

Seton MAGAZINE

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Letter from the Editor

Some years, I look forward to Lent with eagerness and a great readiness to work. Other years, I'm so weary by Lent's arrival that the thought of pushing myself to do anything above and beyond fills me with dread. Or the need to cry. I won't tell you which it is this year, but I will say that the articles in this March issue are a shot in the arm.

Our Feature Family this month remind us to thank God for the little crosses we carry, while John Clark's article reminds us that God's love is more powerful than our greatest weaknesses. In her lead, Dr. Clark gives us hope by describing the struggles of one of the Church's greatest saints, Ignatius of Loyola. Students who are having a hard time can draw particular inspiration from him, a saint who was not a great student.

Seton mom Cheryl Hernandez shares 3 suggestions that might make it easier for you and your family to pray together this Lent, and beyond. The family that prays together is often open to greater blessings, and the chance of thriving together.

Finally, Bob Wiesner and Father Alban Baker give us some beautiful prayers to inspire and encourage us as we make the journey from Ash Wednesday to Easter Sunday. Lent might be a time of penance, but it should surely be a time of great interior joy.

May it be a peaceful, fruitful, holy season for you and yours!

God bless you,

Christine Smitha



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St. Ignatius Loyola

The Patron Saint of Struggling Students

BY DR. MARY KAY CLARK

St. Ignatius Loyola, the founder of the Jesuits, has been long regarded by many Catholics as an intellectual powerhouse. However, St. Ignatius should be recognized as the patron saint of students who struggle with their studies.

St. Ignatius' father was a soldier in the Spanish army, and when Ignatius was old enough to fight in his teens, he became a soldier like his father despite his devoutly Catholic mother's objections. When only thirty years old, Ignatius' left leg was seriously wounded by a cannon ball in battle. Desperate to distract his mind from the terrible pain, Ignatius asked a nurse to bring him a book to read. She brought him two, and her book choices would be an instrument to change the world. They were *The Life of Our Savior* and *Lives of the Saints*.

These two books changed the course of Ignatius' life. As he read about Jesus and the saints, he compared his life as a Spanish soldier with the lives of saints who lived for, suffered for, and died for Jesus—not to attain honors in the military, but to attain eternal life.

Ignatius decided to give up soldiering and instead to teach others about Jesus and the saints. Since he no longer had any income, he begged daily to support himself and others in need.

As Ignatius begged on the streets, he taught people about Jesus and how they could follow Jesus. When faced with questions, however, Ignatius realized how ignorant he was about the Catholic Faith. With money from begging, at the age of 30, he enrolled in a Catholic university.

University classes proved difficult for Ignatius, who lacked study skills. The students, some of whom were half his age, teased him. The professors noted his slowness in learning, and told him that his ongoing begging made his academic life even harder.

Sometimes Ignatius was criticized by

university leaders for promoting the Faith while dressed in very poor clothes which were given to him by begging. He was also criticized because he would spend so much time at the local hospital helping the sick and the dying, and on the streets begging for the poor.

Nevertheless, Ignatius trusted that God would give him direction as to whom he should meet, where he should go, what he should teach, and what he should learn. He developed his own thirty-day program of Spiritual Exercises, of Bible readings, prayers, reflections, and good works for the sick and the poor. He was not discouraged by pain, hunger, sickness, or criticism. He did not give up begging for the poor, in spite of the constant difficulties of learning his lessons.

Eventually, after some years and various difficulties, Ignatius and his followers were ordained to the priesthood. They lived in poverty, begging for clothes and food for themselves and for the poor. They also worked among the sick in the hospitals. Seeing the good they were doing, the pope decided that Ignatius and his followers should be officially formed as a community, changing their name from The Company of Jesus to Jesuits.

St. Ignatius and his followers and successors went on to evangelize all around the world. In many ways, their evangelization efforts have never been surpassed to this day.

Home schooling families can see St. Ignatius of Loyola as a patron. We home schooling parents and grandparents must be patient with the sufferings of discouragement or of learning difficulties in our children and grandchildren. We must help our children to understand that they can use their daily learning difficulties as a way of learning to trust in Jesus and to grow in our Catholic Faith. Like St. Ignatius, we can cheerfully offer our learning challenges



to Jesus, and grow in humility along the way.

St. Ignatius should inspire home schooling parents to accept the fact that not all students learn at the same rate. Lesson plans are written as guidelines and suggestions—not as commandments. Parents need to emphasize to their children the importance of continuing and not giving up. The fact that Saint Ignatius was willing to enter college at age thirty should help parents and students to realize that success is not related to learning certain topics at certain ages.

St. Ignatius of Loyola can inspire our children to realize that God will provide the help needed to be successful in their studies, but in His time frame. St. Ignatius should inspire students to understand that it is not important how much time it takes to learn, but rather that, with prayer, we must continue to try. *St. Ignatius, pray for us.*



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

Should I stay by my son's side for his math lessons?

How much you need to be by your son's side depends on his needs. Some young students struggle with their reading and may need help understanding the directions or questions in the math book. Once you think he understands the concept, have him do several problems on his own, and then check his work later. Dad or an older sibling also might be able to oversee his math.

In addition to math, reading and English are important subjects to oversee closely. With these subjects, it is important for children to learn early concepts well in order to be successful with future work.

We enrolled our daughter in Seton's 8th grade, but she is struggling with everything.

Seton provides many resources for struggling students. Counselors skilled in every subject are available by phone or email Monday through Friday from 9 to 5 Eastern time. We also have many online tutorial videos in various subjects. Seton Educational Media also sell supplemental materials that can be helpful.

For students who need more help than parents can give, we recommend finding a local tutor if possible. (Although our phone counselors can help somewhat, they are not a replacement for an actual tutor working with your student on a regular basis.) If a local tutor is not possible, there are online tutoring services as well. Sometimes a problem in math or English can be resolved within

a few sessions of basic explanation, so you might not incur a large expense.

Although students sometimes struggle in many subjects, the main problem areas are usually math and English. A student struggling in 8th grade math and English can drop down to 7th grade math and English while still overall remaining in 8th grade. In fact, the way 7th and 8th grade English are structured, it is easily possible to work through 7th grade English and then go into the second semester of 8th grade English. For more information about changing course levels, please contact one of our counselors.

Remember, you don't have to finish a grade level in exactly 36 weeks. You can take longer and you really should take longer if that is necessary for the student to learn. With high school right around the corner, 8th grade is really an important time of preparation for more in-depth learning to come.

How can I help my older son in high school with his algebra?

Sometimes an older sibling can help. If two students take the same courses together, they can help each other. Be flexible with the scheduling of high school courses. If your husband or a relative is not available, consider paying a nearby college student to help once or twice a week.

Ask at your parish for a retired or current math teacher who might like to make extra money by tutoring. If so, try to have two students take the same course together. This is also practical for foreign language courses.

We advise you to have tutors come

to your house so you can observe what is happening.

How can I manage all the classes for three children?

If two of the children can take the same class or classes together, try that. Just because a child is a certain age does not mean he needs to be in a certain grade. For example, a child who struggles with math likely will do better being in a lower level book with a younger student.

Another idea is simply to put two children together in the same grade level, even if the older student could handle higher level courses. If the older student becomes bored with a course, such as spelling, assign him to be a "teacher's assistant" and tutor his younger sibling.

Many families have high school students take the same classes together, especially in math, science, and a foreign language.

My son is in 9th grade and is looking forward to accessing help online.

Our 9th grade English lesson plans are now available online. There are several tutoring videos included in the course. The 11th grade and 12th grade English classes will be up soon, followed by the Literature courses. Emails will be sent to students when the courses go up online.

All students enrolled in any of the high school English courses have access to online video Composition lessons, which were made by an English professor from Christendom College.



Interactive Math CD-ROMS

They are like having a personal tutor skilled in Saxon Math and are very easy to use. The student simply puts the CD-ROM in the computer and selects the lesson he has scheduled for the day. The lessons are taught using a "whiteboard" with the teacher's voice-over.

Every lesson in each Saxon Math book is covered. The **D.I.V.E. Lessons** are 10-20 minutes long and use representative problems illustrating concepts.

The **Saxon Teacher** lessons are 20-30 minutes long and use actual problems from the textbook. Both run on Macintosh and Windows operating systems.

D.I.V.E. Into Math CD's \$50.00

The Saxon Teacher CD's \$80.00

"I often recommend Saxon Teacher and D.I.V.E. into Math because they are such dynamic products. They integrate both sight and sound into the learning process, offering more to every student and specifically helping audio learners. These interactive videos focus the child on the process involved in each chapter."

Don Valaike, Seton Home Study School
Science/Math Counselor

www.setonbooks.com

How do I grade the paragraphs my son is writing for an at-home grade?

The lesson plans for the English courses give specific directions for the student and the parent. Read over the lesson plans and make sure your son follows the directions. Basically, you are looking at the topic sentence and making sure the middle sentences rationally follow the topic sentence according to the instructions, and do not go "off topic." The directions usually indicate

the middle sentences should follow logically in time, or in location, or in importance.

My 6th & 8th graders are doing schoolwork from 9 to 4 every day. Is this normal? It seems too long.

From surveys which Seton has done of homeschoolers, we find that the "sweet spot" for the length of the homeschooling day is about 6 hours. Families who take about that time doing school work seem to be the most successful. Much less than 6 hours may be too little to learn all the concepts, and much more than 6 hours may result in student and parent burnout. If you are taking an hour for lunch, then a 9 to 4 day would be six hours of study, so your time is about right.

Of course, the optimal time can vary from student to student and from grade level to grade level. You need to find what works for your family and for each child. If your students seem to take a very long time to do assignments that should be quick, you need to determine whether the issue is a learning problem or simply lack of motivation.

You can try an experiment to determine this. In the morning, tell the children that if everyone finishes their day's work by a certain time—a time somewhat shorter than their usual work day—then you will take them on a fun outing. If your children finish in record time, then you know they haven't been applying themselves other days. But if they struggle to finish on time, then you know there may be an underlying academic problem.

Regarding study time, it doesn't have to be all in one daily block. You can split it up in any way that works for your family. For example, many families schedule reading time in the evening, or set aside a block of time on Saturday to do one course. Experiment, and keep doing whatever works.



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*.



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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UNIVERSITY**



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COLLEGE**
THAT IN ALL THINGS GOD MAY BE GLORIFIED



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**FRANCISCAN UNIVERSITY
OF STEUBENVILLE**



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CATHOLIC UNIVERSITY**



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COLLEGE**



**UNIVERSITY
OF DALLAS**



**UNIVERSITY
ST. THOMAS
HOUSTON**



**WALSH
UNIVERSITY**
A Catholic University of Distinction



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Catholic College**
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setonhome.org/colleges



The Seton Guidance Department

Seton's Guidance & Records Department began with the founding of Seton and the creation of the very first student file. Since then, the department has only grown in size and scope of services to assist Seton's students and alumni.



guidance@setonhome.org



540-636-2238

How We Help You

The Guidance and Records department provides many services. Let's start with Guidance.

Every high school students' enrollment documents and file come through this office with each registration for a new series of classes. Before signing off on an enrollment, a guidance counselor reviews a student's course load, transcript, and potential academic trajectory to clear the way ahead of any roadblocks to graduation and also to make sure a course load is appropriate. On many occasions, a student or parent will call us just to make sure the student is selecting the right courses before enrolling. If you or your high school student has not done this yet, we strongly encourage you to do so soon.

Secondarily, the Guidance Office offers straight-forward advice regarding college and career preparation. This includes everything from recommendations about academic preparations to brainstorming sessions with parents about possibilities to move forward in a trade or career vis a vis the current environment in the job market.

When it comes to college applications, Seton's Guidance & Records Department also offers recommendation letters and official transcripts for graduating students. All other official documentation, such as proof of enrollment letters and records release requests, can be processed through the records department by the registrar.

We're in Your Corner.

The philosophy of the Guidance & Records Department is simple: to go to bat for every Seton student, every time.

Many students and parents feel a bit of trepidation in contacting Seton for a transcript or letter of recommendation. This is certainly understandable, because the process of applying for college is a harrying one, with a result that has life-long consequences.

The Guidance Department seeks to make its part in the process as smooth and pleasant as possible by being responsive, communicative, and thorough with regard to these requests. Moreover, Seton's Guidance office communicates directly

with a college admissions office on behalf of a student when necessary to clear up the occasional question.

Making College Entry Easier

A recent example of such a scenario comes to mind. The Guidance Department was contacted by a Seton family asking for assistance in obtaining admission to the Georgia university of their choice. Seton's Health class (Nutrition), they said, did not meet the science requirement for the university, despite the subject, under a different class title, being on a list of acceptable courses.

Seton's Guidance office contacted the University's representative, pleading the case of the family and clarifying the scope and sequence of Seton's course, arguing that it satisfied the Georgia requirement. Within 24 hours, the University contacted Seton and the family to let them know that the Nutrition course had been accepted and the student had received admission to the university.

Our Personal Touch

Seton's Guidance & Records Department is notable for the personal touch of all the individuals working in the department. Combined with the consummate professionalism of each individual in the department, this level of care is unsurpassed. You can be sure that your guidance needs will be more than met by Seton Home Study School's Guidance & Records Department.

Plans for the Future

One of our goals for the future is to set up a section online for our department. This page will more clearly detail the department's available services, and how students and families can obtain them. Additionally, a long term goal will be to create an application that will assist students in building their own academic and personal portfolio, which will help them in whichever path in life they choose.



Nicholas Marmalejo

SETON ACCREDITATION & GUIDANCE
& RECORDS DEPARTMENTS

Nicholas hails from the South Side of Chicago and currently resides in the Shenandoah Valley on a farmette with his wife Clare and their 3 rambunctious children. Nick majored in history at Christendom College after studying

under Dr. Carroll. He graduated in 2001 and later attended Shenandoah University to obtain his teaching certification for the state of Virginia. Nick's favorite historical subjects include the Spanish Reconquista, Church and US history.

At Seton, Nick oversees the school's online chess club, fields some history calls, and currently directs Seton's Accreditation and Guidance and Records Departments. Other interests of his include chess, hockey, martial arts, Jeeps, restoring old hand tools, and woodworking. In the coming years, Nick plans to obtain his Master's Degree in Education and build a vintage hand-hewn log cabin onto his house.

The First Homeschooler Scholarship

"I am a senior in Seton this year. I would like to say thank you very much for writing a recommendation letter on my behalf for a scholarship I applied for at the community college that I plan to attend this fall. I recently found out that I was selected to be one of the recipients of that scholarship! The scholarship is worth four thousand dollars and it is the largest scholarship that the college awards. They said that I am the first homeschooler to be awarded this scholarship! Thank you again!"

- Seton Student

Stellar Academics

"I successfully applied for both Rutgers and Fordham...I appreciate everything you've done for me and all the help; I have been accepted by Rutgers already! Apparently my academics and my teacher recommendations were stellar so that their decision was quicker. I feel so proud and happy. Thanks again and God Bless you and all those at Seton!"

- Seton Student

Expediting the Reference

"I cannot thank you enough for expediting the reference yesterday! I have received confirmation that Wheaton College received the form yesterday. I just sent in my application, most likely the last that I will be completing. I am so happy to be finished with all the college applications!"

- Seton Student

Matching Scholarships

We are so thankful to all of you at Seton for your efficient and timely providing of recommendations and transcripts. The twins earned significant scholarship offers--this is before honors college and Virginia private college tuition assistance grant. It is awesome that Marymount offered the twins the Catholic high school scholarship because they are enrolled in Seton!

The twins will probably also use the Marymount offer to apply for the matching scholarship at Christendom! Thank's again for your advice and support and timely responses. Blessings!

- Seton Parents



No Regrets: Homeschooling for Medical Reasons

BY JUANITA PFAFF

We were preparing to send our oldest daughter to kindergarten at the school just over the hill from our house, but days before school started, we were at a doctor's appointment for our son, Jude, who had been through quite an ordeal due to the complications of his blood disorder, severe chronic neutropenia.



We asked the pediatrician his thoughts about sending our daughter to school and how it might affect Jude, since the neutropenia makes him severely immunocompromised and any germs that Ashlee might bring home from school would be a danger to Jude. He jokingly said, "Kindergarten is overrated!" We laughed and greatly appreciated him being able to make light of the situation, but then he reiterated that it would put Jude at much higher risk of dangerous illness if we sent the girls to school.

An Incredible Blessing

Homeschooling had always been a possibility in the back of my mind. I worked from home and was already staying home with the children, but I wasn't sure I could handle educating them. Catholic school wasn't an option for us financially and we actually live within walking distance of the top elementary school in the city. However, because of his neutropenia, Jude does not have enough of the white blood cells called neutrophils that the body uses to fight bacteria. So even if he had a common cold caused by a virus, if it turned into an ear infection or if the fever lingered too long, or if even a scratch got infected, he ended up in

the ICU on IV antibiotics and had to receive extensive medical care. During the first few months after Jude's diagnosis, we were in the hospital with him about every 3-4 weeks and most often it was because he got a cold from his sisters.

Being in the hospital with a child is hard enough, but then to manage two other children outside the hospital is an added challenge. Homeschooling was, and still is, an incredible blessing for us, especially in this unique situation. If we were in the public-school system, figuring out who would take the kids to school, pick them up, and be home with them in the evening would have been much more difficult and taxing on us and on those who helped us make it through these difficult times. Being a homeschooling family allowed us to put school on hold during those times we were in the hospital and our son and our daughters were at grandma's house. The girls were able to enjoy time with their grandparents without worrying about their brother because they were surrounded by family. I didn't have to worry about school because I knew we could adjust and pick up where we left off when we got home. But in dealing with a serious medical issue for our child, I think the best part was that since we

were keeping the older girls home, we were able to protect our son from illness as much as possible.

Working within the Bubble

As time went on, we learned how to manage Jude's neutropenia with simple measures that really went a long way, like hydration and washing hands constantly, but we have to take some extreme precautions to protect him, as well. It feels like living in a bubble sometimes. We make infrequent, short outings when necessary or if we are getting cabin fever, but even then, Jude wears gloves and a mask in public and his sisters gladly join him with a mask so that he doesn't feel alone.

We are learning how to do field trips in the safest way possible and we recently even went to the pumpkin patch wearing gloves and masks. We focus on recreating at home instead of afield, having purchased a swing set for the backyard and cleared out lots of room to play. Occasionally, we even have to watch Sunday Mass on TV because in the height of flu season, it is safest for us not to be surrounded by large crowds in an enclosed space. Thanks be to God, it has been three years since Jude's diagnosis and he is now 4 years old.

Blessed Academically

Though we chose homeschooling for medical reasons, we have been so

blessed by it academically because both girls have been able to move at their own pace and we can always adjust as needed. We chose Seton upon recommendation of other homeschoolers in our parish and also because of the support we received when we first called for information.

As we have worked through the books together, I realize that, above all, the influence of the faith on every page in every book for every subject has been astounding. Anyone with a gravely ill child knows how those circumstances can really test your faith. As a mother, I need help every day to trust God and to give my worries and struggles to him. As we begin our day with prayer, we give our family to God. Ashlee and Isa pray for their brother daily, to be healthy and strong.

Just having this time together is such a blessing to me because I have faced the stark reality that our children are only lent to us for a time, and we never know how short that time may actually be. Too many times, I wasn't sure if Jude would make it through an illness because his little body was so sick and weak and limp. But at those times, I was able to lie in the hospital bed with him and hold him and be completely present to him, in large part because I was not worrying about juggling our other children's schedules.

We have learned to keep life as simple as possible, especially in regards to our time at home together. Before Jude was diagnosed, we were always on



the go – visiting friends, going to museums, parks, zoos, restaurants, and other outings. It was fun, but this – slowing down, being home, and learning to enjoy and help each other – this is lasting and real. These are the memories I hold dear, while I don't really remember all those outings before.

I wasn't ready for my son's diagnosis, for homeschooling, for the hospital stays and office visits, but I'm so grateful that God brought us down a path that led to homeschooling and I have no regrets.



Are My Sins Too Many & Too Bad for God's Forgiveness?

BY JOHN CLARK

"My sins are too many and too bad."

Sadly and mistakenly, such is the thought process that will keep many people away from the Sacrament of Confession this Lent, just like many years of Lents before it.

We live in a world that often underemphasizes the badness of sin—there's not much doubt about that. However, it is also possible to overemphasize the badness of sin. How can that be? How could you ever overemphasize the badness of sin? When could that ever happen?

When you claim that your sins are so bad that God cannot forgive them—that's when.

When you suggest that the badness of your sins is greater than the love of God—that's when.

When you act as though the Passion of Jesus is not enough to overcome your sins—that's when.

To that last point: if you think that the passion and death of Jesus was not enough—that it was somehow lacking—you would do yourself a huge favor this Lent by meditating on the Passion of Jesus. We tend to sanitize our conception of the violence that Jesus suffered at the hands of men, but the truth is that Jesus' scourging, crowning with thorns, carrying of the cross, and death were extraordinarily and shockingly violent. The private revelations given to Venerable Mary of Agreda recounted in *The Mystical City of God* and given to Blessed Anne Catherine Emmerich recounted in *The Dolorous Passion of Our Lord Jesus Christ* attest to that fact.

When you read these revelations, it is worth noting that most Catholic theologians agree that the totality of Jesus' sufferings were not required for the atonement of all sins, but that the slightest suffering of Jesus would have atoned for all the sins of humanity. Rather than failing to atone for all the sins of the world, the truth is that the passion

and death of Jesus amount to what Saint Thomas Aquinas called a "superabundant atonement." Thomas explains:

"He properly atones for an offense who offers something which the offended one loves equally, or even more than he detested the offense. But by suffering out of love and obedience, Christ gave more to God than was required to compensate for the offense of the whole human race. First of all, because of the exceeding charity from which He suffered; secondly, on account of the dignity of His life which He laid down in atonement, for it was the life of one who was God and man; thirdly, on account of the extent of the Passion, and the greatness of the grief endured, as stated above. And therefore Christ's Passion was not only a sufficient but a superabundant atonement for the sins of the human race; according to 1 John 2:2: 'He is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for those of the whole world.'"

Sin is an offense against God. Sin is terrible. But when you act as though the Passion of Jesus and the love of God are not enough to forgive those sins for which you seek forgiveness, you are gravely mistaken. What part of the Passion, what part of the love of God is not enough for you?

When Jesus was on the cross, He was thinking of you and me: desiring not to condemn us, but to forgive us. God, The Father of Mercies, wills to forgive us—for original sin, for venial sins, for mortal sins, for many sins. For all our sins.

Can you commit sins so bad or so many that God cannot forgive them? Of course not. Even if your sins are many and mortal, even if you really are as bad as you think—even if you are one thousand times worse than you think—the merciful God awaits you in Confession.

Jesus revealed to Saint Faustina that even if you had more sins than the grains of sand in all the oceans of the world, you should



still approach Jesus with confidence of His forgiveness and mercy. Why? Because God loves you.

If you have been away from the forgiveness of God, come back home where you belong. This year, this Lent, come to Confession and experience the loving mercy of God. Whatever your sins might be, your sacramental repentance will be the cause of a huge celebration in Heaven.

And they'll keep that glorious party going until long after you arrive.

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.

This Lent... Bring Back Family Prayer

BY CHERYL HERNANDEZ

In the Garden of Gethsemane on Holy Thursday, Our Lord asked his Apostles to stay awake and pray with Him. He wanted them to be near Him - to go through His Agony along with Him. Instead, they fell asleep - all, that is, except Judas.

This Lent, we have a chance to do just as Jesus asked - and we can do it together as a family. Many families have already successfully incorporated a daily family prayer time. Others have tried, perhaps several times, and have watched it slip away. Some have yet to try. Lent is the perfect time to bring back - or begin - family prayer. It is a time we are asked to do more - not just give up things like chocolate or Facebook - but to take on more.

Why family prayer? What's wrong with just praying by myself - or with my spouse?

Personal prayer and having quiet time to listen to the voice of God is imperative. Praying as a couple will certainly strengthen a marriage, but coming together as a family to pray is critical as well. Why? Because the devil is working overtime to destroy the family and the last thing he wants is for us to be holy.

In a world of broken and suffering families, coming together for daily prayer is the surest way to stay vigilant and strengthen our families. Praying allows us to give glory to God, to thank Him for all He has done for our family, and to ask for His mercy. And best of all, Our Lord promises He will be there with us: "Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them" (Mt. 18:20).

1. Bring your children on board!

Padre Pio said, "The world will be saved by the prayers and sacrifices of little children." Before you decide to begin daily prayer, talk to your children. Get them excited about making this Lenten journey together as a family and ask for their help to make it happen. There will be times when you will be tempted to skip prayer time, and

just put your kids to bed after a long, exhausting day. Do not be surprised if your three-year old says, "But Daddy, we haven't said our prayers yet!", or if you see your son, in the hustle and bustle of the evening, kneeling down in the living room waiting for you. Children can be very humbling!

2. Where do we begin?

We should begin by looking to the Holy Family as the perfect model. If you don't already have one, you can make a family altar in their honor. This could be a simple table set up in a prominent place in your home, decorated with a crucifix, statues of the Blessed Mother and St. Joseph, a painting of the Sacred Heart, or anything that is special to your family. Children love to make it beautiful by adding candles and fresh flowers.

Prayer time, ideally at the same time each day, could be as short as five minutes or as long as you wish (or as long as the children can handle). It helps to have set prayers so that you are not "reinventing the wheel" each night. The Church gives us so many beautiful prayers to choose from!

In our family, we come together in the evening right before our two youngest go to bed. We kneel and begin each prayer time with a silent examination of conscience. When we had very small children, my husband helped them by asking simple questions (Did I obey Mommy and Daddy today? Was I loving to my brothers and sisters?). This is followed by an Act of Contrition, three Hail Marys, the Glory Be, and other prayers such as the Guardian Angel prayer and the prayer to St. Michael. Then we ask for the intercession of our family's special saints - especially for one or two particular petitions. The kids love this because they can always think of someone for whom to pray. Finally, we stand and end with the beautiful hymn to Our Blessed



"The family that prays together, stays together."

- Servant of God Fr. Patrick Peyton

Mother, the Salve Regina. Then kisses, blessings, and off to bed for the youngest!

3. We already have family prayer time.... what now?

Other than the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, the rosary is the most powerful, efficacious prayer we have. If you as a family are already saying prayers together, perhaps taking on one (or both) of these every day would be the next step this Lent. We have found that praying the rosary at night (as part of our family prayers) is too much. Instead, the children and I pray the rosary in the morning, along with our Morning Offering, on the way to Mass. My husband attends a very early Mass before work and prays the rosary during his lunch break as he takes a walk. Evening prayers, then, with my husband home, are very special because we are all together as a family. On weekends, the whole family comes together for Mass and the rosary.

This Lent, be vigilant, stay awake and pray with Our Lord as a family. Accompany Him on His journey - you can be assured He will be there on yours. And when Lent is over... stay vigilant and keep praying together.



Cheryl Hernandez and her husband live in Florida with their 9 children. They have been homeschooling with Seton for 21 years. Their four oldest are Seton graduates with the fifth graduating this year. Born in California and raised in Europe, Cheryl has a BFA in Graphic Design.



3 Prayers to Guide Our Lent

BY DOM ALBAN BAKER

As Catholics, we know that our faith comes from the two fountains of Scripture and Tradition, and these two find their most complete expression in our public worship, with Scripture forming a large part of the texts and Tradition supplying the prayers and melodies from the early ages of the Church. Hence the liturgy should be a source of our Lenten practices. This article considers three opening prayers of the Mass (collects) which occur in the first few days of Lent and suggests some ways in which these prayers can be applied to homeschooling families.

1st Sunday of Lent

Grant, almighty God, through the yearly observance of holy Lent, that we may grow in understanding of the riches hidden in Christ and by worthy conduct pursue their effects.

This collect aptly describes what Lent should be about: we seek to better understand the riches hidden in Christ and behave accordingly. The allusion is to St. Paul's letter to the Colossians, where he writes that "all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge" are hidden in Christ (2:3). The focus might surprise us—isn't Lent about giving up something, depriving ourselves? Yes, but for the end of closer union with Christ whom we imitate in fasting and self-denial.

This prayer seems written with homeschoolers in mind, for no matter what the subject, Christ is the origin of all the wisdom and knowledge found in that discipline. He is the author of mathematics just as much as He is the author of theology. Since whatever we study is a portion of the truth, and Jesus is Truth, we ultimately wish to grow in understanding of Him. This is an important fact to keep always in mind: is our objective as a family to grow in wisdom and knowledge, or to get a diploma? Is wisdom our objective or only knowledge? Wisdom, by means of our contemplation of God, helps us set all things in order according to that highest cause: it gives order to our thoughts, words and actions. Are our lives ordered by what we learn or filled only with facts?

A practical way to seek wisdom in Lent is to read the daily Gospel as a family at the beginning of the homeschooling day. The children can take turns reading each day, and as much as each is able, each child can suggest a way in which the Gospel message can be lived out that day. (Dad and Mom should make suggestions on days where the passage is more difficult.) This practice reinforces that Christ's teaching is the summit of wisdom and it is the kind of

wisdom that enriches our whole lives, not just our minds. Moreover, the more they hear about Jesus, the more your children will love Him, and that is the goal of each Catholic homeschooling family.

Tuesday of the First Week

Look upon your family, Lord, that through the chastening effects of bodily discipline, our minds may be radiant in your presence with the strength of our yearning for you.

This collect reminds us that Lent is also about bodily discipline: traditionally, fasting. Fasting means that we eat less than we normally do; abstinence is when we do not eat a particular type of food. Both are characteristic of Lent, but fasting is more important, as that is what Christ did during the same forty days we observe. As the prayer says, fasting chastens us because we are weaker, we find it harder to work, and we must call out to God more often; in short, it teaches humility.

Theophan the Recluse, a Russian hermit of the 19th century, believed that children can be taught to fast, and that if they learn this holy discipline when they are young, they will find it easier to be temperate when they are older and will also be able to live with less more easily. Practically speaking, of course, the body requires food when study is involved, as it is the most intense activity in which we can engage as human beings. But there is also a way in which a less than full belly clears the mind and gives it more freedom to work.

What can homeschoolers do to live this prayer? First, do not eat between meals. If there is a snack midmorning or midafternoon, as much as is possible, cut it out for Lent. Make sure the children know why they are doing so: to imitate Jesus, to grow in self-control, to do penance and to offer their sufferings for others who need spiritual help. Second, fast in a special way on Fridays. Give your children a chance to make a sincere

and difficult offering to God; let them set the standard and then give them space to fast (they can probably do more than you think). Expect less of them that day in school work. St. Ambrose said that in Lent if either work or fasting must be sacrificed, sacrifice work. Europe, when it was Christian, used to shut down in Lent to allow her people to observe the fast; homeschooling families can do less work on Friday to honor the Lord and sanctify the season.

Saturday of the First Week

Turn our hearts to you, eternal Father, and grant that, seeking always the one thing necessary and carrying out works of charity, we may be dedicated to your worship.

This final collect brings to mind the need to do works of charity. Children do not have money (nor do homeschooling families!), but almsgiving is still possible in a spiritual manner, via the corporal and spiritual works of mercy. The motive behind such works is desire to alleviate the misery which one discerns in another. Many times, children are aware of this and would be glad to do something to help.

One possibility is to visit a local nursing home or homebound person. Children and the elderly are made for one another in that the youth of the former revitalizes the latter and the young learn respect and love for their elders by spending time with them. If that is not possible given your family size or the ages of the children, think of someone who lives near you in need of a visit or special prayers and let the children's enthusiasm and generous spirit do the rest.



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A Lenten Prayer

Throughout the Great Fast, Eastern Christians make extensive use of the penitential prayer of Saint Ephraim the Syrian, proclaimed a Doctor of the Church by Pope Benedict XV in 1920.

Consider reciting and meditating upon this prayer every day this Lent; it is a powerful tool for growing in the virtues every student needs—namely, industriousness, charity, patience, and trust. What a blessing it would be if by Easter, we were all better students and better Christians!

O Lord and Master of my life, take from me the spirit of laziness, despair, idle ambition and vain talk.

Give me rather the spirit of chastity, humility, patience and love.

Indeed, O Lord and King, grant me to see my own transgressions and not to judge my brother, for blessed are You, now and ever and forever. Amen

May your Lenten spiritual exercises be fruitful these coming forty days!



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Teresa | I played the character of Eponine in *Les Miserables* School Edition, in July 2016. After almost four years, musical theater continues to be a source of such great joy and passion.

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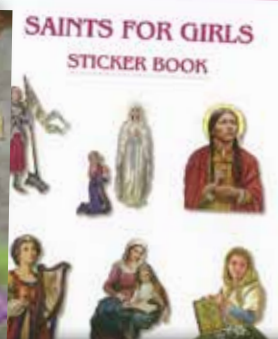
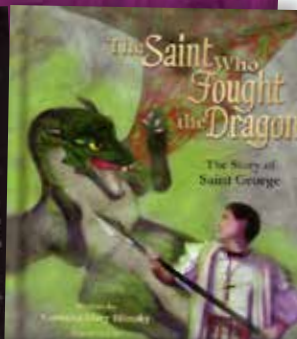
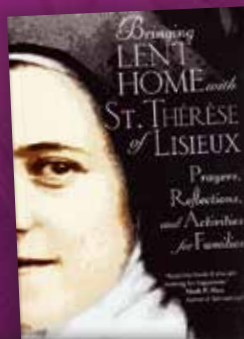
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"From the time of his betrothal to Mary until the finding of the twelve-year-old Jesus in the Temple of Jerusalem, he is there at every moment with loving care. **As the spouse of Mary, he is at her side in good times and bad**, on the journey to Bethlehem for the census and in the anxious and joyful hours when she gave birth; amid the drama of the flight into Egypt and during the frantic search for their child in the Temple; and later in the day-to-day life of the home of Nazareth, in the workshop where he taught his trade to Jesus."

POPE FRANCIS, *URBI ET ORBI* 2015

