

Seton MAGAZINE

Under the Magisterium of the Catholic Church

SETONMAGAZINE.COM | OCTOBER 2015



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STAYING ON TRACK ISSUE

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Vol. 4, No. 10, October 2015
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Subscription Information:

Subscription is included with your enrollment.

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

Cover photo:
The Payne 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.



'My Single Consolation'

The Inspiration of St Isaac Jogues

BY DR. MARY KAY CLARK

St. Isaac Jogues is one of several Jesuit priests and missionaries from France who gave their lives as martyrs in the 1600s to further the dangerous work of bringing the Catholic Faith to the American Indian tribes in North America. He was born in 1607 and was home schooled by his parents until he entered the Jesuit seminary. At his own request, he was assigned in 1636 to the Jesuit Mission in Quebec, French Canada, to convert and teach the Huron Indians. Father Jogues worked at the mission for six years, during which time he was known for his long hours of prayer and his love for the children. The Hurons happily accepted the Catholic Faith and many were baptized.

When there was an attack by the Mohawks (one of the five tribes in the Iroquois Confederacy) on the Huron Mission, many were killed, but others, including Father Jogues, were taken captive. The Mohawks took their prisoners south of Quebec into what is now New York.

Father Jogues was tortured repeatedly for about a year, but in spite of his terrible sufferings, he continued to teach the Faith to the captured Hurons, and even taught some of the Mohawk children. Amazingly, he still continued to pray regularly and at length. While he was a prisoner, there were several conversions.

Father Jogues finally was rescued by a group of Dutch settlers living in the New York area. After a short recovery in France, Father Jogues asked to return to the mission in Quebec. His superiors reluctantly gave permission, and in 1646, Father returned to the mission but was killed shortly thereafter.

Why was Father Jogues so anxious to go back to the American Indian missions after his terrible experiences? Could it be that in spite of his sufferings, he knew he was reaching the hearts of the American Indian children and some of their parents? Perhaps he went back to keep alive in their hearts what he had taught them about Jesus. Perhaps Father Jogues remembered

the happy faces of those children, the light of understanding and love for Jesus in their eyes.

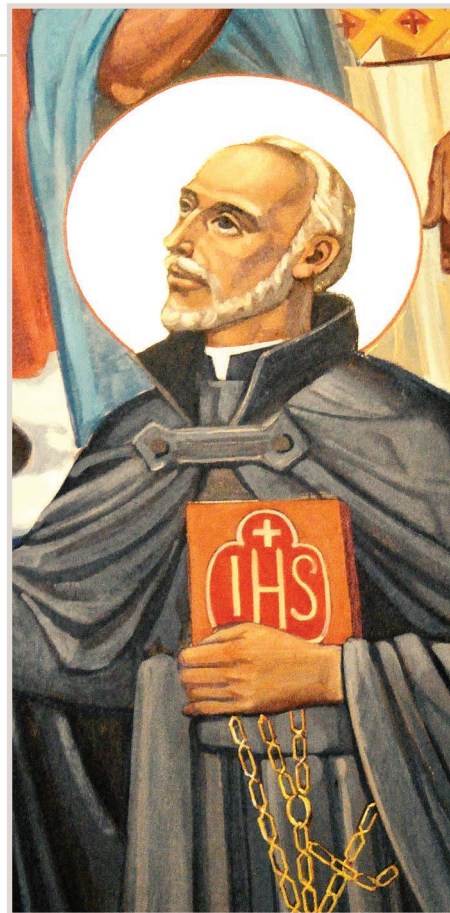
In a letter to his Jesuit superiors, Father Jogues wrote:

"Let not regard for us prevent you from doing that which is to the glory of God. The design of the Iroquois as far as I can see, is to take, if they can, all the Hurons; and having put to death the most considerable ones and a good part of the others, to make one nation of these poor people. . . I become more and more resolved to dwell here as long as it shall please Our Lord, and not to go away even though an opportunity should present itself. My presence consoles the French, the Hurons and the Algonquins. I have baptized more than sixty persons, several of whom have arrived in Heaven. That is my single consolation. . ."

Father Isaac Jogues' message to us homeschool mothers is that we must be faithful to our duty to our children, faithful to those inside our homes while the attacks come from without. We need to remember that no matter what the sacrifices asked of us, no matter how great the problems or the frustrations, what we are giving our children is Love Himself, Jesus Christ along with His mother Mary.

The experience of St. Isaac Jogues reflects the conflict we see today between Christians and the secular culture, which works constantly to vanquish Christians with anti-Christian rules and regulations. The secularists have "captured" the public schools which consistently teach secular values, practices, and ideas.

When our children complain about their "sufferings" in doing math problems or answering science questions, they should be reminded of the sacrifices that others have made for our freedom and for our Catholic Faith. The story of St. Isaac Jogues should be told to our children, who need to be reminded that being ignorant of the Faith, and being ignorant of those who suffered



for our religious freedom, will lead to domination by those who hate the Catholic Faith.

Our children need reminding that they are soldiers of Christ, and that this is not a philosophical expression. They will be asked to "fight" for their Faith in many different ways. Are they willing to risk their lives, their reputation, their future?

America will never return to the Christian nation it once was or is meant to be unless Catholics are willing, again and again, with each generation, to study our Faith, to live our Faith in prayer and sacrifice day in and day out, and also to share our Faith with that same joy that motivated the missionaries, whose 'consolation' it was to bring souls to Christ.

St. Isaac Jogues, you who taught the Catholic Faith, and who were pleased to suffer and die for the conversion of the American Indians, please pray for us Catholics in America to be brave missionaries for our Catholic Faith.



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 do I manage homeschooling several children, with two in high school?

Consider putting two children together in the same grade level. You might have a girl in 7th grade in some subjects, but you might put her in 6th grade with her 6th grade brother in another subject. Having two children work together on subjects usually encourages them to stay on schedule. It is well worth having an older child even give up the challenges of a higher level course to learn along with a younger child whom she can help with the schooling.

Your children in high school should be taking the same subjects together as much as possible. This helps them to be more successful. Two students taking the same course can discuss their assignments and help each other learn without always needing to ask you.

Even if they are not taking the exact same courses, try to have them take similar courses. For example, students taking Spanish I and Spanish II can still help each other learn even though they will not be doing exactly the same thing in their courses.

Make things as simple as you can by using all the helps available. Especially use your MySeton page, both for supplements (such as audios and videos) and for uploading work and taking tests. When your students take tests online, you don't need to collect and safeguard tests for mailing.

Don't ignore the spiritual aspect of homeschooling. We know we need all the help we can get from Jesus and Mary to accomplish this vital task. Each day, try to attend Mass with the children. If you cannot, consider having your family watch Mass on EWTN so the children can pray along with the priest.

Homeschooling is not as much about teaching reading, writing, and arithmetic, as it is about living the Catholic Faith as a family. We are homeschooling to keep the Faith for our children. Talk to your children about why you are homeschooling so they can understand and are more "inspired" to do their schoolwork.

If I send my children to a local co-op twice a week, can they finish the Seton program in three days a week instead of five days a week?

That sounds pretty tricky. If the co-op is teaching using the Seton books, that may be possible. It may be that even though the co-op school teaches three days a week, the parents and students are still expected to do their work on the other two days. You'll want to really pin down with the co-op school exactly what is expected.

*Homeschooling is not
as much about teaching
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as a family.*

My neighbor says she will homeschool when the children get older when it will be easier. What do you think about that?

The main reason Catholic parents homeschool their children is because of the corrupt culture in our society, which is promoted in the public school system. Even in Catholic or private religious schools which do not promote the secular culture, it is often promoted through the secular

textbooks, other students, and sometimes the teachers.

Although families do often start homeschooling in high school (when, for example, there is a Catholic elementary school but no Catholic high school in the area), it can be more difficult to start later. After being in a school environment, older students want to be with their friends and all the activities they have enjoyed for so long. Plus, if students don't develop good self-motivation skills early on, it can be difficult to start developing them in high school. But, starting homeschool at any level of high school certainly can be done successfully.

My 3rd grade son struggles with spelling. May I use another book?

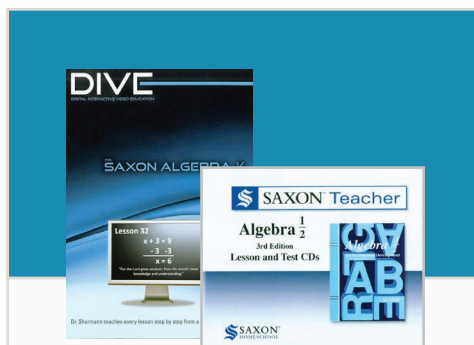
You can always choose to use another book or another system for any course; however, bear in mind that when you do this we can't give a grade on the Seton report card for this subject. For K through 8th grade, that's usually not a problem, since students aren't gaining credits toward graduation as they do in high school.

Before trying a new book, you might look for some ideas to help your son learn the spelling words in the Seton speller. There are many web sites with various ideas to teach spelling. You might check on those and see if one works with your son. Also, be sure that your son's hearing is fine. Some children don't hear correctly which results in speech and spelling difficulties.

You might also want to contact one of our elementary counselors for some more ideas.

Several in our homeschooling group stop homeschooling for high school.

Some families homeschool for grade school but put the students into a brick and mortar high school. Parents usually



Interactive Math CD-ROMS

They are like having a personal tutor skilled in Saxon Math and are very easy to use. The student simply puts the CD-ROM in the computer and selects the lesson he has scheduled for the day. The lessons are taught using a "whiteboard" with the teacher's voice-over.

Every lesson in each Saxon Math book is covered. The D.I.V.E. lessons are 10-20 minutes long and use representative problems illustrating concepts. The Saxon Teacher lessons are 20-30 minutes long and use actual problems from the textbook. Both run on Macintosh and Windows operating systems.

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"I often recommend Saxon Teacher and D.I.V.E. into Math because they are such dynamic products. They integrate both sight and sound into the learning process, offering more to every student and specifically helping audio learners. These interactive videos focus the child on the process involved in each chapter."

Don Valaike, Seton Home Study School Science/Math Counselor

www.setonbooks.com

make this decision either because they feel the available high school is exceptional, or because the parents don't feel competent to teach the high school subjects, or sometimes because the students want to make a change.

The data, both statistical and anecdotal, show that parents can do a great job homeschooling through high school. We have many testimonials from colleges about how great their homeschooled students are. In fact, Christendom College recently ran an ad stating that their valedictorian and salutatorian for 2014 and 2015 were all Seton Home Study

School alumni. Our students tend to do very well on the SAT or ACT tests and often receive generous scholarships.

But as important as academics are, we don't think that's the main reason to stick with homeschooling through high school. The main reason is that the pressures that high school students are faced with today in brick and mortar schools can dramatically affect their ultimate future. Homeschooled students entering a high school will either change their values to go along with their fellow students, or struggle in the daily situation of being the strange outsider in a dangerous drug-and-sex-oriented high school culture. Even if the students stay strong in their faith, it will be hard for them not to be affected by the culture around them. When they are told day after day that good is evil and evil is good, they can easily start to be influenced by this and start to mold their own opinions in the same way.

My 8th grade daughter is struggling with Saxon Algebra 1/2.

The first part of the book is review, so if your daughter is struggling, you need to slow down and go back over the first quarter assignments. She will be lost and doing worse if she continues without having a good understanding of the first lessons in the book. If she continues to struggle after the first few weeks, you might need to go back to the 7th grade book and review the lessons there. Education is not about moving ahead no matter what. It is about learning by repeating and reviewing, and sometimes about finding a different method of presentation. If she seems to be having difficulty with a certain concept, you might find an alternate presentation on the internet of that particular concept.

For any student struggling with math, Seton carries two CD series which provide tutoring lessons for Algebra 1/2 and all the Saxon textbooks. These are a terrific help for busy moms and dads. Go to SetonBooks.com for both the D.I.V.E. series at \$50 each and the SAXON Teacher interactive CD ROMS at \$80 each. The first series runs 10 to 20 minutes per lesson, the second runs 20 to 30 minutes.



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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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Resiliency in our Children

The Unexpected Benefits to Homeschooling

The Payne Family

How quickly ten years have gone! My first thought of teaching our children at home was in March 2003. At that time, what military circles call the “tip of the spear” was moving through Iraq, and it was led by many of our Fort Stewart, Georgia soldiers. My own husband had been in Kuwait for nearly six months and while I was alone at home with our ‘two under two,’ I had a rare opportunity to observe the other military families. Watching them, I learned how to build resiliency in our children—a character trait I knew they would need in the years to come, regardless of Our Lord’s plan for their lives.

In preparation for their soldiers’ deployment, the homeschooling families I knew stopped schooling, adjusting their schedules to accommodate the two weeks of pre-deployment leave every soldier was given. They visited relatives, enjoyed time together, and then went back to schooling after their soldiers’ departures. Families sending their children to school lacked the homeschoolers’ flexibility and missed this precious opportunity for family time. In the following weeks, I noticed a further benefit to homeschooling I had not expected. Having made the most of their pre-deployment leave, homeschooled children were able to handle the ups and downs of deployment with much more emotional

stability. The flexibility and family-centered lifestyle of homeschooling families drew my attention more than anything else. So, right from the start, we were homeschoolers!





Five children, four deployments, and four moves later, our family is stationed at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, in the midst of our tenth year homeschooling. Each year has had its challenges, but we do our best to plan and then trust Our Lord to lead the way. We allow a full calendar year to complete each grade level, giving us time to celebrate the birth of a new blessing, accommodate Army life, enjoy a family visit, pitch in when a need arises or just take time to move slowly through some tough lessons.

Most days begin with breakfast, chores and a short ride to a local parish for the daily Mass. Upon our return home, we begin our schoolwork, following a schedule designed to allow me time with each of the kids in areas where they need help while others play with the little ones or work independently.

About midday, we break for rosary and lunch, then read aloud for 30 minutes. This gives the kids time for rest or handwork. The little ones enjoy lace-and-trace projects and coloring while some of the older children knit or cross-stitch. We especially enjoy funny books for our read aloud time.

We also like to read classics and lives of the Saints. Who knew St. Margaret Mary didn't like cheese?! After read aloud time, schoolwork is finished and we end the formal portion of our school day with tea time around 4pm, a wonderful tradition learned from our international military friends.

Throughout our school day, Seton is by our side, providing easily implemented lesson plans and counselors at the ready with advice and encouragement. With the ability to choose courses that fit each child, even blending grade levels if necessary, and downloading lesson plans weekly, we know we have the tools to succeed in educating our children.

Like many families, staying on track is a challenge for us. We start each new school year with priority given to daily Mass, family prayer, and shared mealtimes. We strive to progress at a reasonable pace through our academic work and look for service-focused activities to balance our schoolwork. Once a week we gather with other Catholic homeschoolers for daily Mass, Adoration, a picnic lunch and playtime. Regardless of where we are stationed, Catholic friendships like these are especially important as we seek to respond in charity to a world that feels so free to comment on our family size, beliefs or educational preferences. Together, we Catholic homeschooling families celebrate feast days and work to support one another as well as our local Catholic community.

Last year, our homeschool group



presented a living Stations of the Cross on one of the Fridays of Lent. This summer, we had a manna bag-packing party and potluck following daily Mass. Each family brought an item to include in the 'manna bags' that were then handed out to the people at our local homeless shelter that day.

Our family is also involved in the 4H program. With only one meeting a month, all the children can be involved in the same club while also exploring individual interests, many of which help to develop skills used throughout life. Cooking, small engine work, sewing, crafts, and reading are just a few of the projects our kids have

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7 STRATEGIES to STABILIZE the SCHOOL YEAR

Schedules and plans are all very well and good, but if you're like most of the rest of us, your school year goes off the rails at some point. It's almost inevitable that something will happen, whether it's relatively minor such as a series of seasonal illnesses, or more significant, such as a new birth in the family. Either way, you may find yourself asking, "How can I get back to the plan we had? How do we get caught up?"

Over the years, we've heard a lot of good advice, and combining that with wisdom from the counselors and Dr. Clark, we offer it to you here, in the hope that if you're currently looking for a way to get back on track, you'll find it in these pages.



1. Eliminate distractions.

A lot of times, it's the little things that knock us off balance. That's because they're small enough we don't notice them at first. Over time, however, they encroach more and more, driving a wedge between us and the important things we need to be doing. Sometimes, that's our own fault, such as when we can't put down the smart phones because we're too tuned in to the latest texts, tweets, and instagrams. Other times, it's not our fault, as when the phone won't stop ringing with calls from marketers, politicians, and scammers, as happened to Seton mom, Sandy.

If you're noticing that you're suddenly taking twice as long to get through the school day, take a step back and see what might be consuming more than its fair share of your time. This goes for the kids too, and nine times out of ten, it's electronics. Silence cell phones during morning hours and stash them away from the school zone. Move toys, comic books, and other recreational items away from work spaces. Ask family not to call before lunch, and register your phone number with the National Do Not Call List. Turn off televisions and radios, and save the internet for afternoons or evenings.

2. Cut class.

Sometimes we get bogged down because we're trying to accomplish too much at once. Brains get saturated, energy lags, personalities generate friction, and before you know it, productivity has been cut by significant proportions. If this happens, it may be worth your while to restructure your school week. Instead of doing all six to nine subjects (depending on grade level) every single day, do Math, English/Reading, and Religion every day, but save Science, History, Geography, and Art for two or three times a week.

Within a particular course or subject, you can cut certain elements, as well. As our counselors so often tell families, "Focus on essentials, and don't worry about the rest!" If it's a major assignment, finish it; if it's a daily activity, let it go.

3. Make it up later.

At times it may be necessary to let an entire course go for a period of time, perhaps even for a semester or even a year. With this method, you relieve the student of the most troubling course during your regular school year, which allows the student to complete the remaining courses much more quickly with a relatively stress-free mindset. Then after everything else has been accomplished, the "problem course" can be begun again, with undivided attention and a sense of freedom to take as much time as needed. As homeschool mom Nancy told us, "Sometimes when something isn't working, it's better to stop and start all over again, rather than just keep pushing." Removing those stumbling blocks for a time may be just what's needed to get school back on track.

4. Whittle it down.

Inevitably, there will come a point when something happens that just couldn't have been foreseen, and for which we just can't be prepared, whether it's a death in the family, illness, or accidents, or an unexpected job promotion with subsequent move. In such situations, it's not unusual for homeschooling to take a back seat for a few weeks, perhaps even a month or two. It can be demoralizing to face the seeming mountain of work that awaits you when the family is finally able to return to fulltime schooling.

Chip away at the work. Do school on Saturday mornings for a month. Add an extra half hour to hour of class time either at the beginning or the end of your normal school day. Meagan had her children do one extra hour a day five days a week for a few weeks after a move, and told us that it wasn't very long before they were caught up. Do one class during lunch every day, something such as spelling or geography, in which everyone can participate. By the end of the first week, you'll have caught up by two or three days, and within a month or two, you'll be fully caught up, using this incremental approach to accomplishment.

5. Do one thing.

If adding in extra school time isn't suited to your family dynamic, try the alternative tactic, wherein you pick just one course or type of assignment, and do nothing but that for a week or two weeks at a time. Seton mom Michelle says when her kids get behind on book analyses, they "take an entire week off just to focus on getting the books read and writing the [book] reviews." Instead of allowing that assignment to drag out for an entire quarter, Michelle makes sure they catch back up by stopping everything else. When you hone in on just one area for a few days before moving on to the next, not only can you get it done more efficiently, it's the Seton experience that you frequently end up getting ahead in everything.

6. Bring in reinforcements.

You may have gotten this far in the article and be thinking to yourself that it's just not possible, not in your life, not in your circumstances. Perhaps it's time to think about asking for help, which is something most of us don't like to do, but which we should all do more frequently, nonetheless. Asking for help produces the double blessing of lightening your burden while offering someone else the chance to practice charity.

Sarah tells us that their family has nearly always been in survival mode, what with eight children under ten, a ninth currently on the way, and the fifth requiring special needs care. She finally reached out to her family this past year, and her father started coming to tutor the children twice a week. It made a difference.

Ask your family for tutoring assistance. Ask close friends from church for tutoring assistance. See about having nearby homeschooling families take one or two of your children for a class each week. And if you can't find tutoring assistance, remember that help doesn't have to be academic. If aunts and uncles or grandparents are not comfortable teaching your children, perhaps they might be willing to help with errands and chores such as grocery runs and housework. Recruit friends and family for a Saturday to help you fill your freezer with a month of meals, or to do a top-to-bottom house-cleaning. Many hands make light work. Even having a young lady from church come once a week to help you with babysitting or tidying can make a big difference in your ability to manage your homeschool.

7. Trust grace.

Finally, trust in the power of prayer and God's infinite goodness. He can and will help your family when you need it. Rely on the Blessed Mother for her intercession and assistance. Seton mother Terri tells a particularly poignant story of how her daughter was unable to do any school work for a long time after the death of a close friend in an accident. At a loss, Terri finally began praying a novena to Mary, Undoer of Knots. Within a couple weeks, her daughter was able to function again, and has since successfully completed her school year. With God's grace, we really can achieve the impossible.

In the long run, as Dr. Clark reminds us, "Staying on track should simply mean not wasting time and doing schoolwork every day." After that, "getting behind" is really only a relative term. That's the beauty of homeschooling. Each student learns at the pace best suited to him or her within the context of the particular family situation. If you need to take a break or take a longer time, that's o.k. But if you believe there's legitimate concern for the state of your homeschool, try one or two of the strategies above, and see if you're not back on track by the end of the year. Happy homeschooling!



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.

6 Home School Tips from an Injured Dad



As I write this, I am at home recovering from a rib condition. For the past several weeks, in addition to icing my ribs and writing semi-relevant blogs and columns, I have spent quite a bit of time homeschooling the kids. During these weeks, I have learned or re-learned several points, and had several beliefs about homeschooling reinforced. I'd like to share some of these realizations. Hopefully, these tips can help you stay on track.

1. Don't wait for everything to be perfect.

If my wife waited for everything to be perfect, we'd have never made it past our first date. Before they begin, a lot of moms and dads want the perfect homeschool classroom, the perfect books, the perfect kids, the perfect...whatever.

Embrace imperfection. Take it from me: imperfection isn't that bad. Whether it's starting homeschooling, starting a new year, or starting a new day, just get started.

2. Buy more highlighters.

I thought about making this Tip #1. Maybe you can teach effectively without highlighters, but I can't. If I may speak pedagogically for a moment, highlighters are the most meaningful invention since movable type. I can think of dozens of academic uses but I'll mention one in

particular. Since you may have to teach more than one child at a time, have the children highlight the concepts they are struggling with or don't understand. Toward the end of the day, help them with the highlighted sections from their work.

3. Ask your children what they learned today.

At the end of the day, review what the children have learned, and why it matters. Say, for instance, the kiddos are studying the Michigan-Ohio War of 1835, which was a series of disputes, arguments, and various un-pleasantries over which state would claim the city of Toledo. At the end of the day, you can ask your kids about it to see what they remembered.

Another benefit to having your kids learn one thing every day is that once you get to be my age, you begin to forget something every day. Your kids learn something; you forget something. So in the aggregate, your family is Even Steven.

4. Once your child understands the concept, move along.

As a parent, you can tell when a child understands something, and when he doesn't. Try not to spend too much time reviewing concepts they already know. My rule as a parent is this: Don't make your math whiz of a child do a 1,275 single-digit math workbook quiz unless you're willing to take that same quiz yourself.

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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 Back on Track When It Falls Apart

BY MARY ELLEN BARRETT



It all seemed so promising in August. All the pencils were neatly sharpened and the notebooks were in pristine condition. The schedule looked completely doable in its color-coded perfection there in your calendar. There was a school plan, a meal plan, a housekeeping plan and an activities plan. It was going to be a great year.

Now it's October and it's all falling apart already. You have no idea what went wrong but something did. No one seems to be sticking to the schedule; the fourth grader can't find his math book for the eleventh time; the meal plan isn't working because you have no time to shop; your husband has been working late for a week, and the house looks like you just hosted a rodeo. What happened?

Life. That's what happened. When planning, we always forget that life unfolds along a course of its own. Taking care of family is the primary job of a homeschool mom, and families are made up of a bunch of unpredictable, intractable, frequently maddening small people called children. No matter how many colored pens and how much washi tape you use on your schedule children just happen, and you know what? That's the way it's supposed to be. You are there to tame the chaos and provide the structure but God put the wiggle in the children and He doesn't expect you to be living in some idealized world where nothing is sticky and everyone is always polite. Kids are kids and adults are imperfect; therefore mud, lost books and piles of dirty clothes are just part of our lives. The important thing is to acknowledge that fact, take a deep breath, and then deal with it before it gets out of hand.

These types of situations can usually be solved with one word. Discipline. It's not my favorite word either, but it is so necessary for a homeschool mom, in particular, to be disciplined. When I feel like things are starting to come apart at the seams, my first response is to examine my prayer life. It is essential to my peace and to that of my family that I do not forgo my daily rosary and Mass at least once a week besides Sunday. If these things are in place then I am in a good place, so make sure that you're getting the spiritual shot in the arm that you need too. Once you have taken care of that, here are some other ways to get back on track.

1. Prep time.

Carve out two hours every weekend to work on school for the upcoming week. This should be part of your weekly routine. You need the time to read through the lesson plans for the upcoming week, pull out any books that may be needed, make whatever copies and so on. This all takes time and shouldn't be done in a rush on school mornings. Your whole life will change when you already have what you need in place every morning, and when you know what is going to be accomplished before the day begins.

2. Eat the Frog.

Mark Twain famously wrote, "Eat a live frog first thing in the morning and nothing worse will happen to you the rest of the day." If you do the hardest thing first, the rest of the day will seem like a cakewalk, so have the children tackle their most difficult subjects first thing in the morning. Once they have eaten the frog, the whole day gets brighter.

3. Check the schedule.

Seton students typically have about seven to nine subjects, if you include music, art, handwriting, etc., but it might be a mistake to try to do all of them every day. See if you can tinker the schedule so that bigger blocks of time are given to a subject on fewer days.

For example, we do history for an hour and a half three days a week and science for two hours two days a week. Math, English and Religion are done every day, but there is a lot of flexibility in the other subjects and playing around with the schedule might make the days run more smoothly for you and your family.

Having a bad day or even a bad month is no reason to get discouraged and question your ability to homeschool. Bad days happen, but they're a blip on the radar of your homeschooling life, so don't forget the big picture. Your child will not fail to be all that God created him to be just because you've had a rocky road here and there.

Rather, these times will teach children that when you get off course in life, prayer, discipline, hard work and a good attitude are the best remedies.

That might be the most important lesson of any your children will ever learn!

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.



Under Your Protection

The Marian Antiphons in Homeschooling

FATHER MARK WENZINGER, O. S.B., PH.D.

Assistant Chaplain, Christendom College, Front Royal, Virginia

The month of October is dedicated to the Rosary in a particular way. We traditionally conclude the Rosary with the *Salve, Regina*, or *Hail, Holy Queen*, which is the best known of the four Marian antiphons that are recited or sung after Night Prayer in the Roman Liturgy of the Hours.

Did you know, however, that there is a prayer to the Blessed Virgin Mary that is far older than the *Salve, Regina*, the other Marian antiphons, and the *Ave Maria/Hail Mary*? This Marian antiphon is also included in the Liturgy of the Hours, and it is a prayer I say many times a day. This short prayer is very easy to learn and to pray many times in the midst of a busy day. It is a wonderful prayer to pray on our rosary beads as a form of vocal prayer that is also simple meditative prayer as well.

This prayer has a wonderful heritage, and is especially appropriate in our own times as a prayer for our Christian brethren in Egypt, northern Africa, and the Middle East who are suffering so profoundly and dying for the sake of Christ. It is beloved by the Salesians of Saint John Bosco, who pray it in their devotion to Mary, Help of Christians. I would like to introduce and recommend this ancient and beautiful prayer to families as they work to stay on track in the various aspects of family life and homeschool during Mary's month of October.

In its current form, this antiphon's first words are *Sub tuum praesidium*, literally, "Under your protection."

Sub tuum praesidium confugimus, Sancta Dei Genetrix. Nostras deprecationes ne despicias in necessitatibus, sed a periculis

cunctis libera nos semper, Virgo gloriosa et benedicta. Amen.

We flee to your protection (or We take refuge under your protection), oh Holy Mother of God. Despise not our petitions in our necessities, but deliver us always from all dangers, oh glorious and blessed Virgin. Amen.

What a simple and beautiful prayer! As little children, we take refuge in Mary's outstretched arms, asking her to protect us from enemies visible and invisible and to strengthen us to serve her Son faithfully in great things and small.

Byzantine Rite Catholics will especially appreciate this October prayer to Mary, since October 1 is the feast of the *Protecting Veil* (Latin: *Praesidium*¹; Slavonic: *Pokrov*) of Mary, the All Holy Theotokos. Long before

Mary defeated the Muslim Turks at Lepanto, she cast her Protecting Veil over the besieged Christians of Constantinople, who were gathered in prayer in her special church during the night Vigil of Sunday, October 1, in the year 911. That night, Mary delivered Constantinople from defeat by the Muslim forces that had afflicted the city for many years.

In its earliest Greek form, this prayer goes back to third-century Egypt, perhaps as far as the period between the years 250 and 280 A.D.! The year 250 A. D. was right in the middle of the brief, but brutal reign of the Roman Emperor Decius (249-251), when the torture, execution and enslavement of Egyptian Christians in great numbers had begun in earnest. The starting point of the Coptic Church calendar, the Year of the Martyrs, is 284 A. D., when the Roman Emperor Diocletian assumed the throne and began an intensive persecution of the Egyptian Christians, many thousands of whom were tortured, killed, or enslaved. The *Sub tuum praesidium* thus emerged from the experience of the greatest possible danger and suffering. How fitting it is, then, that we have recourse to Mary through this prayer in the midst of our lesser struggles.

The original Greek form of the prayer begins: *Hypo tēn sēn eusplagnian katapseugomen, Theotoke (We take refuge under your mercy, Theotokos), and ends with: monē agnē, monē eulogēmenē (uniquely pure, uniquely blessed)*

In this earliest Greek form of the prayer, we have a witness to Mary's title of Theotokos (Latin: *Dei Genetrix*) or *God-Bearer* from as early as one hundred and eighty years before the Council of Ephesus (431 A. D.). We also have very early witness to Christian faith in her role as *Our Mother of Mercy*. Moreover, we also have a very early witness to Christian faith both in Mary's special election by God as the only human being conceived free from the effects of the sin of Adam (uniquely blessed), and in Mary's perpetual Virginity (uniquely pure).

It is thus easy to see that the *Sub Tuum Praesidium* is a most powerful expression of our love for and confidence in Mary as the Mother of Mercy given us by Christ. There could be no better short prayer to Our Lady for help to navigate the most difficult challenges of family life and homeschool. Let us then have recourse to our Mother frequently through this prayer, not only in October, but throughout the course of our lives!

¹"Forceful war-time assistance given by fresh troops," who are, for us, Mary herself accompanied by the saints and angels!

GUIDANCE



Schedules & Rewards

A Seton student once decided that she was going to read what she wanted to read and put her regular school work to the side. Two years later, she suddenly woke up to the fact that colleges were going to want a graduation date on her transcript! Her next year and a half were spent catching up on three years of work. Needless to say, she didn't have much of a life during this period and she still graduated a bit late in spite of her efforts.

This is not a recommended course of action!

Seton does demand a fair amount of work in the curriculum, but even so, there should still be time left for other pursuits: art, music, sports or other healthy activities. What students must guard against is the temptation to place these other things first, thereby neglecting the daily grind of intense study. Resist this temptation! No matter what sort of life is led after schooling, it is necessary to discipline one's own wayward inclinations in order to perform the duties of one's state in life. Business deadlines, the needs of an ailing child, or religious

obligations cannot simply be set aside to gratify a wish for recreation.

On the other hand, it is necessary to get away from the studies a bit now and again to refresh your intellectual focus. Part of forming good habits of self-discipline is learning to include an appropriate schedule of vacation from the books. Strive always to maintain a good balance, but never, ever, allow yourself to neglect any part of your duty as a student!

As you enter into what is most likely your second month of the academic year, take some time to look honestly at how you've been organizing your schedule so far. What are your priorities? Could you be focusing a little better? Challenge yourself to commit more fully to your academics, and look at recreation as a reward for serious study.



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.

5. Pay your older kids (in cash, coins, milkshakes, whatever it takes) to help the little kids with reading.

I have nearly reached the stage of parenting when all my kids have outgrown “sounding out” letters. If my life were expressed in terms of world epochs, the previous two decades would be known as the *Phonics Age*. At a certain point, hearing consonant blends “sounded out” becomes, well, disconsonant. My solution is to have the big kids help the little kids.

I love teaching my kids. I love teaching them about Aristotle, word origins, grace, Shakespeare, and how to take ACT tests. But I'll let you in on a little secret: I usually learn stuff when I teach my kids, and I like learning stuff with them. But (and I say this with every shred of humility that I can muster), I haven't learned a darned thing about Phonics since I was five.

Here are a couple of things you're unlikely to hear any teacher say: “In the

world of phonics, we're all learners,” or “Have you ever looked, I mean really looked at the STR blend? It's majestic!”

If you have older kids, fight back against the chronic unemployment problem in America: hire them to teach the younger kids.

6. Incorporate videos into the homeschool process.

I understand the basic dilemma: you've got two (or seven) kids to teach, but there's only one of you. But there's good news: the huge amount of available videos. Seton has been producing lots and lots of educational videos for the past few years. (I've even made a few of them myself.) So you can be teaching your high-school kids with awesome Catholic videos in one room while you're listening to your younger kids sound out letters in another. It's the closest thing to academic bi-locating since Venerable Mary of Agreda walked the Earth.

There you have it: six tips from a Dad who may be injured, but is still in the game.

enjoyed. Alongside their project work, our club has sponsored many events benefiting the community. Last winter, we hosted a Good Neighbor Tea at a local nursing home with home-baked treats and 50s and 60s music. I sewed simple circle skirts for the girls to wear while the boys became pros at the CD player and managing the stage props. We all had fun seeing the light of youth in the residents' eyes as they enjoyed their refreshments and sang along to “Lollipop” and “Mr. Sandman.” This spring, some of the older youth in our 4H club managed a food drive at the local schools. In conjunction with this effort, our kids joined other club members in planting a garden to add fresh vegetables to the collected dry goods. Our 4H activities provide opportunities for developing life skills and continuing to tune our children's hearts to the needs of others.

The flexibility and family-centered nature of homeschooling has given us the ability to accommodate our military lifestyle, keep Christ at the center of our family, and joyfully serve others. We are truly blessed!



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



The Seton High School Short Story Contest

The stories should feature Catholic values, beliefs, or sacraments. Additionally, they should have character development, and be based in real life scenarios. One winner will be named for each high-school grade level. If no story of distinction is found in a particular grade level, that level may be without a winner.

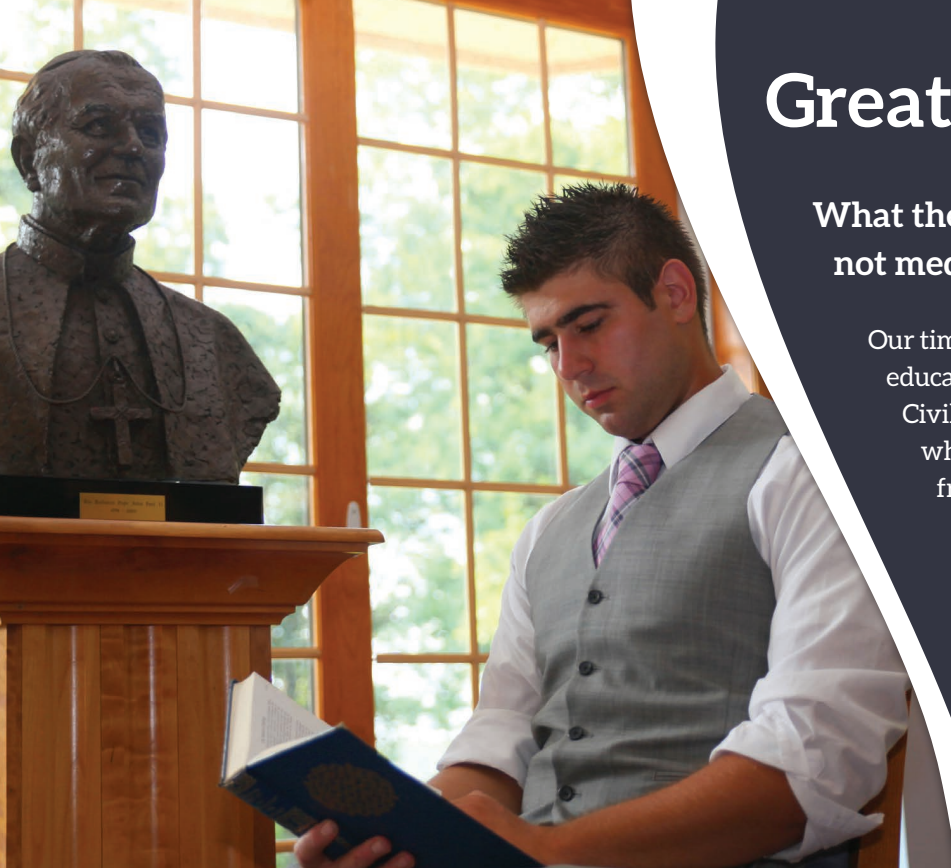
Prizes

1st Place: \$100 - 1 winner per grade

Submission Deadline

December 31st, 2015

www.setonmagazine.com/shortstory



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Seton Student Achievements

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Carmen | I received Grand Champion for Crafts and Reserved Grand Champion for Leavenworth Kansas County Fair Visual Arts for my Last Supper peg doll set 4-H project. It was also selected to go to State Fair.



Claire | I received a distinction in my Grade 3 Voice exam by the Associated Board of the Royal Schools of Music.



Elena | On August 1-2, 2015, I competed in the state outdoor FITA archery tournament in Alaska and I won 1st place in the cub female freestyle recurve division.

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

www.setonmagazine.com/students

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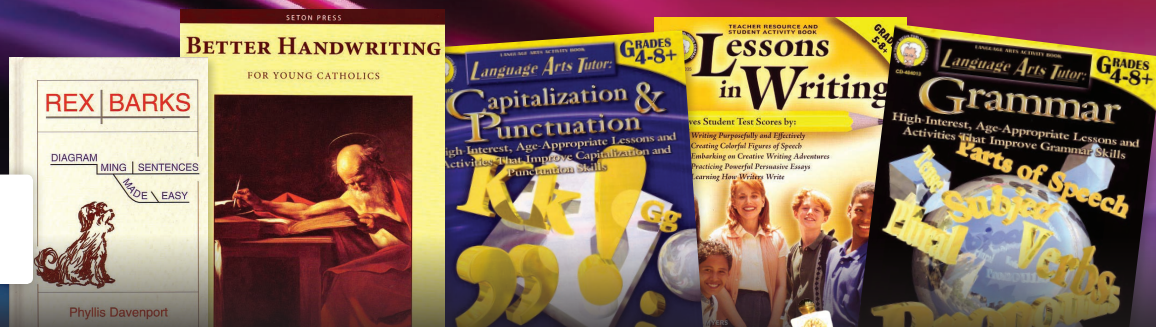
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the Creator, and begin by teaching
them to say their first prayers.*

*In this way a moral universe is
built up, rooted in the will of God,
where the child grows in the human
and Christian values that give life
its full meaning.*

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



Pope Benedict XVI CC The Papal Visit | Flickr