

Seton



MAGAZINE

Under the Magisterium of the Catholic Church

SETONMAGAZINE.COM | JULY 2015



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Vol. 4, No. 7, July 2015

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Subscription Information:

Subscription is included with your enrollment.

Subscription price for non-enrolled families is \$15 per year or \$25 for two years.

Cover photo:
Photo from the Shaw Family

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.



Called to be Today's Apostles

Excerpts from Dr Clark's 2015 Graduation Speech

BY DR. MARY KAY CLARK

In most graduation ceremonies throughout America, graduates and teachers walk down the aisle together, capped and gowned as a sign of great achievement. This home schooling graduation ceremony is different. Yes, the students come on stage, and there is no doubt that their achievements are wonderful. Yet, the teachers, the most important teachers—you homeschooling parents, remain there in the audience.

I want you to know, as I look out into this audience today, *I am looking at some of the best teachers in America*. You don't need to take *my* word for it. You can take the word of Pope Francis. Just a few days ago, Pope Francis stood up to powerfully defend the rights of parents. After lamenting that so-called "educational experts" have taken over the proper role of parents, he concluded his remarks by saying: "It is time for fathers and mothers to return from their *exile* and to fully resume their educational role." God bless Pope Francis!

Dear parents, what is *exile*? Exile means to be away from home. But every one of you parents chose a better way for your children. *You brought them home*. God bless you for that. You have made today possible and achieved a beautiful task.

And God bless you graduates. It is impossible to look at you without being overcome by hope. Years ago, Saint Pope John Paul II assured us that a new springtime was coming for the church. Amidst all the troubles and sadness of this world, that springtime can be difficult to see. *But not today*. Today, I see the springtime of the church in the faces of you graduates. Today, I understand what Saint Pope John Paul II was talking about. He was talking about *you*.

Today, we are entering the time of Pentecost, when the Church celebrates the Holy Spirit and His Gift of Tongues. This was given so the apostles could reach the hearts and minds of others with the teachings of

Jesus Christ. On that first Pentecost, the sound of wind like a tornado drew hundreds of people through the streets of Jerusalem to the house of the Upper Room. Inspired by the Holy Spirit, Peter began to preach, and by a miracle of that same Holy Spirit, each person understood Peter in his or her own language.

This feast of Pentecost reminds us that we Christians have an obligation to tell others about the good news of the Gospel, and let people know how much God loves them. Our words need not be like a loud wind, but our *witness* to the Faith *will* set some hearts on fire.

Pentecost reminds us that the Holy Spirit gives us seven distinct gifts to help us live the Catholic life: 1) *wisdom*, to help us order our lives toward God; 2) *understanding*, to help us comprehend the truths of our faith; 3) *counsel*, to help us make choices in difficult times; 4) *fortitude*, supernatural courage to stand for God in the face of danger; 5) *knowledge*, to help us know divine things; 6) *piety*, that we may love and respect God and His Church; and 7) *fear of the Lord*, to help us avoid sin. Graduates, ask the Holy Spirit to increase in you these seven powerful gifts, because you surely will need them in the coming years.

Up until this point, you graduates have benefited from being nurtured in a Catholic home. As you move away from the daily support of your Catholic family, you will be challenged to keep your Faith. You will be tested by many around you, and encounter many temptations. You will be attacked by the tricks of the devil, which might come through a college classmate, a textbook, a fellow employee, a boyfriend or girlfriend, or even a college professor.

Make choices that combat these attacks. Live Catholic. Make good Catholic friends. Get involved in Catholic groups. Attend a Catholic college. Work for a Catholic



company that supports your beliefs. Most of all, keep saying your daily rosary, keep making holy hours, keep attending Mass, and keep going to frequent confession. The spiritual solutions of yesterday are the same solutions that will work for you today and tomorrow.

Try not to get frustrated along the way. The devil often uses frustration as a weapon. Don't give in to it. You will have your share of temporal failures, but temporal failures *are temporary*. The only real failure is refusing to do God's Will.

Be patient. Never give up. Keep yourself open to the will of God, and incredible things *can and will happen*.

Graduates, this is a day of celebration for *you*, and for what you have accomplished, but it is only the beginning of what you *have yet* to accomplish. You are now educated enough in the Catholic Faith to do what the followers of Jesus are called to do: to spread the good news about Jesus and His teachings while living the Catholic life as He taught. The Holy Spirit is calling each one of you to be *today's Apostles*. He will give you the *strength* and the *courage* to spread the Gospel in your communities, in your workplaces, and on your college campus. Your words and actions will bring other young people to Jesus Christ.

We at Seton are so blessed that you let us be part of your lives for the past few years. What an honor for *us*! On behalf of all at Seton, may God bless you graduates and parents, now and forever.



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 is the best tip you can give me for helping my children study for chapter tests?

Outlining. The student, with your help at first, should outline the chapter. There is no better way to study for a chapter test than to outline. An outline can be as brief as one word per letter and per number, if the student remembers the definitions or the relevant phrases. Perhaps the most helpful outline is one with phrases or key words for phrases or for definitions.

We are trying to help students by adding chapter outlines for some of the English and Science books. These outlines will give you and your student some ideas for outlining that can be applied to other courses.

Your student can find great examples of outlines online. Simply type in something like “Outline of the Civil War” to see excellent examples of outlining.

Will you be doing videos for all the high school courses?

We are beginning to do videos for our most popular courses, and for courses in which we know students could use a little more help. We have elementary level diagramming videos, and soon will start composition videos for the elementary grades.

The high school videos are in the most demand. We have produced about 300 videos, most for high school English. We have produced a video series for Spanish which we aim to have online by fall. We are producing an online tutorial series for the Henle Latin. The Latin teacher has completed the First Year Latin tutoring lessons which should be online shortly.

Our plan is that some videos will be tutorials to go along with the book

assignments, as in the English courses. Some will be the lesson material itself, such as the foreign language courses.

While we continue to produce history videos, we have an amazing set of audio history lectures for both American History and World History. Students and parents have told us how much they like them.

Do most Seton families need to home school during the summer?

Education should not take a vacation during the summer. In the past, the public schools closed during the summer months so that children could help on the farm, but in these times, is there any reason why schooling should stop over the summer? Perhaps parents and children feel they need a break, but the “break” or vacation need not be for three months.

Education should not take a vacation during the summer.

Some studies suggest that a three month break is somewhat harmful to student learning. That long a break can mean that students forget much of what they learned the previous year. To combat this problem, some schools have adopted several shorter break periods throughout the year. That might work for your family.

If you do plan to take a standard summer vacation, you can still keep the children learning. Summer is a good time to finish courses and a good time for reading books. It is also a great time to

review courses, such as math and foreign languages which need strengthening before going on to the next grade level.

Many libraries have reading programs for the summer, with most leaving the reading selections to the parents or students. If your library does not have a summer reading program, you might suggest it. In any case, you can always institute a family summer reading program, with perhaps small prizes the children can win for reading a certain number of books.

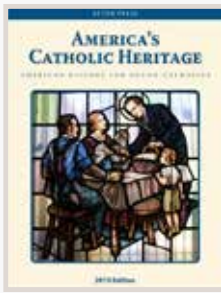
My second grade son has no trouble with his math, but he is struggling with his reading.

Because some young children need extra help in learning to read, Dr. Katie Moran has produced for Seton a series of eleven videos which give parents some ideas about teaching young children to read. Go to the Seton website, click on Curriculum, then scroll down and click on Special Learning Needs, then click on Videos.

Consider reviewing or re-teaching the basic phonics in the first grade book. It is not unusual for children this young to need to repeat first grade topics, especially phonics and math; some children are just not ready to learn these concepts. Some parents have found that re-teaching some first grade classes gives their child the solid support to easily succeed in the second grade.

Regarding reading, some children take longer to “internalize” the sounds of the letters so they can read more easily and more fluently. Some children struggle so much with reading the “sounds of the letters,” that they lose the comprehension of the sentence. So take the time to go back and review until the reading becomes fluent.

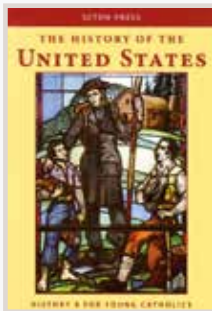
How much help may I give my 9th grader for



America's Catholic Heritage

P-HI05-17 \$18.00

Bruce T. Clark draws upon his vast knowledge of American History and Catholic culture to give us the inspiring story of the men and women who built these great United States.



History of the United States 8 for Young Catholics

P-HI08-13 \$20.00

This Catholic textbook covers the Historical period from the Discovery of America to the 2008 election.

www.setonbooks.com

her book analysis assignments?

First, review with her all the information in the Lesson Plan Manual. We have several pages of information and instruction. Show her the resources available on our website to help her with her assignment. You can offer her clear but general instructions or comments, such as "I don't think you are expressing your idea clearly enough." What you should not do is give her specific sentences or even specific ideas. Help her to think about the ideas she wants to express, help her to be clear, help her to understand that some examples are good but others are unclear.

While the book analyses encourage students to appreciate good literature and come to recognize great writing from the



past, more important is the development of critical analysis skills which can be applied in all subjects and in personal situations throughout a lifetime. You want to help your daughter to take the time to think about what she has read.

Am I required to give a standardized test when my children finish their studies for the year?

The standardized test has always been optional, but in the past, in the early day of homeschooling, it was highly recommended just in case any issues arose with local authorities. Some states do require standardized tests (or some other indicator of educational progress) every year, or every few years. Parents should be aware of their own state homeschooling regulations, which can be found on the HSLDA website (www.hsllda.org).

There are advantages to giving your children a yearly standardized test. Such a test is objective and compares your students' scores with others in the public and private schools in the country. Because of the generally high scores of homeschooling students, it helps when discussing the advantages of homeschooling, and often convinces family and friends that your children are doing well.

Some homeschooling parents are concerned that, going forward,

standardized tests may be modified to focus on the Common Core curriculum. The worry is that scores of homeschooling students might be negatively affected by such a change. However, at this time, we have not seen any noticeable difference in the test scores of our Seton students. They are still scoring well, in the eightieth percentile or higher, which is considerably higher than the public school averages.

In the past, Seton has provided the California Achievement Test free of charge to our enrolled families. However, the California Achievement Test is being phased out by the publisher. We will now be offering several alternative tests: Stanford, Iowa, and Terra Nova.

Unfortunately, because of the higher cost of these tests, Seton will not be able to provide them free of charge to families. However, we will provide a discount to families who wish to order a test. Please visit our website at www.setontesting.com to see the variety of tests available at a variety of prices.



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Armed & Ready!

How Homeschool Equips a Family to Encounter the World | An Interview with 2015 Seton Graduate Catherine Shaw & her family.

What brought your family to homeschooling, and specifically to Seton?

Mrs. Shaw: When Elizabeth (the oldest) was three, we looked at our options and thought “there’s no way we can send our little and precious daughter to kindergarten.” We had a good homeschooling group in our parish, so we decided to try at least kindergarten through second grade at home. We’d get her through First Communion and when she was a little older, we’d consider sending her to school. Of course, once you get started with homeschooling, it just becomes part of your life, part of your community. We decided to approach it one year at a time, to pray about it each year, and obviously, the answer was always to continue.



What brought us to Seton was our experience with a religion competition for the 5th and 6th grade students in our homeschooling co-op. One girl knew absolutely every answer. She’d raise her hand and answer every question with confidence, demonstrating much greater knowledge than I, an adult and mother, had about any of the topics. Afterward, I approached this girl’s mother to ask what she did for religion class. The answer was Seton Home Study School. I was able to borrow the materials this family was using, and after looking through them, I knew that this was definitely what we needed to be doing. We switched to Seton then and there.

Catherine, as a 2015 graduate of Seton Home Study School, how has homeschooling helped you develop skills, talents, and interests?

Time and experience are the biggest things homeschooling has given me when it comes to developing talents and interests. For instance, I was able to take Tae Kwon Do classes for self-defense. I’ve been able to develop my passion for music by playing violin and cello, and performing regularly with the St. Cecilia’s Philharmonic Orchestra of Grand Rapids, Michigan. All of us take music lessons, and my brother plays baseball. My sister Elizabeth and I were also able to start our own dance studio, which would have been extremely difficult on a typical public school schedule.

Tell me a little more about that.

Mrs. Shaw: Catherine and Elizabeth started ballet when they were very young. We were able to get into a Christian ballet school, but it was pretty far outside the city, and as the girls got older and academics became more intense, it became too long of a drive for us to do on a regular basis, so we switched studios. Unfortunately, the first recital at the new studio went in a terrible direction, and we realized we couldn’t continue. Somebody joked that we should start a dance studio in our basement, and one thing led to another. Before we knew it, my husband and a friend of his had found a place to rent, and built a dance studio. We told our friends; they told their friends, and it just fell into place.

Catherine: We’re keeping it recreational on purpose. It’s just one day a week for people like us, who want something creative on our resumes, a fun way to get exercise, and an artistic outlet, but within a quality environment that gives glory to God.

Mr. Shaw: Forty-two students and a beautiful performance later, I think there’s a real message in this for other homeschooling families out there. Homeschooling enables the extraordinary. What is more, you can do all of these extraordinary things during the day without jeopardizing academics or the family unit. You can do these things without stealing time from Dad in the evenings; you can have dinner together and keep that

closeness that is so essential to stable family life. In the public and private educational systems, every extracurricular activity takes place in the evening because the students are in school all day. Homeschooling maximizes time and efficiency, so that you can have all of these goods without jeopardizing the most important priorities in life.

Another takeaway lesson from this experience is that we swim against the currents of “normal” society so that we can change society. Just because it’s difficult or no one else is doing it or we’re told we’re not qualified doesn’t mean we shouldn’t do what is right. If society is not going to do what is appropriate, it is our God-given responsibility to step up, go the extra mile, and do what is good and holy. We can talk all day about the ways in which ballet and the girls’ ballet studio has been good for the community, but the bigger lesson is that we, who have been blessed with education in the truth, have to carry that out into the world, provide witness to the truth with our work, and show the world appropriate and holy alternatives to the evil that has infected nearly every pursuit. That is what we’re doing with Reverence Dance Academy.

So, Catherine, while homeschooling with Seton has helped you develop service to God alongside personal interests, has homeschooling helped you overcome a struggle of any kind?

I have a really bad sense of scheduling. I’m naturally really disorganized. However, the way that Seton sets up a schedule, sends Lesson Plans, and provides study guides helps me stay on track. The other big thing is that Isabel, who is the next closest to me, is naturally extremely organized, so when we work together, she helps me stay on top

of things. If we weren’t homeschooled, we wouldn’t have been able to work together like that.

And has Seton given you anything that you find of lasting value?

I think probably responsibility and ownership of my faith are the biggest things I’ve received from Seton. Even as an eighth-grader, I definitely appreciated my faith. I knew that as a member of the Shaw family, I’m a Catholic and a lover of Jesus. But I remember opening my religion book on that first day as a high school student with Seton and realizing that this was going to be really important. I suddenly had this really strong desire to embrace my faith and to be known for my faith, and that has continued to grow with each passing year.

I think it’s important for us to acknowledge the role of your parents in your education. What are some of the most important lessons you’ve learned from them, Catherine?

I think self-value is one of them. My parents have really helped us to feel confident in who we are, both as princesses and princes of God and as human beings on earth. We have a place; we were born for a reason. The fact that my parents homeschool, and continually show us that “I can do” attitude against every obstacle and struggle has helped to foster self-confidence in us. Then, of course, all the different lessons they’ve given us: music, dance, self-defense—all these things have really enriched our lives. In a special way, my father, who encourages his five daughters to learn self-defense (a seemingly small thing), has really taught us to value and protect our femininity and our purity. Of course, the faith is their biggest gift to me.

Of course. Now, you recently won something called the Monsignor Bukowski award. Tell me a bit about that.

The Monsignor Bukowski award is a scholarship to Aquinas College in Grand Rapids that is awarded on the basis of academic strength and leadership ability. When they awarded me the scholarship, they based their decision on my work at the dance studio as well as the fact that I teach violin lessons, and have had a number of roles in dramatic productions, musical performances, and other activities while keeping relatively high grades.

So that means you’ll be attending Aquinas in the fall.

Yes, I will, and I will be working toward a degree in graphic arts with a possible music minor.

After college, what are your plans for the future?

Catherine: Really, anything is possible.

Mr. Shaw: With Seton, we have armed our daughters against the wiles of society at any level, be it governmental, peers, media, etc. Because they are so armed, we are confident that no matter where God leads them, even as they pursue secular majors such as graphic arts or music, they will not enter the field in ignorance or unpreparedness. Seton is a liberal education, and produces a well-rounded person. The reason we invested in a Seton education and the reason we have hope is because we know that our children are armed and ready to go head-to-head with anyone in any field and to counter the falseness of society’s teaching with truth.

...continued on page 14





Congratulations

Class of 2015

"God bless you graduates. It is impossible to look at you without being overcome by hope."

Dr Mary Kay Clark





"One of the most blessed days of my life was this day: my graduation day!"

Catherine Shaw



"Hold onto your faith no matter what; make an impact with the way you live your life; be an example to people throughout your life."

Katie Heenan Dodson





Gymnastics & Homeschooling

A Champion's Advice for Success

by Katie Heenan Dodson
US National Champion Gymnast, Mom and Seton Graduate
Seton Graduation Address, 2015

When I was first asked to speak to you today, I immediately thought “why me?” I am not a successful business woman; I have not helped make the world a better place; I have not pioneered anything. Why me? The short answer: because of my commitment to education while achieving great success in gymnastics. It is not just because I could train 36 hours a week, or travel all over the country and the world, or endure a pulled muscle or a broken heel. It is because I could do all of that and more and still pass 9th grade English! (All of you know how hard that 9th grade English was!) Only Seton, staying true to its mission and purpose, would ask someone like me to be here today to share my experience. As I look out at each of you here today--future gold medal winners, Nobel Peace prize winners, honest politicians (Heaven knows we need you more than ever), and loving mothers and fathers--I am extremely humbled to be among you, to be one of you and to have a few minutes of your time.

I do not like talking about myself or my accomplishments in gymnastics, but I have come to realize that by sharing my experiences and offering my hard-earned knowledge on time management and other attributes for success, I can help others.

Who I Am

I am the only daughter of four children. My oldest brother is a priest with the

Fraternity of St. Peter, my younger brother is headed to Law School and my youngest brother is still discerning. My Dad is a cradle Catholic and my Mom converted before they got married. I began gymnastics at 4, started competing at 5, and didn't stop until I graduated college. I made it to the Junior Olympic level at the age of 11. I was a member of the US National Team for 7 years, a member of the 2001 World Championship team where I won 2 bronze medals, and I competed at the 2004 Olympic Trials. I received a full scholarship from the University of Georgia and helped win 4 National Championships in a row, scoring more total points than any Georgia gymnast ever, and in addition to many other accolades, I received the Honda Award, the highest recognition for gymnastics in college-level sports.

When my parents realized the extent of my gymnastics talent and the subsequent demands of training and competition, they began to look into alternatives for my education. Both of my parents wanted to find a solid Catholic curriculum for me and after much searching and praying, they found Seton Home Study School. Today, more than ever, I am so very grateful they made that choice, so thankful that like you, I am a Seton graduate.

I graduated from the University of Georgia with a degree in Middle School Education. During college, I met, fell in love with, and married my husband, Stephen. We have three children, Charlie (5 ½), Elaine (2), and Mary Claire (4 months). We reside in Alpharetta, Georgia, where I am a wife and mother, but I also coach gymnastics and do live commentary for college gymnastics meets part time.

How I Survived and You can Thrive

My competitive gymnastics days are far behind me, but some days I still feel as though I'm training for the Olympics just getting through my daily tasks as a mom. Sometimes I look back and wonder, “How did I do it?” How did I train twice a day, six days a week, thirty-six hours a week? How did I travel around the country and the globe so many times a year? How did I overcome injury, disappointment, frustrations, and self-doubt? How did I become a champion? While all that was going on, how did I get any schoolwork done? How did I pass my tests? How did I finish with a high GPA? I did it by following a few simple things: time management, dedication, perseverance, proving the naysayers wrong (in a respectful way), and most importantly, doing it all while staying true to my Catholic faith.

1) Use time wisely. Many times I needed to sleep more than to do school work because of how physically exhausted I was from training, but to me, that was not an option. When I wasn't practicing, I worked on assignments, read, completed projects. I planned out my days and weeks, especially when I had trips or big competitions coming up, so that I could fit everything in to be successful with both my gymnastics and my education. If I knew there was a big paper coming up and also that I had to be ready for training camp, I would plan out when I could fit in research, writing, sleeping, eating, taking care of my body and any injuries, doctor appointments, therapy sessions, all of which had to happen in

between practices—two practices each day. Time management was key. Deciding how to prioritize was not always easy and I did not always make the right choices. But if I made a mistake and chose to prioritize the wrong thing, you better believe I paid the consequences later, adjusted, and never made that choice again.

2) Don't give up. My focus was on my goals, short and long term. I knew gymnastics was important to me at the moment but I also had to graduate so I could go on to compete in college. I had to battle through, find the energy deep down, and remember why I was putting myself through all those challenges and difficult days. There was only one way to achieve my goals: never stop. So I say to you, never stop until the task or tasks are completed. Never give up and never shut down until you have given your all, done your best, and put it all out there.

3) Use your resources, ask for help, and always continue to learn. Listen and learn from those around you. If I had stopped training or stopped learning new skills, if I had thought I was at the top of my game, I never would have been invited to compete at the University of Georgia. I never would have won a single national championship. I would have missed out on so much. Remember, you are never too old, too experienced, or too smart to keep learning. Especially now, as you move on to college or wherever life takes you, soak up as much knowledge as you can and use it to better yourself on your journey through this life.

4) Be grateful for your education. I could never have imagined how Seton Home Study School would enrich my life then and now. To this day, people will feel sorry for me and express how much I must have “given up” when I decided to homeschool. Little did I know that I wasn't really sacrificing anything. In truth, because of Seton, I learned so many beneficial things that have had a far greater impact on my life than any public school experience I could have had. I was able to be true to myself and develop a closer relationship with the Church and our Lord. No matter whether I was learning about biology or history, the root of everything was Christ. Everything came back to the One and True

reason we are here on Earth and capable of learning in the first place. The knowledge I gained from Seton not only helped propel my gymnastics to a higher level, but gave me the tools I needed and still need every day to make it through this life with my faith. And as you know, I went to a secular university where values and virtue are not a top priority. Yet, what I acquired from Seton enabled me to leave with my dignity intact and my faith stronger than ever, and I am here today, completely in love with Christ and His Church.

5) Above everything, live by the Church and all of her teachings. All of you are way more equipped to do that than most. Despite all the distractions and my busy schedule, going to Mass was always a priority of mine. I took cab rides to Mass very early in the morning before a competition or convinced a coach to drive me to Mass before training. I once insisted that the team's big charter bus drop me off and pick me up in front of a church for Mass. I knew that I needed Jesus in my life and with me through every struggle and every achievement. I needed to receive Him in the Eucharist and I refused to miss my obligation to visit His house.

Make sure that you continue to receive our Lord through the Eucharist and all of the sacraments. He will bless your life tenfold. I truly believe that my successes in gymnastics and in my life so far are due to the fact that I continued to practice and grow in my Catholic faith. I know practicing our faith seems so simple and going to Mass on Sundays seems easy, but trust me, I was up against incredible odds and powerful influences that did not support my fundamental religious beliefs, and you will encounter these too.

An important aside is that you never know who you will impact by simply living your faith. I had friends that didn't go to church who were moved by my dedication and asked if they could come with me. One of the reasons I fell in love with my husband was because after we first started dating, he asked me why I never invited him to church. I knew I was going to marry a Catholic but I hadn't wanted to pressure him, especially before I knew that we were serious. He ended up converting before we

got married. So again, you never know who you will impact by simply practicing your faith.

6) Trust in the Lord and what He has planned for you. His plan is best. Through my gymnastics career, I learned that when one door closes, God opens a window and shines light on the path that you should really be taking. Injuries happened at the most disheartening times. There were practices I thought I would never get through. There were disastrous competitions. But from each of those experiences I grew stronger, found different ways to work, and ended up being more successful than I ever imagined possible. Follow your dreams but remember to listen for directions!

7) Never compromise your work or yourself. And, if you ever feel lost or abandoned go back to the core, the center of your life. Remember where your talents come from and all that God promises you. That is one of the most important lessons I learned through Seton. There is a core, a common theme threaded through everything we do and why we are in this world. Always come back to that starting point if you lose your way and you will quickly reemerge, inspired and rededicated to push forward.

8) Don't forget to smile! One of my favorite gymnasts was Amanda Borden. I don't know if any of you remember her from back in the early '90's, but she was always smiling. She made gymnastics look fun and she looked like she loved what she was doing. A smile can be one of your most powerful weapons as you meet all the new people along your journey. Try always to put forward a positive outlook and enjoy the blessings and opportunities God has entrusted to you. You never know when or how the person you portray might just change someone's day.

I close with powerful advice from scripture: Psalm 3, verses 5 and 6, “Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and do not rely on your own insight. In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He will make straight your paths.”

Where are **You** Going?

BY JOHN CLARK



Being homeschooled before Seton started graduation ceremonies, I ‘graduated’ only once; it happened on a bright and sunny spring afternoon in May of 1992 on the campus of Christendom College.

As I looked back over the previous four years, I thought about how attached I had become to those people and that place. Between academic years, I used to count the days until summer was over and I would be reunited with my friends. But as I sat with my fellow graduates after the ceremony, there was nothing to count down any more. I had a feeling like claustrophobia in reverse: I felt like I was no longer confined to Christendom, and that was not a good feeling. For four of the best years of my life, I was allowed to call it “home,” and now I had to leave. As I surveyed the brick buildings, the tiny chapel, and the paths of the campus that I had walked so many times with my future bride, I kept thinking and praying: “Dear God, I’m going to miss this place.”

Presumably, we are supposed to be happy at graduation ceremonies; they are viewed as a happy ending to a wonderful story. But to me, “happy ending” was a contradiction. I prefer happily-ever-after. No ending. Just happiness. If I could have discovered a way to stay there forever, I would have tried to do it. I had taken a trip to Catholic Narnia and had little interest in walking back through the wardrobe.

Much time has passed since graduation, and I was beginning to forget how much I loved it there. But suddenly, a funny thing happened: I remembered. I fell in love with it again.

Just two years ago, our oldest son, Athanasius, faced the decision of where to attend college. I prayed that Athan would

go to college where he could play baseball, and Lisa prayed that Athan would go to Christendom. Simply put, Lisa prayed harder. Put better, God answered the right prayer of Lisa, and rightly answered the wrong prayer of her husband.

I recognized this as soon as Athan began studying at Christendom. He would come home and talk to me about his classes; and in those discussions, I remembered why I loved Christendom. It’s not only the people and the culture; it is that you can spend four years drinking in the intelligence of Saint Thomas, the compassion of Saint Augustine, and the majestic beauty of Dante. And if you are given the grace, you can love the truth. There are few things more exciting than watching someone grow in his Faith, and at Christendom, I saw it every single day. Now, I see it again. And from the perspective of a parent, I assure you that there is an inexplicable joy that a Catholic father experiences when he walks into his living room and sees his son reading Aquinas’ *Treatise on Being and Essence*.

Athan’s time at Christendom has made me appreciate my *alma mater* even more. And after twelve years of homeschooling, during which I taught him his Faith, Athan now teaches me many of the things that I had forgotten about mine.

Graduates, I relate this to you because some of you are about to go to college. That is exciting, but you should realize that there may be no better place to lose the Catholic faith than the average college. In many cases, college can be a spiritual ghost town. Some of these institutes of lower learning are openly, insistently, and proudly hostile to Christianity. They are places where, as Lewis might say, it is “always winter but never Christmas,” because their insistence

on the rejection of divine things leaves the students frozen in the mouth of despair.

You might think you’ll make more money going to a prestigious school, rather than to a solidly-Catholic one. And you might. But if making lots of money is a top priority for you, you need to change priorities, wherever you go to school. All too often today, the mad dash for the medium of exchange only results in exchanging spiritual goods for material ones.

You might think you’ll be held in higher esteem by going to a prestigious school, rather than to a solidly-Catholic one. And you might. Yes, these are not Ivy-League schools. But schools like Christendom are in what I call the Vine and Branches League. Isn’t that the one you want?

We parents keep asking our children: “What do you want to do?”

But we’re asking the wrong question. We need to think about a question that Jesus posed to the Apostles two millennia ago, and asks each of us again at this very moment: “Who do you say that I am?”

Answer that question. And then we’ll make less important inquiries.

I am often asked, “What will Athan do after he graduates?” My answer is simple: “He will defend the faith.”

Graduates, the college you attend will almost certainly be one of the most important and longest-lasting decisions you ever make. Please pray for the grace, wisdom, and courage to make the right one.



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.



Packing the Faith for College

“My son wants to attend a college where he can obtain a degree in a professional field like math or science, but I am afraid he may lose his Catholic Faith! I have spent all these years homeschooling him in a Catholic program, but what will happen to him in college?”

These are serious concerns not only for Seton home schooling parents but for all Catholic parents. It can be very dangerous for young adults to attend a distant college, when the culture continues to turn against Christian values on all sides. What helps do parents have for their children to keep their Faith?

At Seton, we have heard from several of our graduates who are attending college that they take along the religion books they studied at Seton to help them explain the Faith to others who are weak in understanding or education.

In the Arlington Diocese, Father Christopher Vaccaro was assigned as chaplain to a secular college and saw the difficulties of Catholic college students trying to hold on to their faith. Even in many Catholic colleges, little attention is given to

Catholic teachings, and even less to Catholic moral teachings, which is a disaster at this time when students most need to know the truths of the Church. Determined to make a difference, Father Vaccaro started an apostolate to help Catholic college students keep their Catholicism alive while they are attending college. The apostolate is called the Associates of St. John Bosco.

On their website, the Associates of St. John Bosco explain how they “support high school and college students in remaining faithful during this challenging part of life during challenging times.” Their work is accomplished through “(1) hosting College Nights to provide fun and informal social gatherings for rising and current college students, (2) scholarships for those studying at Catholic high school and colleges with a strong commitment to serving the Church in some capacity (priest, religious, DRE, youth minister, etc), and (3) support for colleges to bring vibrant and inspiring Catholic speakers to campus.”

In a recent talk delivered at an Arlington diocesan high school, Father Vaccaro noted that, “of those who go off to college, 80 percent will stop practicing their Faith.” He then declared that only 35 percent of them will return to their Catholic Faith after graduation. To combat this problem, Father Vaccaro and the Associates of St. John Bosco host free College Night meetings for high school seniors. During these meetings, he gives away what he calls a Bosco Bundle™.

A Bosco Bundle™ consists of a Bible, a catechism, a desk crucifix, *Introduction to the Devout Life* by St. Francis de Sales, a book on relationships entitled *Men, Women and the Mystery of Love*, a book about the practical genius of Catholicism entitled *Rediscover Catholicism*, a rosary, and a prayer journal.

Together these items provide a road map to living a Catholic Christian life, guidance on questions of faith and morals, and a blueprint for growing in faith and friendship with Jesus Christ.

Father Vaccaro and the Associates of St. John Bosco encourage recent graduates to put something else in their suitcase when they leave for college: their Catholic Faith. Father Vaccaro points out that unless there is a deliberate choice to grow in holiness and a decision to place prayer and the practice of the faith as a priority, then what often happens is the “busyness” of college life begins to consume the students. With so many opportunities for involvement on campus, plus the academic time commitment, not to mention meeting and cultivating of friendships, the things of God are not deliberately rejected but they just slowly disappear. Preparing properly and finding a community that places God first in all things will allow students not only to hold on to their faith in college, but actually to grow in it!

For \$100, the Associates of St. John Bosco will mail a complete Bosco Bundle™ to any college student or any parents of a college student. Just visit their website www.asjb.org and you can order one.

At this time, the “Associates of St. John Bosco” operates primarily in the Northern Virginia area, but it would seem a great idea for other regions to implement such a program. Seton graduates surely can help fellow Catholic students by starting such a group to meet regularly for support in the Catholic Faith, and to encourage other Catholic students to attend daily Mass and go to Confession at least once a month.

“If we want to have a good society, we must concentrate all our forces on the Christian education of the young. Experience has taught me that if we wish to sustain civil society, than we should take good care of the young.”
St. John Bosco

Taking on High School

BY CHRISTOPHER SMITH

There are times in our lives when we are presented with difficult choices, the consequences of which will echo into eternity and back. As we pace our dens dimly lit by ever decreasing candlelight, grappling with these existential battles like modern day Edgar Allen Poes, it is not difficult to see why Americans are suffering from premature hair-loss and ulcers at epidemic levels. And though there are certainly some questions worthy of this descent into madness, choosing high school courses should not be one.

Working as a Guidance counselor at Seton for the last 3 years, and as an Admissions counselor for 4 years before that, I have had the opportunity to speak with so many wonderful families, hear their stories, share their concerns. And inevitably, as families see high school on the horizon, terror takes hold. Which diploma option should my student strive for? Should my children be taking Algebra 2 in 5th grade so they can take Calculus 3 as sophomores?

Granted, these are serious questions, and there are many important things to take into account when navigating the waters of high school. But the very fact your child has made it to high school is a testament to both parent and student. Give yourselves a much deserved pat on the back! But if you finish that and find these high school

questions still nagging you, give us a call.

Year after year, we have seen that the parents and students who make frequent use of the counseling services at Seton are the most successful. I am sure there are a number of reasons for this, but one is that it's just helpful to have somebody else to talk through ideas and questions. So much of the stress that families experience stems from feeling like they are alone on an island, parents and students alike. This sense of isolation sometimes makes it even more difficult to reach out for help. Those are the moments that it is more critical than ever to make use of the counseling provided by Seton.

Remember that we are here to help families tackle high school and beyond. My hope in these columns is to address general topics that regularly arise in the Guidance department and to provide a supplement to your calls and emails, whether about choosing high school courses, applying to college, internships, scholarships, etc. If there are topics you wish to see addressed that you think may be helpful to other families, feel free to email me at csmith@setonhome.org or give me a call at 540-636-2238.



Christopher Smith is the Director of Guidance at Seton. He has an M.A. in National Security and Statecraft from the Institute of World Politics in Washington D.C. He has a B.A. in Philosophy from Christendom College.

All the way to Eternity

continued from page 7

Catherine, how do you see yourself living your faith and serving God in the future?

I think that no matter what state in life I'm called to, I'll be able to put my talents at the service of God's will. Every single breath we take is meant to glorify God, so whether I'm called to be an art teacher, a stay-at-home mom, or a musician in a symphony, I just want to be Christ's witness in the world. Everything I want is to serve God and others for His sake. If I pursue a career, it won't be for myself because I want a position in the world. It will be because God wants me to bring Him to that place and because that will be the best way that I can give back to Him, give back to my parents, and give back to my family. I'm just so excited for whatever comes!

Thank you for that beautiful outlook on life. It's inspiring. Do any of you have any advice for up-and-coming high school students?

Catherine: I would say, stay calm! If you commit to the education, God will bless your work. If you're nervous or scared, just get down on your knees and pray. You will be heard and you will receive grace to do what is needful. Don't forget the saints and Mary, our Sweet Mother!

Elizabeth (*Catherine's older sister*): The biggest piece of advice I could give is utilize all the tools Seton gives you. Seton is a lot of work, but you have to realize that Seton also provides a ton of tools, and those tools make it possible to accomplish the work.

Mr. Shaw: To the credit of Seton, it has a reputation for being academically advanced. You may need to be creative with how you approach the coursework. You may need to get tutors and lobby different strengths from different family members. But at the end of the day, if you can stick it out with Seton, your children will walk away with three precious gems: 1) spiritual strength, 2) college-preparatory academic prowess, and 3) excellent communication, learning, and organizational skills that put them head-and-shoulders over the rest of society.

Catherine: Give glory to God!





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Seton Student Achievements

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Jennifer, '11 | I received the Thomas Merton Award and Scholarship during my senior year at Mount St. Mary's University (Emmitsburg, MD). This is the highest honor awarded to a selected Mount student.



Mike, '11 | I graduated from Colgate University Class of 2015. I received a substantial scholarship from Colgate which covered my four years' tuition there.



Hugh | I won First Place in the Middle School division for 3-D art in the Denison Performing Arts annual "Young at Art" competition. My artwork was a bird carved out of cedar wood.

Submit your photo, your achievement and what you love most about homeschooling.

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How many astounding examples we have of Christian parents filled with human wisdom! They show that a good family upbringing is the backbone of humanity. Its radiance in society is the source that allows us to fill in the gaps, wounds and voids in parenthood that affect less fortunate children. This radiance can work real miracles. And in the Church these miracles happen every day!

*Audience of His Holiness Pope Francis,
May 20, 2015*



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