

# Seton MAGAZINE

Under the Magisterium of the Catholic Church

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**CHRISTMAS** ISSUE



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The Lyons Family



## Letter from the Editor

*"For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have life everlasting." Jn 3:16*

Welcome to the Christmas edition of Seton Magazine, a double issue filled with Christmas meditations, ideas for celebrating, and of course, greetings from our family to yours. Also featured is the first place winner of our high school Christmas essay contest. You'll find more from our contestants over at [www.bayleybulletin.com](http://www.bayleybulletin.com).

Our normal printing schedule returns after the new year, so look for your next issue around February 1st.

May the blessings of the Christ Child fill your home with peace and joy this Christmas!

Christine Smitha



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Daily at Seton, we gather before the altar at our noon Angelus and offer prayers for our families and friends. We encourage you also to pray for other homeschooling families, especially those suffering from illness, unemployment, or other crosses. United in the Communion of Saints, God allows us to uphold, support, and console other members of His Church through our prayers. Let us pray for one another as we walk the path of homeschooling, so that we may someday all join together in prayer in Heaven.



# A Christmas Meditation

## on the Crèche Scene for Children

BY DR. MARY KAY CLARK

*This Christmas, gather your children around the nativity scene, and join Dr. Clark in this little meditation by reading it aloud. She will take you on a journey of wonder around the creche, helping you to admire the incredible miracle of the Birth of Christ.*

*Children of all ages can learn about meditation, a tool for restoring our joy in the things of God. "But when we think of divine things, not to learn, but to make ourselves love them, this is called meditating," said St. Francis de Sales.*

*Since there is a history of military service in the Clark family, we hope you won't mind that she has included her family tradition of soldiers at the stable. After all, God calls every man and woman from all walks of life to Himself.*

The Birth of the Christ Child, the Incarnation of the Son of God, is an event that is so overwhelming in its full meaning that none of us can truly comprehend it. In the Gospel of Luke, when the angel asks Mary to conceive the Son of God, Mary asks, "How can this be?"

The event of the human birth of the Son of God is so powerfully overwhelming in its demonstration of the immense, immeasurable love of God for each individual person ever created that we are forced to ask "How can it be?" How can we ever understand this unimaginable event?

How can it be that the Son of the Eternal God, the Creator of the Universe, would come to the earth He created? He made the brightly-lit stars and the iridescent moon. He made the brilliant sun so greatly shining we cannot even look at it! He made the countless colored flowers and the huge evergreen trees and the sequoias whose tops

reach the clouds. He made the wide rapid rivers and the huge oceans with their ever-flowing waves perpetually hitting the shores.

How is it that this great God of all creation, this God Who had no beginning, Who has no end, would reduce Himself to a tiny speechless, helpless Babe in a cradle of hay in a dark barn on a cold night? How is it that a young girl not yet a woman should bear this inexplicable God become Man?

How can it be? Who can explain the unexplainable?

Yet, God so loved the world that He gave us His only begotten son, born of a humble young woman without fine dress nor residing in a castle. Instead, she lies in a hay-strewn stable surrounded by four-legged creatures. The cud-chewing cows, bleating sheep, and impatient horses warm the stable with their heavy breath.

As Mary lies on a pillow of hay, her delicate pink face shows a bright smile beyond any earthly beam.

Her husband Joseph, the young foster father, whose rough carpenter hands are become tender with love, caresses the Son of God in the arms of his wife, Mary.

Three young shepherd children silently enter the stable with their eyes fixed on the radiant Child and kneel before the Babe and His mother, laying their new-born lambs at her feet.

Hovering above the human figures are angelic creatures with powerful wings, beating the gentlest music like soft violins that have yet to be made. These angels sing a heavenly melody with words incomprehensible to earthly creatures.

The sound of horses and boots and metal



are heard outside as three Roman soldiers appear at the stable door to offer obeisance to the newborn child and gifts of fresh bread to the head of the humble family.

Three crowned men in red velvet capes topped with white fur enter the stable and advance on their knees with heads bowed low, carrying gifts that glow like gold and diamonds in the soft light emanating from the Child.

In the peace of this holy stable, young Mother Mary starts humming a soft tune and, just as softly, Joseph, the shepherds, kings, children, and soldiers join in the gentle melody.

As the song comes to an end, the Baby in His Mother's lap turns toward each person, and holding up His right hand, He seems to bless them as His Mother says clearly "Some day, you shall be with us in Paradise."

*"In meditation we find the strength to bring Christ to birth in ourselves and in other men." – St. Charles Borromeo*



**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

READ ONLINE!

BY DR. MARY KAY CLARK

**I was not very good in math when I was in school, and am having a difficult time teaching it.**

Relax. You should be positive, telling your child that “Solving math problems is not the same as when I was in school, so I am going to learn right along with you. Together we can learn to solve your math problems.”

Another idea is to involve your husband as well. Ask him to look over the math lessons and help teach them.

Keep in mind that homeschooling is not about math; it is about living a Catholic Family Life. We are homeschooling to save our children so they will be in Heaven for eternity. Take the math slowly; no one is rushing you. Consider asking a neighbor or retired schoolteacher to come in and help teach math, and you can learn, too!

**My friend ordered the Seton program for her 5th grade son, but the math and English books seem too difficult. She did not administer a Seton Placement Test because she wanted the books as soon as possible. What should she do now?**

We sometimes receive “trouble” calls from newly-enrolled parents who never sent a Placement Test score sheet from the previous school, nor took a Seton Placement test. Often, they ordered online and never spoke with a counselor. It is also possible your friend never saw the sample pages available on our website for every book in every elementary grade level.

Please tell your friend to phone one of our elementary counselors, or perhaps one of our math counselors, to see if her son should either change books or spend some time doing extra practice with more basic concepts.

Parents of high school students: It is a serious situation when high school

students are sent books that exceed their ability. Because high school students bear the extra burden of fulfilling credit requirements and taking courses that will enable them to gain college admittance, it is crucial that their time be spent effectively. Incoming high school students should take Placement Tests for entering Seton to ensure that they are placed in the best courses for their skill levels. We want our students to be successful.

*Catholic Homeschooling  
is not primarily about reading,  
writing, and arithmetic. It is about  
living the Faith as a family.*

**I have been homeschooling several children for five years and I am getting very tired. Do you have any ideas to help me?**

Another idea is to cut down on the elementary classes and/or tests for a year.

Take a year off for art and music; for elementary history and/or science, just have your children read the books but not take the tests. Consider having the children do some work in the speller and in the vocabulary book, but not every exercise in every chapter.

Do remember this: Catholic Homeschooling is not primarily about reading, writing, and arithmetic. It is about living the Faith as a family.

Catholic homeschooling is about children growing up practicing the Faith. It is about making sure that our children want to marry a practicing Catholic, with the result that our children continue as practicing adult Catholics. Our children are more likely to homeschool our grandchildren in the Catholic Faith, which

means Heaven will be more heavenly than we can imagine!

You can slow up on the curriculum, but not on practicing and living the Faith.

**I am considering taking the whole year for homeschooling and not taking a summer break.**

Some families do that by taking quarterly breaks during the year. After two and a half months, the family takes a two-week vacation, often traveling someplace to visit grandparents or traveling to another state to see the sights, especially historical places. It seems to work out pretty well as long as Dad can get the time off. Costs of travel are usually less during non-summer months.

Homeschooling year round can be very beneficial to children's education, as children aren't given as much of a chance to forget what they've learned. Just be sure that you don't overtax yourself or your children.

**My 7th grade daughter says her books are too easy and she is bored.**

I am assuming that your daughter is obtaining perfect grades on all her tests. If not, she needs to “prove” to you how easy the books are by obtaining perfect scores on her tests.

One thing you can do is to give her the end of chapter quizzes. If she obtains a perfect score, have her take the appropriate Seton tests for her report card grade. If the first chapters in some books seem too easy, that may be because some books, especially in math, review the previous grade level topics. However, as the book progresses, new ideas will be introduced and will need to be learned. Tell her as long as she gets perfect or nearly perfect grades for each chapter test, she can progress to the next chapter.





## Young Scientist Kits

A perfect Christmas gift for the aspiring scientist! Colorfully presented with everything you need to nurture a child's interest in the applied sciences. Each set contains three complete science kits (3 manuals/3 supply bags).

The twelve different sets can be done individually, but consider working through them all in order to experience the ultimate in science adventure.

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Each set only **\$24.00** 3 sets **\$69.99**

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If your daughter finishes up any course in less than a year, you can always order the next level book for that subject. However, she might find she could use the extra time to put more effort into another subject which turns out to be not as easy as she thought!

## My mother is in the hospital, and I cannot keep up with the children's work.

Consider having your older children help with the younger children. For instance, an 8th grader might have a first, second, or third grade sibling sit beside her as they both work, enabling the 8th grader to help her younger brother or sister with subjects such as math or phonics. You might even consider paying your older child to be a Teacher's Helper while you are at the hospital.

If you plan ahead, you and your older children are likely to come up with some workable ideas.

Remember that homeschooling is about Faith and Family. Putting your child in a school may result in his learning his math faster, but he will also learn the values, or lack of values,

of the current society. Homeschooling is only secondarily about reading, writing, and arithmetic. Strange as it may seem to others, when the family practices the Faith together, the academics come much more easily, as older children help out the younger ones.

## My daughter is about to go off to college, but she has been such a help to me with the younger children. Would it be too much to ask her to delay college for a year so she can help me with the homeschooling? My husband wants me to ask you.

I recommend that all the time. Consider paying her something for helping to teach the younger children. If she wants, she could enroll in an online college course, but she needs to make sure it is something without the current cultural viewpoint, such as a math course or some science courses. Even foreign language courses regularly promote secular values, so beware. There may be some good Catholic colleges offering online courses, so check that out.

A year off from serious studies may actually appeal to some students before they embark on the demands of college. Statistics also show that older students in college achieve better grades!

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

Although families do often start home schooling 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 home school at any level of high school certainly can be done successfully.



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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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READ ONLINE!



# Faith, Family, & Adventure

Homeschooling with the Lyons Family

by Christine Lyons

My husband, Asher, and I were high school sweethearts. Asher is a machinist and I run Clean River Products, a small business making cold process soap. We have been blessed with four children and the ability to homeschool for the past 12 years. We live in New Mexico, the Land of Enchantment.

Asher and I have a passion for hiking, camping, and kayaking which we have shared with our children from very early on. It has taken us many amazing places. As the children have grown, though, they have developed their own interests from these initial building blocks.

Jansen, our oldest, loves meteorites. We had always enjoyed looking for fossils on our hikes, but after reading a book about meteorites one day, Jansen was entranced, and set out to find his own. Four years later, he did. It was the first meteorite discovered in Rio Rancho, NM and was classified by the Institute of Meteoritics at the University of New Mexico. Since then, we have spent many hours wandering the arid deserts of the Southwest looking for meteorites. Surprisingly, we have found more. Jansen has been given several opportunities to work closely with Dr. Carl Agee at UNM, who

has been extremely generous with his time and knowledge. Through this connection, Jansen recently was offered a work study position at UNM.

Ethan, our second son, would prefer not to scour the desert for rocks. He has been learning to write code and render images in 3D with an eye to designing computer games. In the process, he's also taken an

interest in making electronic music and synthesized sounds that can be used for his games. He has contributed his music to SoundCloud and shares his songs with the Life Teen group at our parish.

Brooke, our older daughter, enjoys crocheting and embroidery, and is currently learning to knit. She spent the better part of the summer volunteering as a Junior Leader at a local youth ranch, caring for the farm animals and teaching young children where their food comes from. She has a weekly job babysitting and tutoring other homeschooled children.

Grace, our youngest, has a passion for drawing and painting. She loves to wander the craft store aisles and pick out paint colors, brushes and paper for her next project. She also enjoys reading books about the lives of the saints.

Our Catholic faith is the most important part of our family life and our schooling has helped us grow deeper in that faith. We schedule our days off around Holy Days, and make it a point to attend morning Mass on Fridays. The boys enjoy altar serving and all four children volunteer their time







to clean the church. We have found a way to share the richness of our faith through our business as well. Our specialty soap is chris-m-scented, and it is made to remind us of our baptismal promises.

We have homeschooled our children since kindergarten, but did not begin using Seton until our boys were in high school. When high school came around, I thought designing my own curriculum would be too challenging for me and possibly too limiting for my children, so instead, we enrolled the boys in a public charter school. This did not work out well. The biggest problem was that we had truly enjoyed homeschooling and the new public school schedule was putting a huge damper on our lifestyle. We quickly reversed our decision not to homeschool through high school, and as I didn't have time to put together a high school curriculum at that point, I decided to give

Seton a try. I am so thankful I did! I can see that Seton has provided my children with a truly Catholic education that is challenging and relevant in today's competitive world.

Seton has benefited our family in many ways but most importantly, it has afforded us time to be together as a family, time that we would not otherwise have had. My husband, Asher, frequently works an irregular schedule, certainly not your typical 8 to 5. Had the kids not been homeschooled, they would rarely see him and our weekends would be spent without him. Homeschooling means we've adjusted our school days and daily routine to work with Asher's shifts so that we can have a meal together and enjoy the same days off.

Seton has also given me confidence as a mother and as a high school teacher that my children will be well equipped academically and spiritually to head out

into the world. If I fall short in my abilities to help the kids with certain assignments, the Seton staff are always willing to assist the kids with any difficulties.

Furthermore, Seton has allowed my children to expand the range of their interests and talents. I did not know the difference between a meteor and a meteorite, but because of Seton, I do now, and so does my son! My drawing skills are limited to smiley faces; I can't read music or knit; but homeschooling, especially with Seton, has encouraged the children to develop their talents and interests outside of their regular studies, giving them the tools to do so even if and when I can't.

Thanks to Seton, we've been able to continue our family life of faith-filled adventure through God's creation.





# A Homeschooler's Guide to Celebrating the 12 Days of Christmas

by Christine Smitha



A list of possible Catholic interpretations.

1. **A Partridge in a Pear Tree** or Jesus Christ
2. **Two Turtledoves** or the Old and New Testaments
3. **Three French Hens** or Faith, Hope, and Charity
4. **Four Calling Birds** or the Four Gospels
5. **Five Gold Rings** or the first Five books of the Old Testament
6. **Six Geese** or the Six Days of Creation
7. **Seven Swans** or the Seven Gifts of the Holy Spirit (or the Seven Sacraments)
8. **Eight Maids** or the Eight Beatitudes
9. **Nine Ladies** or the Nine Fruits of the Holy Spirit
10. **Ten Lords** or the Ten Commandments
11. **Eleven Pipers** or the Eleven Faithful Apostles
12. **Twelve Drummers** or the Twelve doctrines outlined in the Apostles' Creed

The importance of these books, known as the Pentateuch, is that they tell of man's fall into sin and his consequent need for a Savior, which is promised in Genesis, and fulfilled by the Nativity.

If anyone in the Colorado Rockies had been awake during the wee hours of Christmas morning a couple decades ago, he might have heard the faint refrain, "Five golden rings, four calling birds, three French hens, two. . ." That was the sound of our family wending our way back up the mountains after attending Midnight Mass in the city below. Though I occasionally wondered about the strange series of gifts, it never occurred to me to attempt dissecting the song, much less apply it as a rule of life for my Christmas holiday.

Fast forward a few years and a friend said, "You do know what that song is talking about, right? It's the Catechism for persecuted Catholics!" Well, as it turns out, there's a bit of controversy about that, and the song is likely just a fun memory game that developed in 17th or 18th-century France.

Be that as it may, there is a recent convention of associating each of the numbered gifts in the carol with a particular element of the Catholic faith.

I like the idea of adopting the carol into family devotions, as Catholics have done with many local customs through the centuries. Perhaps a good way to celebrate the twelve days of Christmas would be to spend some time reflecting on these things, and discussing with your children the significance of each item on the appropriate day. Young children especially will relish the opportunity to sing the song each day so they can find out what each number means.

The twelve days of Christmas also incorporate some of the calendar's most noteworthy feast days, which provide

ample opportunity for good works and devotions, an excellent way to continue celebrating Christmas.

Finally, it's worth remembering that there is a foundation of innocence in most of the regular Christmas traditions and that there is no reason why Catholics can't with purity of heart return to those innocent roots and enjoy these traditions with faith.

So give gifts with joy, but try giving one a day for each of the twelve days of Christmas. Think in terms of gifts the whole family can enjoy, such as a train set, a good movie about Christmas, or tickets to a Christmas program.

Enjoy the Christmas tree lights, but when you light them each night, gather the children for a prayer of thanks that Christ came to light the world.

Celebrate the year that has passed, but don't forget to gain an indulgence from praying the Te Deum on December 31st.

Invite your parish priest over for a festive dinner, and have him bless your house with the traditional Epiphany blessing while you're at it.

Welcome those who have no family to your "inn," so they can enjoy Christmas too.

Let this Christmas renew your faith and inspire your family with gratitude for our True Love's gifts!



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.



Day 1: Dec. 25

### The Nativity of Our Lord

This is a day for honoring the Baby Jesus. Even if you've gone to Midnight Mass, you can still keep Our Lord at the center of the day by gathering around the crèche for morning and nighttime prayers, preparing Jesus a birthday cake as do so many of Seton's families, and singing religious carols, such as "Silent Night."

Day 2: Dec. 26

### St. Stephen, the first martyr

To honor the first martyr, who was also a deacon, and therefore particularly tasked with care of the poor, you might have everyone in the family search their possessions for items to donate to the poor via a St. Stephen's box. A pleasant side effect is that you won't have as much trouble with the typical post-Christmas clutter. Read the stories of St. Stephen and St. Wenceslaus (who was also known for his almsgiving).

Day 3: Dec. 27

### The Holy Family (2015; normally St. John the Evangelist)

In remembrance of the perfect and holy love that existed amongst the members of the Holy Family, do extra charitable works for one another, write thank you notes, and reach out to estranged or distant family members.

Day 4: Dec. 28

### The Holy Innocents

This is a good day to offer prayers for an end to abortion, and also a day to pray for all those who are suffering persecution for their Catholic faith around the world. At the same time, it is also the perfect day to celebrate the children in your family. Thank God for them and give them each a special blessing with holy water before bedtime on this feast day.

Day 5: Dec. 29

### St. Thomas Becket, bishop and martyr

Read St. Thomas Becket's Christmas Sermon from T. S. Eliot's *Murder in the Cathedral*. It's a sobering but worthwhile reflection on the broader meaning of Christmas and what it means to be a Christian in a pagan world. Perhaps with your older children, you might pick an important issue about which to write your local and national representatives, urging them to vote wisely on matters of conscience.

Day 6: Dec. 30

### 6th day of Christmas

There is no particular feast assigned to December 30th, which means it's an opportunity to return to the central mystery of Christmas, the birth of the Lord. With the new year right around the corner, talk with your children about how they can do their part to bring the light of Christ to the world.

Day 7: Dec. 31

### St. Sylvester I, Pope

This feast day of a pope reminds us to pray for our Holy Father and suggests that we commit to regular prayer for the pope and our bishops in the coming new year.

Day 8: Jan. 1

### Holy Mother of God

There's no better way to begin the new year than by honoring Our Blessed Lady! If you have a special icon or statue of our lady, put it in a place of honor in your home for the day, perhaps with flowers and candles. Try praying the Rosary with your family after dinner this night, or if the kids are just too squirmy, sing some Marian hymns, such as "Salve Regina" and "O Sanctissima."

Day 9: Jan. 2

### St. Basil and St. Gregory Nazianzen

These saints were bishops and they are both Doctors of the Church. They also had a remarkable and abiding friendship with one another. Read St. Gregory's account of his friendship with St. Basil from Matins (the Office of Readings) for the feast day, and spend some time with good friends. Talk to your children about the importance of friends in journeying to heaven, and help them put together cards with spiritual bouquets for their own friends.

...continued on page 16





# Simplicity

## The Best Gift God Ever Gave Me

BY MARIE VALDOVINOS

**Editor's note:** Congratulations Marie for winning the Seton 2015 High School Christmas Essay Contest! Entries were judged by quality and adherence to the contest topic, the theme of 'Gift'. Marie was awarded the first prize of \$75 for this essay. The remaining winning entries, and other entries of note, are published online at [bayleybulletin.com](http://bayleybulletin.com), the magazine for Seton High Schoolers.



"It's a gift to be simple." As a youngster I'd often heard this proverb emphasized during Christmastime. I must add that there was also a time I just didn't get the "gift" part of the phrase. I often wondered, What can one get out of being simple? Doesn't "simple" mean to be stripped bare of belongings? I was significantly disturbed when I used to hear this quote, and ended up misinterpreting it as a consequence.

As far as I was concerned, simple living was for the homeless and destitute; I much preferred comfort and entertainment during the holidays and every time of year. What I didn't realize is that these things can lead to myopic insights and spiritual blindness; these, of course, are exactly what I adopted because of my secular viewpoint which, I might add, could easily have shaped the rest

of my childhood and youth.

It was lucky for me that God decided to do something about that in December 2008, the year He sent both a Herculean snowstorm and a valuable message my way.

Both came unexpectedly. Ten days before Christmas, a fierce blizzard swept by our Northern Oregon neighborhood and dumped about six inches of snow on our doorstep. According to the news, this amount was a record-breaker! Over the course of that week, the front lawn became a playground for us kids, who had no idea of the shortcomings which were to follow. Wait until we told all our grandparents what they were missing out on!

And then... the problems began. The weekend before Christmas, our van's power





steering failed on the road, leaving us stranded and in shock. We ended up having to push the car into a parking lot. Since their phone batteries died, my parents couldn't call a towing service, either. To heap insult upon injury, we had no way to get home except to walk (and how many of us wanted to walk almost ten miles?).

Fortunately, though, a kind stranger miraculously stepped in by hiring a snow vehicle to return us home safely. The family van, alas, was left behind in that parking lot. Now I realized my family would have to live through Christmas without the car (gasp!) -- until it could be retrieved and repaired. Enter simplicity.

Frustrated and determined to fix matters, we started wishing and yes, even praying for the snow to melt. I prayed especially hard, Please, God, make the snow go away so my parents can buy us presents this year. The realization of not having a "normal holiday" nearly drove me to panic.

December 24th arrived at last, yet the stubborn snow still refused to release its claim on our town. Between this fact and three sporadic power failures that occurred throughout that week, I was virtually fit to be tied due to these inconveniences. Because we couldn't go grocery shopping, my mom decided to scrape together a substitute Christmas feast using leftover ground turkey, bell peppers, and sweet potatoes.

Given that I was already famished and frustrated, I had little energy left to voice my protest against the entrée. Despite my distaste, however, I had to admit that such a simple meal spared me and my sisters the tedious duty of cleaning a mountain of cookware. Maybe there is a little advantage in a basic lifestyle, I reconsidered begrudgingly.

Though I would have preferred to spend the evening writing Santa an extensive wish list, I chose to read my siblings Christmas stories by the fireplace instead; I knew they were suffering as much of a culture shock as I was. I ended up enjoying my time with them so much that I almost forgot there were six inches of snow outside, no car in the driveway, and no treats or excess gifts in the house. Because the snowstorm forced us to rely on our present supplies, I was slowly learning to sacrifice a typical Americanized holiday laden with commercialism and accumulation.

In striking contrast to millions of American households, our own home boasted very few decorations and a scant stock of presents underneath the Christmas tree that year. As time progressed, I began regarding our situation as more of a blessing than as a curse because, after all, wasn't Jesus born in a small cave and wrapped in a manger? If He could accept meager provisions, so could I. My prayers began

shifting from self-centered begging to more peaceful gratitude for what we did have to share with each other.

In retrospect, I can now confidently say that I have heartily embraced the Christian view of simple living during the holidays. As I have matured, my attention shifted from how many presents there are under the tree to how many blessings there are to be thankful for. This just goes to show that the best gifts in life are those that cannot be seen, and it takes a special heart to understand that simplicity is the greatest of them all.

Moreover, for those of you who may still be left wondering, the word "simple" does not necessarily equal "stark poverty" or "rigorous asceticism". There can be and there are benefits from being simple which I've gained over the years: less temptation to material attachment, appreciation for the bare necessities, and time for contemplating the selfless birth of Christ.

Talk about a three-in-one bargain!

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**Marie Valdovinos** is a Seton senior. She lives in Fremont, CA with her parents and 5 younger siblings. She wrote her first short story at age 6, and has been practicing her creative writing skills for almost 12 years. Apart from writing, her other greatest hobbies include sketching, singing, and reading anything written by Tolkien and Dickens, her literary role models. She owes all her writing skills and current success in school to Seton's rigorous yet rewarding English curriculum. One of her biggest goals is to be a published author.



# Christmas Recipes from Seton Families!

Christmas is full of great recipes and family time. Join our Seton featured families as they share their favorite recipes and traditions.

[READ ONLINE!](#)

## Christmas Greetings to our fellow Seton families from the Hendershotts!

May Our Lord bless all of you this Holy Season and throughout the New Year, and may He continue to bless you all the way to eternity.

### *Christmas Tea Ring - The Unbroken Ring of Giving*

Our neighbors look forward to receiving baked goods on Christmas Eve. Sweet dough is rolled up with cinnamon, nuts, and/or raisins, shaped into a ring with slits to expose the contents, and glazed with cherry slices on top.



#### Recipe: Sweet Dough

4 – 4 ½ cups flour  
1 egg, beaten  
2 packets yeast  
½ cup oil  
½ cup sugar (or less is okay)  
1 ¼ cups water  
1 ½ tsp salt, optional

#### Directions

Mix dry ingredients. Add wet ingredients. Knead. Let rise until doubled. Punch down and divide into 2 (for medium rings) or 3 (for small rings) sections.

Roll dough into ¼ inch thick rectangle. Brush with egg wash, and sprinkle with cinnamon and your choices of sugar, chopped nuts, and raisins. Roll up like a jellyroll, starting on the long side of the rectangle and shape into a circle, pinching the ends together carefully.

With scissors, make cuts on the outside of the ring about 1 inch apart and 2/3 into the dough of the ring, turning each slice on its side to reveal its contents. Let rise until doubled. Bake 375 for 20-30 minutes, until lightly brown.

Make a glaze of your choice. Glaze the top of the ring. Decorate the wreath by placing cut pieces of cherries or other fruits on the glaze. A medium ring is shown in the picture and the smaller sizes may be appropriate for a single or couple.

*Note: We frequently omit the first rising with rapid rise yeast.*



The Hendershott Family



The Payne Family



## A blessed Advent and Christmas from the Payne family!

### *Grandma Bevy's Peanut Butter Balls*

- 8 oz. cream cheese
- 2 boxes confectioners' sugar
- 1 and ½ cups creamy peanut butter
- ½ lb. (2 sticks) butter (best to use butter as new margarines don't have the right consistency)

Mix sugar, peanut butter, butter and cream cheese and shape into balls (easiest to just mix with your hands)

Refrigerate for a few hours or overnight. When chilled, roll into balls of about 1" diameter.

#### **Melt in double boiler:**

- 1 large bag choc olate chips (12 or 16 oz)
- 1 box, unsweetened baking chocolate
- 1/2 cake paraffin, dip

To dip, PopPop finds a piece of wire (5 or 6 inches long) and makes a circle on the end for a handle.

Dip each ball and allow to dry on wax paper. To store, refrigerate peanut butter balls in cookie tin with waxed paper between layers.

## Merry Christmas from the Rocco Family!

We will be celebrating our Slovak heritage by making and enjoying the *štedrý večer* (meaning "generous evening") this Christmas Eve. There is no meat eaten to prepare for the joyous Feast of Christmas Day but there are many other good things to find on the table.

Among the traditional fare is *Oplatki*, the Christmas Wafer served with honey; bobalki (baked balls of dough with sauerkraut or poppyseed filling, commemorating the sweet and bitter times in life); and sauerkraut and mushroom soup.

Give it a try, the soup is wonderful for chasing away those winter germs! As we celebrate the abundant joy of Christ's birth, may the Light warm us and lead us into a happy, healthy 2016.

### *Sauerkraut and Mushroom Soup for Christmas Eve*

- 1 -2 lb onion, chopped
- 1 ¼ cups butter, divided (may need a little more)
- 2 lbs mushrooms, finely chopped (we use white mushrooms)
- 1 quart water
- 10 (7 ½ ounce) cans sauerkraut juice
- ¼ cup flour

#### **Directions**

Sauté chopped onions in 1 cup butter until golden brown.

Add finely chopped mushrooms to onions, and cook until mushrooms are done.

Add water and cans of sauerkraut juice, bring to boil, lower heat and simmer 1/2 hour.

In a small sauce pan brown remaining 1/4 cup butter, adding flour to make a roux.

Slowly add some soup juice (about 2 cups) to the roux, stirring to blend.

Add roux to soup and cook another 15 minutes to 30 minutes. Serve.

Makes 12 Servings

The Rocco Family







# Christmas Cards from Seton Families!



"During Christmas, men open tightly clenched fists in compassion to their fellow creatures. Some rejoice, some weep, and a very few will find the illumined, adorable face of the Christ Child in the cross-bearers around them." At Christmas, men do open their "shut up hearts freely" as Dickens wrote, and allow a ray of warm, holy light to brighten a darkened world." ~Elizabeth Shaw

Merry Christmas from the Shaw family!



Merry Christmas from the Thomas family! May God bless your families during this special time of year. We hope each of you finds peace, joy, and love while celebrating the birth of our Lord.

## *Our Favorite Tradition:*

On Christmas Eve, my dad's side of the family has a big dinner. After dinner, all the kids put on a talent show and play.

We get to hear them sing, play an instrument, or recite a poem. Then they usually put on a play that in some way incorporates the most important message of Christmas—Christ's birth and love.

It's always a treat to get to see each of the kids shine in his or her own special way.



New Mexico is a wonderfully unique place to be at Christmas time. We might be Irish Americans but we enjoy participating in *Las Posadas*, the beautiful tradition of re-enacting the Biblical journey of Mary and Joseph, as well as touring the neighborhoods on Christmas Eve to view the *luminarias*, and following up with homemade green chile stew and tortillas.

This year, as every year, we'll celebrate Christmas with Mass in the morning followed by a day filled with family and a birthday cake for Jesus. Merry Christmas from the Lyons family!



Greetings from our family to yours from this place we've affectionately dubbed Brelinskyville. With two busy Seton graduates, and one of those away at college seminary, we are thankful to have our whole family back under one roof for this joyous season. We wish our whole Seton family a very Blessed Christmas!

Several years ago, we decided to reclaim the Twelve Days of Christmas in our family. We wanted to keep our focus on Christ and others so we brainstormed the perfect gift to give to our extended circles. Together, we designate specific families or individuals for each of the twelve days.

On the assigned day, our whole family prays for the chosen person/persons and offers up all of our works. We designed a simple certificate that documents the date, the names of those we are praying for, and an explanation of our gift.

We mail this along with our annual Christmas card and letter. This has become one of our favorite traditions (the hardest part is narrowing down our list of recipients)!



Each year, we wait with much anticipation throughout Advent to set up our Christmas Tree on Christmas Eve, followed by pizza for dinner and Midnight Mass.

Then we relax over the 12 Days of Christmas, filling them with family memories. May the Blessings of The Holy Family fill your life, during this Holy Season and throughout the New Year.

Merry Christmas from the Wersland Family!



Day 10: Jan.3

### The Holy Name of Jesus

Today is a day to reflect on the power of the Holy Name. On this day, one might consider making an Act of Reparation for those who have abused the Holy Name, and to meditate on the sacredness of all baptismal names. Tell your children why you chose their names, and talk to them about speaking names with respect, as well as saying a prayer whenever they hear God's name taken in vain.

Day 11: Jan. 4

### St. Elizabeth Ann Seton

This day is a very special day for Seton families because it is the feast day of our patron, Mother Seton. Today might be a good day to freshen up the schoolroom or school corner. It's also an appropriate day for getting together with homeschooling friends, perhaps for a potluck dinner at which St. Elizabeth is honored with skits from the children about her life.

Day 12: Jan. 5

### St. John Neumann

The 4th bishop of Philadelphia, St. John Neumann was also an important proponent of Catholic education in the United States. Along with the previous day's feast, this is a good day to celebrate Christmas with fellow homeschoolers.

## Celebrating Christmas with Seton Magazine's authors



### Mary Ellen Barrett

We love to observe the twelve days of Christmas in our home. The children enjoy placing the three kings from one of our non-breakable Nativity sets around the room making them journey ever closer to the Christ child.

On the twelfth night we celebrate with the traditional king cake, to which I add three dried beans in one section. Whoever gets the piece with the beans gets to wear the crown, usually leftover from New Year's Eve, and picks the activity for the evening, a board game, craft, outing or a movie night.

It's always exciting as well as a bit of a mess to see who gets those beans. The twelve days in our home are full of feasting, visiting and resting in the love of our own family and that of our Savior.



### John Clark

As you can imagine, when our nine children wake on Christmas morning to open their gifts, life can be anything but quiet.

So years ago, Lisa and I began the tradition of exchanging our own gifts in the wee small hours, as Christmas Eve turns to Christmas Day. After the gifts are wrapped, the church clothes are laundered for Mass, and the children are trying very hard to pretend to be asleep, it's a chance for us to take a quiet moment to ponder the meaning of Christmas together.

As one of my favorite priests told me many years ago, "Christmas goes by pretty fast. It's important to find the contemplative moments when we can."

#### Resources:

Chaney, Elsa. *The Twelve Days of Christmas*. Collegeville, Minnesota: Liturgical Press, 1955.

Weiser, Francis X. *Handbook of Christian Feasts and Customs; the Year of the Lord in Liturgy and Folklore*. New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1958.

Fisheaters.com, US Catholic.org, USCCB.org

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# Simple Christmas for Homeschooling Families

BY ABBY SASSCER

READ ONLINE!

I still fondly remember our simple Christmas celebrations in the Philippines. The houses on our streets were decorated with lights and colorful Christmas lanterns called parols. Children would dutifully collect and flatten bottlecaps, put them together with hard alambre wire and use them as makeshift tambourines while singing Filipino Christmas carols.

We would attend Midnight Mass and come home to have our *Noche Buena* (*Good or Holy Night*) feast. Every year, my mother would use her special table cloth and hang a simple *Maligayang Pasko* banner on our bare dining room wall. She served honey-glazed ham, a platter of freshly cooked rice, *queso de bola* and, of course, her famous Italian spaghetti. While it didn't seem like we had an abundance of elaborate dishes, I distinctly remember how much love and tenderness my mother put into preparing our Christmas table.

After *Noche Buena*, we would gather around the Christmas tree to open gifts. Each child typically received only one gift. But if you were extra good that year, you would probably receive a special gift from Saint Nicholas himself. I still remember receiving my special gift from Saint Nicholas when I was four years old... my very own set of jackstones!

Our Christmas celebrations in the Philippines were very simple and calm. It is this kind of Christmas tranquility that I

want to pass on to my children during this typically busy season.

Below are simple things we have done to make it happen.

## 1. Meditate on the manger scene often.

Place a manger scene in a very prominent place in your home. Journey back in time with your children and encourage them to imagine the Nativity scene as if they were really there. Ask each child what he or she is seeing, hearing and feeling. Remind your children of the cold stable, the warmth that the animals brought, and the Baby Jesus wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in a bed of hay. Tell the children that Jesus loves them so much that He left the grandeur of Heaven and made Himself poor just to be with us. Meditate often on the words of St. Francis De Sales: "*Let us learn from Jesus in the manger, to hold the things of the world in such esteem as they deserve.*"

## 2. Give, give, give.

Advent and Christmas are ideal seasons for the family to declutter. If children have a difficult time detaching from their things, we simply remind them that they have to make room for the new blessings they will be receiving on Christmas Day. Remind them that not all families can afford to give children Christmas gifts and that we should share with those who are less fortunate

whenever we can. While we can't always control how many gifts our children will receive, we can definitely control how much we give to those in need.

## 3. Keep a simple kitchen.

I try to keep our Christmas menu as uncomplicated as possible. Every year, I simply prepare baked salmon with cream sauce, a vegetable dish and a side. The children and I bake a homemade cake or pie for Baby Jesus' birthday. We can all attest that, with children, having cake or pie is guaranteed to make any meal special.

More importantly, I don't think my children will remember the elegance of our Christmas fare. But they will most likely remember if their mother was irritable, short-tempered and impatient. I have learned over the years that the gift of a calm mother is the best Christmas present I could ever give my family.

## 4. Give gifts with eternal value.

We try to give gifts that won't clutter people's lives and will help enhance their relationship with God and each other. Gifts

...continued on page 22



Born in the Philippines, **Abby Sasscer** came to the USA in 1986. She is a wife, homeschooling mother of three, author, and speaker. In 2008, she founded Project Nazareth and continues to advocate simple living through books & speaking.



# You're Invited: To Become a Christmas Child... Again

BY JOHN CLARK



This month, the editors asked me to write about my favorite Christmas ever. I thought quite a bit about that. I could have gone with the Christmas that I got the toy I wanted (1979), my first Christmas as a husband (1992), or my first Christmas as a father (1993). But I'm going with the Christmas of 1970. I was five days old.

I was a Christmas baby. Even to this day, when my mother sees a picture or a video of me as an infant, she often comments (as though she were reporting the news for the first time) that the nurses at the hospital put a little Santa cap on my head when I was going home.

Days later, my mother carried me into church and I was presented to God. God was at the center of my life from the get-go. And although I didn't share a birthday with Baby Jesus, we were infants at the same time of the year.

Maybe that's why when I think about Christmas, I think lots about babies and children and mothers.

Of course, this is an obvious connection, even to those from whom you might not expect it. When I was very young, I remember overhearing the words of my grandfather to one of his children near the tree one Christmas. My grandfather—cerebral, devout, reserved—emotionally said: "Christmas is for children." In later years, maybe I understand better what he meant. Christmas is for those who wish to be childlike.

In fact, Heaven is for those who wish to be childlike. As Jesus taught us, "Unless you are as children, you will not enter the kingdom of Heaven." We've heard those words many times, but one recent

morning during Mass, I sensed what they might mean.

As I knelt in church, I saw a young mother lovingly carrying her child on her way to Holy Communion—on her way to God. To that point of the day, I had probably been worried about my past sins and concerned about how God would judge me. But suddenly, as I watched this mother, I had an epiphany that this is how I will approach God at my judgment. My thought was that a moment after I close my eyes for the last time on Earth, I will awaken as a child in the arms of Mary. And Mary, the Mother of God, will carry me as a child to present me to her Divine Son—similar to how I was first presented to God as a baby.

My wife took this idea a step further, commenting that when she is judged by Jesus, she wishes to be judged by the Infant Jesus. Maybe that's how it happens. And if it is, it will be a scene of two babies celebrating their infancy together, united by the same Mother.

That might strike you as a strange thought. That's not how we approach God for judgment. Right? As men and women of advanced years, we will stand alone at our judgments. Or do we? Our whole lives, we've been asking Mary to be with us sinners "now, and at the hour of our death." Many people take that to mean that Mary will be with us at our death, and then leave us at our judgment.

But from all that we know about Mary, what suggests her absence, especially when we need her most? Perhaps "the hour of our death" includes both our last moments on earth and our first moments in Heaven. Perhaps the hour of our death

includes the first moment—the eternal moment—of eternal life. Perhaps that is how we will approach God—in the arms of His Mother. Our Mother.

As we have been taught, Jesus came to us as a child because He wanted us humans to love Him, to easily approach Him. In that sense, Christmas is an invitation to both the first Christmas and to the eternal Christmas of Heaven. Jesus is inviting us to love Him. And this Christmas is no different.

If you've been away from Him through sin, please come home. God wants you back. God is ready to welcome you back through the wonderful sacrament of Confession. This year, just like every year, some people will come home. Though they will kneel down and say "Bless me Father, for I have sinned," they are also saying: "I have seen a star in the East, and I have come to worship Him; I have come to love Him."

Like George Bailey, they are saying: "Dear God, I want to live again."

They want to be a child again. With the pardon and peace of God, they will be as children again. They will go into Confession very old, and come out very young. They will be Christmas babies, too. This will be their best Christmas ever.

Thank you for reading my columns this year. Merry Christmas!

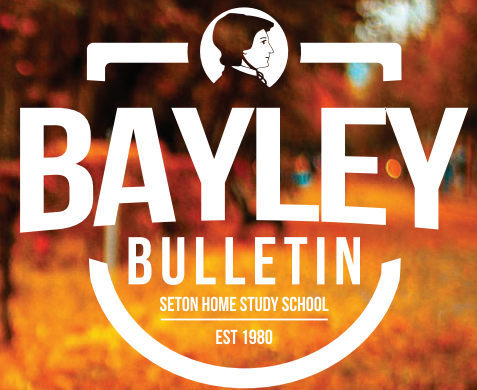
Read John Clark's weekly blog at [setonmagazine.com/johnclark](http://setonmagazine.com/johnclark)



**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.



FALL  
QUARTER  
ISSUE  
ONLINE!



## THE MAGAZINE FOR SETON HIGH SCHOOLERS

This Fall 2015, Seton relaunched its newsletter for Seton high schoolers, but this time expanded it into a gorgeous, full-color magazine.

Every quarter, a new issue is available online to read and share, showcasing contest entries, student submissions and articles from Seton staff to inspire your homeschool journey.

### THE WINTER CONTEST: SHORT STORIES

The fictional, short stories should feature Catholic values, beliefs, or sacraments. Additionally, they should have character development, and be based in real life scenarios. Entrants must be enrolled in Seton high school.

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.

More details online!

#### Submission Deadline

December 31st, 2015

#### Prizes

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



### ALERTING ALL CONTEST ENTRANTS!

Interested in entering the short story contest?

**Sign up today** for our free, Short Story Writing Course. Starting December 18th, we will email you tips and guides to help you with the craft of writing your contest entry, along with 15 short, inspirational stories.

Sign up today at the link below!



[bayleybulletin.com/shortstory](http://bayleybulletin.com/shortstory)



# Betty Bailey's 'Homeschool'

## *How We Can Help Save Our Children & Our Country*

BY DR. MARY KAY CLARK

St. Elizabeth Ann Seton can give encouragement to us homeschooling mothers as we begin the 2016 New Year.

Betty Bailey, as she was called in her childhood, had already suffered significantly by the age of three, with the death of her mother in 1777, and not long after, the death of her younger sister. Betty longed to be with her mother and sister and to live in Heaven. This desire only grew stronger as her loneliness increased when her father remarried. He worked longer hours, and her new mother was busy with her own babies.

As Betty grew older, she attended the Protestant church with her family. She wanted to know more about the place called Heaven, so she spent time alone reading stories about the saints, and spoke frequently to Jesus and His mother Mary in prayer and in quiet conversations.

When Elizabeth became a teen, she still read Bible stories and saints' stories, but she also went to the family's Protestant church more frequently. When she received communion at the Protestant services, she believed she was receiving the Body of Jesus. On Sundays, Elizabeth and one of her sisters would even go to two Protestant services so that they could receive Jesus twice in communion.

As a young adult in a doctor's family, Elizabeth also spent time at parties and other social events. She was married before she was twenty. In spite of the demands of young motherhood, she continued her almost-constant prayer life.

Elizabeth and her husband Will had five children, but throughout these years, Will became increasingly ill. Shortly after the birth of their fifth child, Elizabeth and her husband traveled to Italy, in the hopes of finding a cure for him. They stayed in the home of a Catholic Italian business friend, where

Elizabeth's eyes were opened to the fullness of the Catholic Faith. The Italian family went to daily Mass and said the daily Rosary. After the death of her husband, Elizabeth stayed with the Italian family to further study the Catholic Faith. She realized that the Protestant church she attended denied the True Presence of Jesus in their communion service. Many of the teachings of the Catholic Church were beliefs Elizabeth had already accepted. The daily Mass and the Rosary seemed to fill in the "gaps" she had felt for years with the Protestant beliefs.

When Elizabeth returned to America, she joined the Catholic Church. However, members of her family and of her husband's family would no longer associate with her because they had so much hatred toward Catholics. She was ostracized by the local Protestant authorities, and had to find a new home at a time when homes and churches of Catholics were being burned to the ground in the New York area.

As a widow with children to raise, Elizabeth decided to start a simple, private, almost-secret "home" school. She used her own home as she taught her own children and a few other children. In a very short time, her little group of students grew larger. Finally, through Bishop Carroll, she was able to start the first Catholic girls' school in Emmitsburg, Maryland, in 1809.

We Catholics today are finding that our Church teachings are being attacked in the local schools, in the general community, by state officials, and by U.S. Supreme Court decisions. Government courts are ruling against people who want to live by the basic

teachings of the Bible and of the Catholic Church. The Little Sisters of the Poor are among several of the present-day "martyrs." Others are being forced to sell their homes and businesses because they won't "go along" with the anti-Christian "laws" which force Christians to go against their Christian beliefs and values.

Elizabeth Ann Seton realized that to keep her children from being influenced by ideas contrary to the teachings of Jesus, she needed to teach her children at home.

During Elizabeth's lifetime, attacks on the Catholic Church were in Protestant-controlled states or colonies, but today, Christian values are being attacked at the state and national levels. Anti-Christian laws and regulations are destroying many Catholic schools, churches, adoption agencies, and social service groups, not to mention families!

As we start the New Year, let's remember to ask St. Elizabeth Ann Seton to help our homeschooled children promote the Catholic Faith throughout our country in the years to come. Without the truths of Christ's own church, the Catholic Church, our country will not be able to withstand the attacks of evil and unbelief. But with the persevering witness of Catholics like St. Elizabeth, hearts, families, and even this nation may be converted.





# A New & Shiny SAT for Christmas

BY CHRISTOPHER SMITH

We have received multiple inquiries over the last few months about the new SAT format that will be launching next year. Mr. Wiesner wrote about the new test some months back, but given the amount of concern and interest the test is generating, it's worth taking a second look.

Let me say that your concerns are valid, given the growing importance of standardized testing in the college application process.

The new SAT will be launched in March of 2016. This means that seniors applying to college this year will not really be affected, as most college applications are due before that date. Those of you seniors who still haven't taken the SAT, I would recommend you take it before the launch of the new test, as it is most likely you have studied for the old format. For the most part, it'll be current juniors and sophomores who get to conquer this brave new frontier.

In the past, the SAT ostensibly was used to test a student's innate abilities, while the ACT tested what students had already learned in high school. The architects of the new SAT want it to function more like the ACT, and thus the sections are now constructed to assess students in more specific concepts that will be necessary to succeed in college and the modern workplace. Whether or not the new test will meet that goal is a huge question indeed, and I would not be surprised if there is a lot of tinkering with these concepts in the future.

One thing we do know for certain is that there will be *an increased focus on reading and analysis of passages, even in the Math section*. This is where some of the Common

Core ideas have seeped in and taken hold of the hearts and minds of our friendly test architects. From what I have seen in practice tests, I believe that *our students will be more than able to hold their own* with this change in focus, though again, I would not be surprised to find some biases reflected in these passages. It is not new for the SAT to have questionable and/or objectionable material that the students must analyze, but we should all be prepared for that to increase.

Another "interesting" change is that students will not be tested on vocabulary in the traditional sense. I remember in my own SAT days sitting up late into the evening, flipping through well worn flashcards with my papercut-laced hands stinging from the salty tears flowing out of my weak and tired eyes. These character building exercises will be a thing of the past. Instead of focusing on analogies and antonyms, students will look at words in a more contextual way, such as determining what a certain word in a passage "most nearly means." I think our students will also be at an advantage here and that this change will make things a bit easier across the board—not better, necessarily, but easier.

The infamous essay section will no longer be mandatory, just like the ACT, but students will be encouraged by colleges to take this portion of the test, at least in the beginning. The stated hope is that the section will be based on more objective analysis. For the immediate future, I would recommend that students check with their schools of interest, and find out if those colleges require the essay or not. Seton colleges have done well on this section

since its inception, so I don't expect that to change.

The Mathematics section will see multiple changes in focus and content. As mentioned, there will be a greater focus on word problems, and extrapolating data from passages. Polynomial Algebra will be a strong point of emphasis, as well as data and statistics, and Advanced Math concepts such as Trigonometry. Although Geometry will not be as heavily tested per se, it is still a foundational Math and is heavily used in Trigonometry and even Algebra 2. Certain sections will allow the use of calculators, while others will not. The changes to the Math section are more substantial than those to the other sections, but again, I believe that the analytical skills our students practice not only in Math, but in all aspects of the Seton curriculum, will serve them well. The new SAT Math section is more aligned to what the ACT has been testing, and our students have not seen a drop-off in their ACT scores as compared to the old SAT math section.

With all of these changes, we will be keeping a close eye on any developments. I would be happy for any feedback that you and your families have on the new test, so that we can continue to develop strategies for our students to excel and get into the schools of their choice. Seton students are getting a world class education, and I am confident that will continue to be reflected in their test scores.



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





Cont'd from Abby Sasscer on page 17

that encourage a deeper relationship with God include prayer books, spiritual books or sacramentals. Gifts that encourage bonding time between family members include simple board games or baking kits. Instead of Christmas presents, we encourage our own children to simply gift their siblings with good deeds and random acts of kindness.

We also have a tradition of giving homemade Spiritual Bouquets as Christmas gifts. Every year, I always get a remark from a family member or friend who says that these spiritual bouquets have been the best gifts they have ever received. Our spiritual bouquets read something like this: *Our family will offer 12 Masses, 12 Rosaries, 12 Divine Mercy Chaplets, 12 Sacrifices and 12 Good Deeds.*

Encourage the children to handwrite and decorate these spiritual bouquets. It is an opportunity to give a gift that reflects a true labor of love.

Christmas is always a time of great celebration, but with all the details involved in planning, we can easily lose sight of what is truly important. Amidst all the hustle and bustle, we must remember that Christmas is simply a love story. It is a story of a God who longed so much to be loved by us that He entered into this world and took the form of a little babe. This Christmas, let's remain in a spirit of simplicity, calmness and peace so we can really celebrate the true meaning of the Christmas Season.



## Merry Christmas from the Whalen Family!

We celebrate St. Nicholas Day, Christmas, and the feast of the Three Kings, which keeps the excitement spread out. This year, we hope you have a perfect and peaceful Christmas! Enjoy some pumpkin cake!

### *Pumpkin cake*

- 2 tsp baking powder
- 2 tsp cinnamon
- 1 tsp salt
- 2 tsp baking soda
- 2 cups flour
- 2 cups sugar
- 4 eggs
- 2 cups pumpkin pie filling
- 1 ½ cups vegetable oil
- Chocolate chips

Mix pumpkin, sugar, and oil together. Beat in eggs one at a time. After sifting dry ingredients together, mix them with the wet mixture. Lastly, add in your chocolate chips! Bake at 350 for 45 minutes.

We have added the icing, but most often we enjoy without!

### *Icing*

- 3 ounces cream cheese
- 1 ¾ Confect. Sugar
- 1 tsp vanilla
- ¾ stick butter
- 1 tablespoon heavy cream (a lot of times I just use milk)

Soften and cream butter and cream cheese, add in cream, vanilla, and sugar.





[www.franciscan.edu](http://www.franciscan.edu)



Franciscan University of Steubenville offers homeschool students over 40 majors including Theology, Business, Nursing, Education, and Engineering.

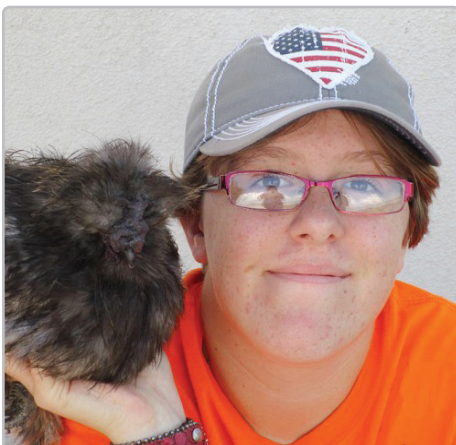
Franciscan welcomes Seton homeschool graduates, who regularly exhibit sought-after qualities of self-motivation, leadership, focus and academic excellence.

Seton Home Study School is proud to say that Franciscan is among the top schools chosen by our graduates.



## Seton Student Achievements

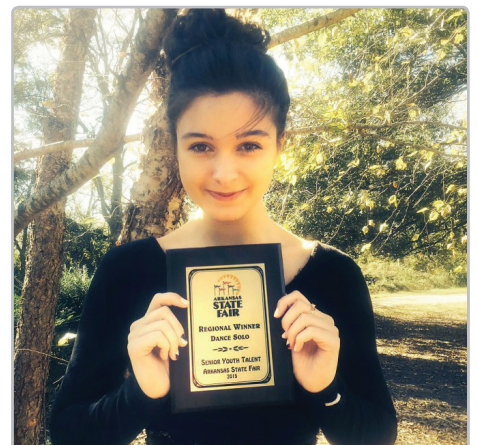
SHARING SUCCESS WITH THE SETON COMMUNITY



**Allison** | I received 4-H Grand Champion Fiber Crafts for my first machine sewn project at the Santa Cruz County Fair (Arizona). I also managed to gain some income by entering my project in the 4-H Silent Auction.



**Gabriel** | I won third place at the adult category Solo/Duo Blues Challenge: Gabriel competed with blues musicians with average 40 years of experience, recognized by the Piedmont Blues Preservation Society, NC.



**Emily** | On October 14, 2015 I went to the Regional Arkansas State Fair Youth Talent Competition and performed my pointe dance solo (that was almost entirely self-choreographed) and won!

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

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## Papal Quotes on the Family

*I urge you, then, never to lose that sense of enthusiasm and concern for truth. Always remember that teaching is not just about communicating content, but about forming young people. You need to understand and love them, to awaken their innate thirst for truth and their yearning for transcendence. Be for them a source of encouragement and strength.*

Pope Benedict XVI,  
Meeting with young university professors,  
August 19<sup>th</sup>, 2011



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