

# Seton MAGAZINE

Under the Magisterium of the Catholic Church

SETONMAGAZINE.COM | DEC 2016-JAN-2017



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Vol. 4, No. 12, Dec 2016-Jan 2017  
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## Subscription Information:

Subscription is included with your enrollment.

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

Cover photo:  
Berquist Family



## Letter from the Editor

At last, the end of 2016 is here. It has been an eventful year both in the world and here at Seton. One of the strangest political races we've seen in this country is over, Britain is no longer part of the European Union, and the oldest extant Christian monastery has been destroyed. At Seton, we lost our beloved chaplain, Father Constantine—may he rest in peace—and watched as some of our associates left for new lives and new adventures.

On the brighter side, we took on a second accreditation, released our new digital program for high school, and graduated another large class of amazing young people into the world.

Now, a new liturgical year has just begun and we're on the verge of turning the calendar. It's a time for taking stock and starting over. As Catholic Christians, this should be a joy-filled time, for we are a people of hope, and this is the time of the coming of our Savior. Dom Alban Baker shows us how the Christmas celebration should carry us into the new year. Dr. Clark's retelling of the Flight into Egypt reminds us that our guardian angels are ever ready to guide us. John Clark talks about being a little more like our children, while Chris Smith reminds students to give thanks for their parents and tough decisions. Amy Pawlusiak rounds us out with some practical advice on keeping Christmas going. You'll also find Christmas greetings from our showcase of 2016's Feature Families.

Merry Christmas from all of us to all of you! May it be a blessed, peaceful, holy season, and a grace-filled New Year!

Christine Smitha

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





# The Flight to Egypt

## *Similarities between the Holy Family & Homeschoolers*

Good St. Joseph, the head of the Holy Family, was told by an angel in the middle of the night, that he immediately must take the Baby Jesus and His holy mother Mary and escape in the dark to safety in Egypt. Joseph immediately gathered up the little family and a few provisions and, before the sun came up, began the difficult trip to a foreign land.

Joseph had strong Faith in God. When an angel appeared about a year before, and told him to wed the young Mary who was living in the Jewish Temple, he immediately made plans. When Joseph was later uncertain about Mary, an angel came again and told him that she was carrying the Son of God by the miraculous intervention of the Holy Spirit.

Joseph was a man of immediate obedience and trust in God. At the third recorded angelic appearance, as the head of the holy household, Joseph once again recognized his God-given responsibility to obey the heavenly messenger. He awakened Mary, and before the sun rose, they were on their way.

As the sun slowly came up at their backs, it lit the unfamiliar dusty road with their long shadows ahead of them. In the still-dark sky, they saw a brilliant shining star leading westward to the unfamiliar land of Egypt.

It is traditional belief among Catholics of Egypt that the angel who directed the Holy Family from behind, also gave miraculous "coverage" as protection from robbers. The tradition is that St. Joseph, the head of the Holy Family, a strong well-built carpenter, walked the whole journey of about 300 miles for about thirty days, briskly pulling the harnesses of the two donkeys that carried Mary and the Holy Child, and the family's few belongings.

### *Trust in God*

It was revealed to St. Bonaventure that the road was difficult to travel, rough and dirty, as it was a little used back road. This road would keep the family safe from robbers and away from other curious travelers. In addition, the Holy Family was traveling in the winter season when it was cold and windy.

St. Bonaventure meditated, "How did they obtain their food? Where did they repose at night since there were no inns on that road? They must have slept on the sand or under a tree. They must have appeared as 'poor wandering beggars'."

There are similarities between the Holy Family's flight from King Herod to Egypt and homeschooling families' retreat from schools which "endanger" their children.

With inspiration from Heaven's guardian angels, homeschooling parents have rejected the dangerous agenda of secular anti-Catholic values and beliefs.

Having made this decision, we must trust that God will guide us in many ways, especially through our guardian angels, pushing us from behind as we follow the "star" of heavenly inspiration. Sometimes the move to homeschooling seems about as drastic as moving from Bethlehem to Cairo.

Homeschooling parents must continue to rely on their guardian angels to stand by them, to give them confidence, patience, trust, and moral strength for the long dusty road ahead of them. Catholic homeschooling families must continue to look to the Holy Family and the "heavenly star" of God's leading light, praying for safety along the road, and for the same determination to endure "leaving" friends and family to protect their children's eternal destiny.

*Guardian Angels, pray for us and our children. Amen.*



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

# your Questions ANSWERED

BY DR. MARY KAY CLARK

## How can my son know if there are any online helps for his courses?

Log into MySeton, check each course name, then click on "Course Resources." This includes audios, videos, and online helps. Check under every course he is taking. Students have found that by checking first, they don't need to make as many calls or send as many emails.

## If my son takes his tests online and I fill in the Quarter Report Form home grades online, do I still need to send in the paper QRF and tests?

No. Parents should not send the paper copy of tests already graded online; nor should parents send in the QRF with parent grades already recorded online.

If tests are taken online and graded automatically, the grade is also automatically recorded. Sending paper copies of the same items can lead to confusion in record-keeping and prevents graders from grading material as quickly as they could without unraveling such complications.

## My friend who recently enrolled asked me what to do first.

Inside the box containing the books and lesson plans, Seton sends the Parents' Homeschool Handbook. Reading the Parents' Homeschool

Handbook is an excellent place to start because it provides an overview to everything from using lesson plans to grading to important phone numbers at Seton. In fact, the material covered in the Handbook was produced specifically to address the kinds of questions we have received from the parents over the years.

The next step I'd recommend is watching your *Open the Box* videos. These can be found in the course resources in your MySeton account online. Much like the handbook, these videos discuss fundamentals and essentials as counselors take you through how to use the lesson plans, tips for establishing good habits, and generally getting off to a good start.

*Our religion books are Catholic and teach more Catholic material than is found in most other school's religion textbooks.*

## I would like to stop homeschooling over the holidays, but I am afraid of losing precious time!

Spending the holiday time with your children is extremely precious time! Do not hesitate to "take off" on holidays to do special things

with your family. Sometimes families try to accomplish some schoolwork in the morning, and then do "holiday" activities in the afternoon, but you need to decide what is best.

When families travel, often the children bring their reading and literature work, which can be a useful way to "kill time" on the plane or in the car. In general, it is never a bad idea to bring each child's favorite subject material because it will keep him or her relatively happily occupied during travel time or before falling asleep in a motel.

Talk with your children to find out what they'd like. Some of the older children may very well want to "keep up" with a couple of assignments. Some might even want to "get ahead" over the holidays. There's no right way to manage schooling during the holidays except the right way for your own unique family.

## I heard Dr. Katie Moran at a conference. Has she produced any tapes for parents who have children that struggle with learning problems?

Dr. Katie Moran has a series of videos that are available on our website for all grade levels. The topics are Right/Left Brain Learners, Learning Disabilities, Visual Learners, Auditory Learners, Dealing with ADD/ADHD,



## Check Out These New Items!



### TRILOGY GIFT BOX

These hardcover books by Neal Lozano are beautifully illustrated by Seton Press artist Ben Hatke and packaged in a beautiful slip case. An endearing Read-Aloud book set for parents to read to their children! 32 pages each.

P-RD01-60 \$44.85 3 Book Set



### New from Ginger Himes

#### Water Mixable Oil Painting

Another great Art DVD from Ginger Himes - the first one on Painting with Oils! Geared to students grade 5 through adult. Designed to give students confidence in painting with water mixable oil paints, and it all cleans up with soap and water!

M-ARDV-32 \$35.00  
Water Mixable DVD

[setonbooks.com/new](http://setonbooks.com/new)

and many more. You'll find them on the home page drop-down menu under Parent Resources: Videos.

### I would like to attend daily Mass with my children, but I hate to get them up so early.

In past generations, children would go to bed earlier and also get up early with their parents and attend the only daily Mass available, which was usually at 7:00 or 7:30. The trick is to put children to bed a little earlier!

Daily Mass is important, but each family needs to decide what is best for

them. For pregnant moms and nursing moms, daily Mass becomes very difficult. Jesus and Mary understand if your family situation does not permit you to attend daily Mass. They will surely honor your desire to do so.

Also, don't forget to turn on EWTN occasionally throughout the day to watch, or at least listen to, daily Mass with your children.

### My friend gives the lesson plans to her children so they have the directions for assignments each day.

If she is giving them to her high school age students, they should read them, but your friend should be reading them also, in order to help her children when they need it. It is essential for parents to be familiar with the lesson plans so they can stay abreast of their students' content, assignments, and schedule.

I am sure your friend is reading the assignments for the younger children, not only to make sure they are on schedule, but also because she needs to make sure they are doing their lessons and understanding the material. Young children are not able to teach themselves in the same way that older children can do.

### Have you produced videos to teach paragraph writing for younger children?

We recently produced several videos to help parents teach their young children to write a paragraph. These have been produced for Grades 1, 2, 3, and 4. We hope to have them available for grades 5, 6, 7, and 8 in the early months of 2017. Look in your MySeton under 'Course Resources' under English.



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.



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



AVE MARIA  
UNIVERSITY



BELMONT ABBEY  
COLLEGE  
THAT IN ALL THINGS GOD MAY BE GLORIFIED



CHRISTENDOM  
COLLEGE



FRANCISCAN UNIVERSITY  
OF STEUBENVILLE



NORTHEAST  
CATHOLIC COLLEGE



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[setonhome.org/colleges](http://setonhome.org/colleges)

# Merry Christmas!

FROM OUR FEATURED FAMILIES!

**D**ear Seton Families, we thank God for each of you. It is a joy to be in communion with you as we all strive to give our children the best spiritual and academic education we can!

This past year, we have been blessed with new life -- Amanda is four months pregnant -- and we are truly grateful. We have also enjoyed Mariam's First Communion, and countless other blessings.

May the peace of the Divine Infant be yours, now and always!

## From the Evinger family

*'Savoring the Gift of Seton: The Evinger Family Story', May 2016*



**H**igh school homeschooling is proving more difficult than elementary grades but with Seton's online tests and resources, we are making our way through.

This season of Advent is keeping our gaze on the Christ child as well as keeping close in mind that Jesus will come again.

We want to be ready.

## From the Owen family

*"Yes, They're All Ours!" - The Owen Feature Family Story', Nov 2016*





**W**hat an exciting time is this time of Advent and Christmas, and what a precious gift from God, this time we have with family and friends!

Our holiday prayer for everyone would be to use this special season as an invite to a deeper relationship with God our Father. Use this gift of time for worship, thanksgiving, praise, and to focus on peace, happiness, love and joy.

May we grow in understanding and appreciation of our many gifts and blessings throughout the new year!

### From the Boyd family

*'7 Ways the Seton Curriculum Makes Us a Stronger Family',  
September 2016*



### From the Campbell family

*'God First, Then Family: Being a Homeschooling Father', June 2016*



This year has been a challenging year for us, with Dad deployed, school, and activities, but through the grace of God we have persevered, our faith has grown stronger, and we have learned that joy is a choice.

This Christmas we wish all of you fellow Seton families the grace and perseverance you need for the challenges that will meet you this coming year. We also hope you choose joy so that your families may grow closer and stronger.

Have a merry and peace-filled Christmas!

### From the Berquist family

*'9 Homeschoolers with a Military Dad. Loving It!' December 2016*



Glory to God in the highest, And on earth peace among men with whom He is pleased." (Luke 2:14).

We recently had our Advent retreat together with the Cebu Catholic Homeschooling Family and Support Group, a group of Catholic homeschooling families in Cebu, Philippines and another Advent recollection with Elim Communities, a Catholic Charismatic group. Both activities were enriching and enlightening.

From our family to yours, we pray that you may find peace amidst the business of the season - the peace that surpasses all understanding, the peace that takes away all fear, and the peace that only the Lord can give. May your family find the joy of Christmas - Jesus Christ Himself!

### From the Sanico family

*'Lessons of Life - 7 Pillars of Homeschooling Success', October 2016*







**H**appy Advent! As a military family, each Christmas has been different. We have spent Christmas in many different locations: Japan, Florida, California, and Texas.

This Christmas will be our first and last Tender Tennessee Christmas. In addition to their daily Seton lessons, the kids have been busy practicing for various Advent activities. With other co-op homeschoolers, they will sing carols and present handmade ornaments and cards to senior citizens at the YMCA and local nursing home. They will all perform in the Nativity play at the chapel on base. Our oldest son will play the piano, and also fill the role of the Angel Gabriel. Our younger son will be Joseph. Our daughters will be a shepherdess, a sheep, and Mary's donkey.

All of the preparations for these activities have helped to keep our minds focused on the reason for the season: Our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. We all know it is a special time to prepare our hearts for Jesus (even our little 5 year old)! We have been ornamenting our Jesse Tree daily. We listen to Holy Heroes, read a daily Advent devotional, and listen to daddy leading the Scripture readings each morning. As for mama, I make time for

reading an Advent book for women, praying, getting sleep, and taking a walk each day. I have made time for Confession, Adoration, and Communion as well, so that my mind and soul can find calm amidst all of the transportation, food preparation, teaching and training for the children.

Don't think we're perfect! We are blessedly normal. We pray that our sons don't make burping noises while they sing to the seniors. We pray for our girls not to do justice to their costumes and fight like barnyard animals at the Christmas play. We pray that we have the patience not to raise our voices at our children when they don't pay attention to the daily devotion. We are grateful for another opportunity to prepare our hearts for our Savior this Advent.

For our family, it's the most wonderful and busy time of the year, but it is all to celebrate Jesus. We pray God blesses you and your family throughout the Christmas season and may your days be merry and bright!

### **From the Bissonnette family**

*'Prayer, Work & Play with a Homeschool Military Family,' April 2016*



# Better Habits

## for Homeschoolers

### A NEW YEAR'S PROJECT

People still make resolutions at New Year's time, but these days, it often seems more like a joke than anything else. "This year, I'm definitely going to get in shape," and the gym memberships spike for two weeks until the next Monday night football game, when it's back to pizza and potato chips on the sofa. It doesn't have to be that way, though, and for all of us, it shouldn't be.

The key to having meaningful resolutions is being motivated by a purpose you adhere to with your heart and soul, and having a reasonable plan of attack. As Catholic homeschooling parents, we recognize three areas of such firm purpose: 1) salvation, 2) education, and 3) family. Instead of making resolutions based on what everyone around us might be doing, or because it sounds good, give consideration to a resolution your family can take up in one of these key areas.

For each area, consider the problem. Ask yourselves the following questions: What are the real needs in our family? What is the most important need right now? Then envision success. What would our family look like if we made

a change in this area? What is the end goal? Finally, make a reasonable plan that involves everyone. What is the simplest way we can fulfill this need as a family? How can everyone participate and contribute? Take time to prayerfully evaluate and answer these questions, and you'll soon find yourself with a set of resolutions you can stick to.

### SALVATION

Surely, the first priority in all our homes is the salvation of our souls and those of our children. Sometimes, it may seem as if we're a far cry from attaining that eternal goal, however. Consider the problem. What are the biggest challenges right now? Is it a struggle to gather the family for prayer? Is Mass time too chaotic? Is getting to Confession less regular than you think it should be? Which of these areas might be the simplest to remedy? Perhaps family prayer time would be the easiest since it doesn't necessarily mean leaving the home. Perhaps a sensible goal would be to have the habit of praying the family rosary this year.

**ENVISION SUCCESS:** What do you expect to gain from instituting the family rosary? Increased devotion to

the Blessed Mother is probably part of the goal, as well as comfortability, even joy, at praying and spending time with God. It would be nice if the children wouldn't complain so much because they have to stop playing or reading in order to pray or go to church. Growing used to regular extended prayers will probably improve interest in religious activities generally. Besides, they say that the family that prays together stays together, so a regular family rosary can be expected to call down graces that help the family be more loving and understanding toward one another.

**MAKE YOUR PLAN:** It isn't reasonable to expect that your family will suddenly be praying the rosary with perfect attention and joy tomorrow, but you can work up to it. Start slow. For the first month or two, maybe you'll just do one decade, perhaps two or three decades for another month or two. Slowly you can work up to the full five decades every night. Employ tools. Seton Press publishes a lovely book called *The Rosary in Art*. Use the beautiful art to center the family's focus on the mysteries. Let the children handle the book while you pray; it will inspire their interest and pleasure at praying the Rosary.



**GET EVERYONE INVOLVED:** Dad can give notice 15 minutes before the beginning of the rosary each night. Perhaps one of the children can lay out the rosary beads for everyone. An older child can light candles to set a reflective and prayerful atmosphere. Children of age may take turns reading the appropriate Bible passage for each mystery. Everyone from Dad and Mom down can alternate leading the prayers. Before you know it, family prayer time will be a time of peace and contentment sought after by everyone.

## EDUCATION

The academic development of our children stands just behind the salvation of their souls in our priorities, and no wonder, for when we educate them, we are educating them not just for temporal success, but for eternal success as well. Well-trained minds and disciplined consciences are their best hope for prudent, virtuous choices that will lead to fulfilling lives and eternal bliss. So consider where there may be gaps or weaknesses in the homeschool right now. Are the kids getting distracted too easily? Does it seem to be taking forever to get schoolwork finished? Do your children complain because they don't get enough time for recreation? Maybe better time management is a good goal for your family this year.

**ENVISION SUCCESS:** What would better time management do for your family? How would it benefit your students' education and improve the homeschool environment? If school were accomplished with fewer interruptions and distractions, the kids might learn more and get better grades. If school finished sooner because of fewer interruptions and distractions, there would almost certainly be less complaining. If the day ran smoother, you'd probably be

less harried at the end of it, and Dad might have to issue fewer lectures and disciplinary actions, leading to a more peaceful and happier environment overall.

**MAKE YOUR PLAN:** First off, how about no phone calls during school hours? Next, how about laying out breakfast items the night before. Wake up calls? They don't have to be miserable. Maybe have the kids take turns choosing a fun piece of music or song to play as 'get-out-of-bed' music on the family stereo, something to energize everyone and get them excited about getting up.

**GET EVERYONE INVOLVED:** Maybe Dad brings Mom a cup of coffee or tea in bed before he leaves for work. Perhaps after breakfast the oldest sibling places breakfast dishes in a sink full of hot water while one of the younger ones wipes down the table, so that Mom can get the toddlers set up with their activities. How about each child makes sure his work area and books are organized and ready the night before, and you use a sticker chart or wipe board with stars to keep track. It's a race to the top. Whoever does the best at staying organized with his or her workspace gets a special treat on Saturday! Schedule frequent breaks so there is less tendency to self-distraction and overtiring, which leads to poor productivity. In time, the school day will straighten out, and life and education will look much calmer around your house.

## FAMILY

It's often noted that homeschooling families seem quite a bit closer to one another than other families. That's not surprising when you spend all day long together every day. Still, kids are kids and we're all human, so just because we're homeschooling doesn't

mean we're perfect. Perhaps there's been a bit too much quarreling and yelling lately. Maybe the kids are being recalcitrant about doing chores and putting things away. Have there been problems sharing lately? Maybe some disrespect from the teens?

**ENVISION SUCCESS.** What do you see resulting from a change? Perhaps you imagine a quieter household, or at least a household filled with conversation and laughter instead of complaints and whining. Maybe the older kids will be a little more patient with the younger kids. Perhaps a favorite toy will cease being something to fight over.

**MAKE YOUR PLAN:** Why not take a tip from Advent preparations? Most of you are probably familiar with the tradition of the Secret Santa, or building a manger for Our Lord out of the soft straw of charitable acts. Keep it going. How about every month, you institute a new cycle of Hidden Helpers or Fairy Godmothers, or Secret Saints, or whatever you'd like to call the project in your family? Draw names from a hat and challenge each other to be as kind, helpful, and generous as possible. At the end of the month, have a big reveal and some sort of family activity planned like a night out, or a special dinner, a movie night, or game night. Then start it all over again. Competition usually does wonders for motivation, and what better reason to compete than for family happiness. You might be surprised at the results.

This year, make a resolution and see your family grow toward God, wisdom, and love!



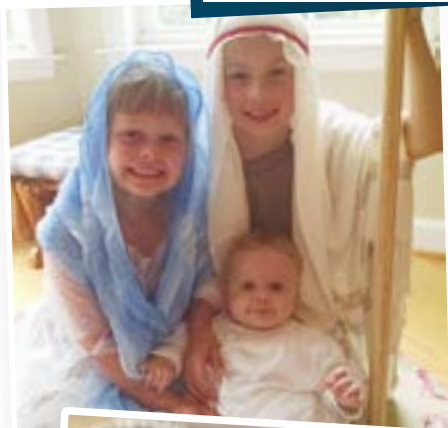
Christine Smitha holds a B.A. in English and Literature from Christendom College. She has taught Literature for nine years, and enjoys dabbling in journalism when she gets a chance. She is currently *Seton Magazine's* Assistant Editor.





# 9 Homeschoolers with a Military Dad. Loving It!

BY ANNE BERQUIST



My family is made up of nine adventurous kids (ages ranging from 17 years to eighteen months), a loving Mom and Dad, 2 guinea pigs, a cat, a dog, and a French lop-eared bunny. To describe the Berquist family, we are all hardcore Catholics, diehard soccer players, committed singers, somewhat unshakable pianists and resolute ballroom dancers.

My Dad is a Lieutenant Colonel in the U.S. Army, and for the past year has been deployed to Iraq. All of us kids have been homeschooled from the beginning, and have thoroughly enjoyed it. As the second oldest, I know that life in the Berquist family can be very exciting, and sometimes very chaotic, especially considering the fact that during school hours all nine of us kids study in the same room! Well, chaotic or not, homeschooling has been a wonderful blessing for all of us.

## Our Mobile, Domestic Church

Homeschooling has offered many possibilities for my family that might not

have been otherwise. First and foremost, homeschooling has made it possible for us to make our home into a domestic church. It has given us a chance to build a solid foundation in our Faith and morals, and has helped us put the two greatest commandments, "Love God with your whole heart, soul, mind and strength," and "Love your neighbor as yourself" at the center of our family life. Homeschooling has encouraged deeper relationships with siblings, and has made us stronger as a family.

A second feature homeschooling has made possible is a flexible schedule; which means more time for prayer, activities, and fieldtrips. Because we are homeschooled we are able to participate in daily Mass, pray together in the morning and evening, and recite the rosary. Our homework can be fitted around these special times and the different activities we have each day. We love to add field trip days to our homeschooling schedule and go to Colonial Williamsburg, Jamestown, Yorktown, or museums, as well as hiking, kayaking/canoeing, and biking.





The third biggest aspect homeschooling has made possible for my family is that when the Army calls us to move, our school transition is smooth. Our family has moved 7 times, and we now live in Williamsburg, Virginia. Moving has been hard for all of us, but I know it has been so much easier than it would have been without homeschooling.

## Nine of Us

There have been several challenges with regard to homeschooling that my family has overcome, but the biggest challenge is probably the fact that there are nine of us. Each kid has a clipboard with a checklist of subjects by time, with the lessons planned out for the whole week. Each child knows what is expected of him or her, and each eventually learns time management.

Every day is different, but a typical day starts with everyone doing a couple subjects before breakfast. On most days, after breakfast we go to daily Mass. When we come home each older child is paired with a younger child to teach that child their schoolwork, while Ma also helps some of the kids. One of the older kids makes lunch for everyone, then comes quiet time for younger children and school with Ma for older children. Dinner and daily activities (soccer, choir practice, piano, scouts...) follow. Actually, I don't think it has ever been that perfect, but having a somewhat solid schedule to work from helps everything flow smoother!

## The Impact of Faith

The impact of faith on our family is tremendous. The center of our faith as Catholics is the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass.

By making the Mass a first priority in our lives, we are making faith the foundation of our lives. We try to go to Mass at least thrice a week, but would not miss going to Mass on our birthdays, patron saints' feast days, Baptismal Days and Anniversaries of each of our Sacraments. Adoration and Reconciliation are important to us once a month. We pray the Rosary daily while traveling, or in the evening, sometimes while folding our eight to ten loads of laundry together. Each morning at breakfast, the life of each saint on his/her feast day is read, as well as the Mass readings if we didn't go to Mass that day. Our morning offering and evening prayers are prayed together. Throughout the day there are spontaneous singing outbursts of sacred hymns and other familiar church music; for example, whenever I start to sing "Dona Nobis Pacem" to myself while doing the dishes, other siblings automatically join in in rounds!


The daily education we receive from Seton is steeped in Catholic tradition and teaching and is a solid academic experience for all of our grade levels. On Sunday mornings most of my siblings take part in the celebration of the Mass. My oldest brother, Martin, serves at the altar. I and four other siblings sing in the children's choir. In the afternoon, my younger sister, Mary, and I sing in the youth

choir. Martin and I help lead small high school groups in discussing our faith. Once a month we have Little Flowers Girls Club and a Marian themed Homeschool Rosary Night. We also volunteer or support many other church activities.

As a family, we love to have recitals and act out skits and plays for each other. This year, my sister Mary Rose was especially inspired and wrote a Christmas Play for our homeschool group. She and I are directing about 30 kids, and it has made Advent come alive! It is beautiful to watch the sincerity and innocence of the children acting out the Nativity story. This will definitely be a favorite homeschooling memory for all of us. Most of our activities are faith-based; when they are not, we have opportunities to be the light of Christ to others and put our faith into practice. All of these things are helping to form our souls so we can realize and accomplish God's mission for each one of us someday.

This Advent, Dad finished his deployment and came home! The first thing we did as a family was to receive the Holy Eucharist at Mass; the true and pure "Thanksgiving;" that one thing on which all of us have centered our lives.






# Why Do My Kids Copy My Vices, & Not My Virtues?

BY JOHN CLARK





When I was a younger parent maybe fifteen years ago, I remember asking Lisa: "Why do the kids seem to get every one of my vices and none of my virtues?"

I honestly don't remember what specifically prompted that question, but it was likely spurred by a night of them getting to bed late instead of getting a good night's sleep, or spending too much time in front of the XBOX instead of coming to the living room for the Rosary, or arguing with each other about something silly instead of trying to get along more charitably.

Perhaps most parents go through some version of this question of lament. Why do they seem to have all my vices and none of my virtues?

But as the years go by, the more ironic—and frankly, embarrassing—that question becomes for me. The question forms what could be termed a personal moral straw man fallacy (the interrogative presumes that I had oodles and oodles of all this virtue in the first place).

But that's not why it's ironic.

As an older parent, as I have watched my children grow up, I have seen the question reversed; or perhaps I could say that I have seen the question answered in a way that I wasn't expecting. Because the truth is that my children—all of my nine children—have virtues that I seem to experience only in shorthand, if not secondhand.

I wish I had the intelligence of Athanasius.

I wish I had the courage of Veronica.

I wish I had the humility of Demetrius.

I wish I had the determination of Tarcisius.

I wish I had the beneficence of Philomena.

I wish I had the cheerfulness of Dominica.

I wish I had the cleverness of Bonaventure.

I wish I had the enthusiasm of Immaculata.

I wish I had the affection for God of Mary Katherine.

As a younger parent, I was proud of my children. I still am. But there comes a moment when pride becomes admiration.

There comes a time when you realize that even though your job as a father is to hold your children's little hands and lead them closer to God—and though you've never let go of those little hands—you suddenly look at your path and realize that it was your children who have been leading you.

There comes a day when you stop hoping that your children will become more like you, and you drop to your knees and desperately pray that you might become more like them. I sometimes ask myself if my kids are tempted to wonder the same thing today that I wondered all those years ago. Why doesn't Dad develop our virtues?

It would be understandable to ask.

Someone once wrote that "the value of marriage is not that adults produce children, but that children produce adults." I think I understand the meaning of those words. I think they mean that two flawed, selfish, and childish people come together and give life to children and give of themselves until they grow up.

But I believe that sacramental marriage is even more wonderful than that. Because in a spiritual sense, the value of marriage is not that children produce adults, but that children produce children. As Jesus taught us, "Truly I tell you, unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven."

And children remind us what virtue is. Our Lord's precept could not be more simple: Become like them.

People often talk about the inability to "look themselves in the mirror" if they commit some moral turpitude. But can I tell you a little secret? There's not a mirror in the world that reflects so deeply and so profoundly upon your soul as the faces of your children. You see, the eyes of your children are windows not only to their souls, but also to your own.

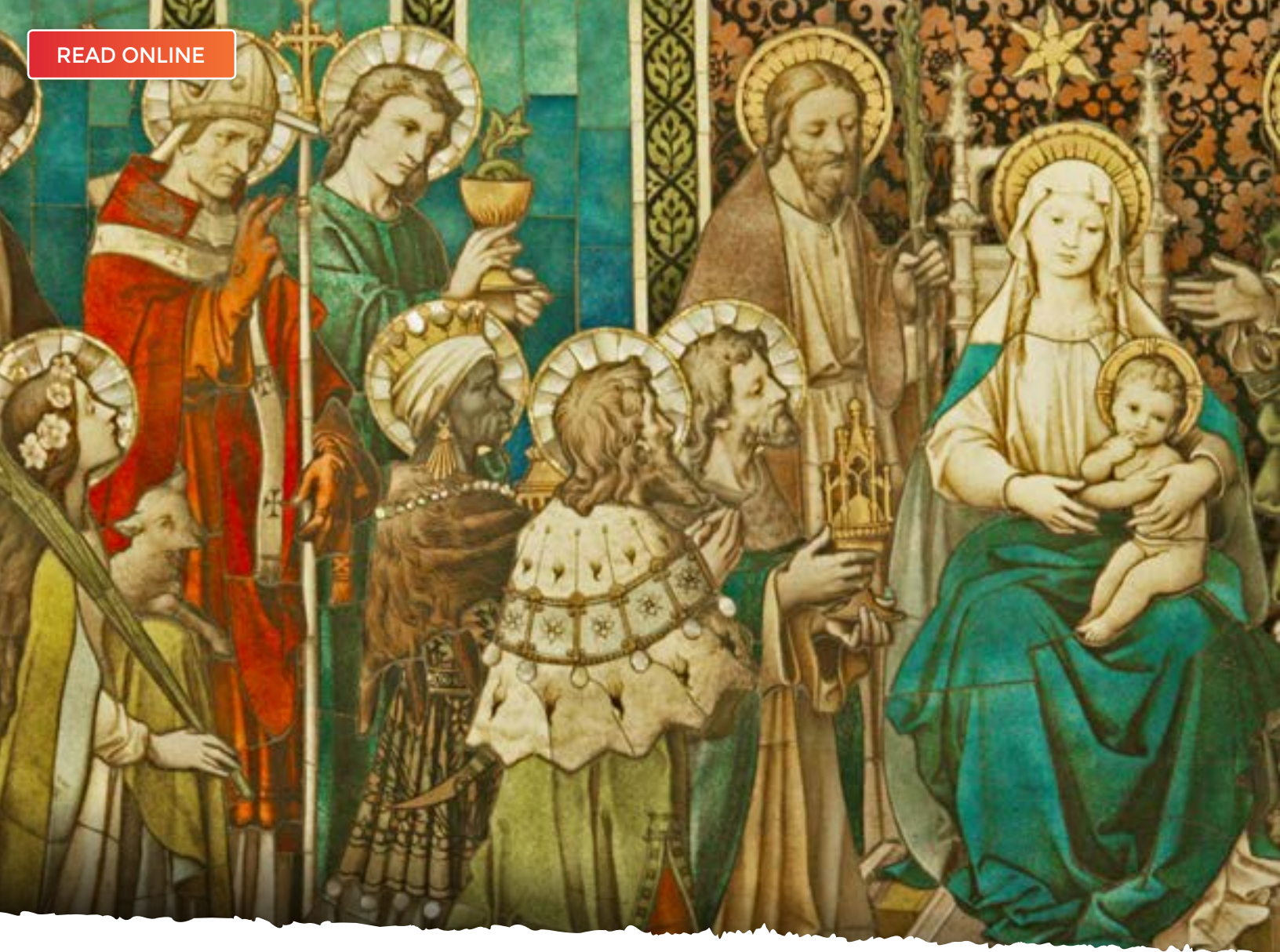
This year, lots of people will make resolutions. Some will last a day. Some will last an hour. But there is a resolution that we parents should all make: spend more time with your children. Become more like a child. Allow yourself to learn, to become virtuous, through your children.

And never forget that they have a lot to teach us.

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



John Clark, a Christendom College graduate, holds a degree in Political Science and Economics. He is a popular writer and speaker at family and homeschooling conferences.



# On the 12th Day of Christmas, My True Love Gave to Me... Himself

BY AMY PAWLUSIAK

The day after Christmas is a bit gloomy. I drive down the street in my subdivision and see myriads of thrown-off Christmas trees lying on driveways, ready to be picked up by the garbage collectors. Many people are already taking down their festive Christmas lights. The songs on the radio, having blasted Christmas music since the day after Thanksgiving, suddenly remember there are other songs to play, and revert back to their regular genres.

The world has moved on, and with Christmas day over, is now enticing me with new items to make the

upcoming holiday festive. New Year's party favors line the shelves, and I know it won't be long until Valentine day cards follow. The world has moved on, but I haven't. I still know there are twelve days of Christmas coming until Epiphany.

The hard part is figuring out how to continue celebrating in a world that no longer celebrates the Christ child, and his amazing birth, but has replaced it with a materialistic idea of Christmas that ignores Him completely.



## It's all Emotion and Stuff

The world sells emotion, between the Hallmark channel movies, the syrupy Christmas carols about "coming home for Christmas" and the idea that Christmas is all about family and presents. Although it's great to have family get together for Christmas, I know that the reason we get together is not about us. As most things in life, the best celebrations are about someone else. We celebrate events like a marriage, a birthday, or a sacrament. We don't celebrate us, we celebrate them, and in the meantime, family comes together and gets to focus on the amazing things God is doing in someone's life.

But because the world wants to forget Jesus, they instead focus on what they can sell, which is the "The Perfect Christmas." And despite our best efforts, we've all bought into the idea that we need an amazing tree, flawless decorations, scrumptious food, and impeccably wrapped gifts for it to be a "Great Christmas." And no matter how many years we see ourselves stress out in order to make this holiday fairy tale come true, we know that by the time we actually get to Christmas, we are left feeling stressed, tired, and worn-out.

The day's greetings may even seem hollow because we are more thankful that we've made it to the finish line than to Christmas.

## We Need 12 Days

In God's great wisdom, He knew our humanity would need more time to take it all in. We would need 12 days to celebrate. Not just a day, or a week, or even 10 days, but 12. Twelve is God's number. It is used 187 times in the Bible. He gave us 12 tribes of Israel and 12 apostles. For him, it's the number of perfection. So, because Jesus is perfect, he gave us 12 days to think about how perfect His coming is. It really is astounding that God would send his only son to us as a baby, to join us in our broken humanity. We can't comprehend this great truth. It makes no sense, but then again, as St. Paul said, "God uses the foolish to

confound the wise." So we stumble into the 12 days tired, exhausted, and needing to grasp the meaning of Christmas. And as I drive through the streets, stop at the store, or go wherever I need to go, I can't help but feel alone in my endeavor to keep Christmas another 12 days.

## Keeping Christmas

I know I need help, so I ask my friends to tell me how they keep the twelve days of Christmas alive in their homes. I get many responses from good Catholic friends who give me great ideas. Some give 12 gifts on the 12 days of Christmas. Others move their wise men a bit closer each day to their nativity set, in preparation for Epiphany. One friend puts a white candle in the middle of her advent wreath and changes the Christmas songs from waiting songs (like "Oh Come Emmanuel") to songs celebrating his arrival (like "Joy to the World").

Finally, on Epiphany, we bless our homes with blessed chalk and write "20 +C+M+B+17" above our thresholds. The letters C, M, and B have two meanings. They are the initials of the traditional names of the three magi: Caspar, Melchior, and Balthazar. They also abbreviate the Latin words *Christus mansionem benedicat*, "May Christ bless the house." The "+" signs represent the cross and 2017 is the year. I love all of these ideas! I've decided I want to use them in my own home this coming year. But it isn't until I have a late night conversation with a good friend who has known me for years that I'm able to put it all into perspective.

## The Church Lights the Way

When I asked my friend this question, he didn't mention the outward signs as most others had. Instead he pointed to the church. "Look at the feast days! We have the feast of St. Stephen, our first martyr on the 26th. The Feast of the Holy Innocents on the 28th, and we celebrate the Holy Family on the 30th. When we go to church on January 1st, it's not for the New Year, it's for the Solemnity of Mary, Mother of God! Finally, we celebrate

Epiphany on January 6th!"

When I think about all these feast days, I realize that I don't have to just "do more," I need to unite with the church more. We need to look at what God did through St. Stephen and all his saints; we need to remember the Holy Innocents, and all who have innocently died for the Faith. We need to look to Mary, our consummate mother, and remember her divine motherhood to Jesus. Finally, when we reflect all that the church is showing us through these feasts, we then look at how God has revealed himself to Man through his son on Epiphany (which means "to reveal" in Greek).

## Outward Signs Still Matter

Our favorite saying in my homeschool group is to keep everything "Simple and Sainly." In this vein, for most busy families, in order to keep the 12 days of Christmas, we may want to try to do the things my friends mentioned above. Move those wise men! Keep up your Christmas lights and tree! Celebrate each day with a small gift or treat.

And finally, bless your house on Epiphany. When we do these things they remind us that we are part of His church, and that though the world has moved on, we are still celebrating with awe and wonder what God gave us on Christmas... hope through his Son! Like lights along a pathway into a home, the church shows us how to celebrate Christmas. First by remembering that Christ came to our broken earth as a baby, then through the selfless examples of the saints and holy innocents, and finally through the love of His mother.

Only after we have walked the pathway of these days can we have the epiphany of being one day welcomed into God's Heavenly home.



Amy Pawlusiak lives in Florida raising and homeschooling her 5 very active children, from high school to preschool. She has a masters in Education from Wayne State University in Detroit, and worked for Catholic talk-show host and writer Teresa Tomeo before devoting herself to homeschooling.



# MIXED TRADITIONS

## Venezuelan Hallacas in a Spanish Christmas

**BY CLAIRE AMAYA-PARRA**

Finalist of the 2016 'Basket of Cheer' Essay Category





More than just a plain old corn tamal, my typical Christmas meal is a union of various international elements originating in South America, Europe and Africa. It contains the corn, the primary source of nutrition for the indigenous people of Venezuela. This is accompanied by the *guiso*, a stew containing various meats and vegetables, many of which are mass produced in Europe. Finally, it is wrapped in plantain leaves, brought by African slaves, who helped work the Venezuelan fields and bring them to prosperity.

When you've lived in three countries, it can sometimes be difficult to have a fixed Christmas tradition, since every country has different Christmas meals, music, services and yes, presents. This year, I'm excited to be spending my first Christmas in Spain, and I have already listened to various Spanish *Villancicos* and tasted *Turron* (a delicious Spanish sweet like nougat) and *Pastas* (really good cookies). I moved to Spain two months ago, after spending twelve years in London enjoying turkey, Christmas crackers and good old Christmas carols (but not enjoying Brussels sprouts). However, as I grew up, my parents took care to also celebrate our Venezuelan background, the hot and tropical South American country where every member of my family was born and where I was lucky enough to spend the first four years of my life. Every Christmas, we gather together to prepare *hallacas*, a corn tamal whose name means "mixed things" in indigenous. Like many other Venezuelan families, my family prepares this typical dish, which infuses the entities that made my country including Native Americans, Spaniards and Africans.

The first primary ingredient in an *hallaca* is the corn. A plant that grows in abundance in my country, the corn is pressed and ground coarsely to make flour mixed with water and a pinch of salt. Corn is the ingredient that represents the Native Americans of Venezuela, whose daily meals were almost all made up of corn. The corn is made into a thick yellow paste (coloured with annatto seeds), which is to be filled with a *guiso* (a stew). Normally, around 40 *hallacas* (depending on family size) are prepared to last until January for everyone. Even frozen *hallacas* conserves their good taste.

The next important part of the *hallaca* is the *guiso*. The *guiso* mixes all the European ingredients brought from those who came to colonize Venezuela. It contains Mediterranean olives and raisins, meat brought by the colonial captains that came from Spain, and even Arabic

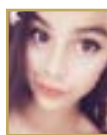


capers and almonds. However, truly, no *guiso* is the same; each family makes it how they like it best, adding pork, boiled eggs, chickpeas, peppers, etc. Preparing the *guiso* and *hallacas* can take an entire day, and my family normally prepares them after breakfast to enjoy *hallacas* for dinner!

The most important part of the *hallaca* is the plantain leaves. Plantain leaves represent the African slaves who, along with their music and customs, brought their plantains and plantain leaves to Venezuela. The plantain leaves are laid out, and the corn paste stretched on top into a circular shape. Then a spoonful of *guiso* is put on top, and the plantain leaves are folded up to make a small parcel tied up with string.

Normally, the whole family participates in preparing the *hallacas*; when I went to Venezuela for Christmas, every member of the family would have a specific role in the preparation, such as making the corn paste, making the *guiso*, wrapping up the *hallacas*, etc.

*Hallacas* not only bring together the richness of Venezuelan heritage, but they also unite the nation's families together like my own, and for the families celebrating Christmas abroad, the hope that we will one day come back to make Venezuela prosper once more.



**CLAIRE AMAYA-PARRA** I am 16 years old and 100% Latina and British. I am currently living in Madrid practicing my Spanish and enjoying Jamon iberico. I love musical theatre and spend my time singing, acting, and dancing. I also love travelling and meeting different cultures and have become an enthusiastic fan of all things Greek; where I've been going for the past two years, enjoying the divine "gyros" (I'm also a food fan if you haven't noticed). Once I graduate I hope to cross the pond and do a double major in Classics and Art.

See the rest of the categories, finalists and honorable mentions on  
[bayleybulletin.com/contests](http://bayleybulletin.com/contests)





# Celebrating a Christian Christmas

DOM ALBAN BAKER

As we are all too aware, the world, especially the retail world, begins to celebrate Christmas once Thanksgiving is over, and sometimes even earlier. Somehow, at least in the United States, the Santa Claus version of Christmas has slowly but pervasively smothered the liturgical celebration that commemorates the birth of Christ. If we are to be firm in celebrating Christmas as the Church intends us to, a celebration that will be the most profitable to us spiritually and culturally, we must know why we as Catholics have the customs we do, which requires a careful look at history and the liturgy.

A simple contrast of the two versions of Christmas, the Santa Claus and the truly Christian, is that the one works up to Christmas in anticipation of material gifts, while the other prepares for Christmas in the hope of spiritual blessings. Since the object of the former is the acquisition of material things, it is not surprising that once they are possessed, the reason for celebrating ends; after all, the point is not Santa, but what he leaves behind. In our liturgical celebrations, we are waiting for Christ, and once He is born, we do not lose enthusiasm, but grow in it. We delight



that God has become man and share that joy with one another, both in church and at our homes. In short, we can say that the world's Christmas is about things, the true Christmas about God. When human celebrations center on things, they lack character and color; when centered on the divine, they breed further celebration and joy.

## Four Weeks of Preparation

In the Church, to rightly mark the birth of Christ, we have a four week period of preparation in which we pray, do penance, and retire from the world. This period imitates the final month of pregnancy of Our Lady, who retreated from Nazareth social life in order to protect the divine child in her womb. In union with her, we contemplate the prophecies of the Old Testament about her Son: a virgin shall conceive and bear a son (Isaiah 7); the Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him (Isaiah 11); Bethlehem shall be the place of his birth (Micah 5); kings shall come from afar to worship him (Psalm 71/72). And in union with her, we focus our attention on that child, earnestly preparing for his birth by cleansing our hearts.

Advent culminates in first Vespers of Christmas on December 24. We then celebrate the birth of our Savior from the evening of December 24 until his Baptism in the Jordan on January 13. In the Latin Church, this tradition dates back to the 400's, when the date for Christmas was fixed as December 25. Keeping the Epiphany on January 6 is much more ancient, and in the West, there is a separate feast for the Baptism a week later. These feasts were always celebrated on their dates, and not on Sundays as they are now in the reformed calendar. This allowed for a certain solemnity and dignity to pervade the Christmas season, since the Church's celebrations overrode the secular calendar. The Baptism is part of the extended Christmas celebration because it was the second Epiphany; in the first one (to the kings) he appeared to the pagan world, while in the second one (the Baptism) he appeared to his own people, the Jews, with the Father and Holy Spirit giving testimony to his divinity. During this three week period, the other significant feasts are

St. Stephen, St. John and the Holy Innocents in the octave of Christmas and January 1 (which commemorates Jesus' circumcision and Mary's divine maternity).

## Keeping the Christmas Spirit

There is even some reason to say that Christmas continues until February 2. The Marian antiphon is *Alma Redemptoris Mater* from Christmas until the Purification/Presentation, and first Vespers of the latter feast is taken from January 1, indicating it is a sort of elongation of the Christmas mysteries. Historically, the Presentation in the Temple and Mary's Purification according to Jewish law marked a certain end to significant events in Jesus' infancy; we read no more of Jesus' childhood until he is twelve years old. Moreover, in the Jewish mind, the ritual to 'purify' a mother of her uncleanness in giving birth closed the legal implications of a childbirth and so would have been important in the lives of the faithful Jews that Joseph and Mary were. So there is sufficient reason to continue to keep the spirit of Christmas at home during the weeks from January 13 to February 2, even if the Church's liturgy no longer has that emphasis.

In summary, then, the Church asks us to prepare for the annual commemoration of Jesus' earthly birth with four weeks of prayer, penance, and deliberate withdrawal from worldly things. Then we celebrate His nativity for three weeks, marked by his birth in Bethlehem, his circumcision and naming eight days later, his adoration by the three kings, and then his baptism in the Jordan River as an adult. This is in contrast to the worldly month long preparation in securing gifts and then the exchange of them on or around Christmas Day, and the abrupt end to the season on December 26 or soon afterward.

## Three Weeks of Christmas

Given these historical and liturgical facts, how do we, as persons in the world but not of the world, align our wills and lives to

the Church's wisdom and derive spiritual benefit from her manner of celebrating Christmas? Since Advent is now past, we should focus on celebrating Christmas for three weeks. This requires a lot more energy than it might seem; experience shows that the six weeks of Lent are actually easier to keep than the seven weeks of Easter. For whatever reason, we have great difficulty rejoicing in good things for a prolonged period of time. And yet the Church calls us to make the effort—to delight in the story of Christ's birth and then the visit of the Magi, and lastly His Baptism. To persevere in these things, we need to have some connection to the liturgy, whether it is in going to Mass more often or in attending Vespers at a local monastery or convent or in reading the Scripture for the day as a family. We cannot expect to celebrate with perseverance unless we lean on the Church's ingenuity and not our own. Perhaps the best idea is to consider going to Mass on the significant feast days during the week. Since the Latin Church as a whole has chosen to observe Epiphany and the Baptism on Sundays instead of their historical days, why not take the kids to Mass on January 6 and 13 to impress upon them the importance of such days? With diligence, one can usually find a monastery or convent which still celebrates those feasts on the traditional days, and if attending Mass is augmented by a festive meal or games or a day off from school, the children will remember that those days are special and these latter things can be done even when we cannot attend Mass as we might wish.

Keeping the Christian Christmas in the face of the smothering Santa Claus version is a tremendous challenge, but one we should be willing to tackle! To firmly yet pleasantly resist our retail and secular 'culture' is the only way we will be able to pass on our faith in a lasting way. Since Vatican II, the Church has called upon families to do this, rather than relying upon clergy and religious to do so. It behooves us to respond to this calling, for it means not only being faithful to our duties as Catholics, but also opening ourselves to rich spiritual benefits



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.

# A Resolution: Recognize the Sacrifice

BY CHRISTOPHER SMITH

Years ago when I was but a tiny, pale eighth grader, my parents decided that it would be best for me to attend a boarding school for my high school years. I fought this with every fiber of my being and held resentment in my heart for a period of time. After all, I would not be able to watch television whenever I wanted, go to the movies with my friends, or drink cases of Mountain Dew until my teeth hurt. I viewed what they were doing as a punishment for which I would never forgive them. Fortunately, eighth graders mature into functioning adults (generally), and I later came to realize that what my parents did for me was not only the best thing that ever happened to me, but an intense sacrifice which I only fully understood having children of my own.

I think many homeschooled students can feel this way sometimes. After all, homeschooling takes a maturity and a

discipline not necessarily required of students at brick and mortar schools, and some students feel this as an undue burden. When we are young, there is a tendency to focus only on our own problems and believe that everything is working against us. I assure you, this is not the case.

In this New Year, every student should take the time to reflect on his or her schooling situation and recognize the sacrifice parents are making by choosing homeschooling. I can guarantee that it would be easier and more economical for your parents to ship every student off to public school and let the chips fall where they may. But your parents have chosen to take a harder path for the sake of your formation as a total person, to protect and develop your body and soul as Christians. This is not a popular decision in the modern world, and many families have felt persecution from family and friends for

choosing the narrow path. But it is a choice made out of love.

So the next time you are feeling frustrated and gazing longingly towards the "greener grass" of attending a brick and mortar school, remember your parents. Hopefully by doing this, you will avoid unnecessary conflict with your family, who have given up a great deal for you to have this educational opportunity. I know that every family is different and we all have our struggles. We are all in this together, but your parents will always be your greatest advocates and strongest support. Take the time to acknowledge that fact to them and to yourself. Your life will be richer for it.



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.

## SPRING QUARTER STORY CONTEST

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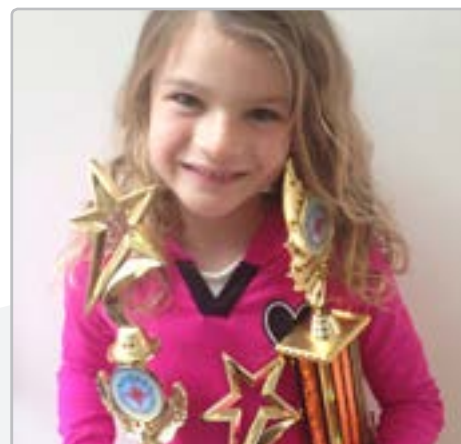
SHARING SUCCESS WITH THE SETON COMMUNITY



**Carlo** | I earned a medal at the U.S. Fencing Junior Olympics Under 17 Saber Category, Feb 2016. My three teammates also placed, a great day for our fencing club, coach, & home state of New Jersey.



**Arcelio, Jonathan, Faustine, Angeli, Arold De Los Reyes** | Won 3rd Place in Qatar National Robot Olympiad, hosted by the College of the North Atlantic Qatar.



**Alexandra** | For the 2015/2016 school year, I won a Second Place trophy for the annual speaking contest at the Raritan Valley Chinese School in New Jersey.

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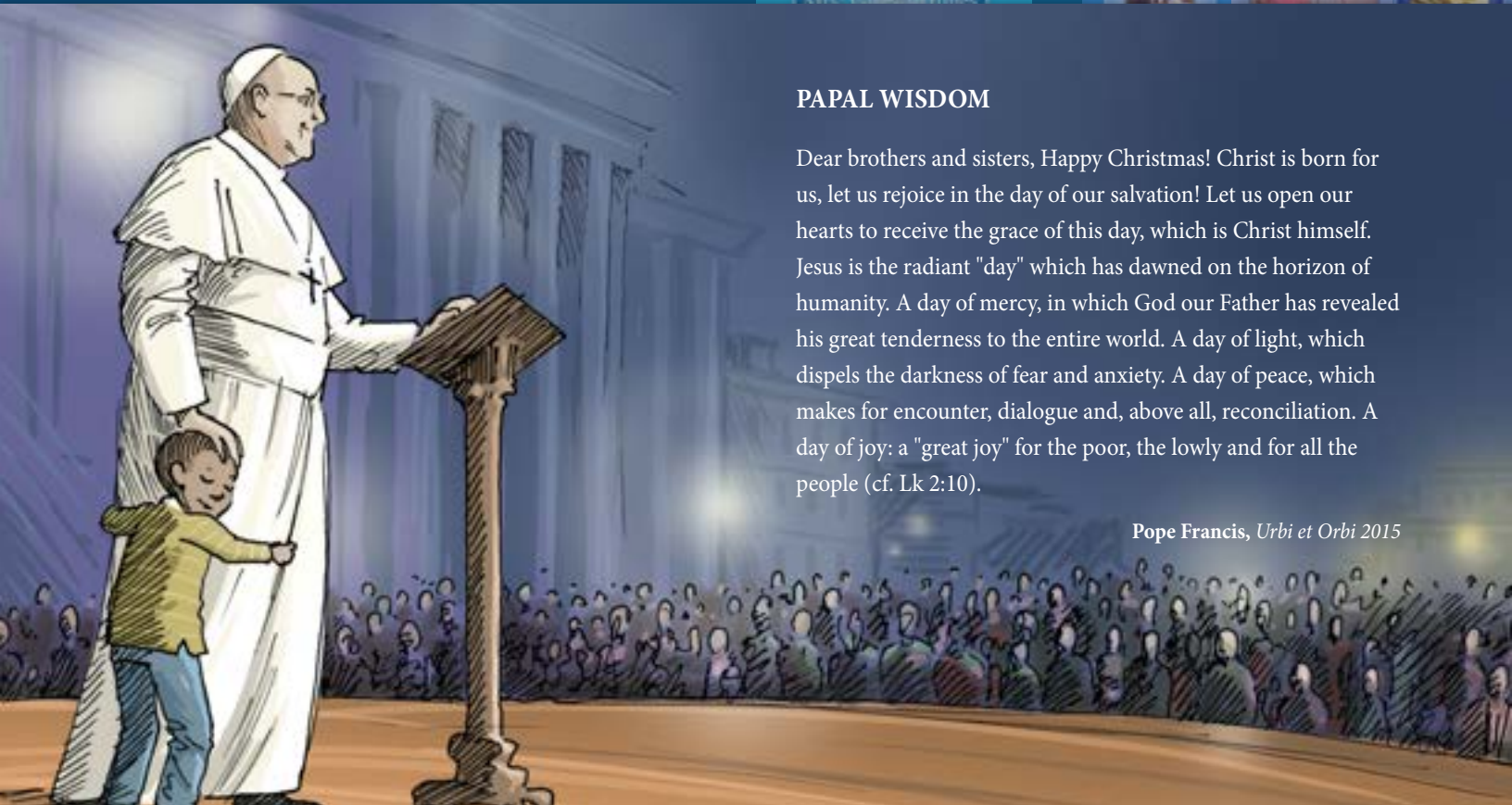
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### PAPAL WISDOM

Dear brothers and sisters, Happy Christmas! Christ is born for us, let us rejoice in the day of our salvation! Let us open our hearts to receive the grace of this day, which is Christ himself. Jesus is the radiant "day" which has dawned on the horizon of humanity. A day of mercy, in which God our Father has revealed his great tenderness to the entire world. A day of light, which dispels the darkness of fear and anxiety. A day of peace, which makes for encounter, dialogue and, above all, reconciliation. A day of joy: a "great joy" for the poor, the lowly and for all the people (cf. Lk 2:10).

Pope Francis, *Urbi et Orbi* 2015



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