

Seton MAGAZINE



Under the Magisterium of the Catholic Church

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HOMESCHOOL VACATIONS

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The Patterson Family

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.



Letter from the Editor

For many of us, March is one of the hardest months of the year; it's wintry, filled with flu, and always Lent. The Christmas cheer has faded; we can't yet see the rising warmth of summer.

March doesn't have to be dreary, however; it can be a month of great promise. As the greening branches swell and burst with new shoots, our souls swell with Divine life growing beneath our Lenten sacrifices and prayers. Let's start thinking about what we're going to do when spring brings the glory of Easter. March is our month to look up and ahead, to grow the wings that will fly us closer to Heaven over the rest of the year.

Of course, March is also when we start planning summer vacations. This issue of *Seton Magazine* should provide you with inspiration for those conversations! So, if you're feeling a little grey, prepare for joy and rejuvenation in this issue, whether you honor St. Patrick and journey through Ireland, plan your next fishing trip, or follow our Pope Emeritus' suggestion of pulling out the Bible for some sunny summer reading.

Happy planning!

Christine Smitha

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A Strange Adventure

St Patrick's Curious Childhood

BY DR. MARY KAY CLARK

Though many people know of St. Patrick as the great bishop who drove the snakes from Ireland, very few know anything at all about St. Patrick's early life, which is equally inspirational. Patrick was born about 386 to a wealthy Roman family living in Britain when it was under the control of the Romans. Patrick's father was a well-to-do Roman leader, a member of the senate, and a deacon in the Catholic Church. His grandfather was a Catholic priest.

As a young boy, Patrick was sent to a Catholic school. However, according to his *Confessions*, Patrick did not like school, and preferred to work on the family farm, to play games and participate in sports, and to go fishing and hunting.

Patrick's family owned a spacious villa overlooking the sea on the outskirts of a town in . When Rome withdrew its soldiers from Britain, the warlike Saxon pirates arrived in ships and raided several cities. During one of their raids near the villa, the pirates killed many people and captured thousands of young people, including Patrick.

At sixteen, Patrick was a great catch for the pirates, who sold him to a wealthy Irish family in need of a shepherd. Used to luxury, Patrick was suddenly forced to live the life of a slave.

While Patrick took care of the sheep, he spent much time praying, more than he ever had when living in his father's comfortable home. Now, he would say as many as one hundred prayers a day. Patrick also had quiet time to consider basic questions about his Catholic Faith, what life was really about, what was important to him. He reflected on what he had been taught by his father and his grandfather, and recalled what he had learned in his Catholic school. Though a captive, he was determined to live the Catholic life he was taught, even fasting on holy days.

Years later, Bishop Patrick told the story

about his escape from captivity. When Patrick was in his late twenties, after a day of prayer and fasting, he suddenly heard a voice telling him to escape his captivity. The following night, the voice told him "Your ship is ready." Believing the voice came from God, Patrick rose from his bed and began a two-hundred mile walk, being constantly directed by miraculous voices, which led him to a seaport on the east coast of Ireland. No one tried to stop him or question him, and in fact, strangers helped him along the way.

When Patrick reached the seaport, the captain and sailors for one of the ships gladly welcomed him. However, he soon was put to work as a slave on the ship, taking care of their cargo of dogs. Eventually, the ship lost its way, coming to an obscure island. According to St. Patrick's *Confessions*, when the food was gone and the sailors were desperate, the captain turned to Patrick and said, "O Christian, you say that your God is great and almighty. Then, can you not pray for us, for we are in danger of starvation?"

Patrick began praying for food, and suddenly, out of the island jungle appeared "a herd of swine." All the sailors and dogs were saved by eating the pigs. The sailors thanked Patrick's God. They had food and water in abundance for the rest of their trip. Finally, when they landed somewhere on the coast of France, Patrick escaped from the ship.

Patrick made his way to the city of Tours in France, to the monastery established there by St. Martin some years before. He spent the next four years living in this monastery, learning more about his Catholic Faith, and growing in the desire to return to Ireland to convert the Irish people. He continually thought about the Irish people, many of whom, especially the children, he had come to love.

This true story of young St. Patrick, retold from his own *Confessions*, should



encourage us homeschooling parents to understand that God can and does work in mysterious ways to save our children even amid the paganism of our day. Young Patrick did not seem as concerned about his Faith while attending school, but when he was forced to survive in difficult days as a slave in a non-Christian society, the teachings of his father, his grandfather, and his Catholic school teachers, helped him to grow in his spiritual life.

The story of young St. Patrick can give us parents hope that while our children sometimes seem to think their sports and fun activities are more important, when the difficult days come later, their hearts and minds will turn back to the teachings of Jesus as we taught them in their youngest years.

The twenty-first century snakes of America are everywhere around us. Our responsibility is to give our children the Catholic Faith so that when the voice of God calls to them, they will follow Him into the battle. With our prayers, even those who drift will return to what they were taught when they were young homeschooling students.



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

My son wants to investigate whatever he wants, rather than do his regular assignments.

You are fortunate to have a boy who wants to learn, who is curious about things around him. Make a deal with him that as he finishes two hours of assigned schoolwork, for instance, he may have a half hour to investigate what he wants on his own. Take him to the library once a week, so he can find more information on his current interests. Help him learn to use the internet prudently, and allow him a certain amount of time each week to use the family computer for research. As always, ensure your children are practicing safe and appropriate internet usage.

It would be easier to teach one history or one science to my boys in adjacent grades.

History and science do not teach the same concepts in greater depth from year to year the way Math and English do, so you need to make sure that by teaching two grades together, you do not cause one or the other of the students to miss important content. This is likely to be more of a problem for your younger students.

It may also be the case that younger students cannot handle the concepts in an higher level. If your younger boy cannot handle the upper science concepts, you might ask the older boy to postpone taking the upper level course to help you with teaching the lower level course.

Another option is to double up the two boys taking the lower level science course in half a year, and have them both take the upper level science course the second half of the year.

With homeschooling, all kinds of adjustments can be made with the

scheduling, but what is most important is that the lessons are adjusted for the ability of the individual student. Homeschooling is the best kind of education because the lessons can be adjusted for the individual student.

What are the three most important things to remember regarding homeschooling?

First, pray every day. Start every single day with family prayer.

Second, make a schedule. Be sure your children are involved in making the schedule and agreeing with it, and then stick with the schedule. Teach your children the importance of following a schedule in order to accomplish anything. Keeping to a schedule is vital.

Third, keep a chart. As a child finishes an assignment, for example, he can post

*Pray every day.
Start every single day
with family prayer.*

a star on the chart. Train your children to understand the importance of finishing each assignment. This will serve them well later in life.

My son is obtaining straight A's in all his courses. I would like him to skip a grade so he is not bored.

One thing we consistently have heard from adults who skipped a grade is: I wish I had never skipped a grade. No matter how well your student is performing, never skip a grade level. Inevitably, there are some new

concepts he needs to learn, or old concepts he needs to review and practice.

If your student wants to learn faster, that is fine. He can finish his grade level work at an accelerated pace, enabling him to start the next grade earlier. In fact, start just one or two subjects earlier as soon as he finishes them in the lower grade.

Be careful not to rush your student, however. Younger students in high school often cannot handle certain course requirements that cover more advanced thinking skills. This is especially the case in English, where students read more advanced novels for a book report, and frequently find the ideas are simply “over their heads.”

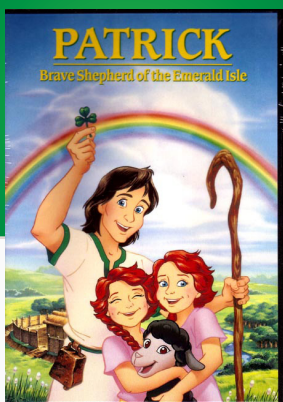
It is hard to attend daily Mass because the homeschooling begins rather late in the day.

As you’ve undoubtedly realized, children do their schoolwork better in the morning, so try to find a noon, late afternoon, or early evening Mass. If you don’t have choices, however, do your best to maximize what is left of the morning hours after Mass by scheduling the children’s hardest subjects during this time.

If it simply isn’t working, consider watching the daily Mass on EWTN, instead. God will certainly give graces to families who try their best to attend daily Mass.

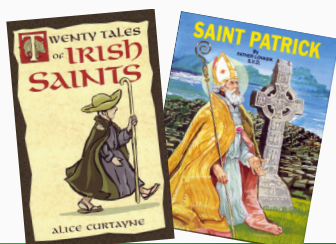
Are states placing less emphasis on standardized testing? What do you think about that?

There always has been controversy about standardized tests, how accurate they are, whether children should be forced to take them, whether the material is relevant, and whether the tests encourage teachers to



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teach to the tests. Certainly it is true that our homeschooling parents want the tests to reflect factual information that the students have learned, rather than the social values promoted by the establishment.

However, it is important to remember that high schools and colleges often rely on standardized test scores for entering homeschooling students because the colleges are less certain that parents actually are following an accepted educational program.

Standardized tests will be around for a long time to come, especially for homeschooling students whose curriculum has not been in the local school system. Fortunately, Seton students consistently average above the eightieth percentile, considerably above the average scores for public and parochial school students.

My mother is upset that we have decided to homeschool her grandchildren.

Homeschooling is not really thought of as so unusual any more. One way you might help your mother to understand that is to invite her

to one of the homeschool parent meetings or to some of the homeschooling group activities. Here in Front Royal, the homeschoolers are active in all kinds of sports.

Consider having a "tea" for grandma, during which the children can show what they are learning in each subject. You might have a display of their schoolwork. Consider having the children work on a project, perhaps preparing something for Easter, such as making a Lamb cake, reciting a poem, or reading a hand-written essay about Easter. Grandparents just want to be reassured that the children are being well educated.

How can I have time to do some of the things that are important to me, such as helping with a political campaign or the Red Cross?

If you want to help on a political campaign or a Red Cross project, your older children could be involved also, working at the polls or locating food for a family. You might have your teens attend a local county political party meeting. They are not too young to see how the process starts in your local town or county, and the activity will complement what they are learning in high school history and government.

Being involved in community projects can be beneficial for the whole family, an opportunity to spend time together and pass on important values to your children. Furthermore, it is good for your community to have Catholics participating in church, community, and political endeavors. Make connections with the people you meet; there may come a day when you may want their support for your homeschooling.

How can my teen son find a part time job to make money to help pay for his tuition?

With so many people out of work, it can be difficult for teens to find jobs. However, your teen might offer to work for free for a few months, with the idea that if his employer is happy with him, your teen would be hired for a year. Have him start with safe places that can give meaningful references, like a library, a hospital, a doctor's office, a law office, a local or county government office, an animal shelter, and so on.



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The Seton College Partner Program is a way to encourage students to continue their Catholic education by attending solidly Catholic Colleges after high school.



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A Public School Teacher's Decision to Homeschool

by Christina Patterson

I think some people have always known that they will homeschool their children. I was not one of those people.

As a public school teacher, I had every intention of my children attending the same school in which I taught--what a perfect solution, right? But sometime between the beginning of my career and the beginning of motherhood, I began to look at the education of my own child a bit differently. You might say that my husband and I were led to the decision to homeschool by simply asking questions. Here is the story of that questioning journey.

I was in public schools every weekday of my life from kindergarten through high school graduation, each day for a minimum

of six hours. That's a long amount of time to be in the public school environment.

In comparison, I attended Mass on Sundays and CCD one hour a week. While my parents did a wonderful job of raising me in a moral and God-fearing home, as you can see, the balance was heavily skewed towards that of the education I received at public schools. That was my culture. Those teachers and my peers were my influences, six or more hours a day, five days a week.

That influence was decidedly devoid of any reference to Christ. Though I learned bits of my faith in little life lessons from year to year, there was no framework, no understanding that all the pieces fit together like a beautiful stained glass window within the sacramental life of our Catholic faith.

I entered college, then teacher credentialing, and then finally, the teaching profession as a brand new fourth grade teacher at age 22. Having realized my passion was for reading instruction, however, I went back to school and earned my Master's in Reading Education and became a literacy coach at a new school. God blessed me with meeting my wonderful husband, and, soon after our marriage, we learned that God was going to bless us with a baby, as well. I continued teaching through my pregnancy, certain of two things:

1) I would resume teaching after maternity leave, and, when our daughter was old

enough, she would go to my school as well (in fact, I entertained the idea of teaching a new grade each year so that I could move up with her and teach her myself).

2) I would never homeschool. It wasn't even a blip on the radar for me.

And then, our daughter was born and everything changed. Though I went back to teaching after maternity leave as planned, I was uncomfortable with missing so much of my daughter's life. Thankfully, I was able to leave her with family rather than at a daycare center. Towards the end of that school year, however, we were faced with the knowledge that, due to an impending move, we would no longer be close enough to family members for them to watch our daughter during the day. If I wanted to continue teaching, she would need to be placed in daycare.

Daycare costs were exorbitant. But, more than that, I pictured the situation, one in which I dropped off my one-year old every day with a non-family member, around a group of children I didn't know. This scenario shouldn't have bothered me in the least. After all, as a teacher for the last seven years, hadn't I expected parents to do the same with their children? Yet, in the same situation, with my own child, suddenly, I wasn't ready to hand over even part of her daily care to someone else. So I went home.

Although I can state with certainty that



when I first began to stay home with our daughter, neither my husband nor I had any intentions of homeschooling her, slowly that began to change. As our daughter turned two, a growing awareness began to develop that we were making different choices than our friends who had similarly-aged children. I still hesitated to place her in a day care. Yet, my friends were placing my daughter's peers in daycare, either from necessity due to work schedules, or by choice, seen as a natural progression for social interaction.

And suddenly, from out of nowhere, my husband began telling people that we were going to homeschool our daughter.

"You're a teacher," my husband insisted. "You can stay home with Ava, and teach her."

Teachers work extremely hard. They are often selfless, putting in long hours each day, only to be followed by more hours of work in the form of papers or planning brought home. I know because I worked with teachers like this time and again. At the end of the day, however, the one thing they can't do is incorporate faith into their instruction. That was really beginning to bother me because I knew that the most important thing for Ava to learn is her faith.

When I again revisited my idea to teach a different grade each year so that she could be in my classroom, I realized it was problematic, too. The idea now met with several realistic questions of its own:

- 1) What school would allow that?
- 2) What happens when she gets into junior high and having mom as teacher is too embarrassing?
- 3) What happens in high school, when she is outside the realm of my credential?

I conceded that my husband was right: homeschooling was an option.

It's amazing how God places certain people in your life at certain times. It was exactly at this time in my life that we moved into a house next door to a homeschooling family of two boys. This also coincided with me meeting many other homeschooling families in the area. From these wonderful people and families, I learned that homeschooling did

not equate to socially isolating your child. "There is so much to do," my neighbor related to me, "that if I wanted to, my children could be involved in a different activity or group every day." The fear of Ava not having any friends or being able to interact with positive peer influences began to diminish.

Then I thought back to my teaching years.

What would I have done with an Ava in my room?

I would have expected her to sit still and learn according to our daily schedule and transitions. Now, as her parent, I questioned whether that long chunk of learning time was the best structure for her.

How would she best learn?

I considered that she might learn best in short, effective lessons interspersed throughout the day: no lost time, simply learning.

But more importantly, how would she grow in her faith and love of the Church?

I looked online at local parish preschool costs. Again, I wondered if I was up to the challenge of teaching Ava myself. At this

point, my concerns about my career were no longer center stage. I was beginning to see motherhood as my vocation, and to realize that homeschooling could easily become a part of that. And, finally, while on a Catholic blog, I came across my first reference to Seton Home Study School. Dr. Mary Kay Clark's book was recommended. Immediately, I ordered the book, and ordered a pre-k curriculum, all in the same day.

So there Ava and I were, sitting at the kitchen table, a few weeks later. She was not quite three and a half, but already spoke in full sentences with lots of adjectives. Just a few minutes later, one of our literacy lessons, short, focused and very explanatory, was complete. Ava was back to playing. But she had learned something: later that day, I heard her say aloud, "down and across, down and across". She showed me that she could trace the letter "T" on paper with a crayon. I couldn't believe that learning had already occurred even after a relatively short amount of time. I then realized that part of the beauty of

...continued on pg 14



Education or Vacation?

Fun Field Trip Ideas to Supplement Your Homeschool Courses

BY SETON STAFF

Recently, we asked Seton families how they spent their vacations - whether they brought their homeschooling along or not. We were very interested to learn that **58% of our homeschooling families do continue homeschooling while on vacation.**

The remaining 42% were divided between those who prefer to take a complete break from school and those who don't go on vacation at all.

Of the 58% who do homeschool on vacation, a surprisingly large number of them do formal schooling of some kind, while the remaining number simply make a point of going on educational vacations.

Combining our experience as parents and teachers with feedback from our families, here are suggestions for homeschool vacations that are both educational and fun! You can actually sneak in a little more learning when the kids aren't looking. With these ideas, plan your field trips and vacations so that they supplement the learning your family is already doing in different courses.

Religion

It's not unusual for families to do pilgrimages and visit shrines and churches, but doing so isn't the only way to grow in your Catholic Faith while vacationing.

Many families recommend Catholic Familyland in Bloomingdale, Ohio. Owned and operated by the Apostolate for Family Consecration, a lay movement officially approved by the Catholic Church and specifically recognized by both Pope Saint John Paul II and his successor Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI, Catholic Familyland is a countryside retreat center that hosts week-

long festivals for Catholic families with daily Mass, Confession, talks, and fun outdoor activities. The focus is encouraging parents in their mission to transmit the Faith to their children, and the spirituality is based on Total Consecration to Jesus through Mary with Joseph.

Another exciting opportunity can be found at the EWTN studios in Hanceville, Alabama. The Shrine of the Blessed Sacrament there is extremely beautiful, but after visiting Our Lord, families can take tours of the EWTN studios and attend one

of the live shows as it is being filmed for television. This is a great way to learn about an important modern-day apostolate, and a fantastic chance to hear in person some of the best Catholic speakers in America.

The Knights of Columbus Museum in Hartford, Connecticut, is a unique museum with galleries portraying the history, art, and achievements of Catholics in the New World, as well as papal memorabilia and Catholic art from around the globe. Admission is free and the museum is open year-round.

History

When it comes to history, there are many museums in every state that can be a window into the past for you and your family. However, there are other ways to get an even closer look at historical events, or gain hands-on experience of the past.



One of the best ways to visit the past is by attending a reenactment, or better yet, becoming reenactors yourselves. In the past, we published a story about one homeschooling family's experience with reenacting, and it is clear from their experience that reenacting is a wonderful way to take a break from school while still learning together as a family. Though Civil War reenactments are still the biggest draw

here in Virginia, there are in fact reenactment units dedicated to re-presenting historical battles all the way from ancient times right through to the Second World War.

Similar to reenactment, but more concerned with everyday life are living history sites such as Colonial Williamsburg, Virginia; Old Sturbridge Village in Sturbridge, Massachusetts; Pioneer Living History Village in Phoenix, Arizona; and

Camlann Medieval Village in Carnation, Washington.

Nearly every state has at least one, and frequently many living history sites, where families can talk with people living and working in the modes of bygone eras, try their hands at old-fashioned pastimes, and see how it would have been to live without internet, cars, or even electricity.

Music and the Arts

Traveling to see family during the summer can be a really good way to expose your children to good culture, especially if you are traveling near a big city. Cities like New York, Chicago, San Francisco, and many others have well-respected symphonies, and significant venues that attract the world's best talent in music and the arts. Tickets are sometimes reduced in price close to performances, and some places run programs that cater to homeschooling families. Carnegie Hall in New York City offers a selection of free programs for families and the Kennedy Center in Washington DC offers free private tours of their facility. Such opportunities are an excellent way to introduce your children to the world of music and drama, so be sure to investigate the options when you're planning your travels.

More and more museums are offering special programs and/or discount days designed specifically for homeschooling families. The Cleveland Museum of Art offers relatively inexpensive homeschool studio classes that combine a visit to the gallery with hands on art classes. The Museums of Fine Arts in both Boston and Houston provide a similar program, and both the National Gallery of Art in Washington DC and the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York City offer events tailored specifically to families.

With the help of such museums, you and your children both can be immersed in the world of fine art. What a fun way to spend some of your vacation time!



Geography

Geography is one of the easiest subjects to learn on the road, but even so, we have some information you might not have heard about before.

The National Park Service has an extensive list of sites spanning all 50 states, not to mention an equally extensive list of programs.

Right now, the National Park Service is running a program called *Every Kid in a Park*, which enables ten year old or fourth grade students to gain a voucher for free access for themselves and their families to hundreds of parks within the system.

This program runs through August 31, 2016, which means it might be a great option for your family vacation this summer. Last year, the Bissonnettes, a Seton family, used

their son's voucher to access the Blue Ridge Parkway in Shenandoah National Park. They were able to bypass the \$20 fee, and their kids are still talking about the beautiful butterfly that flew in their van, the walking stick that walked all over one of them, and the stunning views of the tiny towns way below the ridgeline.



Fishing in Canada

Why It's Important to Go on Family Vacation

BY JOHN CLARK

When my brothers and I were growing up, our family vacations were fishing trips to Canada. In fact, we never really thought about going anywhere else. Some years we went; some years we didn't. But if we went, Canada was where we were going.

Even before the trips, we studied about Canada, or more specifically, about its currency. Though I was later involved in the foreign currency markets as a financial professional, the first foreign currency I ever followed was the Canadian dollar. The rate of currency exchange often dictated whether my Dad could afford the vacation. If the American dollar were strong that year, that was good news for all of us.

In the years we could afford to go, my Dad drove the family station wagon. My mom always stayed home. My mother—mysteriously unattracted to the idea of driving sixteen hours to lodge in a creaky, mosquito-infested cabin perfumed by fish—stayed home for these vacations.

We measured the driving trip less in miles than in how many old time radio programs

we could listen to along the way. As the Clark family raced toward the northern border of America, we were listening to cassette tapes of Burns & Allen, Fibber McGee and Molly, Suspense, and our new favorite: The CBS Radio Mystery Theater. We listened to these so many times that we could quote them verbatim, along with parodying them to each other.

We couldn't afford hotels along the way, so we slept in the car, with at least one of us trying to stay awake with our Dad in the front passenger seat. With a loquacious Green Beret behind the wheel for sixteen hours each way, we learned about war, peace, fishing, faith, card games, music, where to stop for food, and (much more importantly) where not to stop for food. More than all this, though we only realized it years later, our father was teaching us how to be a dad.

When we finally arrived at our appointed cabin, we would unpack our bags and fishing rods and reels, and begin the task of killing the mosquitoes in our cabin. You don't have to be near Canadian water long before you learn that Canadian

mosquitoes are rough customers. I have no idea why, but they're mad and they're looking for someone to take it out on. One of my brothers famously killed over 200 mosquitoes one night in our cabin.

While some of my brothers hunted mosquitoes, I never missed a chance to go with my Dad to the supermarket. I think it was then that I first discovered that if you really want to learn about the culture of a place, go to the supermarket.

In this regard, I was fascinated by how different Canada was from America. For instance, in Canada, milk was sold in bags. Non-resealing bags. In the thirty years since, I have tossed and turned at night as my mind searches for a reason why. But it searches in vain. I keep wondering: If you're going to sell milk in bags, why stop there?

As in: "Anything I can pick up at the store, Honey?"

"Yes, we need a bag of meat, a bag of soda, and a bag of milk."

By shopping in Canada, I also learned a little French. Very little. At the end of my

first week in Canada, I was pretty proud—nay, haughty—that I knew how to say “Cap’n Crunch” in French. For the non-Francophile reader, let me save you the trouble of frantically Googling the answer: “Capitaine Crounche.”

Since then, it has been brought to my attention that “cereal box French” is a slang term, meaning a sketchy and unreliable grasp of the French language, derived primarily from reading the French side of Canadian cereal boxes. (Years later, I found that cereal box French did little for my college grade, as my professor insistently proffered questions outside my purview of ante meridian kibble.)

Once assembled, we did what we came to do: go fishing. The main lake at which we fished was right outside our cabin. But we also sometimes packed up our gear and flew to another nearby lake. To do so, we all flew in a pontoon plane (a plane designed to land on water). This was no easy exercise, as we had to transfer our fishing gear from the plane to the boat, and back again. The hardest part was transferring the boat motor, which weighed about sixty pounds, from the plane to boat. For that to be possible, someone else had to hold the boat firmly to the pontoon portion of the plane. Yet, apparently, this duty was not always communicated well.

On one occasion, somehow the pilot thought that my brother was doing the yeoman’s task of holding the boat firmly to the plane, which he was not. So as the pilot grabbed the engine, the boat separated from the plane, and the pilot nearly fell into the watery abyss while hanging on to the huge engine. Realizing what almost happened,

the pilot responded by saying something that my whole family has quoted to each other ever since. Now, there’s no way to do justice to his words in print, because to understand how funny they were, you would have to have seen the look on his face, along with the Canadian accent that made this understated line infinitely more memorable. He said: “Could you maybe hold the boat?”

It is said that golfing is a good walk spoiled. For me, fishing was often a good boat ride spoiled. Not that I didn’t somewhat enjoy fishing; at times, it was fun, although I was never very good at it. My Dad and my brothers had mastered the art, however. When we fished for Pike, we used red and white metal lures called “spoons” that somehow attracted the fish. What attracted me to the lures was that I didn’t have to put a worm on the hook. One afternoon, we ran out of lures and my brother made his own lure out of a red and white Coke can, which—to the surprise of everyone except my brother, I guess—actually worked!

I had much less luck as a fisherman, but I don’t think I had any less fun. For me, the actual “fishing” part was almost incidental. At its essence, “fishing” meant sitting in a boat together with my brothers and my Dad and cracking jokes all day. And, as I mentioned, a boat ride.

I still remember the feeling of exhilaration of those boat rides at dusk, after another day of fishing. I loved to sit in the front of the boat, feeling the gusts of wind on my face, imagining myself a superhero flying across the water. In the distance, I still remember how pretty it was to see the approaching shoreline, where the tiny cabins had turned

on their lights for the evening and fishermen had built little fires to cook their dinner.

When we arrived back at the cabin for the night, we would usually eat one of two meals: Hamburger Helper or fresh fish. After dinner, we would filet the fish we caught that day, prepare our rods and reels for the next day, or play card games like *Hearts* or *Whist* for hours. These are often the things that happen when you have no television: you communicate as a family and enjoy each other’s company. You see your Dad be happy. You see brothers become brotherly.

Almost four decades later, I look back on those trips with joy. And you know something? I wish we’d never stopped going.

I understand why we stopped: life happens. We had colleges to attend, jobs to work, careers to foster, and our own families to raise. Worthwhile things, all.

But I also understand this: people grow apart. Even brothers.

And so, dear reader, my advice is that you use your vacations to grow closer as a family.

Please consider making your annual vacation with your children something you continue after they grow into adults. If you play your cards right, you might even learn a little French along the way.

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.



The 2016 Bayley Bulletin Shakespeare Sonnet Contest



Open to Seton high school students, grades 9-12. Pick one of three Easter-related topics, and start crafting your submission. Sonnets are very structured, with definite patterns and length. **Topic details and how to write sonnets are available online.** Submissions will be judged by grade level, with two finalists for each grade level (unless no entries of distinction are found).

Prizes

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"Bless me Father, I'm on Vacation."

BY MARY ELLEN BARRETT



Late winter is the time when many of us parents start making plans for summer vacation. Resting together while enjoying some unscheduled leisure is a wonderful way to make memories that will be shared by your children with their children and their children's children. Summer vacations become part of your family lore and really bind your children in a fun way to their siblings and to yourselves. Even a stay home vacation with fun day trips is time well spent.

In Genesis, we are told that on the seventh day God rested. He saw that His work was good and He blessed the day of rest and made it holy. By this we know that rest is good, and to rest with our families is a particularly worthy thing since in these days, we live such rushed lives. Between completing all the schoolwork and doing all the extracurricular activities, the work of the home and the obligations of community and parish, and then of course earning a living (which often involves more than one job per household), it seems that rest, leisure, and relaxation together as a family are at a premium.

That being said, taking a bunch of kids, even a small bunch, on a trip isn't particularly restful. Worthy, definitely, but restful, not always, at least not for Mom and Dad! There are the planning, the packing, the budgeting and researching, and those are all before you set foot out of the door. How about the gargantuan task of getting all the stuff in the car and keeping track of it all until you get home again? I have left more pacifiers, bottles, stuffed animals, books and blankets around this country than I can possibly count.

St. Augustine tells us that our souls are best

at rest when we rest in God. I'm thinking he never took eight kids on a thousand-mile car trip. However, there really are ways to rest in God while on vacation. It takes us paying attention to the small things that God reveals to us as we journey, and being open to His message for this time in our lives. We have to be willing to see God's hand in our planning and choose time together that bears fruit for Him and our family.

There are many blessings and graces provided by God in our little vacations, many opportunities to grow in love and faith. The twelve fruits of the Holy Spirit can be exhibited right there in your big van or small motel room.

When an older sibling holds back the hair of a younger one during an episode of car sickness, we see gentleness and generosity.

When one of the children gives up a turn or goes to the back of the line for a brother or sister, there is charity and kindness.

When Dad answers the same question for the eightieth time (think, "are we there yet?"), patience is being taught. In fact, there are many opportunities to flex your patience muscles when traveling with children. Whatever growth I have achieved in this virtue happened almost exclusively in the car.

As mothers, our whole lives revolve around loving our husbands and children, but a vacation gives even more opportunity to demonstrate selfless love. For example, in my house, I show my family that I love them by agreeing to go camping. In reality, I would rather get tossed off a bridge than sleep in a tent, but my family loves camping, so I slap a smile on and make an effort to enjoy the wilderness, even though the

wilderness has dirt and bugs everywhere and I hate both of those things.

I also try to see that my hardworking husband gets to sleep in for a few mornings when we are away, since he rarely gets to sleep in during the normal course of our lives. I have found that when I make real efforts to put the desires of family first while on a trip, such as making sure everyone gets to see what he or she wants to see, or doing something I normally would not do (a recent vacation excursion to a trampoline park jumps to mind), then I really enjoy myself so much more and everyone else does too.

St. Faustina tells us that to please God we need to do even the smallest things with great love. I think making sandcastles, riding rollercoasters, or paying a ridiculous amount of money to jump on a trampoline qualifies. In the grand scheme of things, these are small actions, but I do them because I love my family, and my family blesses me in return with smiles, hugs, happy faces and rested hearts.

I see the hand of God as peace spreads throughout our family and we return home with a renewed sense of togetherness, bound up in memories of the laughing and silliness of bug bites and ice pop messes. These things are good, and God wants us to rest in Him while we find joy in the family with which He blessed us. That really is worth putting up with some dirt and bugs.

Read Mary Ellen online at setonmagazine.com/maryellen



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

Relax with Scripture on Your Vacation.

BY POPE EMERITUS BENEDICT XVI

When we have a break from our activities, especially in the holidays, we often take up a book we want to read. It is on this very aspect that I would first like to reflect today.

Each one of us needs time and space for recollection, meditation and calmness.... Thanks be to God that this is so! In fact, this need tells us that we are not made for work alone, but also to think, to reflect or even simply to follow with our minds and our hearts a tale, a story in which to immerse ourselves, in a certain sense "to lose ourselves" to find ourselves subsequently enriched.

Of course, many of these books to read, which we take in our hands during our vacation are at best an escape, and this is normal. Yet various people, particularly if they have more time in which to take a break and to relax, devote themselves to something more demanding.

I would therefore like to make a suggestion: why not discover some of the books of the Bible which are not commonly well known? Or those from which we heard certain passages in the liturgy but which we never read in their entirety? Indeed, many Christians never read the Bible and have a very limited and superficial knowledge of it. The Bible, as the name says, is a collection of books, a small "library" that came into being in the course of a millennium.

Some of these "small books" of which it is composed are almost unknown to the majority, even people who are good Christians.

Some are very short, such as the Book of Tobit, a tale that contains a lofty sense of family and marriage; or the Book of Esther, in which the Jewish Queen saves her people from extermination with her faith and

prayer; or the Book of Ruth, a stranger who meets God and experiences his providence, which is even shorter. These little books can be read in an hour. More demanding and true masterpieces are the Book of Job, which faces the great problem of innocent suffering; Ecclesiastes is striking because of the disconcerting modernity with which it calls into question the meaning of life and of the world; and the Song of Songs, a wonderful symbolic poem of human love. As you see, these are all books of the Old Testament. And what about the New? The New Testament is of course better known and its literary genres are less diversified. Yet the beauty of reading a Gospel at one sitting must be discovered, just as I also recommend the Acts of the Apostles, or one of the Letters.

To conclude, dear friends, today I would like to suggest that you keep the Holy Bible within reach, during the summer period or in your breaks, in order to enjoy it in a new way by reading some of its books straight through, those that are less known and also the most famous, such as the Gospels, but without putting them down.

By so doing, moments of relaxation can become in addition to a cultural enrichment, also an enrichment of the spirit which is capable of fostering the knowledge of God and dialogue with him, prayer. And this seems to be a splendid holiday occupation: to take a book of the Bible in order to have a little relaxation and at the same time to enter the great realm of the word of God and to deepen our contact with the Eternal One, as the very purpose of the free time that the Lord gives us.

Audience at Castel Gandolfo
August 3, 2011

Benedictus PP XVI



Staying Involved: Why Dads Should Guide Kids to College

A few years back, my family and I were visiting my grandmother in Michigan. She is a feisty Scottish “lass,” who is one of the few links I have left to my heritage and a world and time quickly fading away. At one point during our visit, my kids asked for lunch and I prepared some food for them. This was shocking to my Grandmother. She pointed out that in her day, it was simply unheard of for men to take such menial household tasks upon themselves. She expressed surprise over how many more young men are now present and helpful in the household. I had undertaken my actions that morning as normal events, neither heroic nor remarkable, but being easily swayed by compliments, I felt good about myself for the rest of the day.

Upon further reflection, I realized that this was probably not the first time in history that a man had fed his children and it was probably not going to be the last. So in sadness, I descended from the tower of self-congratulation I had constructed in my mind. Nonetheless, Grandma’s words have always stayed with me, and over the past eight years working at Seton, I have seen truth in her observation. So many of the fathers and husbands in our program strive to be present in their children’s lives and educations in an uncommonly heroic way.

As children start into high school

and become more independent in their schooling, it can become more difficult for fathers to find ways to continue that high level of engagement. One area where dads can be an incredible help is in the process of applying for college. So many families view this process as a grueling obstacle course from which they cannot escape, but I believe it should be viewed as an opportunity for families to grow closer.

I can almost hear the hundreds of eyes rolling in unison at that last sentence, but it is true. To give good college advice, fathers must have a good idea of their children’s strengths, weaknesses, interests, etc. Talking with our kids about these things can help us learn so much about each other, to discover things we may not have known before. To not only show interest, but also a willingness to actively participate in such a momentous decision as choosing a college, is powerful.

Fathers, stay involved early and often. There are so many criteria involved in choosing the right college, from the spiritual to the financial, so coming up with the list of acceptable and realistic colleges should be done first. While we should be respectful of the wishes of our young adults, there are also times when we can’t be afraid to exercise veto power! If possible, take a trip together to see campuses and speak with school representatives.

Applying to college also requires regular checkups and maintenance. Keep tabs on how your child is doing in school, as grade point average is the major determining factor for many schools. It wouldn’t do much good if you helped your student make a list of dream colleges, only to find out later that he or she didn’t meet the minimum requirements. And don’t forget about the SAT and ACT. You can help your student study by administering practice tests in a timed setting.

As always, we at Seton are here to help with any of these tasks. I know the old stereotype about men not wanting to stop and ask for directions, but in this case, please feel comfortable doing so.

Some of my favorite conversations at Seton have been with fathers looking to guide their kids through the college-application process. Their stories and experiences are what lead me to suggest that the process can be an extremely positive experience; it has been for many of our homeschooling families.



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.

Con’td from the Patterson family, pg 7

homeschool is that time is not wasted; Ava didn’t have time to become bored. Now, at least once a day Ava asks, “Mommy, is it time to do class? Can we do class?”

Ava also spontaneously bursts into prayer throughout the day, with either “Hail Mary” or “Our Father”, and I join in. This is truly wonderful because I’ve always wanted her to see the beauty of a prayer life that is continual each day, interspersed among daily tasks. The Seton materials help me to be mindful about encouraging this, and as we complete the lessons in religion, I am learning my own faith as well.

Would Ava have this same learning experience in a public school, especially in

regards to prayer throughout the day?

Absolutely not; we all know that!

Would she have the same learning experience, even in a Catholic school?

Quite honestly, remembering my own CCD experience, I don’t know. And, I can’t base my child’s education, religious and otherwise, on an “I don’t know.”

But the prize-winning question, really, is the following:

Can I now picture being comfortable with any educational option for Ava other than homeschooling?

After much prayer, we’ve realized that the answer is “No.”

And that, ultimately, is how we arrived at the answer of homeschooling.

Perhaps some detail from my experience will resonate with other readers, but most of all, I hope that you are left with the sense that asking questions is so important. Whatever a family’s situations or needs regarding schooling, prayerfully asking questions throughout that journey can help the family discern the right choice.

What I’ve learned is to not be afraid of your own questions, and ultimately, to be ready to embrace what you believe may be God’s answers.

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Patrick | I have committed to play NCAA Division II lacrosse at Belmont Abbey College, Belmont, North Carolina. It has always been a dream of mine to play a sport in college.

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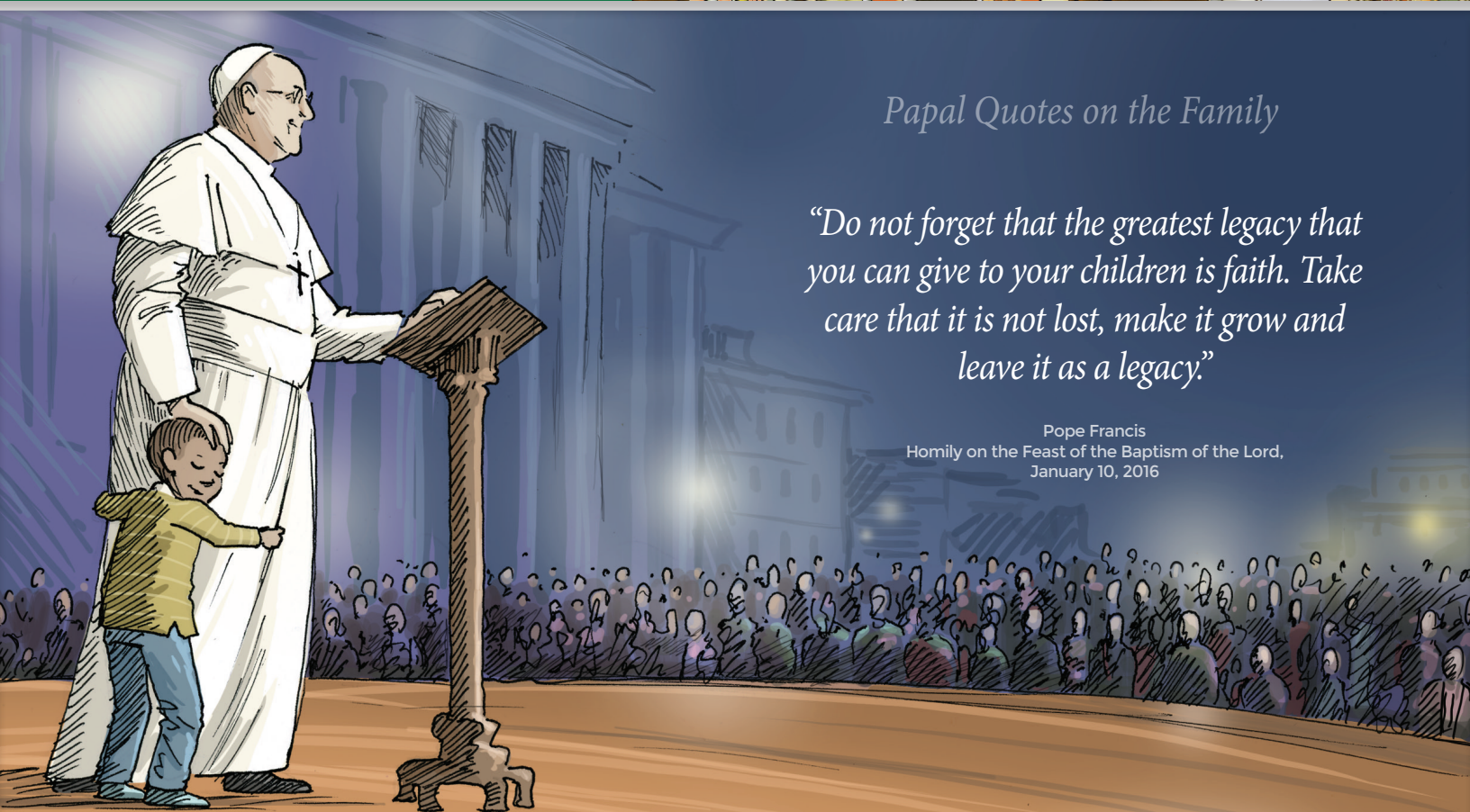
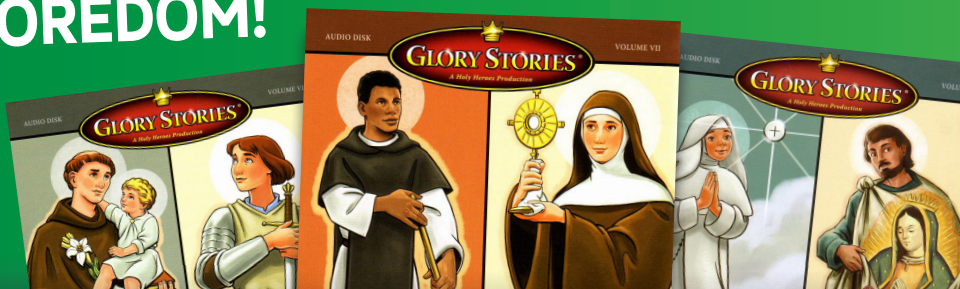
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Papal Quotes on the Family

“Do not forget that the greatest legacy that you can give to your children is faith. Take care that it is not lost, make it grow and leave it as a legacy.”

Pope Francis
Homily on the Feast of the Baptism of the Lord,
January 10, 2016