

Seton MAGAZINE

Under the Magisterium of the Catholic Church

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'CELEBRATING MOTHERS' ISSUE

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The Evinger 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

In *The World's First Love*, Venerable Fulton Sheen said, "Culture derives from woman—for had she not taught her children to talk, the great spiritual values of the world would not have passed from generation to generation. After nourishing the substance of the body to which she gave birth, she then nourishes the child with the substance of her mind." It is a beautiful description of motherhood, and an affirmation of the power of her role.

A mother's life isn't easy, no matter how rewarding it might be. Being a homeschooling mother comes with its own unique challenges, and it can be hard to persevere from day to day. Mothers, know that at Seton Home Study School, you have a support system in place. As a body, we pray for you every day. We're on the other end of the line if you need advice, encouragement, or direction. We know there is no more important work in this world than the work you do of educating your children and raising them in the Faith. In what you do lies the hope of the future.

This issue is a testament to mothers, and a thank you from Seton Magazine and Seton Home Study School for your courage, your faith, and your love. We hope you find a little inspiration in its pages. Happy Mothers' Day!

Christine Smitha

Associate Editor

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Domestic Sanctification

Lessons from Bl. Anna-Maria Taigi

Many of us homeschooling mothers would like to ask for spiritual help from a saint who went through some of the same experiences that we are going through. Blessed Anna-Maria Taigi was a mother who faced the daily struggle of balancing responsibilities with children, husband, and work.

Anna-Maria was born in 1769 and lived in Rome. Her parents were extremely poor, as both were servants in a nearby castle. Anna went to a Catholic school for only two years, where she learned basic reading, writing, and religion, but mostly was trained to prepare food and sew. As a young teen, she worked briefly in a sewing shop, but soon obtained a job as a servant with her parents in the nearby castle.

Anna made her First Confession at seven and her First Communion at thirteen. In spite of their poverty and long hours of work, the family attended early morning Mass almost daily. Anna attended weekly catechism class at the local church, and was confirmed in the great St. John Lateran Church.

Eventually, the noblewoman for whom Anna and her parents worked arranged Anna's marriage to a young man who also worked in the palace. Anna and her husband were provided with servants' quarters, a small set of rooms adjacent to Anna's parents' home. Over the next fourteen years, Anna had seven children, and "was herself the principal instructress of her little ones."

In addition to living in deep poverty and meeting the demands of her daily job, Anna always strove to please her perpetually dissatisfied husband, who insisted that she fix his meals or mend his clothes no matter how late at night. His difficult personality was observed by the children and neighbors, but Anna was known for her self-renunciation.

Anna went beyond simply accepting her difficult life. She inspired her family members, including her complaining parents, by keeping a happy face and an

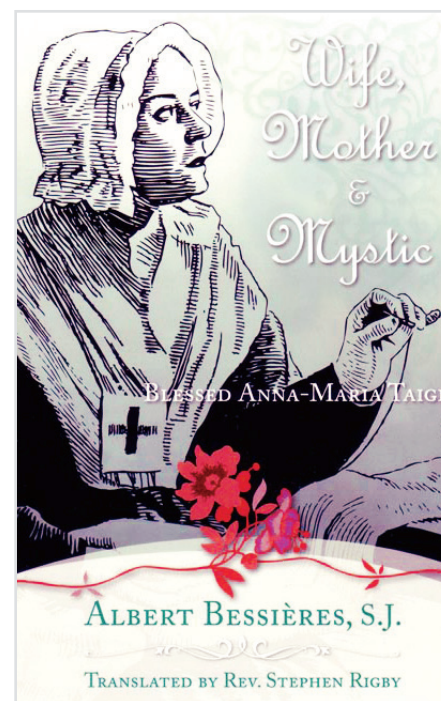
attitude that God was in charge. Not only did she take her children to daily Mass, she led them in daily recitation of the family Rosary. Though she could read and write very little, Anna knew the catechism well, and regularly quoted it to her children. Every night at bedtime, she would give her children a kiss and make a Sign of the Cross on their foreheads.

Anna taught her children by word and example to live a life of sacrifice. When there was a shortage of food, she would go without so that her family could eat. One of Anna's daughters testified that, for punishment when they misbehaved, Anna "preferred to make us go without our dinner or to put us on dry bread." After Sunday Mass, Anna would take her girls to a nearby hospital "to train them in the ways of charity." Another of Anna's daughters reported that her mother used to say: "Laziness is the mother of all the vices."

Whenever a priest came to the house, Anna kissed his hand and made the children do the same. She had special rules or "precautions" for the girls because she could see "happenings frequent and serious enough to put her on her guard." When one of her daughters wanted to marry, the young man was made to "frequent the house" for two months while Anna herself was always present.

After Anna died, one of her confessors related that she "adapted herself to the character of each [of her children]; she cherished their good qualities, mildly corrected their bad ones and thus trained her children perfectly." Her husband testified: "She gave unceasing thanks to God for having caused her to be born in the Catholic Church, and she taught her children to praise Him for so great a favor."

After her death, several of her confessors revealed the messages that Anna had received from Jesus and Mary. One priest reported that Jesus appeared to Anna and said, "I shall save your children for they



are blood of your blood. Moreover, they are poor, and the poor are my friends. Yes, I shall save them, though they have many faults." One of her earliest spiritual advisors stated that a voice had told him to "take notice of that woman...I am calling her to sanctity." The Blessed Mother reminded Anna, "You must be devoted above all to doing His will and submitting your own constantly to His in the state of life to which it has pleased Him to call you...Remember, it is far more meritorious to renounce one's own will and submit oneself entirely to the will of God than to perform the greatest bodily mortifications."

There is so much more in the story of Blessed Anna-Maria as recorded by her family, her friends, and her confessors. Her life is a wonderful example for wives and homeschooling mothers. Today, Anna's incorrupt body lies in repose in the church of San Crisogono in Rome, where she remains as a sign from Jesus to encourage us in our vocation. Blessed Anna-Maria Taigi, pray for us.

Wife, Mother, & Mystic is sold by Seton Educational Media.



Dr. Mary Kay Clark has been the Director of Seton Home Study School for more than 30 years. She writes columns for the *Seton Magazine* and is the author of *Catholic Homeschooling: A Handbook for Parents*.

your Questions ANSWERED

BY DR. MARY KAY CLARK

I feel pressure to finish up the school year by June. Yet my children need more time for math and writing their book reports. Should I stop for a summer break?

Take just a week break, then have the children spend a week or two finishing their quickest assignments, such as the math. Perhaps take a second week break, then help everyone start preparing and writing the book reports. Finishing up the quick assignments first gives students a sense of accomplishment and the confidence they can be successful with the next assignment. Giving them a short break helps prevent burn-out for all of you. The likelihood is that you'll still have time for a summer break in July and August, even if you take a short breather now.

Why is it necessary to memorize the catechism answers word for word?

It always has been the desire of the Church that we know our catechism by memory, so that we might have a solid foundation upon which to build our faith. The parish schools were quite adamant about memorizing the catechism because it was understood that the lessons of the catechism would be a first line of defense for lay Catholics. When in a difficult situation or conversation, those nuggets of catechism truths are a quick reference point for moral guidance. Needless to say, we are all to understand the catechism answers as well as being able to repeat them.

Will you ever produce a 5th grade Seton math book?

Due to numerous prayers and work and persistence by a few, we are in the midst of producing a 5th grade Seton math book. We are reluctant to predict it will be ready by fall of 2016, but it is likely to be ready sometime soon after. Please keep this in your prayers.

As an aside, the new 5th grade Catholic science book is now on the shelves, written by a Catholic science teacher. The new 6th grade Catholic science book should be in print in 2017.

I have never heard of a student doing better in a classroom situation than in an individual learning situation.

My son is an only child and he has been struggling lately. I wonder if he needs to be with other boys in a classroom.

I have never heard of a student doing better in a classroom situation than in an individual learning situation. In fact, the opposite has proven true. Children, and adults for that matter, do better with individualized instruction than in a group or in a classroom.

The reason is that the lesson presentation can be adapted to the individual's rate of learning and type of learning. The student can move ahead or slow down according to the student's own ability. This is why homeschooling is so successful.

If you want your son to have some experience with being with other boys his age, find out about homeschooling group activities in your area. Some communities or churches have musical groups, or theatre groups or sports activities. Check local homeschooling groups and your parish for local homeschoolers' activities.

I don't have enough time to spend with each child. What are the subjects I need to be assisting?

This depends greatly on each student's need, ability, and grade level. At the elementary levels, Religion, Reading, English, and Math are important for developing thinking and writing skills. Encourage your elementary children to do the spelling and vocabulary workbooks on their own. If you have older children or a relative or friend, perhaps the children could do their science and history with someone besides you overseeing. Consider paying an older high school or college student (whom you know well and can trust) to come once or twice a week to help with some of the subjects.

If you have a high school student, determine which courses need help, and consider having a grandparent or other relative, or even paying a neighbor high school or college student you can trust to come once or twice a week. However, you need to stay aware of what is being taught and direct the helpers. Keep them in sight and in hearing distance so you can be aware of what is happening.

Our family will be going on a vacation and spending a good deal of time traveling. Is it wise to take along some school books, or is it "pushing" too much on the children?

Education should be ongoing, though it does not always need to be formal. Often in the evening, children need something to do while on vacation, and having some books available (even workbooks) makes it easy to stay busy. Crossword puzzles and other types of learning games are popular as are mystery books.

Look on our Seton website for enjoyable reading material that we suggest.

Libraries often give prizes for every

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book read and for which the student has produced a book report (note that the books must be on grade level!). This summer, we are encouraging parents to join our Summer Reading Club for their children (baylebulletin.com/readingclub).

I heard you have written your own Seton achievement tests. Will our local superintendent accept those, or do we still need to take the state or national achievement tests.

The new Seton Assessment tests are mainly placement tests, rather than achievement tests. The main purpose of the Seton tests is to determine the level in which a student should be placed in subjects such as math, English, and reading; the Assessment tests can also be used at the end of the year to gauge progress. Achievement tests (also called standardized tests, or nationally-normed tests) are rather different. Achievement tests are meant to determine the ability of students relative to other students. That's why achievement tests come with percentiles and stanine levels, and the scores a student receives are only loosely related to the number of right and wrong answers a student gives.

In states where testing is required, the acceptable legal test for meeting the requirement is the standardized test. So, the short answer to whether you can submit

Seton Assessment tests to meet the testing requirement is, no, you cannot. If you need a test to submit to your local school board, you should order the CAT test, or the Terra Nova test, or the Iowa test, or the Stanford test. Those four tests are all acceptable to meet state requirements.

Seton will automatically send you a Seton Assessment test at no cost after your student completes the third quarter of work. If you need one of the other tests to meet state requirements, let us know and we can send you the test of your choice. Unfortunately, we can't provide the other tests for free, but we do give a discount to enrolled families.

How can I schedule more hands-on activities and keep up with the schedule?

We don't schedule many hands-on activities because many families simply don't have the time or the equipment, especially when several children are being homeschooled. Some parents join a homeschool support group which offers opportunities for various art, music, science, or history projects and activities. Some parents join local library-sponsored or church-sponsored activity programs. Make sure your children are keeping up with the regular assignments, so they understand such "outside" hands-on activities are for those who keep up with their primary responsibilities.

My son in kindergarten is not ready for first grade math, and my friend says her son in first grade is not ready for second grade reading. Must we move our boys up to the next grade level if we believe they are not ready?

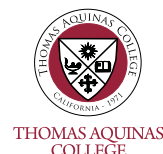
The parents are always in charge. We would not put the two boys into any grade without the parents' decision. What we suggest is that you go back and review the past lessons, perhaps ordering a "fresh" workbook. Teach the concepts again, at the pace that seems best. It is likely both boys will go through their books the second time in half the time. You can order the next level book at anytime. In the meantime, you can begin next level classwork in other subjects.



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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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Savoring the Gift of Seton

by Amanda Evinger



At our house, we celebrate St. Nicholas' Day several times a year—in a way. You know: plastic wrap flying here and there, Styrofoam making clouds, and excited kids giggling over a new batch of workbooks and Catholic learning materials. That is, whenever I place an order with Seton Educational Media, we relive the joy of St. Nicholas' Day in our home. Over the years, using the Seton curriculum has been a grace-filled blessing in our lives, and I can't wait to see all God has in store for us in the future.

For us, the idea to homeschool was a 'no-brainer,' but the choice of curriculum was tough. My melancholic temperament, coupled with my passion for seeking the truth, made me ruthless in scanning curricula for the ideal fit. My husband Michael, one of ten children, was raised on a ranch in western North Dakota and had been homeschooled over 30 years ago, when it was basically unheard of. His parents were real pioneers in the homeschooling movement. When our daughter, Mariam (7), and our son, Matthias (4), reached school age, Michael was certain he wanted them to be homeschooled as he had been.

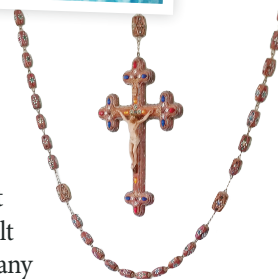
I had quite the opposite experience growing up, but it had the same effect. Having received a staunchly atheistic public school education, I definitely didn't want our children to go through the same thing. I knew homeschooling was God's will for our family. Overly enthusiastic to begin homeschooling, I

doused my first daughter Mariam with several different preschool and kindergarten programs, even though she wasn't yet four. Yet after trying each curriculum, I felt frustrated. Either there were too many hands-on activities that I couldn't keep up with, or the programs weren't challenging enough, or the texts weren't as Catholic as I had hoped. I finally tried the Seton curriculum, and immediately fell in love with its challenging academic texts that so beautifully and fully integrated Catholicism.

Over the years, I have done loads of research on the philosophy of education and on different learning styles. I believe that the various curricula out there have their benefits, but I believe God put the Seton curriculum in our lives as a perfect match for our needs.

Deo Gratias!

For one thing, we live in a rural area where there are few opportunities for faith formation, and not many homeschooling families. After reading a number of Church documents and other writings on the meaning and practice of Christian education, I had become convicted about using a time-tried curriculum that would bring my children the truths of our sacred Faith in every way possible. Sky-high standards notwithstanding, I finally felt I had found a publisher and a homeschool to which my husband and I could entrust our children's minds and souls. The more I used Seton, the





more I felt it was a spiritual fortress that would raise up my children to be secure, successful, and strong. To this day, I am so grateful that as my children use Seton texts, I know they are being enlightened with the tools they need for academic success, while at the same time preserving their innocence and realizing their talents. I am thankful that I don't have to censor any of their learning materials or wonder if what they are reading is nourishing their spirit or tearing it down.

Not only has the Seton curriculum provided a unique way to enrich my children's journey of faith at every turn, but Seton Home Study School has given us the spiritual, social, and academic support we have needed. I love reading the inspiring articles of the writers at setonmagazine.com.

My children continually benefit from the faith-based literature, educational toys, and other Catholic items offered by Seton Educational Media. In fact, one phrase comes to mind when I see my SEM catalog come in the mail: "*Deo Gratias!*"

Of course, another major bonus is that Seton counselors are caring and wise, and they are willing to help in many ways. Truly, when you decide to homeschool with Seton, you become part of a large network of devout Catholics who care about their children—and yours—with the love of Christ. We are blessed to live in a day and age when Seton has built its curriculum and

its educational offerings to such a marvelous degree. My mother-in-law would be the first to tell us we are seriously spoiled!

Yet another reason we appreciate using Seton is that it is a very orderly curriculum that allows the student to work independently. I need to work from home an hour or two each day, so I need my children to complete some of their work without constant attention. I have found Seton to be consistent and user-friendly, which enables the children to complete work on their own. In spite of its orderliness, however, we still find creative ways to use the Seton curriculum. I have learned to 'roll with the punches,' especially when our toddler, Mariella Grace, decides she is doing school with us.

A Typical Homeschool Day

Our typical homeschool day usually begins the night before, when I staple the pages each child needs into packets I keep in a folder. Unless we go to daily Mass and Adoration, we usually begin school with morning prayers and some spiritual reading. Halfway through the morning, we have recess, which we may spend in visiting the Blessed Sacrament or the Good Shepherd Shrine at the Oratory next door. Then we finish our morning assignments and top off the day with favorite stories, or one of Ginger Himes' art videos, and possibly a piano lesson. Sometimes we just

get together and dance to music or play some of our collection of instruments. In the afternoon, we do plenty of reading of beautiful literature, Catholic books, poetry, and non-fiction books. We also go for nature walks, during which we pray the Divine Mercy Chaplet, and collect all kinds of 'nature goodies' for later investigation. We paint, and craft cards for people who are suffering or in need of prayer. A relatively new project we've undertaken is making prayer blankets for the elderly and sick.

Because our children are home all day, they are able to enjoy all these activities, while staying engaged with a serious academic program, and also learning from their parents the skills needed to be successful in life. Recently, they have learned to put math into practice by watching my husband build an impressive garage from scratch as well as a shrine to the Good Shepherd. They've also had the joy of field trips to hunt for shed antlers on the open prairie with their father, another activity made possible by homeschooling. Because of homeschooling, our children know how to run a home business, keep a large garden, tend an orchard, fix nearly anything, sew, and so much more.

In all we do, however, be it manual labor, academic pursuits, or fun family activities, we try to spend our days giving glory to Almighty God, Who has so graciously blessed our family.

The Armor of God for Homeschooling Moms

BY CHRISTINE SMITHA



Parents involved in homeschooling have long understood that the education of our children is more than just an academic pursuit, that it isn't simply a question of developing intellectual capacity in our children and preparing them for successful careers. Rather, it is a waging of war against the powers of darkness that would seek to destroy the souls of the heirs of the kingdom of heaven.

Mothers are on the frontlines of this conflict, as they are the ones who faithfully take up the pen and ruler to daily march into the fray. With each math quiz scored, each book report marked, each religion lesson reviewed, and each science project applauded, every mother widens the ring of truth and love protecting the souls of her children.

There are days, however, when the soldier wearies of battle, and at Seton, we know that mothers also have those days. Especially as we come to the final weeks of the academic year for those who follow the standard American schedule, these can be trying times. It's not just difficult for the kids to stay motivated; it's hard for moms too.

That's why we recommend taking a little time this month to polish your armor. St. Paul says, "Stand therefore, having girded your loins with truth, and having put on the breastplate of righteousness, and having shod your feet with the equipment of the gospel of peace; above all taking the shield of faith, with which you can quench all the flaming darts of the evil one. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God" (Eph. 6:14-17). We know it isn't easy to find time, but just as soldiers work to stay in peak condition, it's important for mothers to cultivate themselves so they can return to battle better than ever. (Fathers, you can always help this endeavor with some extra cherishing of your wives!)

1. Renew Your Decision to Homeschool

Take some time to renew your decision to homeschool. Recall the reasons you had for making such a choice to begin with and look about you to see the good it has wrought in your home. If you need further affirmation, read what the authors at setonmagazine.com have to say about the

value of homeschooling, and think about the encouragement you've received from Seton's counselors. You have devoted yourself to giving the truth to your children. You spend each moment of your life witnessing the truth of God's teachings about marriage and family life. Indeed, you are girt about with truth, and you are wearing the breastplate of righteousness as you fulfill the obligations of your vocation. Rejoice in the truth! And if it helps you to stand tall, consider digging that favorite necklace out of the bottom of your jewelry box and wearing it while teaching for the rest of the year.

2. Take Quiet Time

Cultivate a peaceful heart, by taking a few moments of quiet time for yourself each day. Try reading something that focuses and encourages you, such as *Small Steps for Catholic Moms, Rooted in Love*, or *A Retreat with Elizabeth Seton*. Spending a little time withdrawn each day helps keep us grounded and calm. Otherwise, it's easy to overstress, and the more stressed we become, the more frantic our actions become, and the less effective we are able to be. Staying rooted in Christ's peace by periods of reflection

allows us to step forward with precision and purpose, so we can keep marching forward in the great battle against evil. Of course, a new pair of shoes also might help, and Mothers' Day is just around the bend. . .

3. Restore Your Spiritual Life

Renewing one's relationship with Christ is always a good way to grow in faith. This month might be an excellent time to take up a weekly hour or half-hour of Adoration. Regular prayer is our strongest ally, and indeed the only shield capable of protecting us from the slings and arrows of a society that doesn't understand, or doesn't think we're good enough to do the job we do. Recommit to the Rosary, for it is one of the greatest weapons we have. In the meantime, know that at Seton, we believe you can do what you've set out to do, and we daily pray for your safety and blessing.

4. Never Give Up

Don't lose hope, and don't give up. Even in the darkest, hardest days, God still works. Your children are better off with you, and though they might balk or struggle at times, you are planting the seeds of faith, and arming your sons and daughters for success

in their own battles. "Trust in the Lord with all your heart" (Pro. 3:5). Hold your head up with confidence that God desires the salvation of your children even more than you do, and He has died and risen again to make it possible. And get that haircut you've been wanting for the past six months!

5. Reacquaint Yourself with Scripture

Finally, acquaint yourself with Scripture. The Psalms, in particular, are full of inspiration for the weary, as they show us God's grace continually poured out in mercy. Or take up one of the Gospels, and note Christ's particular care of women, towards whom He is endlessly tender and understanding. Draw energy and inspiration from the Word of God, so that you can be ready to meet each challenge with a sharp mind and determined heart.

You **can** make it through another day; you **can** win today's battle.

Mothers of Seton, you are heroes. You are our heroes, and we honor you.



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.

"For we are not contending against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against the powers, against the world rulers of this present darkness, against the spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places"
(Eph. 6:12).



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Behold thy Mother

Mary is the Answer
to All Our Problems

BY JOHN CLARK

READ ONLINE



Being that I write largely “feel-good” columns, occasionally a reader will upbraid me for it. “Don’t you get it? Don’t you understand how bad the world is right now?” they ask. Well, I think I might. If I understand correctly, here goes. In the Western world: atheists are applauded for their ipso facto “genius,” Satanism is increasingly seen as having more political rights than Christianity, fatherhood is mocked as anachronistic, feminism is defined by one’s willingness to have an abortion, the birthplace of Christianity is becoming a tomb of Christianity, marriage and gender have been redefined, the incessant demand for sins against the sixth and ninth commandments can scarcely handle the supply of fiber optic bandwidth, regulations and ordinances persistently and insistently hurt the poor, socialism is becoming the de facto religion, and the entire concept of religious liberty is beginning to mirror a time and place when blade sharpening was a growth industry and people were taking oaths on tennis courts.

Maybe these recognitions will make some of my critics happy, but for others, they might be objecting: “Wait a minute, wait a minute. This is your Mother’s Day column?”

The answer is yes, and the reason is that we need a reminder of how we got here. Destinations are the result of traveling along a path. We arrived at this epically-bad epoch because we have rejected the most important mother: the Mother of God. Clearly, much of the Western world has simply bid God adieu, but make no mistake—in many instances, Mary was rejected first. The rejection of Mary (which could frankly be called “anti-Marianism”) in many quarters

of Protestantism has had a terrible effect on Christianity. For that matter, outside Catholic and Orthodox Christianity, who is championing her motherhood? Partially because of that rejection, you have today’s ghastly zeitgeist. Of the sins that are so prevalent today, which of them cannot be largely traced to a rejection of Mary? For instance, the dismissal of Mary as the Immaculate Mother of God (along with the rejection of Marian prayers like the Rosary) weakens the arguments against abortion and contraception, and weakens the will against pornography and fornication.

What is the answer to all this? Jesus gave us the answer on the Cross: “Behold thy Mother.”

Consider this: Mary is trying to behold you right now. Repeat: Mary is trying to behold you. What is your response? Are you trying to behold her? Happily, to do so, you don’t need to wait for a special feast day eight months from now. You can behold her—you can develop a devotion to her—right now. Here are three ways to help you get started.

Ask God for the grace of a Marian devotion. There are formal prayers that seek to do this, but mental prayers from the heart work too, like, “Dear God, please grant me the grace of a devotion to Mary, that I may become closer to you.”

Meditate on the Gospel passages involving Mary. Read the passages about the Annunciation, the Visitation, the Nativity, the Wedding Feast at Cana, and the Crucifixion. Read a short passage about Mary every day for a month, starting today.

Say a “Hail Mary.” If you aren’t yet saying

the Rosary, start small: say one Hail Mary a day. Could one Hail Mary a day change your life? In a word, yes. In fact, one Hail Mary said once could change your life. Francisco Suarez, one of the greatest theologians in ecclesiastical history, said that he would gladly give up all his academic accomplishments in exchange for the merits of one Hail Mary said well. Not one Hail Mary a day for a lifetime. Just one. If Suarez is right, think about what a lifetime of Rosaries could accomplish.

One saint, St. Louis de Montfort, did think about it, writing: “If you say the Rosary faithfully until death, I do assure you that, in spite of the gravity of your sins, you shall receive a never-fading crown of glory. Even if you are on the brink of damnation, even if you have one foot in hell...sooner or later you will be converted and will amend your life and will save your soul...if you say the Holy Rosary devoutly every day until death for the purpose of knowing the truth and obtaining contrition and pardon for your sins.”

I understand that the world has problems. But I also understand that many of these problems can be overcome with beholding our mother. This Mother’s Day, let’s commit or re-commit ourselves to her.

Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners, now and at the hour of our death. Amen.

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.

There's No Teacher Like Grandma

A Letter to Grandmothers

BY GINNY SEUFFERT



Dear Grandma,

Early on a cold sunny day, I took my coffee and breakfast, sat in my comfy recliner, and opened the *Chicago Tribune*. The youngest of my many children recently turned twenty-two, and although she lives at home, she is frequently off to work before I am out of bed. My days of hectic breakfasts, followed by throwing a load of laundry into the washer, changing diapers, nursing a baby, all the while ordering kids to start their schoolwork without me, are over, and I can now enjoy a well-earned rest.

Well maybe.

Before 8 A.M., my 3rd grade granddaughter interrupts me with a pile of books in her arms. She is hoping for an early start in her homeschooling day, mostly so she can have an early finish and play outside. I push my newspaper to the side and begin to review common denominators. A few minutes later, her 4th grade brother, realizing she will be running around in the sunshine before he will, gets his books and joins us. So much for peaceful retirement!

Why, you may understandably inquire, do I trade the little free time I have to help homeschool my grandchildren? (I also have a full time job. Twelve kids was not a retirement plan!) The reasons have not really changed since I started teaching my own children in the '80's. Public school is simply not a viable option, in fact less of a consideration than it was thirty years ago.

- Despite the dire warnings issued during the Reagan Administration, educational standards have actually worsened in government schools. In most places, moving to a good district will no longer help. Over forty states have imposed identical educational standards on all students.

- The federal government has ordered that students be allowed to choose the gender of locker rooms and washrooms they use. Traditional family values are actively being undermined by the establishment, to be replaced with a moral relativism unlike anything previously seen in history. Pressure on students to conform to the new values, or lack thereof, can be overwhelming.
- The social situation among students themselves is frequently even more distressing. Promiscuity, drug use, vulgar language, immodest dress, tattoos, weird piercings, and inappropriate use of social media applications are ubiquitous.

It would break this grandma's heart to see these precious children in government schools.

For generations, parish schools and diocesan high schools provided real alternatives to the government system, but that option is becoming more and more elusive. Catholic schools have closed all over the country, leaving many families with long drives twice a day, or with no school within driving distance at all. Religious sisters have all but disappeared and the secular staff often has far better training in academic subjects than in faith formation. Rising costs have placed tuition costs outside the resources of many large families. Sadly, we see no relief in sight.

"Okay," perhaps you are thinking, "but, why not have the children's mother (or father, for that matter) teach them? Didn't you do it on your own?" I did and she does. We share our home with my son, his wife, and their six children. My daughter-in-law, Liz, teaches kindergarten and 1st grade, and I tackle the 3rd and 4th, with occasional overlap on both sides. I help, not because Liz can't do it on her own, but because I

remember how tough it was homeschooling on my own.

Homeschooling four children, with two toddlers running around, is an all day affair. Because I carry half the load, school almost always wraps up in the morning. My grandchildren spend their afternoons at nature centers, zoos, libraries, conservatories, and museums. Because there are two adults, the children have twice the opportunity to attend daily Mass, go to Adoration, or visit a shrine. I don't have little ones, so grandma can take car trips – even overnights – and visit historical sights.

The grandkids enjoy lives rich in experiences outside formal bookwork.

Grandma is doing okay too! It is extraordinarily rewarding to teach a child to read, and to revisit a beloved book I haven't read in years. I consider it an honor and a privilege to pass on love of our country and all of its rich history and traditions. To be more honest than humble, I'm pretty adept at diagramming sentences, teaching fractions, and helping kids to memorize the Ten Commandments – and now I get to do it all over again, this time with the confidence of knowing in advance that it all works so well. I enjoy rich daily interaction with those I love best. There is not a quiet cup of coffee in the world I would trade for this!

Think about it, Grandma. Your grandchildren could get a top-flight education, and you get time with them. What could be better? Your willingness might be just what is needed to make homeschooling work.

Ginny



Ginny Seuffert has been a leading writer and speaker about homeschooling and family management for more than two decades. She has given hundreds of talks at conferences and has written scores of articles on everything from discipline to home management.

The Maternal Heart

God's Masterpiece for the Family



BY DOM ALBAN BAKER

In his encyclical *Casti Connubii*, Pius XI, when outlining the roles of husband and wife in a family, wrote that “if the man is the head, the woman is the heart,” and that she “may and ought to claim for herself the chief place in love.” At this time of year when we celebrate motherhood, it is good to reflect more deeply upon this statement. What does it mean to say that the woman is the heart of the family?

First of all, from a biological point of view, the heart pumps the body’s blood, and blood carries vital materials to the rest of the body. In the same way, a good mother pours love and encouragement into her children. We know from solid psychology (and common sense) that the way a mother treats her children is pivotal to their healthy emotional growth. If the mother is selflessly responsive, children grow up knowing they are loved and are able to love others generously in return. And this is not a small thing: Aristotle says that the habits formed in youth “make a very great difference, or rather all the difference.” There is no more fundamental habit to form than the one which moves a child to consistently say to himself or herself, “I am lovable; I am loved.”

In a family, the mother removes all things that do not belong there: impurity, calumny,

pusillanimity (little-souled-ness). Her house is a place where the dignity of man and woman is upheld, both in body and in soul. The body is honored as the vessel of the Holy Spirit; thoughts, words, and actions unbecoming to Christians are not allowed to take root. The souls of her husband and children are treated with proper dignity because a mother’s heart ensures that charity reigns: no evil talk is permitted to pass their lips, either regarding one another or those outside the home. St. Paul’s words are incarnated in that place: “Let no evil talk come out of your mouths, but only such as is good for edifying, as fits the occasion, that it may impart grace to those who hear... and be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you.” Finally, magnanimity (great-souled-ness) is the norm, while little-souled-ness is banished. “Magnanimity by its very name denotes stretching forth of the mind to great things,” as Aquinas says; this is what the mother as heart brings about in her family.

Secondly, consider the meaning of the heart in the Bible. There the heart is associated with excellence, as being the place where the most noble psychic and emotional powers reside and whence they emanate.

For example, in Proverbs 15:13, the state of the heart determines the state of the rest of the organism: “A glad heart makes a cheerful countenance, but by sorrow of heart the spirit is broken.” This is a truth we all know—if the heart is at peace, it is manifest in our person. So with a mother: if she is happy, the family is well, because the goodness in her passes on to all the members. In a similar way, Jesus says that our true self is manifest in the thoughts of our heart. Put negatively, “What comes out of a man is what defiles a man. For from within, out of the heart of man, come evil thoughts, fornication, theft, murder, adultery, coveting, wickedness, deceit, licentiousness, envy, slander, pride, foolishness.” But out of the heart also come the fruits of the Holy Spirit: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. When the heart of the family, the mother, brings forth these virtues, the family’s identity arises from her holiness.

In the New Testament, the heart is also the seat of divine operations which transform the Christian from within. Writing to the Ephesians, Paul admonishes them to allow Christ to dwell in their hearts through faith. In an individual, Christ dwells in the heart; in the family, using Pius XI’s analogy, Christ

dwells particularly in the mother, not in the sense that she alone possesses Him, but that her faith and her willingness to surrender to Jesus nurture the whole family. In like manner, Paul says in Romans 5:5 that the Holy Spirit is poured forth into our hearts. In some mystical way, the divine person who is most fittingly called Love dwells in that place that we call the heart, and in a mystical way, He dwells especially in the mother, chosen by God to be the focus of love, radiating to her spouse and children the divine charity that dwells in her. Thus, just as God first converts and renews our heart so that the divine presence may reside in all other parts, so He transforms the mother to make holy the family for which she gives her life.

From all this it is not hard to see why St. Thérèse of Lisieux is said to have written that “the loveliest masterpiece of the heart of God is the heart of a mother.” The maternal heart is that which gives life to her family, while she is given life by divine grace from the “heart of God.” And there was no greater maternal heart than that of the Blessed Virgin, a heart pierced by suffering, but a heart that continues to be the source of joy and consolation to so many souls who seek to love and serve the Savior she bore.



Dom Alban Baker, CRNJ, received his Licentiate in Sacred Theology (S.T.L.) from the Dominican House of Studies in Washington DC. He is a member of the Canons Regular of the New Jerusalem, a monastic community serving the diocese of Wheeling-Charleston in West Virginia.



READ ONLINE

Spring is in the Air!

Yes, it's that time of year! The air is warm, the sun is bright, streams are running crisp and cold, greenery is breaking out all over, the family dog is begging for a long hike...and there's that pesky *Roe v. Wade* paper still to write, one more book analysis for English, a few more chapter tests in Geography. What's a senior to do?

Grit your teeth, summon up every last bit of will-power in your possession and keep to the task at hand! Every once in a while we get a frantic call from a student who let the last few assignments slide, went to college without the diploma and found in his or her second year that the Registrar is wondering why the transcript is still showing no graduation date.

Of course, a good Catholic cannot afford to simply ignore God's great gift of springtime, either. A bit of judicious juggling of tasks and pleasure is in order. Once *Roe v. Wade* is finished, by all means take a ramble with Fido. After completing Geography, reward yourself with a short trip to the ice cream parlor. When the last book analysis is written, go fishing for the rest of the afternoon. But, be sure to take up the books again upon your return.

You'll be thankful later!



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



2016 SETON VLOG CHALLENGE - ENDS AUG 31ST

Seton High School Students are encouraged to craft a **5 minute, in-character vlog based on one of the books they are reading in their curriculum this year**. The challenge is to become one of the characters, and either pretend to be in the original time period, or transpose the story into a modern setting while remaining true to the intent of the tale. Details online at bayleybulletin.com/vlogs

2016 Catholic Homeschooling Conferences



The following is a list of Catholic homeschooling conferences during May and June where Seton will offer materials for preview and sale, as well as a \$30-per-child enrollment discount (grades 1-12).

OH, Toledo May 13, 2016 (Fri.) IHM Toledo Homeschool Conference

St. Jerome Catholic Church
300 Warner Street
Walbridge, OH 43465
Fri.: 12 noon – 6 pm
www.ihmconference.org

IN, Indianapolis May 20-21, 2016 (Fri.-Sat.) 2016 Quo Vadis Catholic Homeschool Conference

Marian University (Library)
3200 Cold Spring Road
Indianapolis, IN 46222
Fri.: 2 pm – 9 pm
Sat.: 9 am – 2 pm
www.hfheindy.com

NC, Charlotte May 20-21, 2016 (Fri.-Sat.) IHM Charlotte Homeschool Conference

Belmont Abbey College
100 Belmont-Mt. Holly Road
Belmont, NC 28012-1802
Fri.: 12 noon – 6 pm
Sat.: 9:30 am – 3:30 pm
www.ihmconference.org

GA, Atlanta May 27, 2016 (Fri.) IHM Georgia Homeschool Conference

Cobb Galleria Center
2 Galleria Parkway
Atlanta, GA 30339
Fri.: 12 noon – 6 pm
Sat.: 9:30 am – 3:30 pm
www.ihmconference.org

MN, St. Paul June 3-4, 2016 (Fri.-Sat.) 18th Annual Minnesota Catholic Home Educators Conference and Curriculum Fair

University of St. Thomas
2115 Summit Avenue
St. Paul, MN 55105
Fri.: 4 pm – 8:30 pm
Sat.: 8 am – 5 pm
www.mnconference.org

MD, Mt. Airy June 3-4, 2016 (Fri.-Sat.) IHM Maryland Homeschool Conference

St. Michael's Parish — Poplar Springs
1125 St. Michael's Road
Mt. Airy, MD 21771
Fri.: 12 noon – 6 pm
Sat.: 9:30 am – 3:30 pm
www.ihmconference.org

LA, Lafayette June 10, 2016 (Fri.) IHM Lafayette Homeschool Conference

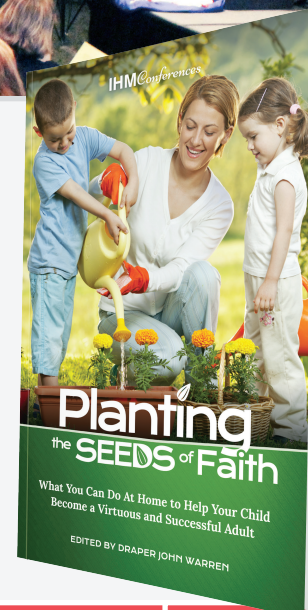
Cajundome and Convention Center
444 Cajundome Boulevard
Lafayette, LA 70506
Fri.: 12 pm – 6 pm
www.ihmconference.org

TX, Houston June 10-11, 2016 (Fri.-Sat.) Houston ARCH Homeschool & Parent Conference

University of St. Thomas
Jerabek Athletic Center
3800 Montrose Boulevard
Houston, TX 77006
Fri.: 1 pm – 7 pm
Sat.: 9 am – 5 pm
www.homeschool-life.com/2034

KS, Kansas City June 17-18, 2016 (Fri.-Sat.) 12th Annual Kansas City Conference for Catholic Homeschoolers & Curriculum Fair

Divine Mercy Parish
555 W. Main Street
Gardner, KS 66030
Fri.: 2 pm – 9 pm
Sat.: 9 am – 4 pm
www.kccatholichomeschooler.org



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Planting the Seeds of Faith

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For additional contact information, conferences, venues, and vendors, visit www.setonhome.org/conferences



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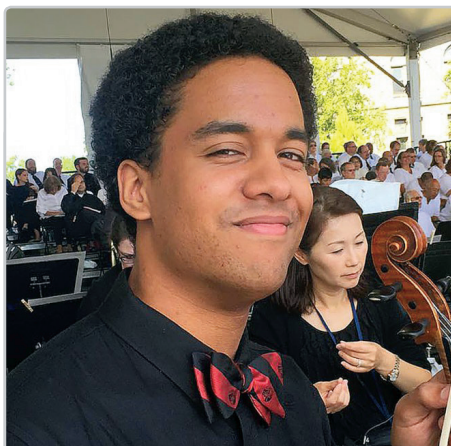


Seton Student Achievements

SHARING SUCCESS WITH THE SETON COMMUNITY



Ann | Ann competed in the WV State Women's Gymnastics Championships in Beckley, WV on March 12-13, 2016. She became the WV State Champion on Floor in level XCEL/Gold.



Cole | As a violinist in the CUA orchestra, I had the honor and thrill of a lifetime performing at the Canonization Mass of St Junipero Serra celebrated by Pope Francis.



Lucy | On March 10th 2016, I became a Texas Youth Ambassador for the Tourette Association of America.

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

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Papal Quotes on the Family

It is no exaggeration to say that providing young people with a sound education in the Faith represents the most urgent internal challenge facing the Catholic community in your country. The deposit of Faith is a priceless treasure which each generation must pass on to the next by winning hearts to Jesus Christ and shaping minds in the knowledge, understanding and love of His Church.

It is gratifying to realize that, in our day too, the Christian vision, presented in its breadth and integrity, proves immensely appealing to the imagination, idealism and aspirations of the young, who have a right to encounter the Faith in all its beauty, its intellectual richness and its radical demands.

Pope Benedict XVI, Address to Bishops of the United States, May 5, 2012

