

Seton MAGAZINE

Under the Magisterium of the Catholic Church

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Seton

Educational Media

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CHRISTMAS SPECIALS

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The Steele Family

A Note to our families

We hope you enjoy our November issue! It includes our *Seton Educational Media* Christmas special center-spread, packed with delightful details and ideas for stuffing stockings and all the educational gifts you'll need to continue your year.

Our **next issue** will be our **end-of-year** double issue, featuring special notes from this year's Featured Families, and showcasing the winning entry of our Christmas Essay Contest. Look for it around December 14th!

Seton Directory



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Every day at Seton, gathered before the altar at our noon Angelus, we offer prayers for our families and friends. We encourage you also to pray for other homeschooling families, especially those who may be suffering from illness, unemployment, or other crosses.

We are all united in the Communion of Saints, and God allows us through our prayers to uphold, support, and console other members of His Church. Let us, then, remember to pray for one another as we all walk the path of homeschooling, so that we may all join together in prayer, one day, in Heaven.

St. Rose Philippine Duchesne

The Missionary to Children

BY DR. MARY KAY CLARK

My mother told me stories about St. Rose Philippine Duchesne and St. Madeleine Sophie Barat, which she learned while attending a Sacred Heart school in Washington, D.C. Perhaps my mother's knowledge of St. Rose was why she was continually involved with improving the local Catholic schools and was extremely supportive of Seton Home Study School.

Rose was born in 1769 in France, where she attended classes with the Visitation nuns at the local church school and became serious about practicing her Faith. She wanted to join a religious order at a young age, so she began living a religious lifestyle at home as if she were a nun. When she was 19, she joined the nearby Visitation convent.

Rose's early training in practicing the Faith in her home established a lifestyle of daily prayer which never allowed other matters to interfere. Her parents homeschooled her, teaching her about the Faith and the spiritual life until the day she entered the convent. The Catholic lifestyle of her parents was her model for living the religious life of prayer and sacrifice.

The French Revolution forced the closing of the convent almost immediately after Rose Philippine joined. She then dedicated her life for several years helping the suffering people around her, assisting to hide priests, and even conducting small classes for homeless children. Nevertheless, she kept up a rigorous daily schedule of personal prayer. During this time, several other women joined her in her work and in her prayer life.

In time, Rose Philippine met Mother Madeleine Sophie Barat, who had recently started an order of teaching nuns called the Society of the Sacred Heart. This Society was officially approved by the bishop and was dedicated to teaching Catholic girls in France who were not receiving formal education. Rose Philippine, then 35 years

old, spent some time with Mother Barat and became convinced that she and her sisters should join the Society of the Sacred Heart and dedicate themselves to giving girls a good Catholic education. Mother Barat appreciated not only the background and holiness of Rose, but also recognized her strong determination to do the Lord's Will in spite of all difficulties.

Because of Rose's leadership qualities, Mother Barat gave her responsibility to organize schools for Catholic girls throughout France. These were very small, one-room "schoolhouses" to start. For thirteen years, now Mother Rose Philippine Duchesne established several small Sacred Heart schools, which basically consisted of one room where girls of various levels were taught together, not unlike the family homeschools today. In fact, the Sacred Heart nuns were usually helped by local mothers.

Mother Duchesne met several French missionary priests from America. She came to believe God was calling her to establish schools for the Indian children in America. She told Mother Barat who, after a request from a bishop in the Louisiana Territory, assigned Mother Duchesne—and a few other Sacred Heart sisters—to travel to America to start Sacred Heart schools to teach the Indian and French children in his diocese.

Mother Duchesne arrived in the Louisiana territory, now St. Charles, Missouri, with four other sisters. She established the first "house" or school of the Sacred Heart in the New World in 1818, under the bishop of St. Louis. Mother Duchesne's school was the first free school west of the Mississippi. During the time she was there, Mother Duchesne became good friends with the famous American Jesuit, Father Pierre DeSmet, who spent years with the Indian tribes and was instrumental in peace negotiations with the Indians. Mother Duchesne would make his altar cloths and



listen to his adventurous stories about his teaching the Indians on the frontier while he gave her spiritual guidance.

In the next ten years, Mother Duchesne managed to start six more small Sacred Heart schools in Missouri and Louisiana. When she was 72 and no longer the Mother Superior, Mother Duchesne fulfilled her dream to start an Indian School for both boys and girls in Sugar Creek, Kansas. Although Mother Duchesne was never able to learn the Indian language, she spent hours in the chapel praying for the students. The Indian children named her "Woman Who Prays Always."

Mother Duchesne is known for having made the following statement to her teaching nuns, but it is also for homeschooling parents: "You may dazzle the mind with a thousand brilliant discoveries of natural science; you may open new worlds of knowledge which were never dreamed of before; yet, if you have not developed in the soul of the pupil strong habits of virtue, which will sustain her in the struggle of life, you have not educated her."



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

I believe my son should skip a grade. He tests out with 100 on almost all his tests.

Just this past September, a 12-year old girl from England scored perfectly on the Mensa Test, higher than Albert Einstein! She was asked if she thought she should skip one or two grade levels. She answered “I don’t think I need to skip any grades. I can challenge myself. I don’t need to have anyone else challenge me.”

Seton recommends that students should not skip a grade level, even in one subject, but the student can proceed in the lessons at the rate which is best for the student.

There are several difficulties with skipping grades. The first difficulty is that important information can be missed in courses which build upon each other. Grade levels aren’t merely teaching the same material at a higher level; often, they are teaching different material that needs to be mastered at each grade level. When a grade is skipped, this mastery often is not achieved.

The second problem is that even bright students need some time to grow in maturity. Just because a student is intellectually capable of doing work at a certain level, that does not mean the student has the emotional maturity to thrive. For example, a student who may be a very good reader but not actually understand the meaning of what he or she is reading. The development of children takes time, which really cannot be skipped.

Not skipping a grade, however, does not mean stagnation in learning. Bright children usually have a wide range of interests, and some have a single-minded interest in a certain topic. Whatever your child is interested in, have him or her focus on that. If the interest is space exploration, then purchase a telescope and a star chart.

If the interest is history, then visit nearby museums. If the interest is music, then invest in lessons. Whatever it is, cultivate the interest and watch it flourish. Bright students don’t need to skip a grade. They challenge themselves.

I used your program for my two boys this year, and we like it very much, but it bothers me that every course seems to be promoting the Catholic Faith.

Seton is following the directives of the Catholic Church. If you read my book, *Catholic Homeschooling*, you will see that the Catholic Church has always taught and continues to teach that Catholic children should be taught all subjects with a Catholic perspective whenever possible. This has been the traditional teaching, not only of the Church, but of Jesus Christ and

*The Catholic Church
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to teach that Catholic children
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with a Catholic perspective
whenever possible.*

of the writers of the Bible. From the earliest days of Christianity, parents taught their children the Faith and did not have them attend “government” schools. In the Middle Ages, Catholic colleges and schools were run by various religious orders, by nuns for girls and by priests and brothers for boys. In all the Catholic schools in America, nuns and religious brothers were the teachers because every subject was to be taught from a Catholic perspective, incorporating Catholic teachings.

Why do you now offer three types of high school diplomas?

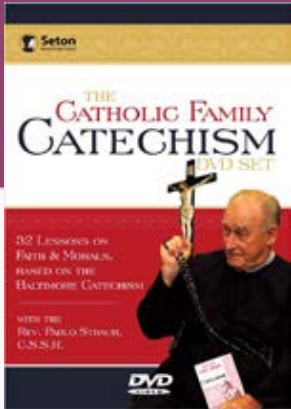
The General Diploma is for students whose parents believe their child will not be attending college. No foreign language courses are required.

The Academic Diploma is for college-bound students. About 90% of our students attend college. The higher number of credits required by the Academic Diploma helps ensure a student has covered all the material colleges expect high school students to know, and prepares a student for greater success on the ACT and SAT tests. High scores on either of these tests play a significant role in gaining admittance and/or financial aid for college.

We recently started offering an Advanced Academic Diploma, which is meant primarily for students planning to enter one of the military academies. However, some students planning to attend Cambridge or Harvard or another of the Ivy League universities, may want to take courses for this diploma. Many students on the Advanced Academic Diploma track take the courses over five years, rather than four.

My sister thinks her son may have a learning problem. Can Seton help her?

Seton can absolutely help children with special learning needs. Seton has a Special Services department which will be happy to consult with parents about their child’s needs. For families who need more help than a simple consultation, our Special Services department can customize the Seton program for your child. You can learn more about our staff and the services we provide online at www.setonhome.org/special-learning-needs.



The Catholic Family Catechism DVD

More relevant than ever, these classic videos are a wonderful opportunity for the entire family to deepen their understanding of the Faith. This series is based on the Baltimore Catechism and was crafted by Fr. Straub specifically for homeschooling families.

Viewing this Catechism series is a wonderful opportunity for the entire family to deepen their understanding of the Faith.

Known as the "Crucifix Priest," Father's trademarks include his deep love of Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament and Confession, his devotion to the Blessed Mother, and his fidelity to the Holy Father. A wonderful family Christmas gift!

To see a sample, visit us online at www.setonbooks.com/FrStraub

DVD Set contains 32, half-hour episodes.

www.setonbooks.com

Some parents at my parish might teach their children at home since we have no Catholic school. What can I do to help them?

Try to start some conversations. The popes are clear about what makes an education Catholic, and one of the important things is that the textbooks are Catholic. The majority of Catholic parents today have never seen a Catholic textbook. Consider giving away a Catholic workbook to mothers whom you think might be happy to have their child work in a Catholic workbook. You needn't make any further comment than: "Here is a helpful book my children liked; would you like a copy for your child?"

The Catholic Faith is beautiful, good, generous, caring, pleasing, delightful, and fulfilling. Give your friend a Catholic book for her child. God works miracles in the hearts of children.

If you belong to a homeschooling group,

encourage your friends to go to a parish gathering, a woman's club, a rummage sale, a Rosary group, a saint's feast day, a novena, anything at all, and bring along Catholic textbooks and workbooks for others to look at or for a gift. Let Jesus take it from there.

I have five children and am struggling with teaching the four older ones.

Think about ways the older children can help the younger children. For instance, a 6th grade boy may like math and be willing to help a younger brother or sister with the math lessons. You could even "pay" him to be a Math Tutor!

An older sister might listen to the first grader read, or help the kindergartener shape letters correctly. Purchase a white board and have a student stand at the board and do his math or diagramming while you are helping his older brother do his studies.

Homeschooling should be a family project with the older ones helping the younger ones, even if only for one or two subjects a day. Besides, the younger ones often learn more quickly as they "inadvertently" overhear some of the older student's lessons.

Consider having the older ones take turns, for even just a half hour a day, to help with babysitting or fixing lunch. There are lots of ideas on the internet to help working mothers accomplish their housekeeping. Think of yourself as a homeschooling manager and see how efficient you can be to accomplish your goals.

Where can I find someone who has homeschooled in my area who might help me?

Every state has a homeschooling organization, and most have a Catholic homeschooling organization. You might check on our website for the groups and locations that sponsor homeschooling conferences. If your state is not listed, check the Homeschool Legal Defense Association website which lists Christian and Catholic state organizations. If you email Cecilia at Seton [csauer@setonhome.org], she may have the name of someone in your area who would be willing to help other local Catholic homeschooling families.



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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.



AVE MARIA
UNIVERSITY



CHRISTENDOM
COLLEGE



UNIVERSITY
OF DALLAS



JOHN PAUL THE GREAT
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NORTHEAST
CATHOLIC COLLEGE



UNIVERSITY
ST. THOMAS
HOUSTON



THOMAS AQUINAS
COLLEGE



THOMAS MORE COLLEGE
OF LIBERAL ARTS



Wyoming
Catholic College
Wisdom in God's Country

setonhome.org/colleges

Homeschool with Dad

“My Perspective on Keeping Their Education Catholic”

An Interview with Dave Steele



For the month of November, we interviewed Dave Steele for some unique insight into a homeschooling father's point-of-view. Dave is married to Michelle; they have eight lovely children: Corinne (22), Kara (20), Krista (19), Tim (16), Ben (13), Joe (10), Nick (8), and Jake (6).

The Steeles love their Catholic faith, and they are avid fans of the outdoors. They enjoy spreading their joy of faith, family, and homeschooling with frequent gatherings hosted at their home in Minnesota.

As a father, what are the reasons you're most thankful for homeschooling?

I am grateful that Catholicism is immersed in each subject and in our children's school day. The kids are able to begin each day with daily Mass. Then, during school, they learn their Catechism, Bible History, the lives of the saints, truths about virtue, et cetera. I come home to cool stories about the saints that my children read while I was gone, and I get to see book reports where my children wrote about how the main character practiced virtue.

I'm grateful I don't have to worry my kids are being exposed to inappropriate content. Seton is a solid, Catholic school, for which I was never gladder than when my daughters entered high school. When I'm at work, I know that my children are safe at home with their mother, and that they're engaged in authentic learning, not only about the faith, but with regard to their academics.

I'm grateful for the one-on-one attention my children are receiving in their education.

I'm grateful for how much Michelle and I have been strengthened in our own



faith since we started homeschooling. Although we both loved our faith and went to Mass every Sunday, we didn't really know why we were Catholic. It wasn't until we began homeschooling that we really began to learn about and understand the beauty and truth of the Catholic Church.

At the end of the day, there is so much peace in our house, and I'm convinced homeschooling is a big part of that.

What caused you and Michelle to choose homeschooling in the first place, and then why Seton, in particular?

When our oldest daughter started Kindergarten, we thought she could benefit from one on one teaching, so we decided to homeschool for one year. It went so well that we decided to continue for a few more years, and before we knew it, three years had turned into twelve, and she graduated from Seton. Since then, we've graduated two more kids from Seton, and all of them have really enjoyed being homeschooled.

As far as choosing Seton to begin with, I really liked that Seton is accredited. I know that my children are attending a credentialed school. The complete package Seton provides was also an important factor. Michelle's work is easier because all the books and lesson plans come right to the door; she doesn't have to figure out a curriculum all on her own. The Seton staff played a role in our choice, as well. They were excellent in answering all of our questions, and have become especially helpful in high school, where the classes are harder and our children have had to call many times.



Additionally, we liked that Seton holds parents accountable as teachers. Following Seton's guidelines, Michelle always makes sure that our children's every assignment and test is completed and turned in on time. That has really helped our oldest children. Recently, my daughter, who is in college now, took an online test for a biology class. Her professor told her that he'd never had a student be as efficient as she is. I'm sure Seton helped her with that.

In most families, most of the day-to-day homeschooling is managed by the mom. Is that true in your family, and how do you, Dave, as a father, assist and support the homeschooling effort? How do you support Michelle?

Michelle is definitely the one who organizes everything, but she makes sure everyone in the house helps. Before bedtime each night, all of the next day's books and work are set out, breakfast dishes are arranged, and the whole house is clean.

Sometimes, Grandma and Grandpa come and help with teaching, which gives Michelle a little break and the kids a chance to learn from a different teacher.

I'm the principal, and I help keep order. I also take time every day to pray with the kids and also to engage in my own quiet prayer time. I try to take a bigger teaching role when our kids reach high school. I spend a lot of time with the kids in hunting, trapping, fishing, camping, and four-wheeling, which provides many teaching opportunities for me to show the children different kinds of animals, trees, plants, fish, etc. They don't even realize they're learning!

We also plan road trips during the off season so the children can see all the states in the USA, though we've joked they'll have to learn about Hawaii and Alaska on their own!

When it comes to helping Michelle, I make sure she gets time to herself in the evenings. She might go for a walk, do a little shopping, or meet some friends for ice cream. I think it's important that she



have that chance to get out for a little break when she's been home all day with our eight children.

When our kids reach 7th grade, we put them in sports, which helps both the children and Michelle. Our girls have all been in cross country and all have made it to the Cross Country State Tournament, even winning the meet. This required two to three hours of training a day, and gave them the chance to exercise and learn to interact with others, while providing Michelle with a breather.

In the end, I think our homeschooling goes well because both Michelle and the kids know they have my unwavering support.

What are the truths and values you most want your children to learn?

I want my children to know the truths of the Catholic Faith in their fullness. It's important to me to teach them to pray. I want them to know what it means to be a family. I want them to know what it means to be a good person. I pray they will contribute to society. I pray they will grow in courage like the saints.

...continued on page 14

How Seton Has Changed to Better Serve Catholic Families

by Seton Staff



In 1983, the newly created Seton Home Study School boasted only 50 students. Just ten years later, Seton already had a total enrollment of 4,500 (see Matthew 13:8).

Today, there are over 13,000 enrolled students, an additional 25,000 students who use Seton materials, and a total of about 50,000 students using Seton Testing Services.

Seton has grown and dramatically changed over the years, but always with an eye toward meeting the needs of more and more Catholic families.

Seton High School

In the 1980's, Catholic parents, who were faithfully trying to pass on the Catholic Faith to their children, faced a very frustrating situation. As the moral standards of society at large continued to decline, public schools became more and more toxic to a solid Catholic upbringing. Additionally, Catholic schools began closing at an alarming rate. From 1965 to 1985, the number of Catholic elementary schools in the United States dropped more than 27%. With more and more Catholic schools closing, the option to use Catholic schools was not available to many families, and where Catholic schools were available, they didn't always live up to parental expectations.

In the 1970s and 1980s, many families banded together to form small parent-run schools, where they could have more influence over what was being taught to their children. One such school was started in Northern Virginia in 1975 by Anne Carroll, the wife of Christendom College founder, Dr. Warren Carroll. Seton School prospered, but it was able to serve only the families who lived close by. Many other families heard of Anne Carroll's good work and wanted a Seton education for their children as well. Some parents even sent their high school age children to live with host families in Virginia throughout the school year; however, this was obviously impractical for many families. To serve a larger community, Seton School needed to expand.

Seton Home Study School

Answering the need to provide a Seton education without making students physically relocate to Virginia, Seton Home Study School was born in 1982, under the direction of Anne Carroll.

In the beginning, enrollment was very small, and the homeschool office was a single room. When enrollment in the home study division became larger than the enrollment in the physical school, Anne Carroll realized that not only did homeschooling have huge potential, but running Seton Home Study School would be a huge task. Dr. Mary Kay Clark was chosen to become the Director, and Seton Home Study School became a completely separate school, moving its headquarters

to Front Royal, Virginia. Buying up available copies of solid Catholic textbooks, and spiral-binding some photocopied texts of out-of-print books, for the first ten years or so, Seton was able only to rent out school books. At the end of the year, families were required to send back not only all the lesson plans, but nearly all of the books as well.

However, it was not long before Seton began producing its own books. At first, Seton made books available only to enrolled families, but it quickly became obvious that to serve the greater community of Catholic families, Seton needed to expand by offering books outside of enrollment.

Seton Educational Media

The answer to the desire of parents to purchase Seton books was Seton Educational Media (SEM). The first SEM catalog was printed and mailed out in the summer of 1993. The catalog was 32 pages long and printed on the most economical paper Seton could find. Among the items offered were Seton's *Spelling for Young Catholics*, *Catholic Reading for Comprehension*, *Handwriting for Young Catholics*, and *Science for Young Catholics*.

It turned out that selling our books to families not only helped the families, but was also good for Seton. Because we were selling so many books, we could have larger print runs—in the thousands rather than in the hundreds—which allowed us to improve quality and reduce prices.

Over the years, Seton Educational Media has grown from a small mail-order business to a very large internet-based business, selling hundreds of thousands of books and other educational and religious items every year.

Special Services

The goal of Seton has always been to serve as many Catholic families as possible. Early on, one of the difficulties we ran into was that some families wanted to enroll but were not sure how to proceed in teaching children with learning disabilities. We did not want parents of children with learning disabilities to feel that the local public school was their only option, so Seton needed to expand its services to help these families.

For this reason, a very early hire at Seton Home Study School was John Willard, who founded Seton's Learning Disabilities

department. Under Mr. Willard, Seton started offering a video program to help dyslexic students, and we began offering individualized programs for students with learning disabilities.

We have had several different learning disability specialists over the years, but the department has been helmed for the last decade by Stephen Costanzo. Each year, the Learning Disabilities department counsels hundreds of parents, and provides individualized materials to over 350 students.

Seton Testing Services

As homeschooling grew in the 1980s and 1990s, many states adopted new home-schooling regulations. Often, these regulations made homeschooling easier, but many of the regulations also included provisions such as annual standardized testing.

From very early on, Seton Home Study School had furnished standardized tests to families. These tests were used both for purposes of placement at the beginning of the year, and also to measure progress at the end of the year. Testing services were provided at first only for enrolled students, but in order to serve

the wider homeschooling community, Seton's testing work expanded to become Seton Testing Services, which provides tests to tens of thousands of homeschoolers every year.

Seton Testing started out with only the California Achievement Test (which we still offer for some grades), but has now expanded into several different tests, including the Terra Nova and the Iowa Test. Recently, Seton Testing Services has expanded into online testing, which will likely be the direction that testing moves in the years to come.

What Will the Future Bring?

Seton has grown and changed over the years, but one thing has remained constant—our desire to serve Catholic families. Each new area of growth has expanded the number of families we serve.

As we move forward to provide even more services—such as online high school courses—we fully expect to keep and grow this commitment.

What new or expanded educational services could your family use? Let us know, and you might be helping Seton to write the next chapter of our history!

Seton

Educational Media

FREE SHIPPING
on any order over \$50

Christmas Catalog 2015



\$25.00

Wooden Nativity Set

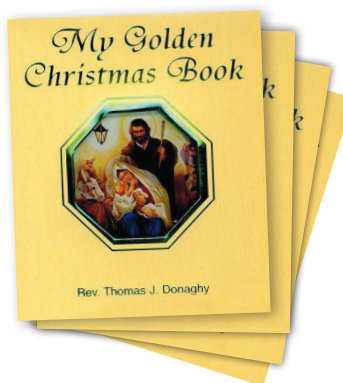
M-RLCH-14

This child-friendly, wooden nativity set provides a "please touch" holiday experience. The four-piece stable is easy to assemble and the 11 figures encourage your child to re-enact the events of that Christmas Day long ago. A retelling of the Christmas story is included on the package.



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My Golden Christmas Book

P-RLPK-34

Help your young children prepare for the birth of Jesus, learn about the Christmas story, and familiarize them with Christmas celebrations around the world.

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CCC Animated Saints & Heroes DVDs

M-RLDV-41

Catholic, inspiring,
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Each 30 minutes.

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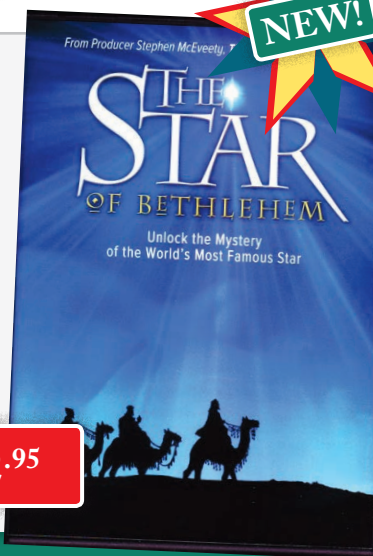
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The Star of Bethlehem DVD

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Is it possible that the star was a real, astronomical event? Presenter Rick Larson walks you through Biblical and historical clues revealing the incredible significance of this celestial event as well as the vastness of God's creativity. Discover the secret of the Star - a secret of magnificent beauty.

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SETONBOOKS.com



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Saint Memory Card Game

M-RLSS-20 **\$3.95**



How to Make a Movie

M-ARDV-60 **\$20.00**



Advent Calender

M-RLCH-15 **\$8.95**



Catholic Songs for Children (CD)

P-MU01-12 **\$10.00**



Journeys with Mary: Apparitions of Our Lady

M-RDB4-36 **\$7.00**

A Day on Skates



A Day on Skates

M-RDBK-51 **\$17.00**



Prayer Pillow Cases

Prayer Pillowcases pair beautiful original art with favorite prayers to offer all ages a delightful new way to:

- learn Catholic prayers
- remember to say prayers,
- begin and end each day with a prayerful heart!

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M-SSCP-13 Act of Contrition
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- M-SSCP-17 Good Shepherd
M-SSCP-18 Hail Mary
M-SSCP-19 Memorare
M-SSCP-20 Divine Mercy
M-SSCP-21 St. Kateri
M-SSCP-22 Our Lady of Guadalupe

Holy Traders Saints Trading Cards

Fantastic stocking stuffers! A total of 154 cards in 6 sets!

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Saints Biographies

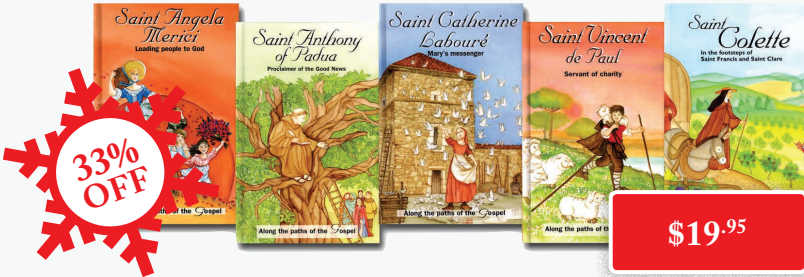
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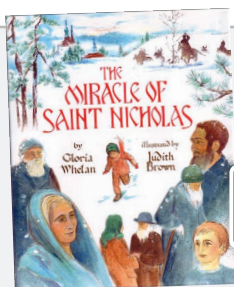
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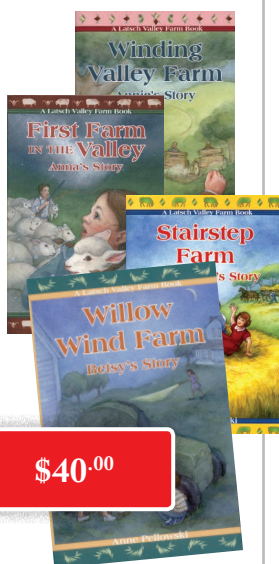
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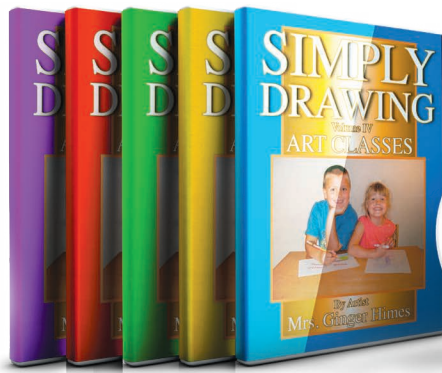
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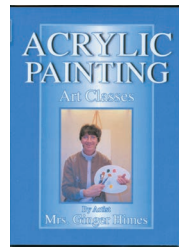
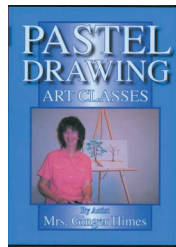
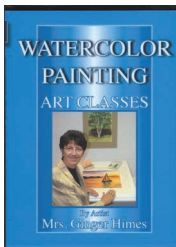
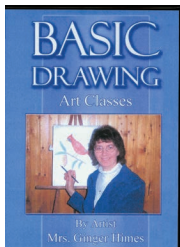
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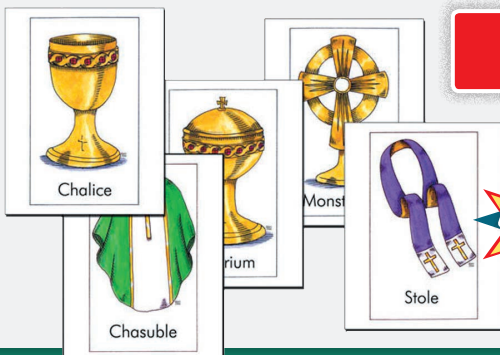
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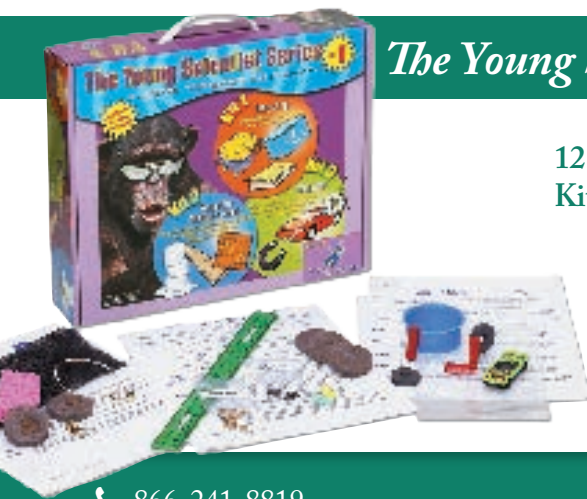
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A close-up, artistic photograph of the American flag, showing the stars and stripes in a draped, flowing manner. The flag is the background for the entire page.

WHY WE NEED TO REDISCOVER THE ‘WHY’ IN EDUCATION

BY JOHN CLARK

When my oldest son, Athanasius, was 11 years old, I took him to a baseball camp run by Hall-of-Famer Cal Ripken. As we parents excitedly watched our children with visions of major leagues dancing in our heads, we took note of each instruction and nuance. Surely knowing that we parents would remember these lessons to pass on to our children, but fail to explain the logic behind them, Ripken offered some advice to us parents on child instruction: “Explain the why.” In other words, instead of simply providing rote answers, provide the reasoning.

It’s a lesson I never forgot. Increasingly, I came to realize that explaining the “why” went far beyond the baseball diamond, and that subjects like mathematics, history, writing, and doctrine benefited from whys, too. Also—and this takes patience from parents—encourage the why. Lastly—and this takes patience from children—ask the why.

Scripture recounts that Jesus often asked questions of others in order that they might answer their own questions, in order that they might seek the truth:

“Why does this generation seek a sign?”

“Why did you make trouble for the woman?”

“Why did you doubt?”

However, whys are often discouraged in today’s education.

Modern pedagogy doesn’t like whys, because whys can lead to questions about causes, and questions about causes can lead to questions about God. Why is a brilliant question. But in an educational structure that constantly demands answers to someone else’s questions, there’s little time for students to ask their own.

As playwright David Mamet recently wrote: “Society functions in a way much more interesting than that multiple-choice pattern we have been rewarded for succeeding at in school. Success in life comes not from the ability to choose between the four presented answers, but from the rather more difficult and painfully acquired ability to formulate the questions.”¹

Explaining, encouraging, and asking why are matters that I kept in mind recently as I wrote Seton’s new online American Government course (which should be available in the coming months). In the course of my research, looking at other American Government textbooks, I was surprised how dry and stale they were. Now, with a degree in Political Science, this should have been an area of interest for me—but not the way these textbooks presented things. I noticed how few questions were answered, and how few serious questions were ever asked. In a hurry to address the what, they all seemed to ignore the why.

I wanted to do something differently.

For the first six weeks of the 36-week course, we don’t even discuss the political structure of America. Instead, we discuss things like why the natural law matters, why rulers have authority to govern, why governments have duties toward citizens, why political justice matters, why we

...continued on page 14

¹Mamet, David (2011-06-02). *The Secret Knowledge: On the Dismantling of American Culture* (p. 28). Penguin Group US. Kindle Edition.

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.

Chess Mates

The Lively World of The Seton Online Chess Club

BY NICK MARMALEJO

Chess is an endlessly intriguing game. My introduction to it came at age 5, when I watched my dad and his brother play after dinner in the family room during weekend or holiday visits. Uncle Whitey was a formidable player and he took most of the games against my dad, who was also quite good. Although I was often shooed from the room for jumping on the couch during their chess matches, my affinity and fascination for the game had nonetheless begun.

Soon I was begging my dad to teach me to play chess. After he came home, tired from a long day of erecting the steel of Chicago's skyscrapers, I would assault him with many requests for instruction. It wasn't long until I had received some basic tutelage and began setting up the board. For years after that, my father and I played frequently, usually with each game ending in my defeat.

However, my losing began to change in the eighth grade, when my older friend Rob presented me with his worn-out copy of *The Complete Chess Player*, written by Fred Reinfeld, a chess master who taught the game in New York City. He was also a prolific writer who helped popularize chess in America during the mid-20th century. My battered soft-cover became the gift that keeps on giving; it was my first formal introduction to the mysterious world of chess tactics, traps, and strategic thinking.

The next time I played my dad after reading Reinfeld's book, I was not such a soft target. To his astonishment, I began beating him, and he in turn was forced to up his game. A new pattern of competition and friendly rivalry between us started as we continued to pass the time with chess. Eventually, I desired to test my skills against new opponents. It was then that I began attending the high school chess club.

At that time, before the dawn of the internet, contact with very highly-skilled or

master players was restricted essentially to one's geographical location and the handful of books at the local retailer. If you were lucky, you might find one or more strong players against whom to hone your skill. If not, the game was still fun, but the nagging feeling of knowing that there was still something more to the game, something missing, remained.

Today, of course, all of that has changed. Chess has grown in both popularity and possibility. A seemingly endless stream of tutorials, videos, books, news, and websites where one can always find a game have advanced the skill of the average player and have made the game even more exciting and accessible.

Growing up in Northwest Indiana, I was fortunate that some of the chess players who played in our club, or had once played, as I was to find out, were stupendous.

My discovery of this occurred while preparing for the annual tournament in Terra Haute, Indiana. Scott, a former club member and then medical student, was still in contact with our chess coach and heard about our upcoming tourney. At the coach's request, Scott began showing up each week to pummel us into shape with what seemed like chess wizardry.

To be sure, playing Scott was a rapid and frequent lesson in humility. Game after game, he would demonstrate the intricacies of play, commenting on our weaknesses to help us improve. Finally, in one game of a series with Scott, I had a breakthrough. I saw that I could force a draw. I wouldn't win, but I wouldn't lose either. Against a player as amazing as Scott, not losing was thrilling! Someone who had appeared unbeatable and invincible, I realized, could make a mistake, a lesson that has helped shape my progress, however minimal, ever since.

For homeschooling students and their

families, chess teaches, among many things, that difficulties are building blocks to success. More than an intellectual pastime, chess teaches patience, perseverance, and calculation, harnessing the full powers of the imagination. It is likely that these are the reasons why the great saints Thomas Becket, Charles Borromeo, and Francis Xavier were wholly fond of the game, the latter of whom could often be found playing at a friend's house. Even St. Teresa of Avila used chess as a metaphor with which she advised her sisters to "checkmate" the divine king by total self-surrender to Christ.

One of the great blessings here at Seton Home Study School is the availability of the chess club for its students. As the administrator of Seton's chess club, it has been most enjoyable not only to play the occasional game, but also to set up tournaments and witness some of the friendships that develop around the board. While visiting Chicago this summer at a home-schooling conference, for example, I met students who raved about their "cool" Seton chess friends from Florida, whom I had also just met.

Whether you are young and old, boy or girl, a novice or a master, learning and playing chess is a noble and worthwhile pursuit, one that I recommend for all who are interested. Please join us at the Seton Chess Club if you feel so inclined.

St. Charles Borromeo Quote: "*Your Eminence, if you were told that you were about to die, what should you do?*" "*I should finish this game of chess,*" said St. Charles; "*I began it for the glory of God, and I should end it with the same intention.*"



Nick Marmalejo, a history major, graduated from Christendom College in 2001. He holds a Virginia Teacher Certification and lives in the Shenandoah Valley with his wife and three children.



Monasticism, Homeschooling & the One Thing Necessary

SISTER ANNE MARIE WALSH, SOLT

It can be challenging to look at the world today and to remember the words of Scripture: "...where sin increased, grace overflowed all the more" (Rms. 5:20). We know the Gospel's relevance is timeless. However, understanding the way in which it penetrates a specific period in time requires a creativity found only in the Holy Spirit, Who searches the hearts of men and applies the deep things of God within concrete historical situations.

Pope Benedict XVI, meeting with representatives from the world of culture at the Collège des Bernardins, Paris, in 2008, addressed the threats to modern culture by drawing attention to the roots of Western Civilization. In particular, he considered monasticism and its development, noting that, "Amid the confusion of the times, in which nothing seemed permanent, they (the monks) wanted to do the essential – to make an effort to find what was perennially valid and lasting, life itself. They were searching for God. They wanted to go from the inessential to the essential, to the only truly important and reliable thing there is... *Quaerere Deum*, to seek God."

Whether on the mainland (Europe) or in Celtic lands, the establishment of monastic

communities was ordered to a life that was conducive to finding God and to living out a covenantal relationship with Him. The daily communal life of the prayer and work of Christ became a seal against the chaos and barbarism of the times, a stamp of the deeper Gospel message that brought order, meaning, and ultimately, great cultural development.

It should not surprise us that the biblical principles by which the monks lived and their deep study and contemplation of the mysteries of God, started to leaven the secular order, so that time, learning, art, music, animal husbandry, farming, care of the poor, all began to be marked by the laws and light which God Himself had put into creation. An order and a fruitfulness developed that actually had heavenly origins. The bells announcing the call to prayer, which punctuated each day, and the liturgical seasons with their abundance of solemnities, feasts, and even the rich Gospel lessons of ordinary time, made the meaning of life, one's responsibilities, one's destiny, readily understood. And though there were variations of monastic tradition and development between the mainland and the Celtic lands, the essentials were the same: "the supreme good of knowing

Christ Jesus"...(Phil 3:8), in light of which all else is rubbish.

Monasticism did not begin as an attempt to create a new culture or civilization. The holy men and women of those times were interested in the one thing necessary. The impact upon the surrounding culture, even when efforts to evangelize became more direct, was quite in accord with the words of Christ: "Seek first the kingdom (of God) and his righteousness, and all these things will be given you besides" (Mt 6:33).

The Catholic homeschooling movement in our present age has, at its heart, this same seeking of the monks. It is a response to a loss of vision. Caryll Houselander, in her book, *Guilt*, noted that "The great repression of our age is the repression of Christ in man" (p85). Nowhere is this more evident than in secular education.

We live in a time that has known Christ and now rejects Him. Given this, we cannot wonder that man no longer understands himself: apart from Christ it is not possible, "For in Christ were created all things in heaven and on earth, the visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominations, or principalities or powers, all things were created through Him and for Him. He

is before all things and in Him, all things hold together” (Col 1:16-17). He is the pattern, the form of our own identity and destiny. His life must be allowed to grow in us. Apart from Him, everything begins to disintegrate, both interiorly and exteriorly, individually and communally. Our own time witnesses to this with alarming clarity.

However, in Catholic homeschooling, genuine education seeks to assist the child in developing into the fullness of all that God has created him or her to be. This kind of education involves heart, mind and soul and fulfills its purpose by forming children to Christ, preparing them ultimately to see God face to face. In coming to the full measure of the mature Christ, children become natural evangelizers in all the realms of human activity in which they may engage: intellectual, physical, scientific, academic, artistic, apostolic, spiritual. The Christ-life within is the essential thing in the midst of the contemporary bombardment of the inessential and the society’s growing barbarism. The Christ-life is a gift that one begins to yearn to give for the happiness of others.

The path of a movement such as Catholic homeschooling is provided by God, just as it was for monasticism, in His Word and in the rich teachings and traditions of the Church. A beautiful image for today is of little domestic monasteries where children are formed to true humanity. With authentic education, they begin to become, not in a forced way, but in a supernaturally natural development, little Christs touching the world in the activities of their childhood and adolescence. Finally, in adulthood, they become an even greater leaven as they take their places in the world.

Pope St. John Paul II often pointed out that the Church and the world are at a crossroads. He exhorted us to commit to a New Evangelization in order to usher in a new springtime of Christianity. He also warned us that if we do not follow the movements of the Holy Spirit, we will see a new age of barbarism. Among the great signs of hope, we can claim Catholic homeschooling as one of the harbingers of the formation of the new man and a new springtime, knowing that, “a Christian has only to be, in order to change the world” (C. Dawson, *Christianity and the New Age*).



Sister Anne Marie Walsh, SOLT, has been a religious for 25 years, and taught in SOLT schools in the USA and Italy. She has served in the formation of seminarians and sisters, been involved in Pro-life work and giving retreats based on the teachings of the Church. For the last ten years, she has served as the General Sister Servant for the Sisters of the Society of Our Lady of the Most Holy Trinity.

GUIDANCE



The Path to Rome

During my junior year of college, I spent a semester studying in Rome. Being young and full of adventurous energy, I decided to go over early and travel around before classes began. Being young and also full of impulsive bravado, I decided that it would be a good idea to just show up in the Eternal City with no real plan as to where I was staying or how to get there, with 3 months’ worth of luggage in tow.

I have heard people throw about the phrase, “If you want to make God laugh, tell him your plans.” I think a more accurate phrase would be, “If you want to make God laugh, show up in a foreign city with no earthly idea of what you are doing, so that you find yourself wandering up and down a busy highway at night with 2 large suitcases and a guitar for several hours, wondering if you are even in Italy.” I imagine that phrase probably won’t catch on anytime soon, but it should.

Without having anything that could realistically be called a plan, I ended up biting off more than I could chew. This sometimes happens with students and parents I speak to here at Seton, especially new families who might not be aware of the challenging nature of our program. While every student is different, there are a few pointers I would like to suggest so that you don’t find yourselves wandering feverish and crazed in a foreign land.

As I have mentioned before in this column, the High School Course Catalog is an excellent resource for choosing courses, and one of the most useful items is the Recommended Course schedule. The different diploma options are laid out with the various course requirements and electives shown over all four years. The Advanced Diploma is the most challenging option and requires six and a half credits of courses each year. But there is a reason we recommend six and half and not eight.

We have found that students who take more than the recommended course load tend to struggle when trying to get their work completed

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

Do you have any advice for other homeschooling fathers?

First of all, stay involved in your kids' lives. So often, fathers are gone in the evenings, doing their own thing. I like to come home and spend time with my kids. I know I'll never regret spending 'too much' time with my kids, because they grow up really fast. Three of mine are already grown, but as they've become adults, my relationship with them has grown as well. They come to me with their trials and seek my advice. There's no better father's reward.

Next, if you are a homeschooling father, do not be afraid to talk to other men about it and to support it openly. Every summer, we host a handful of couples who are interested in homeschooling. I make a point of encouraging the dads to come and of sharing my homeschooling experience with them. Almost all of these couples choose to homeschool and usually with Seton after meeting us.

Finally, remember that your wife's day at home isn't always easy, and be there for her. Take care of her.

and often fall behind. Granted some people want their children living in the basement at the age of 25 still trying to finish up that book analysis from English 11. If that is the case, disregard this column. But I assume that sentiment does not apply to many.

Moreover, taking on an extreme number of courses tends to correlate with a decrease in GPA. While it is certainly important to take as rigorous a course load as possible for college acceptance, it is even more important to keep grades up. A good GPA is something of a *sine qua non* for colleges. Having nine courses senior year with Calculus, Physics, and Latin 4 might look great, but the shine is taken off a bit when the student is also sporting a 1.8 cumulative GPA.

As always, if there are any questions when choosing courses, give us a call. We will do our best to advise you on the best path for your students. At least we will try to keep them from arguing with Italian bus drivers in broken fragments of Latin. Maybe Latin 4 is a good idea...

should pray for our troops and for our leaders, why some things are "rights," and some things are not, and why liberty is vital to a nation. In short, we examine all the important things that an American Government textbook should address.

In this course, by the time the students analyze the Declaration of Independence and The Constitution, students know why these historical documents are wonderful. Then they study the political structure of American government and its three branches.

For the third quarter, the students spend nine weeks reading and analyzing the Roe v. Wade decision and why that

decision was un-Constitutional.

In the fourth quarter, we examine why some authority is properly left to the states, to local authorities, and to the people.

Of course, the undercurrent of all this is the constant reference to the teachings of the Catholic Church and the writings of some of her most brilliant members.

Therein lies the simple motivation for writing such a course. It is the motivation behind all Seton's courses. Just as there is a body of encyclicals that are known as the "social encyclicals" of the church, so also are there what could be termed the "educational encyclicals" of the Church. And in those, the popes have consistently

maintained that all subjects be taught from a Catholic perspective. At Seton, for thirty years, we have believed the popes were serious about that.

Today, more than ever before, we need to answer the call of the popes. We need to re-discover the why in education, and re-discover the beauty of our Faith. The beauty of homeschooling is that it allows parents and their children to do just that. We at Seton are committed to helping you achieve your homeschooling mission. As we continue forward in an effort to assist you, please pray that we be given God's grace to do so.



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.

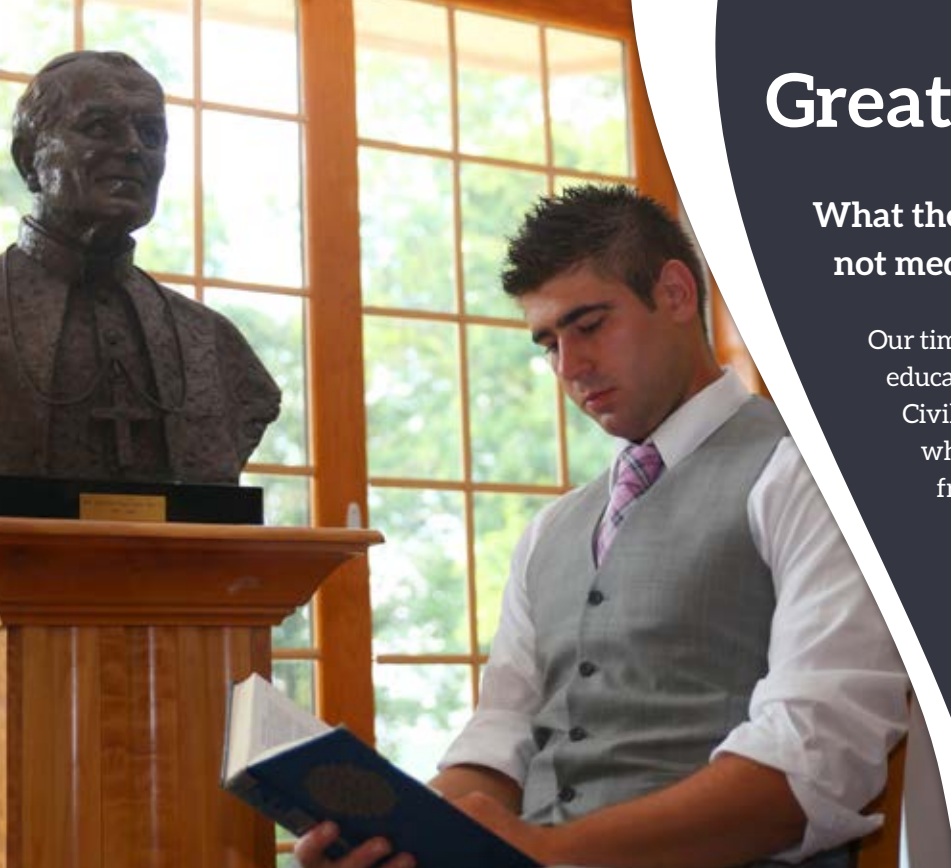
Prizes

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

Submission Deadline

December 31st, 2015

www.setonmagazine.com/shortstory



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– DR. MARY KAY CLARK

”

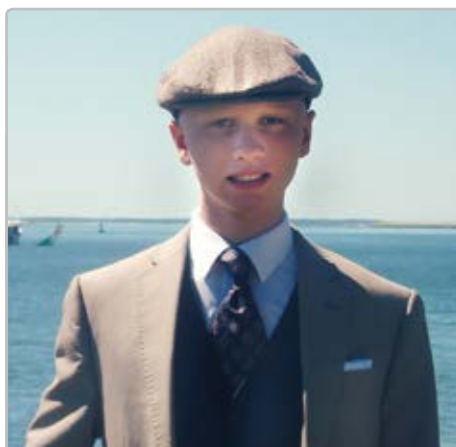


Seton Student Achievements

SHARING SUCCESS WITH THE SETON COMMUNITY



Jansen | Starting on September 16, 2011, and up to now, Homeschooling has allowed for me to discover and identify ten meteorites.



Ryan | Currently 16 years old and finished with my Freshman year at Southern New Hampshire University with a 4.0 average. I have been invited into an honor society which I am completing the steps to be inducted.



Blake | I became an Eagle Scout with my local Boy Scout Troop 25 in Lucedale MS on June 23, 2015

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

www.setonmagazine.com/students

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Family Advent Activities in Preparation for Christmas!

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Papal Quotes on the Family

The goal of education is to guide and support the development of the freedom to make right decisions, which may run counter to widespread opinions, the fashions of the moment, or forms of political and religious ideology. This is the price of building a culture of peace!

Pope Benedict XVI, Speech to Government Members and World Leaders of Culture, September 15, 2012



Pope Benedict XVI CC The Papa Visit | Flickr



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Educational Media

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