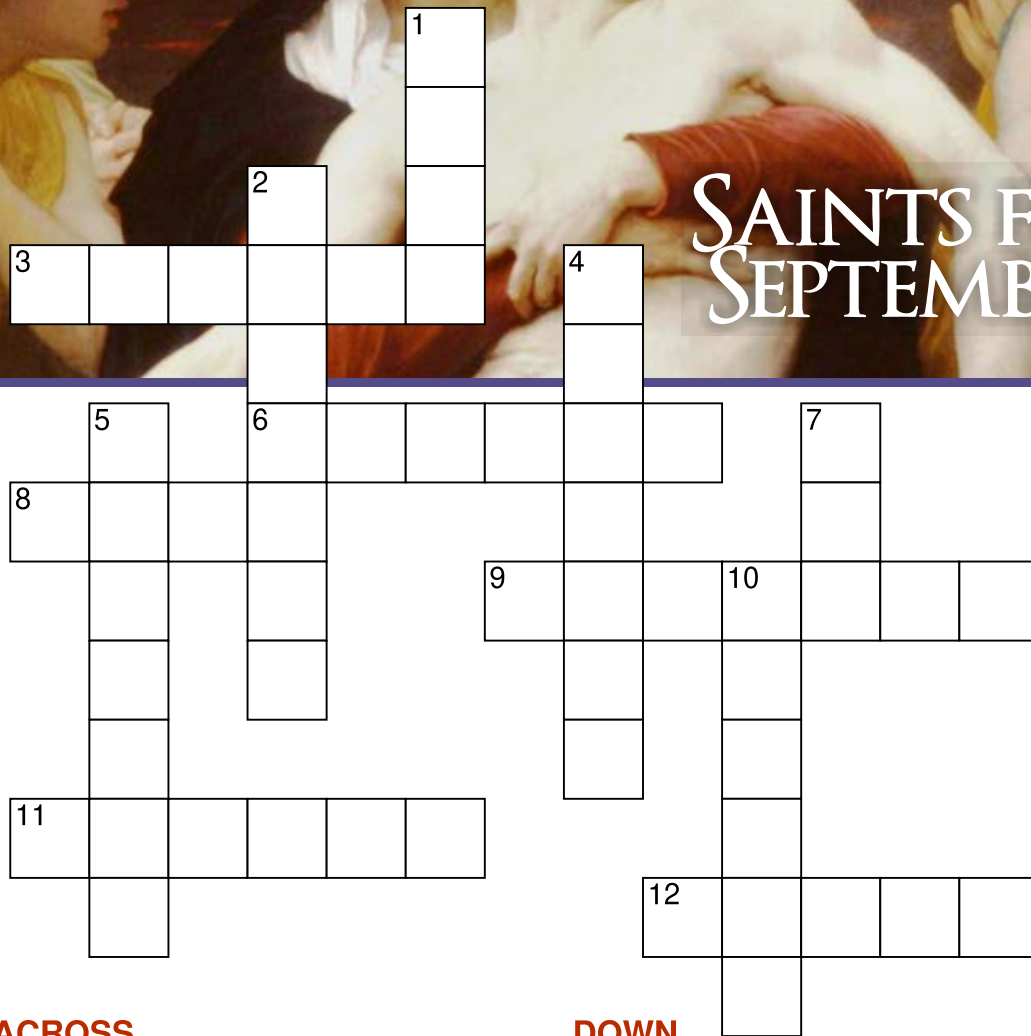
Obviously there will be times when a particular dreaded exam will take place on early Monday morning. Some study is often necessary on a Sunday. But, as much as possible, a student should attempt to step back from the “job” of education and do something a bit different. The term “recreation” should be taken to mean just what it says: on Sunday after Mass a student should get back to the real person behind the books and re-create the self. A student is not a “studying machine” but a beloved child of God, and time should be taken to think about that on a regular basis. Sunday should find a student getting out of the rut a bit and doing some very human, relaxing things, throwing a ball around for a while, or taking a hike, or sharing a pizza and chatting about things other than school.

Keeping one day a week to enjoy being God’s own child and acting like one is a great help for remaining sane in an intellectual hot-house!



# SAINTS FOR SEPTEMBER

## CATHOLIC CROSSWORD



### ACROSS

- 3 This saint was the brother of St. Cosmas; they were early Roman martyrs.
- 6 St. Peter \_\_\_\_ baptized and ministered to many thousands of African slaves.
- 8 The Holy \_\_\_\_ of Mary is celebrated on September 12th.
- 9 The Feast of Our Lady of \_\_\_\_ is usually celebrated on September 15th.
- 11 This saint translated the Bible into Latin; his translation is called "the Vulgate" and is the official translation of the Church.
- 12 The Exaltation of the Holy \_\_\_\_ is celebrated on September 14th.

### DOWN

- 1 St. \_\_\_\_, archbishop of Constantinople who died in 407, earned the nickname Chrysostom, which means "golden mouthed," for his eloquent preaching.
- 2 St. \_\_\_\_ de Paul is well known for his service to the poor.
- 4 Pope St. \_\_\_\_ the Great has a calendar and a type of church music named after him.
- 5 This man was a tax collector before he became an Apostle.
- 7 St. \_\_\_\_ of Pietrelcina spent long hours in the confessional and had the gift of reading souls.
- 10 St. \_\_\_\_ Bellarmine wrote a famous catechism.



# Success Starts Simply!

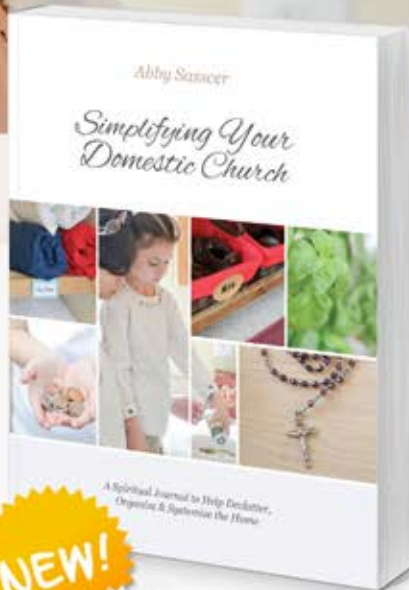
## Simplifying Your Domestic Church

A Spiritual Journal to Help Declutter, Organize & Systemize the Home

Written and Compiled by Abby Sasscer, popular blogger at [setonmagazine.com](http://setonmagazine.com).

Imagine yourself walking inside a church...Christ-centered, uncluttered, and orderly. Wouldn't it be beautiful if we could recreate the same atmosphere in our own domestic churches? But aside from living out our vocations as wives and mothers, we have answered Our Lord's profound call to educate our children at home.

While home schooling has its indescribable rewards, it also comes with many challenges. One challenge, I believe, lies in how to provide a simple, holy, and orderly environment so our homes reflect a truly Christ-centered domestic church. My hope is that this journal will somehow help families declutter, organize and simplify their own domestic churches.



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## Student Achievements



**Gianna** | I have a myriad of medical issues all relating to spina bifida. At 14, I created a cookbook of 52 latex-allergy friendly recipes and photos. It's now on Amazon.com, called 'A Year with Gianna'!



**Aden** | During baseball season, I caught a high fly ball playing right center field, getting the batter out. My coach awarded me the game ball for making that catch.



**Anne** | I served as 2013-2014 Louisiana State 4-H President. Homeschooling taught me to be self-disciplined.

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## PAPAL WISDOM



In the light of God's word, I would like to ask you, dear families: Do you pray together from time to time as a family?... But in the family how is this done? After all, prayer seems to be something personal, and besides there is never a good time, a moment of peace... Yes, all that is true enough, but it is also a matter of humility, of realizing that we need God, like the tax collector! And all families, we need God: all of us! We need his help, his strength, his blessing, his mercy, his forgiveness. And we need simplicity to pray as a family: simplicity is necessary! Praying the Our Father together, around the table, is not something extraordinary: it's easy. And praying the Rosary together, as a family, is very beautiful and a source of great strength! And also praying for one another! The husband for his wife, the wife for her husband, both together for their children, the children for their grandparents....praying for each other. This is what it means to pray in the family and it is what makes the family strong: prayer.

Pope Francis, Homily of Mass for Day of the Family, Oct 27, 2013

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