

Seton



MAGAZINE

Under the Magisterium of the Catholic Church

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Our Prescription for Seton Success

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Executive Editor

Dr. Mary Kay Clark

Editors

Mary Ellen Barrett
Kevin Clark

Marketing Director

Jim Shanley

Design & Layout

Joe Sparks

Contributing Writers

John Clark
Cheryl Hernandez
Amy Hogan
Fr. Jeffrey Kirby
Nicholas Marmalejo
Jeff Minick

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www.setonmagazine.com

Seton Home Study School
1350 Progress Dr.
Front Royal, VA 22630

Phone: (540) 636-9990

Fax: (540) 636-1602

info@setonhome.org

www.setonhome.org

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Matthew Hogan, Bishop Edward
Weisenburger, Daniel Hogan



SETON EMAILS

CUSTOMER SERVICE

custserv@setonhome.org

COUNSELORS

counselors@setonhome.org

ADMISSIONS

admissions@setonhome.org

GRADING

grading@setonhome.org

GENERAL INFORMATION

info@setonhome.org

MY SETON

myseton@setonhome.org

STANDARDIZED TESTING

testing@setonhome.org

SPECIAL SERVICES

SSDept@setonhome.org



Letter from the Editor

Happy summer! I'd like to introduce myself, I'm Mary Ellen Barrett, mother of eight children and wife of twenty-five years to Dave. We live on Long Island in New York and we have just wound up our fifteenth year of homeschooling.

June is a very welcome month for this busy homeschool family. The weather is warm and pleasant without the horrible humidity that is our lot in July and August here in the northeast. The commitments that keep us so busy in May are done or winding down and there are finally some white spaces in my planner.

One of our favorite things to do in June is to plan our festivities for Father's Day. Honoring their father and showering him with love is a tradition that the kids enjoy and to which they bring a great deal of enthusiasm. In this issue, we are happy to feature the Hogan family. In their home, the main homeschooling parent is their dad. We are happy to have this opportunity to share with you the story of a great homeschooling dad and how the Hogan family makes homeschooling work in their busy lives.

This issue also will give you some great reasons why the study of Latin is important and how to maintain your flexibility as a homeschooler with our independent study option for some courses. Cheryl Hernandez has written a lovely article on a favorite topic of mine; how to infuse your homeschool with beauty.

I hope you enjoy this issue, it's particularly dear to me as my first as editor. I hope you have a blessed and relaxing summer season.

I would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge the wonderful work of my predecessor Christine Collins. Christine's leadership and keen editorial eye has been essential to evolution of Seton Magazine's current level of excellence. We all wish her the very best in her future endeavors and we are very grateful to have had the opportunity to work with her. May God bless and keep her.

Sincerely,

Mary Ellen Barrett



SETON PHONE DIRECTORY

SETON HOME STUDY SCHOOL

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ADMISSIONS

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Draper Warren

Darin Byrne

John Thorp

Joseph Clark

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TRANSCRIPTS, RECORDS, & EXTENSIONS

540-635-1937

Mary Kerstiens

GENERAL COUNSELING

540-622-5526

Cecilia Sauer

ELEMENTARY GRADING

540-622-5563

Bruce Hacker

Jacinta Black

ELEMENTARY COUNSELING

540-636-1429

Sharon Hassett

Carin Delancey

Lisa Clark

Catherine Higginbottom

SACRAMENTAL PREPARATION

540-635-4728

Deacon Gene McGuirk

SPECIAL SERVICES

540-622-5576

Stephen Costanzo

Kathleen Hunt

Therese Zepeda

HIGH SCHOOL ACADEMIC COUNSELING

540-635-4728

Gene McGuirk

HIGH SCHOOL GRADING

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540-622-5571

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HIGH SCHOOL RELIGION

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Walker Solis

Elizabeth Wagner

HIGH SCHOOL SPANISH & FRENCH

540-622-5537

Manuel Vicente

HIGH SCHOOL COMPUTER COURSES

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540-636-2238

Nick Marmalejo

540-622-8478

Bob Wiesner

St. Margaret of Scotland

BY DR. MARY KAY CLARK

Though Saint Margaret of Scotland lived and died almost one thousand years ago, she remains one of the most beloved people in her nation's history. I need not look far for a reminder of that fact. My husband's family, which is 100% Scottish, has two names peppered throughout their lineage going back many centuries. For boys, the most popular name is Bruce, because his family can be traced back to Robert the Bruce. The most popular girl's name has been Margaret or Elizabeth, in honor of Saint Margaret of Scotland.

Around the year 1045, Margaret was born in Hungary to Prince Edward of England and Princess Agatha of Hungary. When Margaret was a young girl, her royal family returned to England, but upon arrival, her father was killed. Some years after, fearing for her family's safety, Princess Agatha gathered her family and set sail to return to Hungary. On their way, however, a storm arose, and their ship was wrecked on the shores of Scotland. Seeing their plight, the Scottish king, Malcolm Canmore III, invited the family to stay in his castle. Malcolm and Margaret quickly fell in love, and they were married.

Margaret's devotion to Jesus, illustrated by her prayer life and daily Mass attendance, significantly influenced Malcolm. The Catholic influence of the king and queen quickly spread throughout Scotland. Malcolm and Margaret built Catholic churches and chapels, promoted schools in churches, and initiated national conferences for Scottish bishops and priests to encourage them to promote traditional Catholic teachings when there was laxity in the practice of the Faith.

Malcolm and Margaret were blessed with eight children, and they raised them in their beloved Catholic faith. Queen Margaret was deeply involved in the Catholic education of her children. The queen attended Mass every day with her children, as well as teaching them the catechism daily. As the royal couple's children grew older, they not

only taught them the Catholic Faith, but they also taught them how to practice their Faith by works of charity. Her eight children came to be known as intelligent, educated, disciplined, and involved with charitable work.

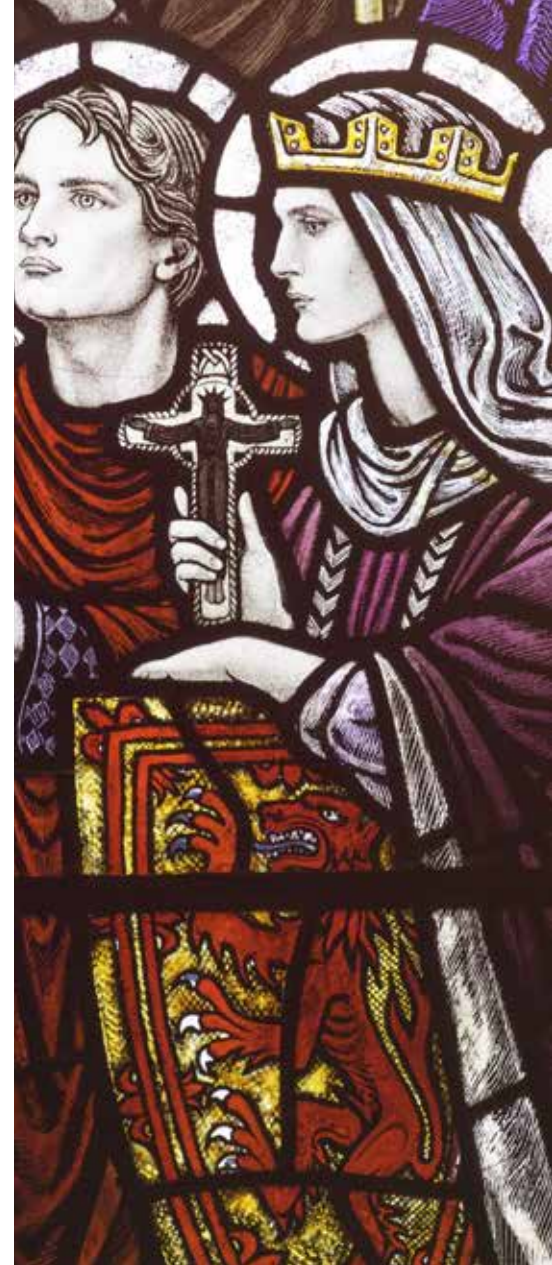
"Margaret exhibited profound love and affection for the poor, the sick, and the suffering."

Margaret was devoted to the care and education of her eight children, but also to the children of Scotland, especially the poor. She asked mothers in need to bring their children to her kitchen door every morning, where she would put them on her lap, tell them stories about Jesus, and give them sweet breakfast pastries. Through a special grace, it is believed, Margaret prayed throughout the night. She thanked God for her husband who loved her, who loved the children, and who loved helping the Scottish people he served.

As the queen, Margaret exhibited profound love and affection for the poor, the sick, and the suffering. Queen Margaret went out into the streets with her children to help those in the hospitals, the jails, and anyone else in need. Later in life, her children, as kings and leaders, followed the path of their parents in practicing the Faith, supporting the priests and bishops, and helping the poor.

Saint Margaret of Scotland is a saint needed for today. She was not only dedicated to her family and her children's education, but she also led her husband to be more involved in supporting the Church. She led her children to be more involved in helping those in need in the community. She was knowledgeable about the true teachings of the Catholic Church and promoted them consistently in the churches.

Though Margaret was born into wealth, her personal life in teaching her children,



in teaching them to serve others, and her life of daily Mass and daily prayers, gives all of us home schooling mothers an excellent example of dedication to serving family and community.

St. Margaret, pray for us home schooling parents, so Jesus gives us a special love for teaching our children to care for others less fortunate, and to help them realize that we have an obligation to Jesus to promote His truths in our community, in our parish, and in our family.

St. Margaret of Scotland, Queen and Home Schooling Mother, 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

Do you have counselors to help with French, Spanish, or Latin?

Mr. Manuel Vicente is our Spanish and French counselor. He can be reached at 540-622-5537. Mr. Jeff Minick, who has taught Latin to home school students for many years, is our Latin counselor. Mr. Minick can be reached at 828-400-8132. They can be reached by email at mvicente@setonhome.org and jminick@setonhome.org. Both counselors have made videos to help students. We are producing more lessons and tests online.

Does Seton have more resources for high school courses?

Seton provides supplemental material for many courses, both at the elementary and high school levels. Simply go to All Course Resources in your MySeton page; scroll down to the course in which your child is enrolled, and you can find many helpful materials in print, video, and audio format. More is being added.

Seton is presenting three academic “tracks” for high school students. How do we decide which track to follow?

The General Diploma is an option for the non-college bound student. The Academic Diploma is an option for most of our students who are college-bound. Most students on the Academic Diploma track can do this without too much parental help.

The Advanced Academic Diploma is for students who will likely go on to Graduate School or a military academy after college. These students will be taking advanced level science and math courses, and will probably need serious help from a parent or teacher. For further details, read the article “Your 3 High School Diploma Options” in the high school catalog.

Because it is important that your

student succeeds, it is important to realize how much you can help your student in the different courses. If you took French in high school, your student will likely do better in French than in another language because you can help him. For the math and science courses, choose the courses in which your student can be successful because you can help your student to do well.

As high school students move through the courses, if there is any difficulty, they may switch from one course to another. Just phone a high school counselor for further advice.

“Pray the Rosary with your children every day. It can be broken up with a couple of decades before lunch, and the last three after lunch or as a family after dinner.”

Do you have tips to get our school work done by the end of June?

You can try both increasing the time you spend and cut back on assignments.

To give yourself more time, consider having the children do some classes on Saturday so they can finish up. Most students would prefer that rather than going into the summer.

For the elementary levels, be sure to cover thoroughly the important concepts so that your children will be successful in the next grade level. The subjects that “build” on previous lessons from previous grades such as religion, mathematics, reading and phonics, and English grammar and composition must be well understood by your children. Your children need to spend the time necessary to “conquer” these subjects.

It is possible to cut down the time

for the lessons in spelling, vocabulary, history, and science by doing more orally. Two chapters in Spelling and Vocabulary could be done in one week. Time for history and science chapters may be cut down with more oral reading, discussion, and answering chapter questions orally.

If you find that your end of June completion date is simply not possible, add a couple more weeks onto your schedule.

What is most important to keeping up is to stick to your daily schedule.

Can the Seton counselors help my son with his daily Algebra work?

Our Academic Counselors who answer phone and email questions help parents explain math problems to their children, but it is impossible for us to provide daily counseling to students. The books teach the concepts. If students need day-by-day help that parents cannot provide, some parents obtain help from older children, relatives, or college students.

Consider joining other parents to pay a local tutor to help regularly, or to be available for daily questions. Sometimes, this can be done by email or online tutors. For more advanced courses in math or science, you might ask your pastor for names of retired teachers.

Is it possible for my neighbor’s daughter to take high school courses without enrolling or having Seton grade tests?

Your neighbor can order the books, but unless her daughter is enrolled, she won’t receive any lesson plans, tests, or obtain a report card. High school students need high school records even if they don’t plan to attend college. Without a high school record, it could be difficult to attend a business school or college years later.

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How can I keep up my prayer life when I am so busy home schooling?

Keep your favorite prayer book next to your bed so you can grab it the last thing at night or the first thing in the morning. Even if you have only 5 or 10 minutes, you can start and end each day with Jesus. Also, start the school day with your children by saying some favorite morning prayers, such as the Litany of the Sacred Heart. If you can, take your children to daily Mass. If daily Mass is impossible, you and the children can watch the EWTN daily Mass, and join in the prayers. Pray the Rosary with your children every day. It can be broken up with a couple of decades before lunch, and the last three after lunch or as a family after dinner.

Can I enroll my 8th grader in some high school courses?

If your student has finished some 8th grade courses, such as math, English, or science, she could start the 9th grade level in the same subject. Do what you can, however,

to help her finish all the 8th grade courses in the summer. Otherwise, she may not finish all her required courses.

Which level of standardized achievement test should my son take when some of his subjects are in the next grade level?

If you are taking one test, have him take the lower level test. Better to do well in a few subjects than not do well in the others. Of course, you have the option to test your son on each grade level. Some parents like to do this for their own benefit. However, additional charges will apply and these results are not composite scores suitable for state reporting.

I will have a baby next year. How can I keep home schooling?

Think about keeping the children in the bedroom or area where you will be with the baby. They can work at a table with their books and papers or on the bed while they are reading. Older ones can help the younger ones. Consider having two children do some of the same courses, such as PE, art, and music. If two are in adjacent grades, consider having them do the same history and science courses. Ask an older child to help a younger one with one or two courses.

There are many little things you can do to make your home schooling work, but talk it over with your husband. Dads usually have good, practical ideas.

What was the response regarding your potential Grade 5 Seton math text-workbook?

We are very excited about the new text/workbook. One of the features is that children can write in the book rather than copy their work on a separate sheet of paper. There was an excellent positive response from Seton students and parents who reviewed it. A former math teacher wrote the text-workbook, and it was reviewed by an experienced retired math teacher who gave it high marks. The text/workbook should be available by September 1st.



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



AVE MARIA UNIVERSITY



BELMONT ABBEY COLLEGE



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setonhome.org/colleges



Why Study Latin at Seton?

BY JEFF MINICK

Why study Latin? What's the point? Outside of a Latin Mass or certain functions at the Vatican, no one speaks Latin anymore. It's unlikely you'll ever shamle about the neighborhood conversing with your friends in the language once spoken by Caesar and Calpurnia.

So, why do Seton and other schools encourage students to take Latin? What are the benefits? And for young people interested in learning lingua Latina, what advantages does the Seton Home Study School offer its Latin students?

Solid questions. Spectemus et videamus. Let's look and see.

Some students learn Latin hoping to improve their SAT English scores, and studies have shown Latin students excel on that part of the test. With far less effort, however, students could memorize lists of words, definitions, roots, and usage to prepare for such tests.

Others come to Latin seeking a gateway into the specialized language of law and medicine. Again, there is evidence that Latin helps them succeed in these endeavors, and many scientific and legal terms spring from Latin roots, but students who have never cracked a Latin text do as well in these fields as those who study Cicero and Virgil.

No--we need to look elsewhere for reasons to justify spending valuable energy and time studying declensions, conjugations, and vocabulary lists.

Study Latin and You Master English.

First on this list of reasons is inflection. English sentences depend on word order to convey their meaning. If we say "Mary sees the sailor," we cannot change the word order without changing the meaning of the sentence.

However, Latin is an inflected language, meaning word endings determine the function of words in a sentence. In Latin, we might typically write "Mary sees the sailor" as "Maria nautam videt." Yet, we also could tumble the Latin words about however we liked—"Maria videt nautam," "Nautam Maria videt," "Videt Maria nautam," and so on—because of the endings of the words, even the beginning Latin student would read all of these sentences as "Mary sees the sailor."

Now you may ask: So what's the big deal? The big deal is that

inflection, changing the form of a word to express its function, gives us an amazing tool for understanding grammar and syntax. Studying any foreign tongue deepens our knowledge of the English language, but inflection forces us to explore grammar and syntax in more intricate ways. Different word endings determine whether a noun is a direct or indirect object, whether a verb is in the present or future tense.

In addition, Latin provides us with a gymnasium of the mind. It exercises our brain. Like algebra and calculus, like physics and chemistry, the study of Latin trains us to think more clearly, more logically. By coming at language from such a different direction as inflection, students find themselves intimately engaged in these mental gymnastics.

Latin also serves as a superb introduction to the Romance languages. French, Spanish, and Italian are all related to Latin, and knowledge of the language familiar to Pliny and Aquinas makes learning these other languages much easier. Former students of mine, who took just two years of Latin, excelled in high school or college French, Spanish, or Italian.

Latin opens windows on our English vocabulary. Though English is a Germanic language, more than half of all English words are derived from Latin. The longer the word, the greater this percentage. A vast majority of four and five syllable words are rooted in Latin soil. In that sense, Latin is not a "dead language." It is very much alive.

Nor should the historical significance of Latin be overlooked. Not only will students learn the language spoken and written by the ancient Romans, but they will also take part in an educational experience once shared by men and women from Marcus Aurelius to Thomas Jefferson, from Virgil to Dante and Margaret Roper, Saint Thomas More's daughter. For twelve hundred years after the fall of the Western Roman Empire, scholars, ecclesiastics, and statesmen read and spoke this ancient language. Latin also continues to be the official language of the Roman Catholic Church. To study Latin makes us a part of this Great Tradition.

Finally, Latin carries a certain cachet. Suppose your grandmother, perhaps suspicious of home schooling, asks what foreign language you are studying. If you reply, "Spanish," she will likely say, "Well, that's very practical these days." Should



you answer “French,” she may comment, “French is a beautiful language.” If, however, you respond, “Latin,” your grandmother will likely offer one of two comments. She may ask you why anyone would study a dead language, in which case you should cite the above arguments. But she may be as likely to say: “Latin? Latin? You must be smart.”

And so you are, again, for the reasons cited above.

What Makes Seton's Latin Program Special?

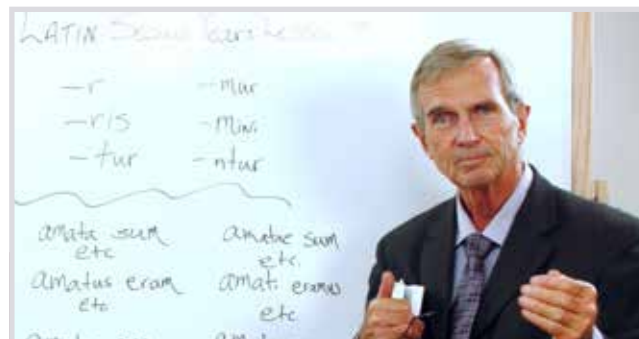
First, Seton uses the Father Henle Latin series. Some may criticize the Henle textbooks as antiques—they were written during World War II and contain references to that conflict—but the books remain in print for a good reason: they serve their students well, particularly homeschoolers. Many other textbooks—and I have taught several—are teacher-dependent texts. The first chapter of these books typically offers a lesson in the first declension, the second in the present tense of first conjugation verbs, the third in adjectives. Such jumping around from nouns to verbs to adjectives can easily confuse students.

Unlike these texts, the Henle books follow a logical pattern. These textbooks first teach the declensions of nouns, pronouns, and adjectives, then move into the verb conjugations. This progression allows students to grasp the order of Latin forms and syntax.

Besides its wise choice of a textbook, Seton also offers its students numerous helps. The lesson plans contain many excellent suggestions for study. Audio and video aids for these lessons are also available. The video series walks the student through the Henle Latin I book chapter by chapter. Finally, students seeking additional assistance are encouraged to call or email our staff with their questions.

We, at Seton, also encourage you to seize other opportunities in your Latin studies. We urge students to take the National Latin Examination, offered annually in March by an organization independent of Seton. If you enjoy Latin and welcome academic challenges, we encourage you to continue your studies past Latin III to consider taking the Advanced Placement Latin Test for bulking up your academic record, for gaining college credit, and for the grand honor of translating Virgil and Caesar.

“Non scholae sed vitae discimus.” We learn not for school but for life. The lessons you gain from your study of Latin—the language skills, the value of perseverance and hard work, the knowledge you can tackle a new subject and make it your own—will serve you for a lifetime.



As seen in Seton's Online Latin Courses

Jeff Minick is “the Latin guy” for the Seton Home Study School. He has a master’s degree in medieval history and a year of doctoral work in the same field—but he has spent the last twenty-five years teaching Henle Latin to his children and to several hundred home-educated students, guiding about forty of these students through their preparation for the Advanced Placement Latin examination.

Minick believes young people have great potential. To fulfill that potential requires “the push,” that interior grit and self-discipline that leads to accomplishment.

Minick is the father of four children, all of whom were homeschooled, and grandfather to twenty-one grandchildren. He lives with his daughter in Front Royal, Virginia, where he helps with various household duties, which include teaching three of his grandchildren. In addition, he writes reviews and essays, chiefly for the Smoky Mountain News and Chronicles magazine, and has self-published two novels, a collection of essays, and a book on mentoring young men using movies. These books may be found on Amazon. Some of Minick’s essays, stories, and poems may be viewed at jeffminick.com.

You may reach Mr. Minick at
Jminick@setonhome.org



Our Prescription for Seton Success

BY AMY HOGAN

Blood sugar over 400! Lord have Mercy! My 4 year old woke up not acting like himself one morning. He had been wetting his pants more often and woke with a pungent smelling breath. I knew as a resident doctor at Via Christi Family Medicine that this meant type 1 diabetes. As he was not critically ill, we went to Mass and then checked him into the hospital to do further testing for confirmation.

That was Thanksgiving weekend 2006 when our oldest child Matthew was indeed diagnosed with type 1 diabetes at 4 years old. Benjamin was 2 years old and Mary was 6 months old. Matt had been in preschool at our parish school and loved it. However, a move was in order due to a new job. January of 2007 meant a new school, new teachers, and a new medical problem to take care of.

The family transitioned just fine, but Matt's love for school did not. We were confused as to why he was so unhappy. He used to come home singing and repeating the spirited games they had learned. We wondered, did the change of attitude have to do with his diabetes? His new teacher was quite nervous about it. My mother, a former preschool and kindergarten teacher, came to visit and went with him to school one day. She helped us realize that the new preschool had a lot more "sitting" rather than active learning with song and activities. As a busy boy with lots of energy, Matt needed more time to get his energy out and social interaction. We finished the semester with Matt coming home stating how many grams of carbs were in the snack at school rather than singing songs and dancing.

As 2007 had been a very busy year of transition, we needed a summer vacation! The grandparents were

dying to keep the children for a week, so my husband and I planned a getaway trip to Estes Park, Colorado. Driving there we had some time for conversation. I told him I was worried about Matt going to school in the fall. Some of my friends had been doing home school I told him. My husband is very traditional and conservative, so I was not sure what his reaction would be. Would he reject the idea and "freak out". Instead he listened and we discussed what home school might mean for the family. He is very into computers, so I asked him to help me research the best home school curriculum.

In the meantime at grandma and grandpa's, even though my parents are educated and caring people, former teachers themselves, Matthew's blood sugar did "freak out". Sugars were 300's and 400's when 100's that are normal!

Prayers Answered

We began praying about it and researching. We looked around online for Catholic Home Schools. We realized Seton Home Study had a great online presence with online support if needed. The curriculum was well developed which would take out any guess work as to what the children would be expected to learn. Seton had the whole package: Catholic, accredited, and an all-around great education! On the drive home from Colorado I called





a Seton counselor. She answered all my questions and was very friendly. We wrote down the pros and cons. The pros side of the assessment had things like flexibility, more active playtime for our active boy, more time with siblings, Catholicity we could be excited about, better monitoring of the diabetes, and more family time in general. We decided to give it a try, after-all it was just Kindergarten....

Ten Years Later

Now, I, Matthew Hogan, will help finish the story! I just finished 9th grade! My brother Ben finished 7th and Mary, who also has diabetes, finished 5th grade. Our “littles” Jacob and Danielle are 2 and 5 years old. They hope to be Seton students someday too.

We know home schooling is a little different from the mainstream, but we thrive on it. While my mom started us down the road of home schooling, it has been dad who has done most of the work! Another thing “different” about our family is that my mom works and my dad stays at home. My mother is a family practice physician with a very busy clinic. So, my dad is the one who stays home with us kids and runs our schooling schedule. He always seems to know when we need a little help or when we need to work out the problem ourselves.

After ten years, I feel extraordinarily blessed to be in a school as great as Seton Home Study. All the benefits Mom mentioned, like spending more time with family, being more active, and taking

better care of my diabetes has been very beneficial. But as kids, our favorite part is that though we work hard on our “homework” during the day, we have more free-time in the evenings. As we have gotten older we have begun to appreciate more of what Seton gives to us. We have come to love the high quality religious education that Seton offers. We are building our faith in Jesus and becoming well informed Catholics.

I know for sure that my diabetes has been much easier to care for at home than if I had been in regular school. Sometimes I have to check blood sugar when I feel low. I may need a snack immediately. This has to be very disruptive of regular school days when there are 20-30 other kids in a class watching you be “different”. At home, with my dad, and my brothers and sisters, I am just “me”.

Our Homeschool Hero

But none of this would be possible if it were not for dad staying home and helping us get through a rigorous curriculum, which continually challenges us to do better and strengthens us for the future. I pray that God bless the great people who have helped us at Seton Home Study School and God bless dad, our home school hero.



The Necessity of Beauty

BY CHERYL HERNANDEZ

Why is beauty important?

Beauty has traditionally been counted as one of the ultimate values, along with goodness, truth and justice. Beauty awakens us, brings us joy, and provides us with a sense of awe. Beauty reminds us of God's presence in the world.

This is why, since the beginning of Christendom, magnificent cathedrals have been erected. Masterpieces of art have been painted and sculpted because the worship of God should be done in a surrounding of beauty, primarily for His glory, but also to help us direct our minds and hearts toward Him.

We should not only desire to worship in places of beauty, but also, for this same reason, we should try to bring that beauty to our own home and family — our domestic church.

The reality is that we live in a world that can be very ugly. We try to shelter our children (and ourselves) from that ugliness — which often can even be promoted as “beautiful”. Because of this distortion, it is so important to cultivate the sense of true beauty in our family. Our children need a foundation based on beauty and we want them to long for it in their own lives because all beauty leads to God, and our role as parents is to lead our children to Him.

How can we instill in our children an understanding and desire for beauty?

The beauty I am talking about isn't found in opulence or extravagance. You don't need chandeliers in every room and crystal on the dining table. You certainly don't need a lot of money. With a little planning and creativity, there are many simple ways you can bring beauty into your home and family through music, art, literature and nature. Below are just a few examples.

1. Fill your home with beautiful music.

Listen to classical music, sacred music, and solo instrumentalists at home and in the car. Bring your children to orchestras, operas, and any live beautiful music. Our city has a wonderful program to encourage children to attend the orchestra — with one paid adult ticket, up to nine children can attend for free!

Many churches offer concerts showcasing organ pieces or choral music. Recently, a local church in our area brought in a Steinway and had a magnificent pianist play a program of Chopin.

Instead of giving your children more toys or electronics for their birthday, think about giving them an “experience” — tickets to an opera, symphony, or ballet. With a little research, you can find reasonably priced tickets at off-times. Perhaps your child can invite one friend or sibling, dress up and make it a very special night to remember.

Consider having your children learn a musical instrument. It is, quite possibly, the best financial investment we have made as parents. There were many times when we looked at our budget and my husband wanted to cut back. Somehow, thank you God, we managed to cut elsewhere so the children could have music lessons. With a large family, we have managed to have just the two oldest at home take lessons and then teach the younger ones in turn. As one goes to college, the next one begins lessons. Look for teachers who will emphasize the teaching of classical music.

2. Expose your children to beautiful art.

Take your children to museums and show them good art. Many art museums are free on Mondays — take a field trip and study the paintings up close. However, just as you would before watching a movie with your children, know the content of the exhibit before you go. Not all art is beautiful or appropriate!

When on vacation, take the time before you leave to research nearby cathedrals, shrines, and other examples of interesting architecture. If you have older children, you can assign each of them one site to research, and have them share their information with the family while you visit.

Decorate your home with beautiful art. This doesn't have to be expensive. With a little searching and luck, you can find original paintings for next to nothing at estate sales or thrift stores. Prints of beautiful artwork are fine too! With a little creativity and spray paint, an old frame can be made as lovely as the picture.

Buy used, oversized books of the great masters and encourage your children to look at them. Print copies of gorgeous paintings and paste them to the covers of your children's schoolbooks. Laminate them and use them as placemats. There are many ways to expose them to wonderful art. We love the Seton books because they provide photos of beautiful paintings, stained glass windows and cathedrals. Our kids often look in the back of the book to learn the name of the artist or title of the work.

Our homes should be filled with statues and pictures of the saints, Our Blessed Mother (who could be more beautiful than Mary?), crucifixes, icons and other religious items.

3. Read and invest in beautiful books.

Surround your children with classic literature, poetry, and spiritual books. Have them read stories of heroic virtue and noble deeds. Stack your coffee table with books filled with gorgeous photography, artwork, and architecture.

Begin when your children are very young by selecting books that have wonderful illustrations and paintings. Weed out books that lack beauty – either through uninteresting text or substandard artwork.

There are so many wonderful books out there, and it is easy to acquire inexpensive, used copies. Monthly library book sales or purchasing used books on Amazon are where most of our books have come from.

Be selective! Here is where quality is far more important than quantity. It is worth the time and investment to have your family surrounded by good, beautiful books. In one of my favorite books, *A Landscape with Dragons*, author Michael O'Brien provides outstanding reading suggestions according to age level.

Discover the beauty of poetry. Incorporating poetry into our homeschool (and having access to lots of wonderful books on poetry) has turned all of my children into poetry lovers.

Make a list of excellent books and begin reading them, one by one, to your children. Seton offers many in their catalog and supplies reading lists for each grade level with their lesson plans. We read out loud during lunch — even the older ones like to sit around the table and listen to Mom read wonderful books. Another mom I know puts on audio books (of great literature) when they are in the car — her children love it!

Like cultivating an appreciation for classical music or art, if children are not saturated in high quality literature from an early age, they most likely will shun it when they are older. The world is full of dime-store novels, teen romances, and fluffy books packaged in provocative covers to attract our children. Teach them to be very discerning. Keeping the standard of literature you have in your home very high is something you will never regret.

4. Bring beauty to your dinner table

We live in such a fast-food, disposable society. Paper plates have become the norm for family dining. While they certainly have their use, there is something lovely about setting the table in a special way for the family dinner.

It doesn't need to rival a setting in Downton Abbey — the simplest touches can transform a table. With your children's help, you can cut some flowers from the garden, light a couple of candles, use cloth napkins and place a pretty pitcher of water in the center. On special occasions, celebrate by getting out your nicest tableware. Put on a tablecloth and iron the napkins! One of my daughters loves to set a beautiful table, and she makes a big deal out of birthday dinners and special occasions. Setting a beautiful table for dinner not only makes the food taste even better, but also shows love and regard for your family.

5. Marvel at the beauty of Creation.

Take nature walks, go on hikes, discover your local state parks, drive to the beach (or mountains) and watch the sunset. Slow down and really look at the magnificent beauty God has given us all around. We so often take it for granted that we barely see it anymore. Almost every night, one of my daughters walks across the street (we live across from a big field in the country) and just watches the sunset. I hope she never loses that sense of wonder and awe when looking at the beauty of God's Creation.

Plant flowers, fruit trees, and flowering trees in your yard. There are plants which attract butterflies — it's wonderful to see them flitting about in your garden. Put food and water out for the birds to enjoy. My mom has a hummingbird feeder right outside her kitchen window and, because she faithfully fills it up, the little birds flock to it. Do whatever you can to attract God's creatures to your home so that you can appreciate them on a daily basis. And, of course, place a statue of Our Blessed Mother, the queen of all beauty, in your garden.

We cannot erase all the ugliness of the world, but we can keep that innate sense of beauty alive by the choices we make. Through music, art, books and nature, we can fill our home and family with beauty — awakening and reminding us that God is indeed present in the world.

"All that is good, all that is true, all that is beautiful, brings us to God." – Pope Francis



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.

Imperfect Father's Day

For some fathers in America, Father's Day is a wonderful and happy reminder of all the things that they have done right in raising their children. Maybe they celebrate the day with their children, reliving old memories and talking happily about future plans together. But I suspect that for some fathers, Father's Day is just a painful reminder of the things they have done wrong, or believe they have done wrong, in raising their children. Rather than happy memories, they ponder missed opportunities and broken relationships with their children. These men might still deeply desire to be good fathers, but they think they missed their chance—that time has inexorably passed them by. If you are one such father, I want you to consider a couple of thoughts.

First, recognize that there are no perfect fathers. It must be tough for some fathers to go through life feeling like they are competing against some imaginary League of Perfect Fathers. That's not fair to any man—or to any child, for that matter. The fathers look in the rear-view mirror and kick themselves for their past failings, and the adult children wonder what it would have been like if only he or she had been blessed with a perfect father.

Years ago, Frank Sinatra recorded a song called "My Way." It goes like this:

"Regrets, I've had a few

But then again, too few to mention...

And more, much more than this,

I did it my way."

That's a cool story, but it's not mine. Mine reads more like this. As for regrets, I've had many—too many to mention. Sometimes "I did what I had to do," but far too often, I didn't. And doing it "my way" was usually what landed me in Regret-Land. There are the words I said, but shouldn't have; there are the words I didn't say, but should have.

Oh, and one other thing. Everything I just said about regrets and "my way" could apply to me both as a parent and as an adult child. There were words of encouragement, appreciation, and love that I could have offered my own mom and dad, but I was too busy, too cool, or too...whatever, to

offer them. Until I grew up (meaning, in my case, my forties), I never realized how much my parents needed to hear them. For some of us men, maybe the best way to become better fathers is to become better sons.

For now, recognize that the common denominator in human parenting is imperfection. Don't let the inability to achieve perfection stop you from trying to be a good dad.

Second, you haven't missed your chance. "My children are grown up, and they won't even speak to me any more! I missed my chance to be a good father," you say.

It's odd how some parents look at fatherhood as something that men are

*"Stop reading this right now and say a
"Hail Mary" for your children."*

graded on when their child turns 18, and then they graduate from it. It's worth pondering that we fathers will continue to be fathers not only for our entire earthly lives, but for eternity. That gives you a pretty long time to turn things around. Regardless of the mistakes you have made in the past, you can still be a good father. Right now. Here's a great way to start: Pray for your children. In fact, please stop reading this right now and say a "Hail Mary" for your children.

Even if your children will no longer speak to you, speak to God about them. Ask Mary, Undoer of Knots, for her intercession. There are many, many sets of parents and children—once terribly estranged—who are now good friends. That can happen to you. True, there are some relationships that have encountered such significant problems that they cannot exactly be neatly mended on earth. But you can always seek God's forgiveness, forgive yourself, and forgive others. You can always pray for yourself and your children.

What does prayer have to do with being a good father? At the risk of understatement: Everything! Ultimately, it's not the trips to



Disneyland that make you a good father; it's the time spent in prayer. Even if your children will no longer speak to you, realize that you are your own living proof that you have not missed your chance to be an awesome dad. The devils in Hell are the ones who tempt you to think that you missed your chance. They are bitter because they missed theirs. You didn't.

If Father's Day causes you to feel a lack of hope and a sense of sadness, please turn to the Father of Mercies, asking for His help for yourself and for your children.



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.

5 Simple Steps to Improve Your Prayer Life

FR. JEFFREY KIRBY, STD



So much is going on in our lives and the world. Amid these activities and responsibilities, how are we to stay close to the Lord? How are we to pray? Here are five steps that can help.

1 “I really want to pray. How do I start?” The first step is to acknowledge we are not the ones who initiated our desire to pray.

God summons us to himself. When we wish to pray, God is already working within us. This should be a great consolation and encouragement to us. It is an opportunity to calm our concern and deflate our anxieties on how to pray or whether we’re praying right. God is already working in us, and he will guide our efforts to pray.

2 “What’s the best way to start praying?” After recognizing that God is calling us to pray, our next step is to develop a habit of prayer. This is a humble but very necessary step. We must create a habit. The two best ways to create a habit: A) Make it achievable; and B) Attach it to an existing habit.

The first point is important. A person cannot start running and then think they’re ready for a marathon. Progress in the spiritual life is slow, and the maxim is true: “As fast as you pick it up is as fast as you will put it down.” For the habit to stick, it must be slow and practically achievable. For example, maybe the goal of praying five minutes a day could be a great start.

The second point is as important. Sometimes, new habits are lost just by plain forgetfulness, or from willful laziness or distraction. By attaching our daily five minutes of prayer to an existing habit, we ensure it will be remembered and we will fight to get it done.

For example, we can attach our five minutes of prayer to taking a shower or brushing our teeth in the morning.

The forming of a habit is essential because our prayer life cannot grow and mature without it.

3 “What am I supposed to say when I pray?” When we pray, we can say whatever we want. There is no such thing as a bad prayer. When we begin to pray, the most important thing is we are praying.

To help us when we begin to pray, we can do what we do best in our fallen nature; namely, we can just complain! We can open our hearts and just let God know about our struggles and disappointments.

As our habit strengthens, we can change our complaining into thanksgiving. We can thank God for all his blessings.

Eventually, our five minutes can become ten minutes. We can also pause and let God speak to us. In forming our habit of prayer, we deepen our understanding that prayer is about relationship and covenant, and not about a “to do” list for God. We see that prayer is about asking God what he wants from us, and not asserting what we want from him.

In time, our ten minutes can become fifteen or twenty minutes and then we can use different prayer forms from the Church’s spiritual treasury to help us deepen our prayer and more clearly hear the Lord speak to us.

4 “What can I do when prayer gets really difficult?” When our prayer life becomes dry, it’s important we understand what is happening. Some might think that when prayer becomes difficult or dry, they are doing something wrong, they have offended God in some way, or something in that arena. What is happening in these moments? What is God doing?

This part of the spiritual life is the purgative way. The expression reflects the reality: we are being purged in these dark times of prayer. God is removing the consolation and teaching us to love him for himself and not for the blessings we receive from him. In the purgative way, God has moved from “soul triage” to “soul surgery.” In this process, he is teaching us dependency and trust.

We should not fear these moments. Even as we wrestle, the spiritual masters teach us

that God is closer to us in our purgation than our times of consolation. God is doing more in our souls than we could ever imagine. Our task is to persevere and let God work.

The purgative way usually concludes with an illumination of some form. The Lord imprints knowledge within us in a profound way. This could include a mystical awareness of love, mercy, hope, healing, or other areas we need in our discipleship.

5 “Am I praying all by myself?” No Christian ever prays alone. As someone who is baptized, we always pray in Christ. The Lord makes constant intercession for us and everything we do, we do “in him, with him, and through him.” In Christ, we are also surrounded by the saints, who are the friends of God and our older brothers and sisters, as a “cloud of witnesses” helping us (Hebrews 12:1). They encourage and pray for us. They inspire us and model the Christian way of life for us.

We never pray alone. In our life of prayer, it is very good to find a prayer partner or join a prayer group. For those in Holy Matrimony, their God-given prayer partner is their spouse. It is utterly essential that married people pray together, and that Christian families pray together. **Parents are the first and graced spiritual directors of their children, the royal priests of the domestic church, and as such they must teach their children to pray.** The Christian family is called to be an oasis of prayer, showing our fallen world the face and compassion of God.

In conclusion, each of these five simple steps is meant to help us in our busy lives. They are meant to guide us in our life of prayer. Each step is intended as counsel along the way of life and from the trenches of the Church to assist each of us in developing or deepening our interior lives.



Fr. Jeffrey Kirby, STD, is the Administrator of Our Lady of Grace Parish in Indian Land, SC. He holds a doctorate in moral theology from the Holy Cross University in Rome and is the author of the book, “Lord, Teach Us to Pray”.

Seton's Independent Study Program

BY NICHOLAS MARMALEJO

What it is and when it's right for you

Flexibility is a primary reason many families decide to homeschool. A range of options are available. Homeschoolers can tackle subjects in the order they prefer or study topics unavailable to them at conventional schools. Families can carve out more space in their busy schedule for non-academic-related pursuits, such as sports or fine arts, in which a student particularly excels. Time is also available for daily devotions, such as prayer, daily mass, and works of charity.

Whatever one might say about homeschooling, it is flexible across the board, and Seton acknowledges this flexibility as one of homeschooling's greatest strengths.

Questions inevitably arise, however, when students want to pursue subjects outside of Seton's curriculum yet receive formal credit or acknowledgement on their transcript. The short answer is there are two ways a student can do this: send us a homeschooling transcript, or enroll in Seton's Independent Study Program.

Philosophically, Seton and the Catholic Church recognize that parents are the primary teachers of their children. Because of that, if you send us a transcript from your personal homeschool that denotes a subject, grade, and credit for a specific class, we do accept its legitimacy. A college or university, however, is another matter. Most will ask questions about a student's learning program. In particular, they will be interested to know if the student truly merited a grade they received, and it will be up to the student to demonstrate or prove their academic readiness to the college.

The alternative is to enroll in Seton's Independent Study program. This program is not a panacea or catch-all for everything under the sun—courses still must be approved by Seton. Seton offers the program because many homeschooling families need the most robust transcript possible to record their non-Seton pursuits. We also know that not all students learn in the same way, and that some programs blend with a student's learning style better than others.



Nicholas Marmalejo, Seton high school guidance counselor. He has a history major and graduated from Christendom College in 2001. He holds a Virginia Teacher Certification and lives in the Shenandoah Valley with his wife and three children.

How Independent Study Works

To enroll in an independent study course, the parent proposes a course of study by signing up for the course under the Resources tab on their MySeton page. The parent fills out the form, noting the time that will be spent on the subject, course materials, and the teacher(s) involved. Currently, the fee to add each course is \$30.00.

If the course of study is approved, Seton sends you Quarter Report forms. After a student completes a quarter's worth of work, you return the filled-out Quarter Report form to Seton, along with evidence of the student's work, usually a test. Seton reviews the work and then records the grade if there is no discrepancy. It is this third party review that gives the record its strength.

On the Seton transcript, Independent Study grades are noted on a separate attachment called an Addendum. The Addendum notes that the courses on it are either elective, supplemental, or approved core substitutions, but not a part of the student's official Seton grade point average.

While a diploma-seeking student can request an independent study in any academic subject, as a rule, no core substitutions are allowed for Seton's Religion, English, or Social Studies courses. For other courses and subjects, approval with stipulations may apply.

So, when should you use a homeschooling transcript versus an independent study? Well, it depends.

For students in sports or the fine arts and planning to pursue them at a higher level in college, I recommend an independent study. For students in those activities that just want it noted on their transcript to receive formal credit or acknowledgement, I recommend taking the homeschool transcript route.

With respect to academic-related subjects for students planning on college or trade school, I recommend the independent study.

Without a doubt, for a process as highly nuanced as Seton's Independent Study program, one article cannot answer every question. Please contact Seton's Guidance Department if you have any specific questions about the program. Like the Request for an Independent Study form, a template for a Homeschooling Transcript can also be found under the Resources tab on your MySeton page.



2017 Catholic Homeschooling Conferences

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

LA, Lafayette June 16, 2017 (Fri.) IHM Lafayette Homeschool Conference

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

CO, Denver June 29, 2017 (Thu.) IHM Colorado Homeschool Conference

St. Mary Catholic Parish – Marian Hall
6853 S. Prince Street
Littleton, CO 80210
Thu.: 12 noon – 6 pm
www.ihmconference.org/colorado

TX, Arlington July 21-22, 2017 (Fri.-Sat.) IHM North Texas Homeschool Conference

Arlington Convention Center
1200 Ballpark Way
Arlington, TX 76011
Fri.: 12 noon – 6 pm
Sat.: 9:30 am – 3:30 pm
www.ihmconference.org/northtexas

MI, Lansing June 16-17, 2017 (Fri.-Sat.) IHM Michigan Homeschool Conference

Lansing Catholic High School
501 Marshall Street
Lansing, MI 48912
Fri.: 12 noon – 6 pm
Sat.: 9:30 am – 3:30 pm
www.ihmconference.org/michigan

IL, Chicago July 6-7, 2017 (Thu.-Fri.) IHM Chicago Homeschool Conference

Bobak's Signature Events & Conference Center
6440 Double Eagle Drive
Woodridge, IL 60517
Thu.: 12 noon – 6 pm
Fri.: 9:30 am – 3:30 pm
www.ihmconference.org/chicago

MA, Lowell July 28, 2017 (Fri.) IHM New England Homeschool Conference

UMass Lowell Inn & Conference Center
50 Warren Street
Lowell, MA 01852
Fri.: 12 noon – 6 pm
www.ihmconference.org/newengland

VA, Fredericksburg June 23-24, 2017 (Fri.-Sat.) IHM National Homeschool Conference

Fredericksburg Expo & Conference Center
2371 Carl D. Silver Parkway
Fredericksburg, VA 22401
Fri.: 9 am – 9 pm Sat.: 9 am – 4:30 pm
www.ihmconference.org/national

OH, Dayton July 14-15, 2017 (Fri.-Sat.) IHM Dayton Homeschool Conference

St. Peter Catholic Church – Family Life Center
6161 Chambersburg Road
Huber Heights, OH 45424
Fri.: 12 noon – 6 pm
Sat.: 9:30 am – 3:30 pm
www.ihmconference.org/dayton

NJ, Mahwah July 28-29, 2017 (Fri.-Sat.) IHM New York Homeschool Conference

Ramapo College of New Jersey – Robert A. Scott Student Center
505 Ramapo Valley Road
Mahwah, NJ 07430
Fri.: 12 noon – 6 pm
Sat.: 9:30 am – 3:30 pm
www.ihmconference.org/newyork

CA, Costa Mesa June 24, 2017 (Sat.) Southern California Catholic Home Educators 17th Annual Conference & Curriculum Fair

St. John the Baptist Catholic Church
1015 Baker Street
Costa Mesa, CA 92626
Sat.: 8 am – 4 pm
sccheregistration-rita@yahoo.com

OH, Cleveland July 21-22, 2017 (Fri.-Sat.) IHM Cleveland Homeschool Conference

St. Adalbert Parish — Keller Center
66 Adalbert Street
Berea, OH 44017
Fri.: 12 noon – 6 pm
Sat.: 9:30 am – 12:00 pm
www.ihmconference.org/cleveland

**For updates on all
Seton Conferences go to:
Setonhome.org/conferences**



SETON MAGAZINE JULY GRADUATION ISSUE

STAY TUNED FOR SETON MAGAZINE'S SPECIAL JULY ISSUE. SEE AS SETON'S STUDENTS GRADUATE AS THE CLASS OF 2017. THIS ISSUE WILL INCLUDE STUDENT ACHIEVEMENTS STORIES, PHOTOS OF THE CELEBRATION AND MUCH MORE.

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WWW.IHMCONFERENCE.ORG

POPE FRANCIS

GENERAL AUDIENCE

WEDNESDAY, 19 MARCH 2014

Advice to Fathers

I ask for you the grace to be ever closer to your children, allow them to grow, but be close, close! They need you, your presence, your closeness, your love. May you be for them as St Joseph was: guardians of their growth in age, wisdom and grace. May you guard them on their journey: be educators and walk with them. And by this closeness you will be true educators.

