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Photo from the Thomas 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.



Mary, Queen of Apostles

Our Inspiration as Homeschoolers

BY DR. MARY KAY CLARK

On August 15, we celebrate the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mother into Heaven, body and soul. In a glorious heavenly event, surrounded by angels and saints, she was crowned the Queen of Heaven by God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit.

While we often speak of Our Blessed Mother as Queen of Heaven, Queen of Angels, and Queen of Saints, perhaps her title as Queen of Apostles is more relevant for us homeschooling parents. As we teach our children at home, bringing the truths of Jesus Christ to our children, we are acting in many ways like the first twelve Apostles.

Like the first twelve apostles, we are evangelizing in our homeschooling enterprise. Though we do not travel to the ends of the earth, certainly the conversion of our children and hopefully our children's children could extend to many families yet to come. Perhaps one day our own children could be involved in helping to teach all nations through missionary work.

Several of the first twelve apostles were poor fishermen of Galilee. With Christ by their side, and after His Ascension, with Mary by their side, they accomplished the conversion of the world to Christianity.

Converting our children to Christ, converting the "world" of our family, we can participate in converting the whole world, at a time and place just as pagan as the Roman world of the first twelve Apostles. We can do it, however, only with Jesus and Mary by our side.

Queen of Apostles, help us and our children to preach the doctrine of Jesus by living a life of holiness. With devotion and perseverance, with patience and courage, help us and our children to overcome our weaknesses. Through daily frustrations and sufferings, through the difficulties of

teaching and learning, teach us to grow closer to Him Who loves us so much as to die for us.

Queen of Apostles, as the Mother of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, you gave us the Source of Eternal Life. Your self-giving was essential for Jesus to be born into the world, and for His work of Redemption. Today, you are essential in our homeschooling to bring Jesus to our children. Through your constant intercession, through your prayers, through your love, you give us the consolation and courage to continue in our daily work of teaching our children.

Queen of Apostles, as you spent the days with the Apostles before Pentecost, leading them in prayer and giving them words of wisdom and encouragement, we ask you to give us wisdom and encouragement in our daily teaching of our children. Certainly the Apostles' courage and fortitude was due directly to your presence and your words reminding them of the promises of your Son.

Queen of Apostles, it must have been during those days before Pentecost when you spoke about the hidden years of Jesus, those years when you taught Him at home. Though you kept all those things pondering in your heart, you must have shared them with the Apostles at that time.

Queen of Apostles, share with us those things hidden in your heart to help us teach your least brethren, your smallest apostles, our children. Share with us, from your heart to ours, some hidden wisdom as we struggle to help our children become strong apostles for your Son.

Queen of Apostles, after the Ascension of your Son, we know that you must have been the teacher of the Apostles. You must have been instrumental in encouraging the Apostles to go forth to all the nations. Your heart, filled with love for each person in the world, must have influenced those first Apostles to spread the divine love of your Son.

Queen of Apostles, help us to be apostles for our children, by what we teach and our good example, by our kindness and charity, by our patience and good works.

Queen of Apostles, pray for us homeschooling parents as we struggle day by day to be the teachers we need to be for our children. Help us to convert our children and the world to know Jesus, to love Jesus, and to serve Jesus.



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

Is it important for me to follow the lesson plans as written?

Yes and no. If you are just starting home schooling, definitely you want to follow the lesson plans for at least the first month or so to become familiar with how the program works, and also to learn just where your child needs extra help and where your child may be able to do some work independently.

After the first month, you will learn that he can do some lessons pretty much on his own, such as spelling or vocabulary. However, you may discover he does not know his multiplication tables as well as he should and needs more work in this area.

After a while, you can and should adjust the time frame needed for each subject. However, we do suggest that for the first year, try to do all the lessons for each subject. For the second year, you may find that you can make some adjustments with times or even with extra exercises that you think are needed.

I would like to put both my 4th grade and 5th grade boys into the 5th grade history so they can take the course together. Is there any disadvantage?

In some subject areas, children in adjacent grades can certainly work together in the same subject. It can be helpful to both students as well as mom and dad. You may consider what is best, for the older to move to the lower level history, or for the younger to move to the higher level history.

One thing to look out for is a rather dramatic difference in the learning ability between the two brothers. If so, to prevent any “difficult” feelings between them, you might want to return back to each working in his own level textbook.

How often may I phone or email a counselor for my questions?

We have no restrictions on the number of calls or emails. If your question is a simple matter requiring a straightforward answer, we suggest that you email rather than call. An email gives our counselors a chance to look up the answer and respond. If you need to talk a problem over with a counselor, then by all means call.

*Parent calls and emails
are actually very important
in helping us to improve
our program.*

Parent calls and emails are actually very important in helping us to improve our program. We do keep a record of the questions which come in and make changes in our lesson plans or additions to our lesson plans as a result of parent questions. Parent calls regarding corrections or additions needed in our Seton-produced books are recorded and referred to when we reprint our books.

Don't forget the 19 Message Boards that Seton provides for parents, and students, to share ideas on both general and specific subject areas. Go to Seton's page and scroll down to Seton Message Board to look for a subject area that might have some helpful suggestions for you.

What is the advantage to send the tests over the internet to Seton?

Many moms find that they like to send the tests over the internet so they can

be graded more quickly. Children also like to see their test results more quickly. The graded tests are sent back for parents and students to see the grader's comments.

Another benefit is that sending the tests over the internet saves a trip to the post office, and also the postage to mail the work to Seton. When tests or assignments are done on paper and are waiting around the house to be sent in, they can be misplaced or destroyed accidentally. Electronically submitted assignments never have this problem.

What is the most important thing I need to do as I start the new school year?

Besides praying with your children every day, start the year by taking the time to go through all the books and lesson plans and tests to see what is expected of your student, and to realize what you need to do as your child progresses through the year. It is best not to begin without proper preparation, which means spending several hours of quiet time going through all the materials so you have a good idea of what needs to be done by you and what needs to be done by your student.

Perhaps most important, you need to figure out which subjects will demand your time sitting down next to your students, and which subjects students can do on their own with you simply explaining and then checking over.

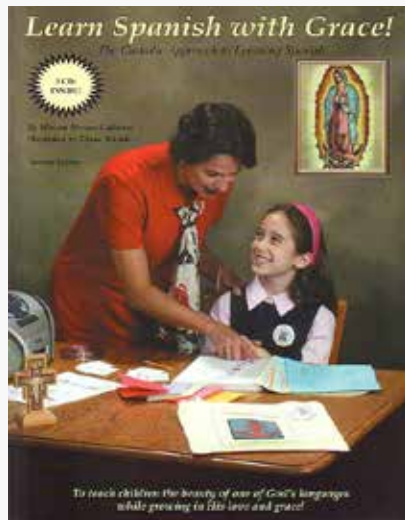
Consider asking your husband to help with at least one or two subjects, either before he leaves for work, in the evening, or on the weekends. Perhaps the most important thing to do is talking with your husband and making sure he is involved. Children love having their dads help them in their studies.



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Learn Spanish with Grace (Grades 2-8)

M-SPAN-00 \$35.00

Children learn elementary Spanish grammar and vocabulary with a Catholic approach. Throughout the book, the children will follow a logical storyline of joyous songs and fun exercises.

www.setonbooks.com

Why can't I substitute a book I like better than the Seton book report book?

To put it briefly, our graders cannot grade a book report adequately for a book they have not read. However, if you have books that you want your children to read, consider having a little family book club and have your children give oral reports to the family at dinnertime. Children certainly can become excited about discussing the ideas presented in books. Seton

provides a Supplemental Reading List at the back of each grade level Reading lesson plans. If you cannot find a book, some of these may be available online for printing out. Check out "Catholic Children's Ebooks" on the internet.

Why don't you include teaching a foreign language for students in the elementary grades?

Our standard elementary curriculum has quite a few subjects already, and it would be burdensome for many families to include an additional required subject. We do sell elementary level books for Spanish, French, and Latin if parents want them. If parents or grandparents speak any foreign language, they should definitely make sure that the children are learning that language. It not only gives the children a better understanding of the structure of language, but it gives them an appreciation of a different culture, it gives them pride for their own family stories, and a broader view of the world.

What do I say to members of my parish who think home schooling is a bad idea for our children?

The important thing is not to criticize those who think they are helping you because they are concerned about you and your family. Listen patiently and try to appreciate their concern. Emphasize, however, not what is wrong with the local schools, but rather the positive features and experiences you and your children are having. Are your children learning better at home than they were in school? Mention that. Are your children learning new things and growing in their faith? Mention that. Are the parents learning new things about their Catholic Faith that they never knew? Mention that as well.

You might also want to mention that research into homeschooling shows that it offers many benefits over traditional schooling. The fact that homeschoolers score well over national averages on standardized tests is just the beginning. For statistical information about the benefits of homeschooling, check out the National Home Education Research Institute (www.nheri.org).



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Seton College Partners is a way to encourage our students to continue their Catholic education by attending a solidly Catholic College after high school.



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setonhome.org/colleges



A Whole New Level

An Interview with Amy Thomas

Why is homeschooling important to your family?

Sometimes, as a military family, you get stationed in places where the schools are not adequate. We were stationed in a very remote area and found the schools to be lacking in many things that were important to us. So, because I could not work, I decided to try homeschooling. We figured it would be a temporary situation

until we moved out of the state. I started out homeschooling my oldest when she was in 3rd grade and here we are with her entering high school! It has become such a blessing to our family. It's important to us because it's another level that brings us closer as a family. We eat together, we play together, we travel together, and we learn together.

What made you choose Seton Home Study School?

I had been using a different curriculum, but needed to find a new one because what we were using didn't go past 7th grade. One day, I was at my friend's house and she introduced me to Seton. She let me look through her handbook and showed me the website. It really struck a chord with me, so when I got home, I went online and researched the website. My husband Dustin and I really liked the accreditation aspect and all the help that Seton offers. It seemed like a great fit for our family.

What do you like most about Seton?

1) I love that it incorporates our faith into our learning. So many times, we as Christians become only "Sunday Christians." We forget that our faith should permeate everything. Seton brings our faith into our children's education and our daily lives. The fact that my children read all these

wonderful stories about true heroes—the saints—helps them to see what it means to be on fire with the Holy Spirit.

2) The curriculum is wholesome, yet challenging.

3) I also truly appreciate that the books are honest and upfront. For example, the history and religion books give a very balanced look at people and events. If a Catholic person did something wrong, the textbooks acknowledge that. What we learn shows the positive side of history, yet also shows where sin and error had their effect. This is important for our kids. They need to understand that we all struggle with sin, yet by God's grace can still do great things. So I like the fact that the curriculum doesn't hide from the truth. My husband and I stress to our kids that they must always seek truth even if the truth is painful to hear. The Seton curriculum does exactly that.

What role does your Catholic faith play in your schooling and family life?

When my husband and I were married, I was Protestant and he was Catholic. I was staunchly against Catholics, so much so that I thought it was a cult. But God has a way of working



miracles, doesn't he? Nine years into our marriage, I converted to Catholicism. So, it hasn't been very long that we have been extremely active in our faith as a united Catholic family. It's been just within the last several years that we have really started living out the Catholic Faith in the best way we know how. Now we really enjoy reading about our faith and sharing what we've learned with each other. We pray together; we listen to Catholic Answers on car rides; we visit basilicas for field trips. We see how important it is to make sure that each part of our life is led by Jesus.

How does a homeschooling day go in your family?

We usually have breakfast together around 7:30 a.m. Then the girls do their daily chores. School usually starts around 9:00 a.m. We work until lunch. We are blessed in that most days we have all three meals together as a family. After lunch we resume work until it's time to leave for gymnastics. My girls are competitive gymnasts and they practice several hours almost every day of the week. Homeschooling allows us to accommodate their rigorous workout schedule without foregoing family time. We also incorporate piano lessons and at least one field trip a month. As a military family, we are only stationed in a place for a few years. We love to get out and see what each state has to offer. Homeschooling allows us to travel with Dad at times and really immerse ourselves in the culture and lifestyle of each place we live.

How has Seton benefited your family?

I think it has taken my kids' learning to another level. I really believe they are getting a quality education. My oldest just finished 8th grade and I know that she is ready for high school and even college. She is learning valuable skills that I wish I had learned in my public school education. More importantly, Seton has opened our eyes to the richness and fullness of the Catholic Faith. I converted to Catholicism in 2009, so I feel I like am still learning so much about the Faith. This has been a unique and special learning experience for my kids and me as we explore this new territory together. Several times a week we find ourselves saying, "Wow! That is so cool!"

What is one piece of advice you could give to other homeschooling families?

Some days will be great. Some days will be trying. But every day of homeschooling is a blessing. Although these blessings are accompanied by sacrifice and struggles, those sacrifices are utterly worth it. Our children are with us for only a little while before we must send them out into the world. It is very comforting to know that because of the choice to homeschool, they will be armed with a solid, rich foundation in their faith before they leave.





Get Ready, Get Set, Go!

5 Ways to Make a Good School Year

Success is all about preparation. Winning a race takes training and a healthy lifestyle. Acing a test takes study and a good night's sleep. So too, a good school year takes some forethought and preparation. Here are 5 ways you can prepare your families for a successful school year.

1) Find your spiritual footing.

Success may be all about preparation, but preparation needs to rest on a solid foundation, and for us, that foundation is God. The saying goes that "If everything is right with the Lord, then everything else will be alright too." Conversely, if things aren't going well in the spiritual realm, they're not going to go very well anywhere else either. So, right now, before the school year gets started, determine how to incorporate prayer and the sacraments.

For yourselves, Mom and Dad, make time for personal prayer before the children get up, or before you begin the tasks of the day. Alternatively, set aside time in the evening for a little spiritual reading or solitary prayer.

Figure out if it will work for your family to go to daily Mass, or at least on certain days of the week, such as Mondays to start the week well and Fridays to give thanks for another week accomplished. If you don't live near daily Mass, consider reading the Epistle

and Gospel of the day with your children at breakfast, or watching EWTN's daily Mass. Pick a particular saint to be the patron of your school year, and commit to asking for his/her intercession and the intercession of each day's saint every morning. Take a Bible verse as your motto, frame it, and place it in a prominent place where it can be a constant guide and inspiration. Sirach 21:21, Psalm 119:66, Proverbs 9:9, and John 14:26 are just a few of the many excellent verses on teaching and education. Teach your children a good prayer or novena to be said together at the beginning of each school day, and think about incorporating observance of the noontime Angelus tradition. One way or another, allowing school to revolve around Christ will help to ensure it stays on track.

2) Choose Dad's role for the year.

Most endeavors in life benefit from a bit of coaching assistance, and in homeschooling, fathers usually fulfill that role. In some families, emotional support is all Mom and

the kids need from Dad to get through the week. However, for many families, the more Dad can be involved in the homeschool, the better off everybody will be. If you haven't previously done this, then right now, before the new academic year begins, you should sit down together and work out at least one significant way Dad can get hands-on with homeschooling this year.

You might be in keeping with many families if you decide that Dad is going to be the Math and/or Science teacher this year. However, for some families, it might work better if Dad teaches a different class. Homeschooling mom, Kim, told us that her husband teaches history, music and art. Susan says that her husband is the foreign language teacher in their household. Mada told us her husband teaches the kids English. Many times, we've heard that fathers are the religion teachers in the family.

Dad's role doesn't always need to be an explicitly teaching role, however. We've heard wonderful ideas about alternative ways for dads to be involved in the homeschool from a number of Seton families. Elizabeth says that in her house, "Dad grades everyone's work. It keeps us

all honest!” Lacey told us that her husband administers all the tests. Meagan’s husband has a really interesting approach, in which “he takes turns leading one discussion topic parallel with the children’s lessons before he heads to work. Each day is a different topic so he knows where the children are in all of their studies, and it gives me a small coffee break.”

Dads can teach. Dads can run review sessions. Dads can lead experiments and field trips, or act as academic and behavioral counselors. Ultimately, whatever specific role dads take on, as long as they remain the “C.E.O. . . . Chief Encouraging Officer,” as mom Anne puts it, they’ll be making a significant and positive contribution to the homeschool.

3) Establish basic structure.

Some people are going to be more comfortable with a greater degree of organization, and some people are going to be more comfortable with less. However, all benefit from at least a basic system being in place. A fundamental level of structure or organization makes it possible to stay abreast of school and life and to prevent catastrophic collision when they intersect.

Look at a calendar. Even if you don’t want to plan an entire semester, or even a quarter at a time, at least look at the month ahead. Take note of feast days, birthdays, family events, anything that might be a potential interference with school, so you’re not surprised when those days arrive. Schedule a handful of slightly longer schooldays and a Saturday morning or two to make sure you can make up the time that might get lost to activities and external events. If you need them, you’ll be glad you’ve already made provision, and if you find you don’t need

them, so much the better; then you’ll have extra time to give to something else important.

Establish basic policies for daily time management. In one house, these might be as simple as determining which subjects will be covered on which days, or whether they’ll be covered in a morning or afternoon session. In another house, these might involve setting time limits for each subject, and schedules for when each child will have one-on-one teaching time with Mom or Dad. Settle on basic breakfast, snack, break, and lunchtime routines, so that your children learn what to expect and what they can or can’t do at these times.

Don’t forget to give some thought to the way chores and general housekeeping will fit into the daily program; after all, life must go on, even when you’re homeschooling. Know when laundry and vacuuming will take place, and plan who gets to help you with dishes and taking out the trash.

4) Set up a classroom.

Not everyone has the luxury of dedicating an entire room to school (though if you can set aside a room for exclusive scholastic use without permanently alienating some part of your family, we highly recommend it). Nonetheless, studies have shown that serious work is best accomplished in a distraction-free zone. Do whatever you can to make this possible for your children. Some families set aside their dining room for a classroom for the entirety of the school year. Homeschool mom Bridget uses the spare bedroom as a classroom. Keri says her family does school in their loft. Kelly set up her family’s enclosed sun porch as their schoolroom. Consider using a basement, even if it is unfinished, as long as there is heat and you can provide good light. A

section can be cleaned, arranged with desks and shelves, and decorated with maps and diagrams to provide an encouragingly academic environment.

If there simply is not space to dedicate an entire room to school, find ways to set aside a section of a room. Rearrange furniture in the living room so that one corner can be turned into a school corner. If your staircase has a large landing area at the top or the hallway has a nook, see if those spaces can be utilized for individual study carrels as you’d see in a library. Mom Krista is very creative, and keeps the bar in her kitchen for school use, while “the cabinets above contain all the homeschool books.” Ultimately, of course, children can do schoolwork just about anywhere, but they’re guaranteed to be more efficient and effective if they can be provided with a little individual space set aside just for their academics.

5) Review your resources.

This is one of the most important preparatory activities you can do. Look over the lesson plans so you know what each course will be teaching and what assignments are scheduled when. Review textbooks and workbooks (this does not necessarily mean read cover to cover) so you know exactly what material your students will be interacting with on a daily basis. Log into your MySeton account and peruse the supplemental exercises, study aids, book analysis guides, learning tools and for high school, the audio/video tutorials, so you’ll have a sense of what helps are available when they are needed later on. Finally, check Seton’s contact page to learn who your counselor contacts will be in case you need to call or email with questions once school begins.

Following these five basic steps of preparation for a new academic year will make a big difference in the tone and manageability of your homeschool.

Get ready, get set; now go have a great school year!



Christine Smitha holds a B.A. in English and Literature from Christendom College. She has taught Literature for nine years, and enjoys dabbling in journalism when she gets a chance. She is currently *Seton Magazine’s* Assistant Editor.

Back to (Home)School

The 5 W's

BY JOHN CLARK

Several weeks ago, I was asked to write a column for this magazine with the “Back to School” theme. I considered this somewhat ironic since the defining feature of homeschooling is that we are not going “back to school.” The fact is, we’re staying home—with good reasons. And if you need a little motivation to begin another academic year, here are my five W’s of homeschooling.

1. Who? The family.

For many homeschool families, the mother is the main teacher, with the father taking a less time-intensive role. But it is a common misperception that the parents are the only ones who teach their homeschooled children. In truth, other family members can play a large part as well.

During much of my homeschooling years, I spent lots of time with my grandparents. For my twelfth birthday, my grandmother gave me a handwritten poem. Thirty-two years later, I still keep it in my desk. It concludes:

*“And now that manhood is so near,
It all becomes so very clear,
That days ahead you will find
Even greater things to fill your mind.
And though the joys of earth be many
(And most of them don’t need a penny),
You’ll see your soul is truly thrilled
When with those things divine its filled.
So, bless you Johnny dear, and know
That Grandmere and Grandpere love you so.”*

My grandmother is much of the reason that I’m “thrilled with things divine.” You see, during my homeschool years, I witnessed her being thrilled at divine things first. She illustrated to me that the love of God and happiness were ultimately

inseparable. The last thirty years have served to prove that to me.

The days spent with mothers and fathers, with grandmothers and grandfathers, with uncles and aunts, with brothers and sisters, are irreplaceable opportunities to grow in virtue and love.

2. What? The Faith.

Seventeen centuries ago, St. John Chrysostom wrote: “In our own day every man takes the greatest pains to train his boy in the arts and in literature and speech. But to exercise this child’s soul in virtue, to that no man any longer pays heed.” Little has changed since Chrysostom’s time—except for the fact that, as a society, we no longer train children in the arts, in literature, or in speech.

I’ve never been comfortable comparing homeschooling with other forms of schooling. I think the benefits of homeschooling can stand on their own merits. But it’s irresponsible to ignore the point: many schools are commonly pushing an agenda that bears no countenance of Christianity. In many academic institutions, virtue is a secondary pursuit, if a pursuit at all. As John Chrysostom may have put it, many schoolchildren are taking atheism and socialism for credit; they are only auditing virtue.

By contrast, your children have a curriculum of faith—the world’s greatest lesson plan. Your living room is the classroom of virtue.

As an answer to the world’s pollution of vice, the homeschooling world creates an environment of faith and an ecosystem of Christianity.

It is true: there are no guarantees. Things like grace and virtue are not hereditary. But at least our children are learning what virtue is.

3. When? Now and forever.

The things we’re teaching now do not benefit our children only in the present moment. The most important lessons today are the ones that benefit our children forever.

4. Where? Home.

Your homeschooling house may look like very ordinary—ordinary doors, ordinary windows, and ordinary walls.

Don’t be fooled. Your home is a castle where Catholic knights in shining armor and Catholic princesses are raised. Your home is a magnificent cathedral of the domestic church, and for that reason, it rivals in beauty anything and everything that was built during the magnificent summit of Christendom’s glory. Your home is a basilica where the classrooms are adorned with the images of the Sacred Heart of Jesus and the Immaculate Heart of Mary. What better place to learn?

5. Why? Because God loves you.

Of all the lessons that children can learn, this one is the most important. Who can teach this lesson to children better than parents?

Parents, as you begin to open the books and get out the pens and pencils for a new year, ask God to give you grace to remember the reasons you are homeschooling. Make a list of your reasons, and revisit them often.

Welcome back home!

Read John Clark’s weekly blog at
setonmagazine.com/johnclark



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.

Getting organized is one of those concepts that gives a warm fuzzy feeling to the left brained among us—you know, those who are always on time, with check books balanced, kids in clean clothes and dinner in the crock pot at 10am. Of course, that same concept gives a case of the heebiejeebies to the right brained, poetry-quoting, field trip-going, schedule-resisting, six months late for dental appointments types among us.

I fall somewhere in the middle of that.

Being organized, however, is not a death knell to spontaneity and creativity; rather it allows more time for these things because all the necessary aspects of life are automatically taken care of in their proper time. This time of year, shortly before the beginning of the traditional school year, is a good time to evaluate our goals and priorities for the coming school year and get the home and kids organized so as to get off to the best start possible. It's not all that difficult, but it can be an overwhelming prospect and easy to put off when the weather is still summer-like and the beach or lake calls to us.

What's important to remember is that every moment spent getting yourself together prior to beginning formal lessons will repay itself tenfold over the coming year. Think of all the free time you would have if you never had to search for a pencil or a book, if your first few weeks were carefully planned on paper or on the computer with an eye toward the season, upcoming feast days, afternoon activities and a rough menu plan in place.

"First keep the peace within yourself, then you can also bring peace to others."
Thomas à Kempis

So, keeping all of this in mind, let's get down to the nitty gritty. How do I get organized for the upcoming school year within the next few weeks? Here are a few tips:

1. Pick a hard and fast start date. Don't waffle on this. Most people work best when there is a deadline looming at them. Just to keep myself honest our homeschool start date will be August 10th this year. You heard it here first.

2. De-clutter. This is essential and is the most overwhelming of tasks. Go through your school supplies and books with ruthless disregard for sentimentality. If



My 5 Simple Tips for Starting School

BY MARY ELLEN BARRETT

you haven't used it in two years, you aren't likely to. If you might use it in five years, gift it to someone else and borrow it back or buy it used. Abby Sasscer, in her lovely book, *Simplifying Your Domestic Church* (setonbooks.com), recommends four P's for tackling paper clutter: Purge, Prioritize, Process and Put Away. This can be applied to books, toys, clothes, really anything. Be brutal.

3. Clean the room where you will do your planning. A recently tidied, dusted, vacuumed, mopped up space is much more conducive to creative and cognitive activity. Gather your materials and make neat piles. Make the space inviting. Brew a cup of something pleasant and settle in.

"Organizing is what you do before you do something, so that when you do it, it is not all mixed up."

A.A. Milne

4. Decide on a calendar and homeschool planner. I like the planners that Seton sells, as they are undated and the layout works with the way I visualize things. My calendar is the Catholic Mothers' Daily Planner (michelequigley.com). I am a paper and pencil person but I realize that many people are iCal or Outlook devotees. This is all good as long as you use it consistently. When planning school lessons, I always have my

calendar open to make note of feast days, holy days of obligation, and special family days.

5. Make a booklist for each child to cover each subject for each year. My next step is to set out for each child a white dishpan, labeled with a post-it, and with the booklist tucked inside. As I gather the books, or as they are delivered, I add them to the pan and check them off the lists. When each list is complete, the books go into the crate that is reserved for that child. This helps eliminate the possibility of starting the school year thinking I have a book that I don't (it's happened and it's not fun when it does).

When planning out your lessons and school days, try not to plan too far in advance. This will help you not feel behind when the occasional stomach bug or basement flood derails you for a few days. It's easier to re-adjust a few weeks than a few months.

Now is the time to invest a few hours in the ongoing peace of your family and homeschool. The investment is well worth the time and the rewards will greatly bless you in the coming year.

Read Mary Ellen online at
setonmagazine.com/maryellen



Mary Ellen Barrett is mother of seven children and two in heaven. Mary is wife to David and a lifelong New Yorker. She has homeschooled her children for eleven years using Seton and an enormous amount of books.

A Homeschool Homily

Delivered at the Front Royal, VA Homeschool Mass on May 22, 2015

It is a privilege and an honor to be celebrating this Mass with you and for you and among you. As I am told that you are all homeschoolers, I want to encourage you to make the first item on your curriculum be teaching and learning about the Holy Mass.

The Holy Mass is the most important event, act, and celebration in the Catholic Church and therefore in the whole wide world. It is so good for us to start everything with the Holy Mass, for it provides a tsunami of grace and favors and blessings to those who take part in it. The Holy Mass soothes our pains and trials through the Passion of Our Lord Jesus Christ and infuses courage, patience, and hope to enable our continuance in the good things we do.

This Mass is offered in thanksgiving, through the gracious hands of the Blessed Virgin Mary, for all the gifts and graces that the Good Lord gives to the whole

homeschooling community in general, and to you gathered here at Front Royal in particular, to celebrate another year of progress and success and hard work and achievement in homeschooling.

Homeschooling is the best and most natural way of teaching and learning. Those who so vehemently oppose it know this, for they feel insecure in the realization that with all their billions of dollars and great teachers and tremendous programs, they cannot produce the finished artifact of homeschooling: a confident, balanced, clear-thinking, virtuously-acting, culturally rounded, open-minded individual, who is comfortable in every social level and supremely capable of holding more than his or her own on the playing fields, at the office, and in the halls of justice.

When a baby is baptized, a special prayer is said for the father that as he is the first

teacher he will be the best of teachers in everything. That is the wish and prayer of Holy Mother Church and it works. And if fathers are the best of teachers, they are only half as good as the mothers, whom everyone knows are the very, very best of teachers.

May you be encouraged and empowered to continue in your noble role and be rewarded in this life with loving and grateful and virtuous children, and in the next life with the glory and joy of all the faithful servants of Jesus, to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.



Fr. Seamus O'Kielty was born the 8th child of 10 in Ireland. He studied in seminaries across Europe. After his ordination in 1954, among other things he served as a missionary in Africa, a highschool teacher, chaplain to the Bolivian army, parish pastor, and Navy chaplain deployed to the Middle East. He has served Christendom College since 2002.

Thank God for the Gift of the Family.

Excerpted from a speech given at Georgetown University graduation, 2003

As I see joy and just pride reflected on the faces of the parents and friends of these graduands, I think of God's goodness in giving the gift of the family to humanity.

It is God himself who willed that a man and a woman should come to establish a permanent bond in marriage. Marriage gives rise to the family. In this fundamental cell of society, love grows. There the exercise of sexuality has its correct locus. There human maturity is nurtured. There new life utters its first cry and later smiles at the parents. There the child is first introduced to religion. Is it any wonder that the Second Vatican Council called the family "the church of the home" (cf. *Lumen Gentium*, 11)?

In many parts of the world, the family is under siege. It is opposed by an anti-life mentality as is seen in contraception, abortion, infanticide and euthanasia. It is scorned and banalized by pornography, desecrated by fornication and adultery, mocked by homosexuality, sabotaged by irregular unions and cut in two by divorce.

But the family has friends too. It is nourished and lubricated by mutual love, strengthened by sacrifice and healed by forgiveness and reconciliation. The family is blessed with new life, kept united by family prayer and given a model in the Holy Family of Nazareth of Jesus, Mary and Joseph. Christian families are moreover blessed by the Church in the name of Christ

and fed by the sacraments, especially the Holy Eucharist. It was beautiful that at the beatification of Mr. and Mrs. Luigi and Maria Beltrame-Quattrocchi in St. Peter's Basilica in the Vatican City on October 21, 2001, three of their children were present.

May God bless all the families here present and grant our graduands who will one day set up their own families his light, guidance, strength, peace and love.



Cardinal Francis Arinze was born in Africa, and ordained in his late twenties. Pope St. John Paul II invited him to head the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue. As of December 2008, he has been the Prefect emeritus of the Congregation of Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments.

REV. SEAMUS O'KIELTY

CARDINAL FRANCIS
ARINZE

Your 3 High School DIPLOMA OPTIONS

BY CHRISTOPHER SMITH



A few months back, I found myself at a local diner, perusing the menu over a cup of tepid coffee. The menu did not say I was entitled to hot coffee, which I assume means such a thing is more of a privilege than a right, and I did not raise the issue. What this diner lacked in coffee selection (as in “not terrible”), it made up for with over 200 menu items spanning every conceivable ethnic cuisine: Italian breakfast, Ethiopian lunch, Appalachian dinner. If a dish had been cooked at any single point in any civilization throughout history, it was on the menu.

This vast array of options left me dazed. How could anyone choose from so many options without wondering if they had made a terrible mistake by selecting the BLT sandwich over the BLT omelet, or the BLT cream pie? In the end, I chose the sandwich, which was adequate insofar as it provided the energy for me to leave at the end of my meal and never return.

Over the past few years, Seton has increased the options and tweaked the requirements for our high school diplomas. This was done in order to better reflect the standards which some colleges were looking for in certain subject areas, such as Math and Science, all while adhering to the high standard Seton has always expected of our students. Yet after my harrowing

experience with that diner menu, I do understand how looking at the high school courses catalog can be intimidating. So I would like to go over the different options, hopefully to allay at least some of the questions and concerns that have come to my attention.

There are three high school diploma options: General, Academic, and Advanced. The Academic diploma is the standard diploma that the great majority of our students seek, and which is in line with the requirements for almost any college or university. It is also most in line with what Seton students were required to complete in the past, though there have been a few changes. We now require a third year of math, typically Algebra 2, and a third year of Science, as well as a half credit of Geography, and a half credit of Economics. Otherwise, everything else is the same as our past diploma requirements. Students enrolled in 9th grade before 2014 are not bound by these new requirements.

The Advanced Academic diploma is a new program Seton instituted in 2014 in an attempt to offer an organized path towards taking Seton’s more rigorous courses while rewarding students for that extra work. Many states have Advanced Diplomas, and Seton’s is based on the Virginia version. With added Math, Science, and Language

requirements, this diploma is meant for students who might be trying to get into programs related to those fields, such as engineering, or into upper echelon schools such as Ivy Leagues or Military Academies.

The General Diploma is an option for students that might not necessarily be looking to attend four year university or college immediately out of high school, or might be considering going to local community colleges or vocational schools. The overall credit requirement is the same as the Academic diploma, 22 credits, but the foreign language requirement is dropped.

Remember that you are not locked into a diploma option. If a student is enrolled for the Advanced Diploma and wants to switch over to either the Academic or General Diploma, that is perfectly acceptable. Options aren’t always a good thing, but in the case of Seton’s diploma selection, we believe they are. As always, we are here to help you make this decision with your high school students.



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.

Seton Writing Contests 2015

Promoting Excellence in Academic & Creative Writing



The Christmas Essay Contest

Our second Christmas Essay Contest has begun! The same guidelines as last year are in place. The contest will be open to Seton high school students, grades 9 through 12. The essay should be around 500 words in length.

First prize publication will be in this print magazine and online. Second and third places will be featured online.

Put it on your schedule! Members of the Seton staff will be the judges. They are looking forward to reading some very fine essays.

Seton students generally are fine writers and we expect that judging the essays will actually be rather difficult. So sharpen your pencils and make our lives interesting!

Visit us online for details, submission information and any/all questions you may have.

www.setonmagazine.com/2015essay

Prizes

FIRST PLACE: \$75

SECOND PLACE: \$50

THIRD PLACE: \$25

Submission Deadline

OCTOBER 31ST, 2015



The Seton High School Short Story Contest

Announcing the 2016 Catholic short story contest for our high school students.

The broad parameters of this contest are that the stories should feature Catholic values, beliefs, or sacraments. Additionally, stories should have character development; that is, the main character should grow or mature in some way in the story. Stories should not be fantastical but should be based in occurrences that could happen in real life.

The prize is \$100. Submissions will be judged by grade level: freshman, sophomore, junior, and senior. One winner will be named for each grade level, though if no story of distinction is found in a particular grade level, that level may be without a winner.

The deadline is December 31st, 2016 to allow students time to write stories of true craftsmanship.

Look for more details in our October 2015 issue.

Grand Prize: \$100

1 WINNER FOR EACH GRADE LEVEL

Submission Deadline

DECEMBER 1ST, 2016



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Seton Student Achievements

SHARING SUCCESS WITH THE SETON COMMUNITY



Mercedes | I was selected as one of only 20 youth in the UK to participate on the nationally televised competition called Child Genius 2014.



Daniel | I completed my B.S. in Neuroscience at the University of St. Thomas. After a gap year in which I taught and performed guitar, I was accepted to the University of Minnesota Medical School.



James & Aidan | We performed in the production of 'Seussical' during May 22-24, 2015. They practiced 3 days a week for 3 months, and joined a cast of nearly 50 other kids.

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

www.setonmagazine.com/students

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In 2012 on the Feast of the Baptism of Jesus, Pope Benedict gave a homily about the importance of parents educating their children in the Faith.

While educating children is a challenging mission, he said “education becomes a wonderful mission if it is done in partnership with God.” John the Baptist was a great teacher, Pope Benedict said, but John always emphasized that Jesus was The Great Teacher.

Parents are the means through which the love of God passes to children, so parents must be sure to stay in the state of grace to keep their ability to educate their children in the Faith, the pope said.

Pope Benedict emphasized the importance of the Holy Spirit received at Baptism. “It is very important for you parents, and also godfathers and godmothers, to believe strongly in the presence and action of the Holy Spirit, and welcome and invoke the Holy Spirit through prayer and the sacraments.”

“Prayer is the first condition to educate because in prayer, we give ourselves to God. We entrust our children to Him Who knows them before and better than us.”

With prayer and the sacraments, parents will be able to discern the most appropriate way to educate their children, when to be tender or firm, when to keep silent or when to correct.

