

Seton MAGAZINE

Under the Magisterium of the Catholic Church

SETONMAGAZINE.COM | SEPTEMBER 2015



How Do You Do It?

Why Homeschooling was the Natural Choice | pg 6



Mastering English Before It Masters You

page 8

'Keep Your Dad Home' Day

John Clark | page 10

A Rail to Run On

Mary Ellen Barrett | page 11

Seton Directory

Executive Editor

Dr. Mary Kay Clark

Editors

Kevin Clark
Christine Smitha

Marketing Director

Jim Shanley

Design & Layout

Dominic de Souza

Contributing Writers

Mary Ellen Barrett
Tara Brelinsky
John Clark
Bob Wiesner



Customer Service
custserv@setonhome.org

Counselors
counselors@setonhome.org

Admissions
admissions@setonhome.org

Grading
grading@setonhome.org

General Information
info@setonhome.org

My Seton
myseton@setonhome.org

Shipping
shipping@setonhome.org

Standardized Testing
testing@setonhome.org

Special Services
SSDept@setonhome.org



Seton Home Study School
540-636-9990

Admissions
540-636-2039

High School Grading
Rhonda Way
540-622-5525

Elementary Grading
Bruce Hacker
540-622-5524

High School Course Approval
Gene McGuirk
540-635-4728

Bob Wiesner
540-622-8478

High School English
Walker Solis
540-636-1755

Elizabeth Wagner
540-622-5555

High School History
Bruce Clark
540-636-1199

Nick Marmalejo
540-622-5571

High School Math
Tom Herlihy
540-636-1846

High School Math / Science
Don Valaike
540-636-1396

Seton Educational Media
540-636-9996

Transcripts, Records, and Extensions
Betty Valaike
540-635-1937

Senior Guidance / Enrollment / Independent Studies
Christopher Smith
540-636-2238

Religion / Sacraments
Father Constantine
540-636-1527

General Counseling
Cecilia Sauer
540-622-5526

Special Services
Stephen Costanzo
540-622-5546

Kathleen Hunt
540-622-5542

Standardized Testing
Patty Graham
540-636-1250

Elementary Counseling
Sharon Hassett
540-636-1429

Carin Delancey
540-636-2342

Rose Herlihy
540-636-1429

Vol. 4, No. 9, September 2015
www.setonmagazine.com

Seton Home Study School
1350 Progress Dr.
Front Royal, VA 22630

Phone: (540) 636-9990
Fax: (540) 636-1602

info@setonhome.org
www.setonhome.org

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:
The Brelinsky 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.



Junipero Serra

& the Homeschooling Mission

BY DR. MARY KAY CLARK

Our current Pope took the name Francis because of his desire to follow St. Francis to help the poor. It is not unexpected, therefore, that when the Pope visits the United States in September, he intends to canonize a great American Franciscan priest, Blessed Junipero Serra, who dedicated his life to helping the poorest of the poor, the native Indians of the Americas.

Junipero was born in 1713 and grew up on an island off the east coast of Spain. Junipero's family lived in a farming community where children helped their parents on the family farm. Junipero's serious practice of his Catholic Faith was a direct result of living the Catholic Faith as taught and practiced by his parents.

Junipero was fortunate enough to be able to attend daily classes for boys at the church school nearby, and was soon recognized for more advanced intellectual ability. At sixteen, he decided to become a priest, and after attending a seminary for several years, he became a Franciscan priest in 1737.

Father Serra spent twelve years as a seminary professor preparing young men to be priests. During this time, he became an excellent and enthusiastic speaker and teacher. Crowds of people would come to hear his sermons.

At age thirty-six, however, Father Serra revealed to his superiors his deep desire to be a missionary among the Indians in America. Though the Franciscans did not want to "waste" the brilliant mind of Father Serra among the Indians, his superiors finally assigned him to America to work among the Indians.

Father Serra arrived in "New Spain" or Mexico, in 1750. However, on the trip, he was bitten by a poisonous insect. This caused a permanent ulcer on his leg, which led to constant pain, a limp, and sometimes total weakness. Nevertheless, he began learning about life among the Indians, and the many diseases that the Indians

and priests contracted, such as malaria and smallpox. (It was not unusual for all the missionaries at a mission to die from diseases and lack of food.)

Father Serra helped various tribes of Indians over many years, living through several Indian attacks. He taught the Indians who lived with the missionaries about Jesus and the Catholic Faith. He also taught them farming skills, which helped them to live without constant stealing and fighting among themselves. He and the other Spanish missionaries brought seeds and taught the Indians to grow corn, beans, squash, and sugar, showing the Indians how to irrigate their farmland, as well.

Father Serra and the Franciscan missionaries taught the Indians how to buy and sell their farming products, how to trade for oxen, goats, cows, and pigs, and how to make farming implements. The priests encouraged the Indians to learn to read, to produce plays, and to participate in religious processions. While the Franciscans hired architects, the Indians learned building skills and built many small Spanish-designed churches. Small Indian towns grew up in Mexico and in places to the north and to the south.

From 1758 to 1767, Father Serra was once more assigned to teach classes in a university, this time in Mexico City. However, in 1767, the Spanish king ordered all the Jesuit priests out of the Spanish territory in South and Central America, replacing them with Franciscan priests. Thus it was that Father Serra was sent to be a spiritual leader among the Indians in the present California area. Father Serra established ten missions in the California area where he taught the Indians practical skills as well as the Faith.

One serious problem that Father Serra and the other missionaries had to deal with was the fact that the Spanish government owned all the land, which meant they owned the churches as well. The missionaries were required to follow the directives of the



Spanish government, and were "allowed" to be in the Spanish territory only as long as the King approved. Food produced by the Indians often was taken to provide for the Spanish soldiers, leaving little for the priests and the Indians. Father Serra was known to have said that the Spanish government literally raided the missions and even destroyed the churches if the soldiers needed the building materials.

In 1773, Father Serra was asked to write a Constitution not only for the missionaries and the Indians, but also for the Spanish government officials. Father's Constitution

...continued on page 14



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

How important are the videos for the high school courses? We don't have a computer at home and we would need to go to the library to see them.

After the student watches a video, he is asked to rate the video and offer comments. It is very rare for any student to say a video is not helpful, and most say Very Helpful.

While the videos are not essential to doing well in a course, they not only offer further understanding, but they also provide more “inspiration” for learning the material. The presenters tend to provide a certain amount of “fun” and enjoyment while learning the material.

My friends are pressuring me to join a support group. What do you think?

Many home schooling moms feel they can use the support from a group, as well as benefit from different teaching ideas through having discussion meetings with other home schooling moms. For many moms, it is very helpful, but for some moms, they just want to take their own path. My suggestion would be to try a few meetings and see if you find any help, or any special friends whom you might call simply to talk over ideas. Even if you don't glean a great deal of home schooling help, you might meet some good Catholic families who can support you in your family vocation. If you try a group and it's not right for you, you can always stop going. But if you never try, you'll never know.

I feel a little depressed that this year has not gone as well as I would have liked; my children are just now finishing up last year's work.

It is important for you not to feel

depressed about your schooling because you might be conveying that attitude to your children. First, remember that even if things don't go perfectly, you are still saving your children from the secular influences that are dramatically affecting the children attending the schools.

Second, in this society, being a mother is being heroic!

Third, we never guarantee that our efforts will meet the optimal outcome we hope for. All you can do is just keep trying and encourage your children to keep trying.

Fourth, there's no inherent relationship between your children's learning pace and the calendar. Children learn at different rates, and they learn individual subjects at different rates. The point is to keep moving ahead with learning at the best pace for the child. With home schooling, we are using the most sensible approach to learning for children. Seton's lessons are to serve as a

Children learn at different rates, and they learn individual subjects at different rates.

guideline, not a command. They certainly are not meant to make you feel guilty for not having done enough in a certain period of time.

Stay calm and just keep trying. You and your children will accomplish more, and live more happily, if you don't put yourself under such pressure.

Discipline is a real problem in my home. My kids will only do their work if I am sitting with them. If I turn my back, they start playing a game.

Discipline is often a difficult problem in home schooling families. In fact, it seems that more people stop home schooling because of discipline issues than for any other reason. The lack of discipline in homes mirrors the overall culture, in which the idea that sometimes we need to obey authority is seen as contrary to our human rights.

The fact is, people who are undisciplined are people who are unlikely to succeed in life. People who lack discipline will find it difficult to hold a job or to raise a family. In the worst case, they may even lose the Faith.

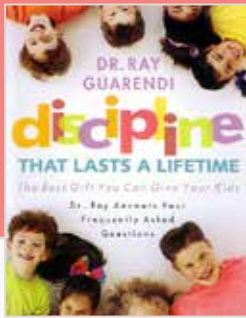
However, many families have been able to turn around the lack of discipline and create a workable and peaceful family life. It can be done, although it is not easy.

For help with discipline issues, consider attending a homeschool conference. Homeschool conferences feature speakers regarding discipline, such as Dr. Ray Guarendi.

Seton sells a number of books regarding discipline. Visit us at www.setonbooks.com then search for 'Discipline'. Remember that authors of these books offer suggestions, but it is up to you in the end to find what works for your family.

It upsets me that our pastor is not happy about our home schooling.

Many parish schools are under significant financial pressure. The economic problems over the last several years have caused many families to struggle financially.



Discipline That Lasts a Lifetime

M-FMBK-18 \$14.00

In the last generation or two, discipline has been assaulted as outdated and demeaning. Dr. Ray Guarendi deals with this problem in this book, confidently asserting that not only is such an assessment false, but rather self-discipline will be the best gift you ever give to your child.



It Doesn't Have To Be This Way

M-FMBK-81 \$7.95

Clear, confident, and consistent parenting is the key to successful homeschooling: short, sweet, to the point, and chock-full of practical, commonsense advice that has worked successfully for generations of parents.

www.setonbooks.com

Since parishes rely on donations from their parishioners to keep going, struggling families often mean a struggling parish. The bishops are closing schools and even churches because attendance and finances are so low. So, it's not hard to understand that pastors may look at home schoolers and see lost income to the parish school.

That being said, your first responsibility

must be to your children and your family as a whole. You are the one who has to make the choice of what is best for your children. Even though the parish priest might like your children to be in the parish school, he does not have the information you have, or the authority you have, to decide on the best educational situation for your children.

In any case, the decline of parish schools can hardly be blamed on home schooling. In 1965, there were 4.4 million students in Catholic elementary schools. By 1985 this number had dropped to just over 2 million—and there was no appreciable level of Catholic homeschooling during these years. In 2014, Catholic elementary schools enrolled a little less than 1.4 million students. There are perhaps a few hundred thousand Catholic students being home schooled in the United States. There are millions upon millions of Catholic children who are enrolled in public or non-Catholic private schools. One would think that just out of sheer numbers, the children enrolled in non-Catholic schools would be a more fruitful population to target for enrollment in parish schools.

I am not sure if I'm seeing all the grader comments on a high school English essay.

We have found that sometimes students and parents do not actually “see” the grader comments for book reports or essays submitted over the internet. You need a computer or internet browser that supports PDF comments. If you don't have it, you can find directions on how to get it in the Frequently Asked Questions section of MySeton.

High School English graders always make some comments, so if you don't see any comments in red on the essay itself, you should find comments embedded into speech bubbles and/or highlighted text. When the student places his cursor over the speech bubble or highlighted text, a comment box will pop up.

*You are the one who has to
make the choice of what is
best for your children.*



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*.



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



AVE MARIA
UNIVERSITY



CHRISTENDOM
COLLEGE



UNIVERSITY
OF DALLAS



JOHN PAUL THE GREAT
CATHOLIC UNIVERSITY



NORTHEAST
CATHOLIC COLLEGE



UNIVERSITY
OF ST. THOMAS
HOUSTON



THOMAS AQUINAS
COLLEGE



THOMAS MORE COLLEGE
OF LIBERAL ARTS



Wyoming
Catholic College
Wisdom in God's Country

setonhome.org/colleges



How Do You Do It?

Why Homeschooling
was the Natural Choice

Tara Brelinsky

Whenever I tell someone new that we homeschool, I take a deep breath and wait for the inquisition. Inevitably, they ask, “How do you do it?”

Be it the curious customer standing behind us in the mega-store line or that distant cousin at the family reunion, enquirers have probed my mental stability to be making such a choice by asking me for an explanation. Should one of my students happen to be in close proximity, the investigator often feels compelled to quiz little Jude or Malachi on their ABC capabilities and grasp of the American system of democracy. I’ve learned to be ready.

Having homeschooled my children for fourteen years now (including two Seton graduates), the query has been invoked countless times. And when our oldest was finishing his 8th grade year, the question shifted to the subject of high school because even though we’d managed to that point to raise and educate a small clan, for some reason, high school had the stigma of being a whole new world in the learning department.

I remember my high school career. It was a whole new world, but not necessarily for the reasons the detectives think. There was that

Spanish teacher we could distract into forgetting he was supposed to administer a test and that environmental science teacher who insisted on knowing how many children I planned to have since each little bundle would bring us one step closer to planetary destruction (guess, I'd deserve an F today).

Then again, I suppose that I owe each one of those enquirers a debt of gratitude because they taught me early on to reflect on the *how's* and *why's* of this homeschooling vocation. Like all things in life, it is easy to fall into a rhythm or stay stuck in a groove, repeating the same old patterns without discerning whether we are or are not making progress or where that progress is leading to. Preparing to answer the question keeps me on my toes and forces me to reevaluate from time to time.

For me it seems that homeschooling is the natural choice. I tell people that God never really gave me an alternative because we have never been able to afford private schools and instruction without God at the center fails to meet our eternal teaching goals. I see homeschooling as part of my marriage vocation. My marriage led me to parenthood and my parental duty is to be the primary teacher. Since we haven't been blessed with a better educational option, then I am called to homeschool. Framed in that aspect, I am better able to endure the long, hard days when I doubt my abilities to produce reasonably intelligent, hard-working citizens.

Then again, if my heavenly Father has called me to educate my children, then He will pour out the grace needed to sit through one more math lesson, teach another balking new reader or press on when my high schooler falls behind on his foreign language studies (although it would be



perfectly okay if God instilled me with a bit more patience in those moments).

Admittedly, though, when high school was on the immediate horizon, I got a bit weak in the knees. With a full house of various ages, I didn't feel up to the task of creating transcripts and monitoring credits. For the elementary grades, we'd invested in assorted curriculum primarily from one provider, but I was the only grader and lesson plan organizer. For high school, I wanted to enroll my older children in a thoroughly Catholic program that could offer them superior educational opportunities and reinforce their faith while relieving me of some of the more mundane tasks like grade calculating and assignment scheduling. Seton Home Study fit that bill for us.

Homeschooling has been a tremendous blessing in our family life. It has allowed us the time to experience life together and it keeps our hearts and minds centered on the domestic church. Like many homeschool families, my children don't segregate themselves by ages inside of our home or out. It is a joy to watch the toddler in the arms of his teenaged brothers when they are chatting with friends or to spy my younger boys playing games with their older sisters.

We choose to school year-round, taking a two week break after every nine week

semester. This schedule helps us avoid long, unproductive stretches (think 6 boys in a household with no schedule to follow = chaos) and it also helps to halt burnout because nine week chunks pass by quickly, especially when you know a break is coming between them.

Since we don't take an extended summer break, I don't feel guilty about participating in co-ops, factoring in some travel time (or occasional mental health days). Flexibility works well for us because I tend to get overwhelmed and frustrated by rigid calendars.

Additionally, this kind of schedule has allowed for life and all of its unexpected events to happen without throwing us into a tail-spin. A few years ago we suffered repeated losses (from babies to a job) and I had to wade through the pit of depression. There were days when I wanted to hide under the covers, but knowing that my children needed me was the catalyst that got me up and kept me moving forward. Having the wiggle room to start late on hard days

...continued on page 14



Mastering English Before It Masters You

Talk to any veteran of Seton Home Study School, and you'll hear the same story: Seton English is tough, but when you've finished it, there's little in the academic world that you won't be able to handle. There's no denying that Seton's English courses are challenging and rigorous, but they can be accomplished successfully with determination and hard work.

The key is to have a can-do attitude and to master the English courses before they have a chance to master you. Following are tips and tricks for doing just that, as well as featured supplements and resources that can make a world of difference to students and parents embarking on a Seton English course.

Remember, Seton is here to help. Use the tools we've provided for you, stay alert, and you'll do just fine in Seton's English courses. When in doubt, we're just an email or phone call away! Together, we'll make sure that you master English before it masters you.



"If the book report worksheet isn't helping the student, I suggest he or she simply read the book with the topics printed on a sheet of paper. This way, when the student finds something that will support or prove the topic, it can be jotted down beneath the relevant topic.

"For very young or inexperienced students, I recommend that the parent-teacher take dictation. Once students can see that they have thoughts worth putting on paper, they'll gain more confidence. Additionally, the parent-teacher can read the book with the child and point out supports for the topic, which teaches the child what to look for.

"I also recommend that parent-teachers not make too big a deal of the five-paragraph requirement, which can overwhelm young students. Instead, focus on having the student write a separate paragraph each day. At the end, these can be combined into the full assignment. Once you break down the assignment like this a few times, the student will become much more comfortable and capable of working independently."

Sharon Hassett, Elementary Counselor



Advice from the High School English Counselors

"Seton provides an array of options for the book analysis each quarter, meant to accommodate every kind of reader. If you're new to Seton or reading is not a strong point, be discerning in your book choice. Our message boards often have threads in which students have shared their experience with reading certain book analysis books, and these conversations can be a useful guide in your decision-making process.

"Students working on the book analysis assignment may want to take notecards, just as they would for the research report. Writing incidents and conversations that act as evidence for a trait or theme will help determine if the student has enough evidence to support his conclusions.

"Don't ignore comments on graded work! Those comments are meant as helpful advice that can teach you how to improve your English skills. Be sure to access any resources that the grader may have attached to your work, as well."

Elementary Grades

At the elementary level, students struggle with understanding grammar and developing writing skills.

3rd through 6th as well as 8th grade students needing opportunities to strengthen understanding of grammar concepts or practice grammar skills can find preliminary exercises in the course resources online.

Diagramming Videos

For students who need additional help with understanding the principles of diagramming, a full suite of diagramming video tutorials is available on MySeton.

Book Reports

When it comes to writing, young students seem to struggle most with applied writing skills, or instances when they are required to write about something they have learned or read. At Seton, the elementary book reports are one of the most frequent assignments of this type. Fortunately, Seton provides worksheets for students to use with their Book Reports. These worksheets are sent with the Lesson Plans.

Writing Skills

Junior high students needing to solidify writing skills before entering high school may find the 6th and 7th grade Paragraph Writing Handbook within the lesson plans particularly useful.

High School

High school presents its own set of English challenges, most of which center around analyzing literature and writing the research reports.

Book Analyses

The recurring book analysis assignments can be helped by a viewing of the relevant video tutorials, found in the Course Resources for each English course. These tutorials provide an overview of the works you'll be reading for the book analysis assignment, as well as key advice on important scenes, character development, and ideas.

Additionally, the Chapter Notes, also found in the Course Resources, can make a big difference to a student's ability to comprehend the works assigned for the book analysis. These questions encourage creative thought on ideas and plot details important to the development of the book analysis essays. Keep in mind that these questions are meant to be answered briefly

and orally, either in conversation with a parent-teacher, or into a recording device.

Don't forget the sample book analysis essays! Even our highest-performing students have benefited from regular review of these resources, which show exactly how a book analysis should be structured.

Research Papers

As for the research reports, remember that the Lesson Plans are your friend. There's a reason why the research report is divided into smaller assignments that occur in each of the 1st, 2nd, and 3rd quarters. If the assignments are tackled as scheduled, students accomplish manageable portions of the workload step by step, instead of being overwhelmed by a huge project at the end of the year.

This also gives students the chance to discover early on where they might be having trouble, so that problems can be corrected early.

‘Keep Your Dad Home’ Day

BY JOHN CLARK

Years ago, someone popularized the idea of fathers taking their children to work for a day. Hardly a novel idea, since most of recorded history recounts children and fathers working together; yet in the modern world, the idea make a lot of sense. When a child understands what his father does all day at work, it is easy to see how the relationship can benefit.

When I worked as a stockbroker and brought my high-school age children to work with me, they would come into my office and see the multiple computer screens lit up with flashing stock quotes. I tried to explain to them what I was doing and what all those flashing letters meant, but I doubt they were able to understand the subtleties of modern finance. Nevertheless, one of my children told me recently: “When I used to come into work with you, I wasn’t sure what you did, but I knew it was important.”

I think that’s a pretty healthy response to seeing a dad at work. It not only helps the child, but it also helps the father to communicate the importance of his work to his children.

Flip the Coin

Now, however, I want you dads to consider the other side of this coin: our children need to know that we consider their homeschooling work important, too. For this reason, I recommend that we homeschoolers institute a *Keep Your Dad Home Day*. As the name suggests, the idea is for you dads to take a day off from work and spend it with your kids in their homeschooling world. Your kids need it; you need it; the homeschooling world needs it.

As I’ve said in different ways in dozens of articles: the biggest problem in the Catholic homeschooling world is not the lack of curriculum; it’s not that Billy is a semester behind in Geometry; it’s not that

your search for a better geography book has proven fruitless. The biggest problem is that dads are not involved enough in the process. And if that’s a secret, it’s a poorly kept one.

For instance, at homeschooling conferences, presentations about the father’s role in homeschooling are often poorly attended. Many times, talks about the father’s role are not even scheduled because organizers know that the audiences will be sparse. At other random homeschool presentations, moms commonly outnumber dads by over 5 to 1, and sometimes more like 10 to 1. This is pragmatically explained away, but *outside* of homeschooling, what other aspect of parenting involves this type of ratio?

Moreover, I suspect that the ratio inside the home is sometimes even greater, and the question becomes a binary one, as in “My wife does the homeschooling. I don’t.” (I’ve heard countless forms of that statement in the past thirty years.) Seton’s internal research has illustrated the positive correlation between fatherly involvement and homeschool success. We fathers need to step up to the plate. Home plate.

A Special Feast Day

To that end, I suggest the first and inaugural “*Keep Your Dad Home Day*” for September 18th, the feast of St. Joseph of Cupertino. For many of us, that’s a couple weeks after homeschooling begins. That gives our wives and children the chance to unpack their boxes and sharpen their pencils.

Why that feast day? St. Joseph of Cupertino was the worst student in his class. In fact, Joseph’s story is one of the most hard-luck stories in history, Christian or otherwise. He was rejected by almost everyone he came across, and some rejected him on numerous occasions. At one point, he was given the job of merely taking care of a mule, although no one thought he could accomplish even that task properly.



FEAST DAY: SEPTEMBER 18TH

However, after several years of everyone observing his holiness and love of God, Joseph was allowed to sit for an exam, the passing of which meant that he could follow to the priesthood. Joseph was asked one question, the answer to which he explained so incredibly well that the examiner did not feel the need to ask any further questions. This was fortunate for Joseph, since he knew the answers to little else. Joseph later became a priest and his life as a priest was one of the most miraculous in history. And in many ways, it began with knowing the answer to one question on an exam.

As St. Joseph of Cupertino *learned* the right things, we fathers can ask for his intercession to help us fathers *teach* the right things.

So on September 18, stay home — and homeschool.

What we would like is for fathers to write in with their stories of how they spent their day, what they learned by staying home, and the effect that this day had on their families. Send me your stories, and I will write a blog about it shortly thereafter.

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.

A RAIL TO RUN ON

BEST PRACTICE FOR USING SETON'S LESSON PLANS

BY MARY ELLEN BARRETT

Soon the boxes will arrive and the excitement of a new year's worth of lesson plans will engulf the Barrett home. Actually, I'll be the one who is most excited; my husband just smiles indulgently at my giddiness and the children will only quickly glance through the Lesson Plans before disappearing in stark terror of being asked to do something right then. Seton plans have been part of our life a long time now and I am so grateful to have this "rail to run on".

When the lesson plans arrive I put each set in a binder and attach sticky tabs to divide by subject on the right side. Over the coming days I will go through each subject with my large planner and make a monthly list, in pencil, of any supplies I will need for projects or experiments, or any books I would like to order or obtain from the library.

In addition, I will choose my quarter end dates and sketch out what days we will take off, when vacations begin and a tentative ending date for the year. This is all in pencil since I can't be sure what the year will bring and being flexible is essential for a homeschool mom. I also take the time to use my highlighter to mark those assignments which are to be turned in to Seton. In this way, if we get behind or there is an overwhelming amount to accomplish in a given week, I can see at a glance what is most important.

I love using the Seton teacher planners to write out the day's plan for each child. I usually only plan three weeks in advance, so I sit with the lesson plans and write out in the book what is to be accomplished each day. This gives me a good handle on

each child's workload as well as giving me time to plan extras, such as going on a field trip or acquiring an ingredient for a science experiment.

FREE TO BE FLEXIBLE

Doing only three weeks at a time really gives me a lot of freedom to adjust our year as things come up. So many Seton moms feel that they are "behind" when they take time to go on a field trip or if the stomach bug attacks and nothing gets accomplished for a week. While no one can plan for an illness, if you know that you need time to help out a sick relative, or a new baby is arriving during the school year, planning this into the schedule relieves the feeling that you aren't accomplishing anything and allows you to increase the workload during more quiet times in life. If mom writes out the plans for the whole year in one sitting then you might be constantly readjusting and erasing, but spending one Sunday every three weeks writing things up and reading all the tidbits about how to present a lesson gives a great feeling of freedom and flexibility.

Now, as much as I am a fan of having that "rail to run on," it often makes sense to change the plans in order to accommodate individual learning issues or to lessen the burdens on mom. If, as I have been the last few years, you are homeschooling six or more children, you may need to tweak things in order to get everything done. For example:

With the younger kids, I write their spelling words on sticky notes, and when it's time to alphabetize the words (usually Wednesday), the children can stick them on the wall in alphabetical order. I can see

at a glance it's done and move along, while the stickies are moved to the children's bedroom wall for review. It's easier and fun. When my kids write English papers, their first drafts can be dictated into a recorder and then written out. This allows for some self-correcting, is a little more fun, and frees mom for something else.

For our state study projects (4th grade), the girls like to make beautiful scrapbooks of their work, whereas the boys (who couldn't care less about a scrapbook) like to do the work and present it in a trifold poster-board. Allowing the work to progress in these ways keeps the kids' interest in the subject, teaches some independence and creativity, and allows for mom to be in a more supervisory role.

The lesson plans can be a daunting proposition; however, when approached with the intention to create a lifestyle of learning in the home and when used with an organized and sensible approach, the book lists, project ideas, movie suggestions, and all of the other extras enhance your child's education and create a joyful, peaceful place in which children can learn, grow, and flourish.

That is a rail it's a pleasure to run on!

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.

THE DUSTY, DARING ROAD AHEAD

Is it Time to Shake the Dust... or Not?

If anyone will not welcome you or listen to your words, leave that home or town and shake the dust off your feet. – Matthew 10:14

It's difficult these days, no doubt. It's difficult to maintain hope in the future when Western Civilization has not only abandoned Christianity but also has seemingly abandoned any tenuous connections it once had even to mere sanity. It's not enough anymore to tell us that the threadbare emperor is really wearing a beautiful suit of clothing; now we are told that the Constitution requires us to affirm the beauty of the emperor's vesture. It's difficult these days, no doubt.

It's easy these days, no doubt, to shake the dust from our feet and say good riddance. "You want a society in which bad is good and good is bad, where up is down and down is up, where we talk about protecting children while destroying them, where the greatest expression of tolerance is intolerance and actual tolerance is forbidden? You want it. You got it!"

But, in reality, if ever there is a time for shaking the dust off feet, this is not it. There is a saying in politics that you don't want your enemies to define you. If Christians withdraw from society, as it is all too tempting to do, we will only be worse off because our detractors will then have an unanswered opportunity to define us as they want.

Better that we define ourselves.

There is only one way that Christians define themselves; and that is love. There is only one way in which Christians live their lives, and that is love. There is one thing that Christians return in the face of hate, and that is love.

They say Christians believe what they believe because of hatred. As if we could harbor hatred within our hearts and still dare to call upon the mercy of God. We speak the truth out of love. Indeed, truth

and love are really the same thing—love is simply truth in action.

And what we need is more action, because you can't achieve what you don't dare.

ACTION 1: Make sure you and your children know and understand the Catholic Faith.

A huge percentage of people who sit in the pews every week don't know what the Catholic Church teaches. And even many of those who know the teachings don't know the reason for the teaching. And for those people who understand the reasons, their children likely do not.

If you want to understand a problem, go back to the beginning. In the case of the modern misunderstanding of marriage and family, the beginning is *Humanae Vitae*. The world finds itself in its current state because it rejected the prophetic message of Pope Paul VI in 1968. He warned of the evils which would come from separating the procreative and unitive aspects of married love. If only the world had listened.

ACTION 2: Become more active in your church.

It's not enough merely to teach our physical families. The family which is our church community must be taught as well, and that requires trained and committed catechists. In some cases, where the Faith is not well-known or is disregarded, this may be like becoming a missionary to a foreign land. Even so, the Faith, once planted, can grow 30, or 50, or 100-fold.

Besides teaching, simply knowing and acting together as a faith community is important. Does the surrounding, non-Catholic community know that your church exists? It should, because if they don't know you then they are more likely to believe it when someone says that the Catholics are



haters and bigots. And if they do know you—from your good works, from your charitable endeavors, from your care for the poor, from your help of the aged—then when falsehoods are spread about you, there will be no ears to be tickled and no tongues to repeat the charges.

ACTION 3: Become more involved in your community.

Do you know your neighbors? Could you count on them in case of trouble? Would they vouch for your character? Isolated people are vulnerable people. All Catholics, but especially homeschoolers, need to know and be known in the community. You should know who your local town and county representatives are, and let them know about your views. Are there needs in your community? Volunteer, and have your kids volunteer.

Most communities have many fraternal and other clubs. If you own a business, join the Chamber of Commerce. If you have an interest in politics, join a local town or county committee. Join the local Toastmasters Club so you can learn how to stand up in front of an audience and speak concisely and coherently.

Especially if you are young, run for public office. It's actually not that difficult to run a campaign for a local Town Council or County Board of Supervisors. You don't need much money; all you need is energy and time. In Front Royal, Virginia, last year, a young gentleman and a young lady (both

under 30) ran for Town Council on shoe-string budgets. They both won.

ACTION 4: Consider relocating to a more Catholic community.

Even though you don't want to withdraw from the world, you don't want it to overcome you either. If you move to a more Catholic community, then your family can meet other Catholic families and your children can have Catholic friends, and perhaps someday marry a Catholic.

The option to withdraw from society is sometimes called the *Benedict* option, after St. Benedict, the founder of Western Monasticism. Writing in *Crisis Magazine*, Austin Ruse suggests what he terms the *Escriva* option: engaging with the world, but from a home base of orthodoxy. He writes, "Though we would never use such a phrase, my family and I live in ... an 'intentional community' in Northern Virginia where a grade school in a Church has brought dozens of mission oriented families together. Many in the grade school go on to the local Catholic high schools—Oakcrest for the girls and The Heights for the boys. Others have come to this area for the vibrant home-school community. Many live a little farther out, gathered in Front Royal, Virginia, around Christendom College and the various Catholic apostolates headquartered there. Some of these families have begun to intermarry. All of them are fully engaged in the culture: banking, politics, teaching, journalism, medicine, even the movie business. They gather strength from each other and wade into the culture with the Gospel example of their lives."

It's not just Front Royal, or the Northern Virginia area. Steubenville, Ohio is also a strongly Catholic community, as is Ave Maria, Florida. And there are others around the country. Search them out.

If you can't move, then at least don't be isolated. Seek out other families who are similar-minded, and confirm each other in the Faith.

However difficult the landscape appears when we gaze out through the windows of our domestic church, the world is hardly worse now than that into which Christ was born. Did the sorry state of the world stop those early Christians from living life, performing their work, and preaching the Faith amidst a faithless people?

Christians conquered the world once; not with arms, not with imprecations, not with fear, not with trembling, but with steadfast love. Do we dare to do so again?

GUIDANCE

Work & School

A vital part of growing up is learning from experience. All the books in the world won't be of much help to a person who cannot actually function outside the home. Thus, this month's column focuses on employment for the high school student and learning to operate successfully outside the home.

For most, the time eventually comes when small jobs such as baby sitting or yard care must give way to more formal work situations. Some will find good employment year after year with the same employer, something akin to an internship, while others may find it more interesting to experience a variety of jobs as they search for a field with more permanent appeal. My own experience included construction (I hated it!), restaurant work (I enjoyed this and can still turn out passable Mexican food), an ice factory (rough work, but a really cool summer job!) and a grocery store, which I enjoyed due to the great variety of people I encountered. I'm glad to have

had these experiences, though I had long been aware that I would aim at a career in education.

Some Seton students have literally made their own jobs, of course. Two young ladies, independently of each other, were quite successful in raising beef cattle. One of them actually solved some problems with cattle and was traveling the country giving talks to rancher's associations by the time she was sixteen! Both completely paid for their college education! Seton students have formed businesses as diverse as breeding show horses, computer repair services, dog grooming, art galleries, and journalism. The only real limit is one's own imagination and inventiveness. The general idea is that diligence and excellence in academic affairs should translate very well to the world of gainful employment.



Bob Wiesner earned a B.A. in Philosophy from Christendom College and his M.A. in Theological Studies from Maryknoll School of Theology. His passions include classical music, iconography, and history.

demanding obligations and respect for the rights of all. The document was signed and approved by the Spanish king. Father Serra's Constitution was in use in the California area about 15 years before the United States Constitution was ratified and signed.

What might we home schooling parents be able to learn from Blessed Father Junipero Serra and his work among the American Indians?

Our home schooling families are like little missions where we teach our children the Faith, show them how to practice their Faith, and even, like Father Serra, teach our children how to provide for themselves as practicing Catholics.

Catholic homes, like little missions, should be places where the Faith is taught and practiced. Unhappily, we need to teach ways to practice the Faith in a society which often rejects our values. As Father Serra ensured, our homes must

be places where our children can learn practical skills for daily life as well as skills to help them in future careers in a non-Christian culture. Like Father Serra, we need to teach the Faith, mostly by good example, to others in our community. We should ask for the blessing of the holy Junipero Serra on our Catholic home schooling missionary work in our family and in our community.



or stretch out a week's worth of lessons over two weeks saved me from feeling like we were falling behind in our studies.

Having my children present throughout that difficult time was a lesson in and of itself. They witnessed first-hand the struggle of carrying our crosses and saw the merit of staying the course.

Now that I have succeeded in graduating two of my students, I have the added benefit of seeing the full fruits of my years of labor at the school table. Watching our two eldest navigate the world of young adulthood, apply for secondary education, continue their altar server commitments, and maintain employment has validated all those answers I've given throughout the years.

Could God call me to follow another course next year? Perhaps. But for now I will continue to school my children in my home knowing that He has called me to this task and His plans are trustworthy.



Write for SetonMagazine.com

Our September Theme: Making Seton Work for You

Share with us your tips for making the Seton curriculum fit your family environment and needs. From organizing lesson plans, to selecting which exercises get precedence, to how you make the rules for time-off and catch up work, SetonMagazine.com is devoting September to sharing your experiences, ideas, and advice with the homeschool community.

We pay for published articles!

Submission Deadline

Friday, August 21st, 2015

www.setonmagazine.com/submit



The High-School Christmas Essay Contest

Our second Christmas Essay Contest has begun! 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. More details, submission information online!

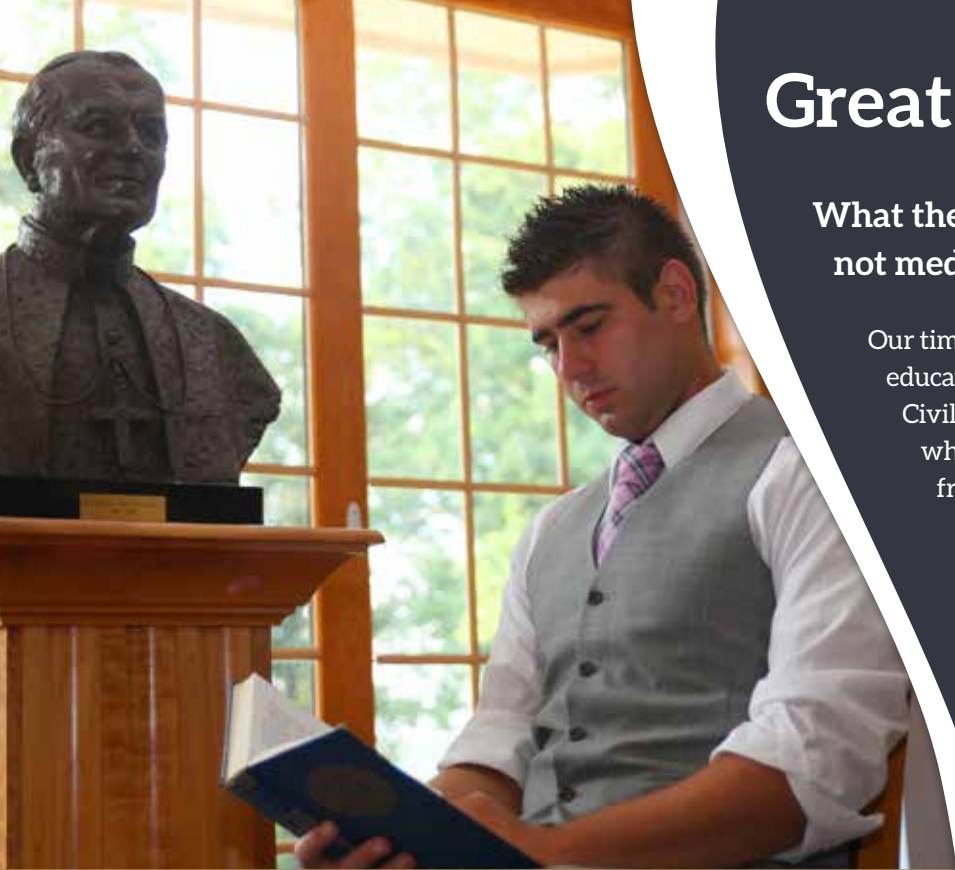
Prizes

1st Place: \$75 - 2nd Place: \$50 - 3rd Place: \$25

Submission Deadline

October 31st, 2015

www.setonmagazine.com/2015essay



Great minds **think** alike.

What the world needs now is greatness —
not mediocrity.

Our time-tested Catholic liberal arts education — the same education that has inspired the greatest minds of Western Civilization — is not for the faint of heart, but for those who are willing to accept the bold and challenging call from God to become the great men and women He wants them to be.

Dare to join us. Dare to be great.

SETON STUDENTS EXCEL HERE.
christendom.edu/setonhome



CHRISTENDOM
COLLEGE

Front Royal, Virginia | christendom.edu | 800.877.5456

“

“I sent all my seven sons to Christendom College and I’ve never regretted it.”
– DR. MARY KAY CLARK

”



Seton Student Achievements

SHARING SUCCESS WITH THE SETON COMMUNITY



Leslie | I was accepted to Gatton Academy. After my two years at Gatton, I plan to continue my education at Western Kentucky University, with a major in Chemistry and a double minor in Biochemistry and Astronomy.



Colby | I played “Pugsley” in The Addams Family at The Arundel Barn Playhouse. President Bush and his wife Barbara attended. They invited the cast to their home in Kennebunkport for a party.



Mario | I was chosen to represent the East Brunswick Baseball League 10 U travel All-Star team. I have been involved with baseball since I was 5 years old.

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

www.setonmagazine.com/students

Seton Home Study School

1350 Progress Drive

Front Royal, VA 22630

Change Service Requested

Non-Profit Organization
U.S. Postage
PAID
Permit No. 19
Elizabethtown, PA

Essential Resources for Catholic Homeschoolers

SetonBooks.com/catholic-resources



*Today more than ever,
the Christian family has a very noble
mission that it cannot shirk: the
transmission of the faith,
which involves the gift of self
to Jesus Christ Who died
and rose; and insertion into the
Ecclesial Community.*

Pope Benedict XVI, Letter to the Participants
in the Fifth World Meeting of Families, May 17th, 2005

