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The Darnowski Family



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Letter from the Editor

Dear Readers:

For many of us the month of September brings about the beginning of our school year and all of its accompanying hustle. The sports, dance classes, and other worthy but exhausting activities are also starting up again, and we can see those lovely blank spaces in the calendar getting filled up. It can be overwhelming.

In this issue, Dr. Clark reminds us that, as parents, we are given grace to accomplish the education through the sacrament of matrimony, and we are in fact called to be the primary educators of our children. "It...should be stressed that the education of children is a sacred duty and a shared task of the parents, both father and mother: it requires warmth, closeness, dialogue and example." St. John Paul (Discourse to the Participants of the Plenary Assembly of the Pontifical Council for the Family, June 1999)

All of this grace is necessary because homeschooling is hard, and it's easy to become overwhelmed. Mr. John Clark shares some wisdom in how to keep going when you feel like quitting, and I would like to add the suggestion of writing down a few of the reasons you chose to homeschool in the first place and put it somewhere as a source of inspiration. I made a bookmark of mine, which rests in my daily prayer book.

The family is a masterpiece of God's creation, and children educated within this masterpiece by the parents He chose for them will be blessed with many graces. At Seton it is our privilege to assist families in carrying out this vocation. We stand ready to support, encourage and pray for all of you as you work to bring the Kingdom of God to your children.

Blessings,

Mary Ellen Barrett



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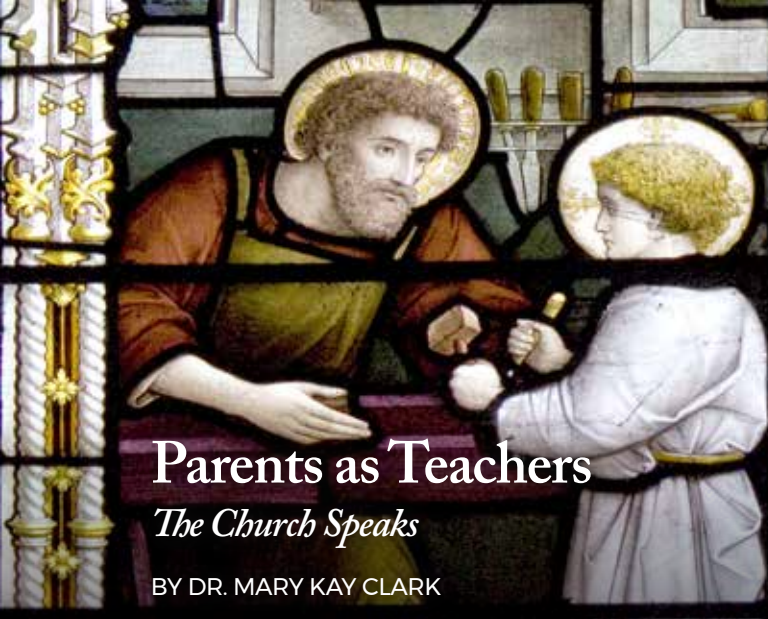
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Parents as Teachers

The Church Speaks

BY DR. MARY KAY CLARK



Many years ago, when Seton came into existence, Father John Hardon, currently being considered for canonization, spoke frequently at Seton Home Schooling Conferences. He constantly encouraged parents to teach their children at home, and he gave spiritual guidance to parents. Many of Father Hardon's statements are included in my book *Catholic Home Schooling*, especially in Chapter 3 on Church Teachings on Marriage and Education.

The Church Speaks

The official teachings of the Church on marriage and raising children are found in the Holy Spirit-inspired writings of the Church, the Church encyclicals. As we begin the new school year, it seems appropriate for parents, grandparents, relatives, and older children to reflect on these official teachings of the Church.

1897 - Pope Leo XIII in the encyclical *Militantis Ecclesiae* teaches that the whole educational program for children is to be permeated with "the sense of Christian piety" as well as a sense of devotion and reverence toward God and the doctrines taught by Jesus. Pope Leo went so far as to say that "religion must permeate and direct every branch of knowledge."

1929 - In his famous encyclical, *Christian Education of Youth*, Pope Pius XI issues "...the supreme importance of Christian education, is not merely for each individual, but for families and for the whole of human society." He continues, "The family holds, therefore, directly from the Creator the mission, and hence the right, to educate the young."

1930 - From his encyclical *Casti Connubii*, Pope Pius XI, inspired by the Holy Spirit, we learn "...the faithful can...open up for themselves a treasury of sacramental grace from which they draw supernatural power for the fulfilling of their rights and duties faithfully, holily, perseveringly, even unto death. Hence this sacrament [of Matrimony] not only increases sanctifying grace...but also adds particular gifts, dispositions, seeds of grace, by elevating and perfecting the natural powers."

These words are not simply for reflection but for inner strength and whatever graces we need to accomplish the Will of God in teaching our children how to practice our Catholic Faith in a non-Christian society. The fact is that the long-term, day by day, minute by minute obligation of parents, is educating our children.

1965 - The Second Vatican Council in the *Declaration on Christian Education* declared "Since parents have given life to their children, they are bound by a grave obligation to educate their offspring, and so must be regarded as their primary and principal educators." This is repeated in the Code of Canon Law, 226.2

1968 - In the encyclical *Humanae Vitae*, Pope Paul VI declared that marriage and conjugal love are by their nature ordained toward the "begetting and education of children."

1981 - Pope John Paul II repeated these words in the encyclical *Familiaris Consortio*, which continued to declare the teachings of the Church: "The Right and Duty of parents to give education to their children is

essential... it is original and primary... it is irreplaceable and inalienable."

1983 - Pope John Paul II publishes *Charter of the Rights of the Family*, an amazing document filled with strong arguments for the rights of parents.

1995 - The Pontifical Council for the Family issued *The Truth and Meaning of Human Sexuality*. In that document, the Pontifical Council wrote "This right [to give moral instruction] also implies an educational **duty**. ...[Parents] would be guilty were they to tolerate immoral or inadequate formation being given to their children outside the home. ...Therefore, through this document, the Church holds that it is her duty to give parents back **confidence in their own capabilities and help them to carry out this task**."

Years ago, when I met with Cardinal Édouard Gagnon in Rome, he told me that he believed that homeschooling is vital for evangelizing from one generation to the next. We must take his message to heart. Each Catholic homeschooling family must be a source of grace for our children and for a society struggling for survival.

All the saints in Heaven, help Catholic home schooling parents to teach their children the moral truths of Jesus Christ as well as their academic studies.



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

your Questions ANSWERED

BY DR. MARY KAY CLARK

My friend says she is advancing her 4th grader into 6th grade math because he knows all the material so well. Is that a good idea?

Parents should make the final decision, but we don't recommend advancing a student by omitting a grade level in any subject area that depends on previous skills.

Math, English, and foreign languages are subjects that need constant review and practice, even after the basic concepts are learned. Skipping a grade level in those subjects can leave a student with knowledge gaps.

The courses in which you could move a bright student up a level or two are religion, history, and science, as well as spelling and vocabulary. We suggest only moving students up if their grades are consistently high.

My husband would like our older child to start helping with home schooling the younger children.

That is fine if the older student can keep up with her own work and continue to do very well. Some families ask an older student to act as an "assistant teacher" for younger ones. In a few families, a high school graduate takes a part-time job for a year and helps with home schooling the younger ones.

This can also be an effective tactic if a higher grade level student needs remedial practice. For example, if you have a 7th grade student who needs more math practice, you can have that student tutor a 5th grade student. That will actually help both students.

How can I help my son with his book analysis if I don't have time to read the book myself?

The book analyses are meant to help students use inductive thinking skills, to make students think about the reasons for supporting their topic sentence. The student must consider the actions and words of a character, and come to a conclusion.

Even if parents do not read the books, parents can help their children by asking the children to talk about what they are reading for the book report. Some families ask children to share what they read at dinnertime. Retelling story events can help students review and think about the reasons why a character spoke or acted as he or she did.

It is very important that both parents and students read the book analysis directions in the lesson plans **before the student begins reading the book.** That way, the student knows exactly what to look for in the book. We suggest that students use a highlighter to underline parts of the book which the student can use as examples when writing

the book analysis. If a student highlights important parts, it should be very easy to go to the book and find specifics that will be needed in the analysis.

Once your student writes the book analysis, we suggest that parents look it over to see whether the student has written a persuasive analysis with good examples. In other words, do the examples cited by the student prove the assertions made about the character?

What do you think about parish home school classes?

Some moms like sending their children to a "tutoring" class at the local parish. The children can meet other Catholic home schoolers. However, some of the usual classroom problems do arise, so parents need to be questioning their children. A slow student or a student who has learning issues, or a student who needs more explanation, can be made to feel inadequate. Parents need to be very alert for possible situations such as these.

That said, it is certainly worth considering, especially in more technical areas where the parish teacher may have special training. For example, a parent may have difficulty teaching a foreign language class or a computer programming class. A class a couple of times a week at the parish taught by an expert could be a real help in such cases.

What should I emphasize for my son about learning math?

Our Seton math counselor gives the following answer: While English is a tool of Communication, Math is a tool of Order. Through learning math, students can develop the thinking skills to manage their lives. Some students need to "toil" at math problems, but hard work is essential to be successful in life.

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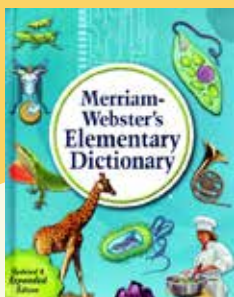
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Many students fail at math because of carelessness in either "reading" the math problem or being careless in doing the problem. Legibility in writing the math problems is absolutely essential. Neatness is absolutely essential. Many students who have wrong answers cannot read their own writing of the math problem. From reviewing the tests of many math students, it seems that too many students don't take the time to think about the problem; rather, they just write a quick answer.

Repetition is important in learning everything, at least for most of us. While the **rate** of comprehension—that is grasping and understanding math concepts—varies greatly among students, **retention** of what we have studied comes to all students mainly by **repetition**.

When I enroll, can I choose the books for the book reports?

Yes, you can choose the book report books for 4th through 8th grades when you enroll. If you enroll online, then you would need to list the book titles you want in the Comment textbox on the Household Information tab. Just list the books you want for each grade level. If you enroll by phone, simply tell your admissions counselor your book choices.

To see your book choices for saint books and novels, you can view our Elementary Course Catalog at <http://www.setonhome.org/homeschool/explore/elemcat>

I have a friend with a son at the local high school. His son would like to enroll in just one course at Seton to make up for a course he did not pass.

We have many students who enroll in Seton for one course to make up for a failed course in another school. Because we are accredited, it is usually not a problem for the other school to accept our course for their graduation requirements. We encourage students to take such courses over the summer, however, when they can focus on the work and put in the time and effort needed to obtain a high grade.

Can you explain how independent study works regarding high school course credits?

Students can take courses as "independent study," either on their own or at a co-op, and these courses can count toward graduation requirements. If they are, for example, math or science courses, they can take the place of required courses. You can take courses outside of the core subjects, such as a driver's education or a music course, which can count as an elective credit toward the total credits needed for graduation. Independent study credits do not count toward a student's GPA, but they do count toward graduation and the credits will be listed on the student's transcript.

There are some subject areas in which we do not permit students to do independent study: religion, English, history, literature, and government. (An exception to this general rule is that students who are citizens of countries other than the United States may do an independent study of the history or government of their country.) The reason for this is that we feel that these are areas in which a Catholic perspective is very much needed, and an independent study course is unlikely to provide that perspective.

For more information please see this page: www.setonhome.org/independent-study



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



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



setonhome.org/colleges



5 Reasons to Love Seton's Online Printable Lesson Plans

BY CHERYL HERNÁNDEZ

If your student is enrolled with Seton, and you haven't been using the printable online lesson plans, you may want to check them out.

Over the course of 21 years, we have enrolled our nine children with Seton Home Study School, with five graduates. That tells you we are big fans of the excellent curriculum Seton provides. One of the many reasons we love the curriculum is the ease of printable weekly lesson plans, primarily because they help my students (and me) to stay on target and complete each year on a timely basis.

The big stack of lesson plans sent with your student's curriculum each year can be rather daunting for a parent. For a young child to be handed them can be even more daunting! The purpose of the online lesson plans is to simplify things, breaking down assignments on a daily basis, making them far less intimidating — even happily doable!

I would encourage you, if you are not using this feature already, to take a peek and maybe just try it this year, and see what you think. Here are five good reasons to do so....

1 They are simple and easy to use.

When you go on to your student's MySeton page, simply scroll down to the tab that says "Print daily lesson plans". On the Daily Lesson Plan Creator, you can choose to print either weekly plans or daily — just click on the tab you would prefer. When you have selected the courses to be printed (and the week you would like), select "Create Lesson Plans", and you will be able to view them in your word processing application. Here's where you can edit and customize the plans for each student before you print (more on that in #4).

2 Choose weekly or daily lesson plans.

Many families, especially those with younger students, use the daily lesson plans. This is especially good if you don't want your child to be overwhelmed with an entire week's worth of work. At the beginning of the school day, you can then go over the

daily assignments, printed out on one sheet, with your student. At the end of the school day, your student can come to you to check off each subject.

My children prefer the weekly lesson plans because they like to know what is expected each week. The older children, especially, can then manage their time accordingly. For instance, if they know there will be a history test on Thursday that week, but our homeschool coop meets that morning, they may opt to postpone the test until Friday so they will have more time to study. With older students, they have more flexibility to manage their weekly work themselves, as long as the work is complete by the end of the week. This teaches them organization and responsibility. If the plan doesn't work out as expected, they are required to finish the work over the weekend. Often, this makes them rethink how much flexibility they want to give themselves the next week. Often, too, they will think of ways to manage their time better so assignments get finished on time.



3 Accountability is good for everyone!

Over the years, our family has had up to 6 students fully enrolled with Seton at one time. That's a lot of assignments for a parent to keep track of! Things can easily get lost in the shuffle. At the end of the quarter, when a student needs to send in all the requirements, there will invariably be a paragraph, a science test, or a few quizzes that got overlooked. This is where the online lesson plans help everyone to keep organized.

My children come to me each Friday to go over their lesson plans from that week. They check off assignments as they are completed. We make sure that nothing was missed, and the week is deemed "complete". The younger kids liked when I drew a funny face or put stickers on the lesson plans at the end of a completed week. My older ones, instead, will take great pleasure (and dramatics) ripping the completed week's lesson plans out of the binder, crumple them up, and toss them into the waste basket across the room. If, however, some assignments did not get

done, I highlight them and send them back to their desk (or have them complete them over the weekend). Not only are weekly lesson plans a great way for a parent to stay on top of the required assignments, but it helps the student to learn responsibility.

4 Customize your lesson plans.

This is my favorite part of the online printable lesson plans. Before they are printed, each subject gets put in the order in which I want them completed each day. For instance, I want my 4th grader to begin each day with his Religion assignment — so that gets put to the top of the plans. (Use the arrows to place each subject where you would like). Because he is working on his cursive and his handwriting tends to go downhill as the morning progresses, the next subject for him is Handwriting. The next subjects usually go in order of difficulty. Math, for instance, would go next, followed by English. The last subjects would be the simpler ones for him — Vocabulary, for example. I omit some subjects on their weekly lesson plans by simply not checking the box - Physical Education, Music and Art. Not that they don't do these subjects — but they are done in a less structured manner, with no "required assignments". So to simplify, I leave them off the lesson plans.

On the Daily Lesson Plan Creator, some subjects will say "Print blank (No lesson plans available.)" I check these - Spelling, for instance, because I want the lesson plans to have a place for Spelling each day. After the plans are printed, I will pencil in the required Spelling assignment. For example, I will pencil in on Monday "4A," meaning "Week 4, lesson A". On Fridays, I will pencil in "Quiz" so my student knows there will be a quiz on the words that week (and so I don't forget). For Saxon Math, I do the same, penciling in each daily math assignment, including tests.

Another great way to customize your lesson plans is to write notes or highlight specific points. I often do this more for my own benefit than for my student. For instance, if one of the reading assignments requires written questions from "This is Our Land", I might make a note for my student to do the assignment orally with

me. Sometimes, I attach a note saying, "See mom for grade on this assignment", so I can mark it on the quarterly report form after my student shows it to me. Some assignments I might omit altogether. Reviewing the printed lesson plans and making simple notes prior to the beginning of each quarter makes the quarter go smoother, especially end-of-quarter grading.

5 Put the printed lessons plans in a fun binder.

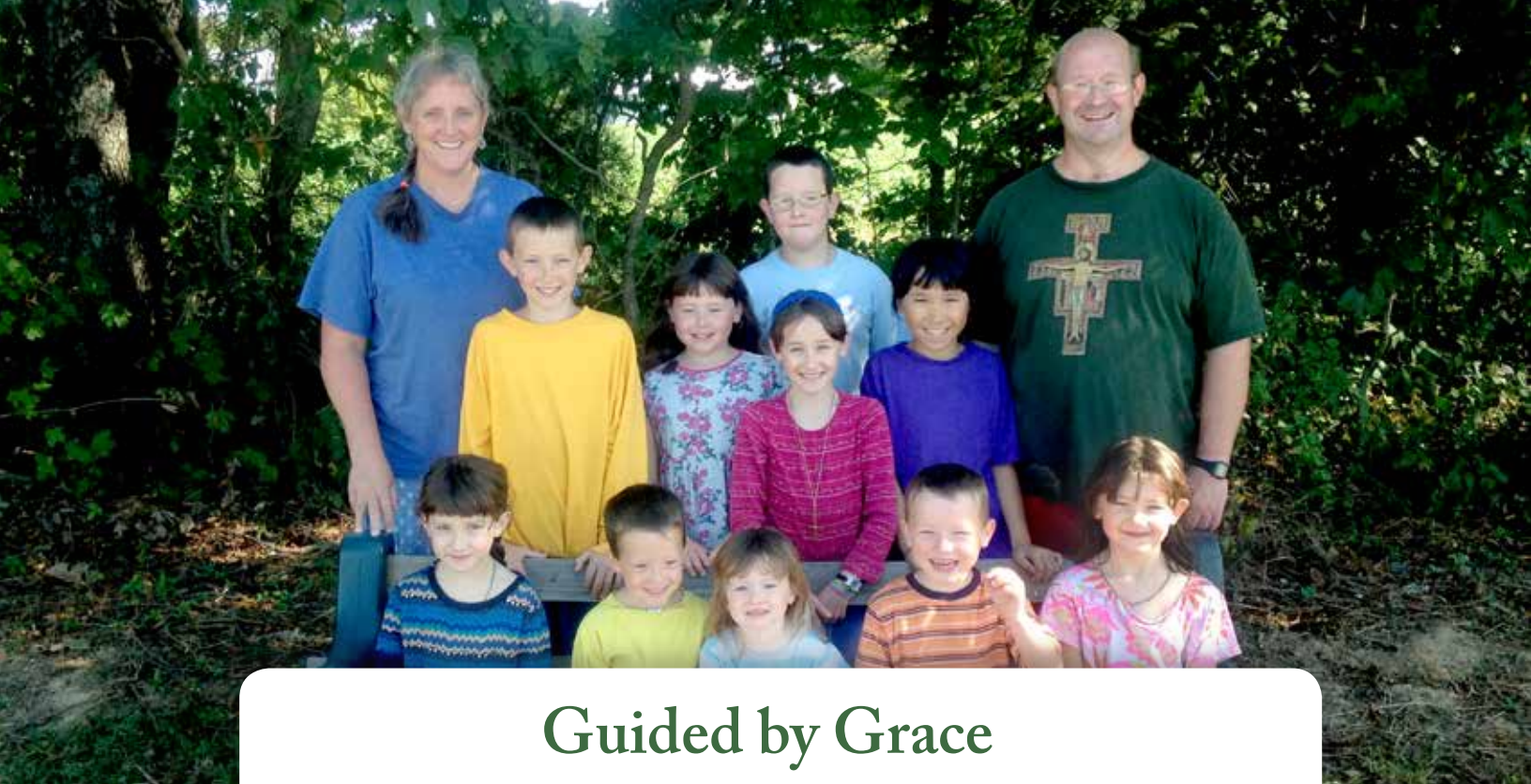
Before each quarter begins, I print all nine weeks of that quarter and place them in a colorful binder. Each of my students has four binders of the same color — one for the online weekly lesson plans, one for all the lesson plans (sent with the curriculum), one for answer keys and one for quarterly report forms and tests. With several children enrolled at once, and four binders for each child, it helps to have them color coordinated! Printed binder spines indicating the student's name and what the binder is for are helpful as well.

In past years, we have decorated the covers of the binders with pictures of the Stations of the Cross and the Mysteries of the Rosary (both can be purchased at setonbooks.com), which fit in the front and back cover sleeves of the binders nicely. Each year, it's fun to change the covers, and this year we have pictures of my children's favorite saints with accompanying quotes. These are easy to find online and can be printed in color. A map, periodic table, or a copy of the Declaration of Independence also make good binder covers. Just don't make the mistake I made one year and put pictures of the digestive system (thinking it would be a great way for my daughter to memorize some human anatomy terms for her health class). That didn't go over so well!

There are many ways to customize Seton's online lesson plans to suit your family. Check it out and see how they might help you this new school year.



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.



Guided by Grace

BY ADELE DARNOWSKI

How did we come to homeschool?

When I was 18 years old, single, and fancy free, I joined a pro-life missionary group led by a lovely priest — Fr. Norman Weslin. We traveled about doing pro-life work and sometimes going to jail for praying the rosary outside the abortion mills. I learned so much about prayer and community during that time. I learned how to recite the Liturgy of the Hours and sing the Salve Regina. This knowledge has stayed with me to this day.

Also, I came to see and be amazed by the beautiful pro-life families out there. The love and generosity of those people repeatedly blessed us. They would take us into their own homes and sponsor us when we would visit their cities and towns. In one particular home, I had a watershed moment I had no idea would change my life later on, as this lovely Catholic family with many children used Seton to homeschool. I flipped through one of the elementary grade history books on their coffee table and found the story about Christopher Columbus and the Nina, the Pinta, and the Santa Maria. After many years of Catholic education in Canada, I had NO IDEA that Christopher Columbus was Catholic and that he had a ship named after Our Lady. There and then I said, “If I ever get married and have children, I will use Seton.”

It was like a calling card from God. I even wrote down the Seton address. I didn’t meet and marry my spouse until 14 years later. I purchased the Seton Kindergarten program when my son was only 18 months old, and I held it in safe keeping until he was ready.

“If I ever get married and have children, I will use Seton.”

My husband grew up as an only child as his parents struggled with infertility. School was always a difficult place for my husband, even though he was a budding genius. Others were often jealous of his academic success, and the Faith was not taught very well in the Catholic schools he attended. His mother taught him from a Baltimore catechism she found and guarded as a treasure after she came across it on a newsstand in the New York City subway. She too knew a treasure when she found one, and so she socked it away in case she would ever have a child. When Doug was born, she taught him well out of this prized book. If one bad book can spoil a whole convent of nuns, one good book can bring untold blessings and affect whole generations!

While my husband’s Dad was very concerned about his son’s education and the passing along of the Faith, he was very reticent to homeschooling. He was worried about socialization. Doug went instead to Evangelical schools and had to fight to defend his Faith against teachers and students who tried to “convert” him. It made him very strong in his Faith, though he really would not recommend this route to parents, as it was painful and lonely. Perhaps it was something akin to what St. Therese felt when she begged to be taught at home as a young lady.

What’s a typical homeschool day like in our home?

Our homeschool day starts at six a.m. when my self-starting twelve-year old gets





himself up and makes breakfast. Depending on Mass time, we try to get to work as early as we can, while people are fresh. We try to stick to a fairly rigid schedule, similar to that of a happy monastery: prayer, work, meals, and play. Our quiet time is from 1:00 p.m. - 3:00 p.m. and early bedtimes for the children are important. On Fridays, we have a little field trip in the afternoon if all of the work is completed.

What has helped us in homeschooling over the years?

Several resources that have helped me in my homeschool journey are:

1. A friend who told me she has quiet time for every child every day from 1:00 - 3:00.
2. Dr. Mary Kay Clark's book *Catholic Homeschooling*.
3. Ginny Seuffert's discipline and home-school suggestions and her quip "Early and often."
4. Dr. Ray Guarendi's disciplining secrets as outlined in his books.
5. Phil Lenahan's 5 Steps to Financial Freedom.
6. A final resource I loved early on was *A Mother's Rule of Life* by Holly Pierlot.

Have there been challenges in our homeschool?

Our greatest challenges to homeschooling have come from outside the home: worries about the world and what's going to happen, as well as financial worries. These stresses seem to come into our home and disrupt our peace and our schedule. The devil wants to steal, kill, and destroy, after all. He would like you and me to give up and to feel so badly about ourselves that we cave to whatever will take us away from our duty of the moment. "But in all these things we overcome, because of him that hath loved us." (Romans 8:37)


Other big helps include: family meetings, children doing chores, weekly date night (usually in home) for Mom and Dad, praying a daily rosary, Mass and weekly confession. We pray the family rosary whenever we get into the car, even if we've already said one. Keep things simple! Stay home more instead of doing other activities.

If there are lessons to be learned from our story, they may be:

- Marry a good, holy man even if you must wait many years to find him.
- A year of mission work for an older teen might be an invaluable learning experience!
- Keep those Seton History books around; you may have a stray eighteen-year-old who picks one up to read it!
- It takes tremendous courage to keep going; if you feel weak, borrow Our Lady's courage and the courage of the Sacred Heart of Jesus.

We love Seton because it is academically challenging, wonderfully and faithfully Catholic, simple, yet beautifully disciplined. It is a beautiful gift to the Church and the world. Thank you, Ann and Warren Carroll, for founding Seton, and Dr. Mary Kay Clark for all you have done and endured to make Seton what it is today. It's a little miracle in a dark world! We love you.




$$2 + 2 = 4$$

When You Feel Like Quitting

BY JOHN CLARK

About this time every year, homeschooling families begin to receive their boxes of books. Also about this time every year, the negative thoughts can start.

"I am not achieving any of my homeschooling goals."

When I was seven, I had two goals: first, marry Princess Leia; second, play shortstop for the Cincinnati Reds. As I grew older, I realized goals can change, and that's OK.

When you are making goals for homeschooling, make them realistic and achievable. And if you find that they are unrealistic and unachievable, change them. Also, don't make just long-term goals; make daily goals as well. Someone should have told me this when I was seven. Don't focus so much on the major leagues at the moment: have a goal of fielding fifty ground balls today. If fifty is too many, field twenty-five. If twenty-five is too many, field ten. If ten is too many, field one. Just one. And if you can't field even one today, that's why God gives you a wonderful gift called "tomorrow." Homeschooling is no different. In homeschooling or anything else, achieving very big goals is the result of first achieving very small goals. And you don't have to achieve them all today.

"This was the year I was going to be organized, and I failed."

Many parents who quit homeschooling say the reason they quit was because "they weren't organized enough." Let me let you in on a little secret: that's probably not why they quit. My guess is that only a few parents ever quit homeschooling because they couldn't get organized, but lots of parents quit homeschooling because they

thought that disorganization equaled failure. Sometimes it's helpful to read books and blogs and hear talks about organization, but sometimes those books and talks only serve to make us organizationally-challenged parents think we're failing. If you regard organization as the most important aspect of homeschooling, and you can't seem to get organized—you will eventually quit homeschooling. You just don't want to fail any more.

"Be patient with your children, just as God has been patient with you."

Let me be blunt. There is only one real failure: Hell. And there is not a single soul in Hell who is there for the crime of disorganization. On the contrary, I believe that many saints will attain Heaven partly because their disorganized parents chose to homeschool them. Remember something when disorganization and chaos tempt you to quit: the theological virtues are faith, hope, and charity—not faith, hope, and organization.

Look, I'd like to be more organized. I'd also like to be three inches taller, have bigger biceps, and be able to cook bacon on the stove without burning it. But I have my own unique strengths and weaknesses. So do you. I admire people who are organized, just as I admire people who can make perfect bacon on their stoves. By all means, make some effort to be organized, but be patient with yourself. And for those of you who are great at homeschooling and believe that your success is due to your organization

prowess, start giving yourself a little more credit—your greatest success is not because of your organization; it's because you love your kids.

"My kids don't seem to care what they're learning."

Many people don't recognize the greatness of a gift until long after they receive it. Think about your own life: When you were seven years old, did you realize the sweetness of the gift of Holy Communion? When you received your first sacramental absolution, did you break into tears pondering the enormity of God's mercy? Falling in love with God takes time. Be patient with your children, just as God has been patient with you.

We homeschooling parents teach our children more about God every day. That's a gift for everyone involved. In fact, today's communication of God's love is a gift to both giver and receiver that neither giver nor receiver can fully comprehend. And tomorrow is a new opportunity to increase that knowledge and love. As Frank Sheed wrote in *Theology and Sanity*, "if a man loves God knowing a little about Him, he should love God more from knowing more about Him: for every new thing known about God is a new reason for loving Him." In teaching your children about God, you are giving them a gift that is so great that it can never be repaid—only passed on to future generations. Try to remember that when you're tempted to quit.



John Clark is a homeschooling father, a speechwriter, an online course developer for Seton, and a weekly blogger for *The National Catholic Register*. His latest book is "How to be a Superman Dad in a Kryptonite World, Even When You Can't Afford a Decent Cape."

The Sense of "Overwhelm" and How to Handle It

BY NICK MARMALEJO

On HGTV several years ago, there was a show called "Over Your Head" with contractor Eric Stromer. The show detailed the lives of ambitious homeowners who took on difficult do-it-yourself projects only to find the work more than they could bear. In the case of a couple, one or both spouses would call Mr. Stromer to the rescue. He would show up, jovially inspect the work, and then complete the project correctly, leaving the homeowners happy and the home in glistening condition.

When it comes to homeschooling, the above scenario may sound disturbingly familiar. Many of us are excited to begin our homeschooling year, but part of the way in, we start to think, "I'm in over my head!" Our efforts may seem small or endlessly beleaguered by the vagaries of life, while the work ahead looks daunting. In such moments, there is no Mr. Stromer to remedy the situation, but if you are a Seton homeschooler, reinforcements are available.

Seton is on Your Side

One primary advantage of being in Seton Home Study School is the support system that is built into the program. When you encounter a problem, you simply need to call or email for help. You are not putting us out—we are not too busy to assist you with your problem. Seton is here to help you every day, every step of the way, even if the phones are ringing off the hook.

Yet it is up to us as individuals to make progress in homeschooling. When encountering what I often call, the "sense of overwhelm," here is one strategy that will help keep your school year moving forward.

Remember that so often it is slow—not fast—that wins the race. It is frequently

better to make small but continual steps and finish than try to make giant leaps with no progress at all. Frankly, giant leaps are hard to sustain, and zero progress is demoralizing.

Just yesterday, I was reminded of this lesson when faced with the formidable task of moving a stack of gigantic wood slabs across my property. A large chunk of my Elm tree had fallen, and I had it sawn into lumber for future projects. I sat, staring gloomily at the pile while listening to thunder approaching in the distance. No help is coming, I thought. I remembered the words of an old carpenter, who talked about how he moved logs by himself: "Inch by inch, a little a time. With great patience, you can accomplish much more than you thought possible."

After a considerable amount of effort, I did indeed move those log slabs. It was hard work, but took much less time than I thought, even though I had taken the inch-by-inch approach.

The same is true of homeschooling. When a problem arises, it is not the end of our success, but the beginning of a solution. We can work through and overcome obstacles, even if it means making only slow but gradual progress. On the homestead or in the homeschool, great strides can be made if we can remember that sometimes it's okay to go slow.



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

THE SPORTING LIFE

Sports and physical fitness are important in American society. It only takes watching one professional game to realize we are a sports loving people. We overpay athletes and jump through enormous hoops to procure tickets and watch games, we root wholeheartedly and sincerely for “our team”, and we delve into the depths of despair when they lose.

I’m sorry, but I just don’t get it.

I enjoy baseball, and I have even been lured into caring about a football season or two in my time, but the committed passion of the team enthusiast eludes me. I do, however, recognize the importance of competition in sports, and I am generally in favor of children participating in sports programs. In the right environment, they learn cooperation, team work, and the valuable life lesson of how to lose gracefully. There is also the important physical fitness side to participating in athletic programs.

We are an increasingly obese society, largely because we are technologically savvy and therefore sedentary. We sit too much, and so do our children. 17% of children ages 2-19 are classified as obese, due in part to fast food consumption and the fact that they spend an average of seven and half hours in front of a screen every day. (Source: CDC National Center for Health Statistics. 2014) To get a child outside and moving a few times a week is to give them good fitness habits that will hopefully carry on through life and prevent the onslaught of weight-related diseases now plaguing so many older people.

So, as a home educating mom who is more inclined to tea and book than an afternoon at a field, how do I get my children involved in sports or fitness activities that will offer all the benefits of sports programs and not

break the bank? It can be done, but as usual, we homeschoolers have to be a little more creative in our approach.

PAROCHIAL ATHLETICS

My children have been active participants in our parish sports program. We have done track and basketball. The coaches are volunteers from the parish and passionate about passing along a love of the game to the kids under their tutelage. The seasons are usually six to eight weeks long, so there is no issue of getting overwhelmed by a constant demand of time and energy, which can often be a problem for moms with children on competition teams. If your parish has no athletic program, check with nearby parishes; living within the parish is not usually a requirement for participation.

If you live in one of those enlightened school districts that allow homeschoolers in their sports programs, you may consider yourself lucky. I would, however, recommend caution when availing yourself of these benefits since, once you are on the school district’s radar, it is very difficult to get off. Some districts may demand extra paperwork or testing for the privilege of participation. It is wise to examine all the requirements and to realize your child when thrust into the public school football or basketball program, will be exposed to a lot of the things that many of us homeschool to avoid.

Based upon my research and observation, I think most school districts do not allow homeschoolers to participate in their sports or music programs, but this does not mean your child should miss out on the team experience. There are a lot of options available these days, and they need not cost a fortune.

COMMUNITY SPORTS


These days, every community has a variety of sports programs. My family has participated in soccer; as a result, my daughter increased her skills and travels with major teams within the league. At this level, our experience was mixed. The coaching was excellent, and my daughter’s team mates, with whom she had grown up through the ranks, were a lovely group of girls. However, as they succeeded, the competition and commitments grew in intensity. The expense became considerable, and the other coaches, managers, and parents were extremely intent on winning. This is to be expected as children age up in these programs, and while such programs work well for some families, they did not fit into our lifestyle.

If you have a child who is talented athletically and you can handle the level of intensity, the time, and monetary commitments that come with serious competition, these programs are an excellent resource for your child. As students get older, college scouts and scouts from national teams and programs get involved. It is a big family commitment, but worth it for the children who exhibit athletic prowess at a particular sport.

THINK OUTSIDE THE BOX

Physical Education, or gym, does not really have to be a traditional team or sport, though. So, if you are not a “team” kind of family, then the options are many, and you can find something that will fit into your lives and fulfill your requirements. Having fun would be nice as well.

The President’s Council on Physical Fitness is an excellent free resource for



homeschooling families who wish to increase their level of fitness and learn about wellness and nutrition. Check the guide at this website <https://www.pyfp.org/doc/teacher-guide.pdf>

There used to be a section in this guide specifically for homeschooled students, but the previous administration did away with that. Now homeschoolers get only a brief mention about their participation, but the program is still an excellent option. Children with special physical needs are included and can participate in every level. This is an excellent route for homeschoolers who are willing to get up and move but prefer to do so in their own backyard. The website also links to the PALA + program, which promotes physical fitness and good nutrition, and encourages families participation. This could work for both physical education and health in an IHIP if your state requires an Individualized Home Instruction Plan.

Another option for homeschool families is biking. A scheduled weekly family biking outing is an excellent way to maintain fitness, coupled with a bicycle safety program, such as found at www.safetykids.org. Cycling can only be done seasonally in most areas of the country, but remains a great option for both fall and spring and should be considered a viable option.

In the winter months, when stuck in the house, many DVDs, Wii games, and YouTube videos can help with exercise. I enjoy the Leslie Sansone videos. They are designed around walking two, three, four, or five miles with some light weights involved. They are fast-paced, and Mrs. Sansone is very upfront about being a Christian. The tone of the videos is pleasant and upbeat while the ladies are

dressed appropriately but nicely for fitness activities. You need not be embarrassed if your sons are watching. I prefer these adult DVDs to those made for children, because they are quieter and more focused on achieving fitness goals rather than loud music and silly behavior. The Wii Fit is also a good option for gym in the winter.

PRIVATE LESSONS

My last suggestion, and usually the most expensive, is private lessons. We have gone this route a few times for karate, ice skating, archery, and Irish Step Dance. While this can be an expensive option, there are ways to get your children the benefits of private instruction without having to sell one of them to the instructor. First, do a lot of research. Every school has its own policies, and every owner wants new clients. Perhaps a gym, dojo, or dance studio would do a homeschool class once a week during the day (a time when the businesses are usually empty) for a discount if you can guarantee a certain number of students. Propose a six-week class to begin and see if it works from there. Most people will commit to something short-term.

Many school districts and libraries offer continuing education classes in the evenings. Your high schoolers might benefit from a once a week Zumba class, and if they like it, the instructor can be approached about further classes. Our district offers classes in golf, aerobics, volleyball, boating, and tennis.

Ask about multi-child discounts. I received a considerable discount for our dance classes because I had three girls enrolled, and my high school student taught a class of three year olds. Dance teachers are often glad to have a little extra help

with three-year-old classes and are only too willing to give you a couple of dollars off to have an extra pair of hands in the room.

THE ALL SEASON EXERCISE

Don't forget the easiest exercise: simply walking. It is free, widely available, and if you dress appropriately, can be done in all seasons. Walking is heart healthy, and can accommodate all age groups when combined with wagons, strollers, and slings. You can pair it with science and call it a nature walk. You can combine it with religion and pray the rosary or walk to Mass every day. You can call it home economics and walk to the grocery store, where you can do a little math. How about everyone listens to a book and walk while doing literature? See, an entire curriculum, literally at your feet.

However you include physical fitness into your curriculum, I encourage you to think outside the box and consider your children's interests and abilities, as well as your own work load and stress levels. This is one area of homeschool that should help us decompress and teach the children the joy of being fit and healthy and preserving their bodies as the temples of the Holy Spirit they were created to be. Most of all, I would encourage you to participate alongside your children and show them that exercise is necessary for our health, but the real reason to do it is because it's fun.

And who doesn't want more fun?



Mary Ellen Barrett is mother of seven children and two in heaven, wife to David and a lifelong New Yorker. She has homeschooled her children for eleven years using Seton and an enormous amount of books. She is editor of the *Seton Magazine* and also a contributor to *The Long Island Catholic*.



Saint Joseph of Cupertino

THE FLYING FRIAR

FRANCISCAN PRIEST AND FRIAR
PATRON SAINT OF STUDENTS AND AVIATORS

FEAST DAY - SEPTEMBER 18

Care to share your story.



Every month, we highlight a homeschooling family in the Seton Magazine. The stories from these families help inspire, encourage, and motivate others within the Catholic homeschooling community.

We'd love to hear your story!

To submit your family story for consideration, visit the website link below and answer a few short questions.

Find out how to share your story at: www.setonmagazine.com/family-story



Seton Student Achievements

SHARING SUCCESS WITH THE SETON COMMUNITY



David | Training with a simulated F-18, I graduated with honors from Aviation Challenge - Mach III, winning the Reaper Patch for the second year in a row!



Ann | I enrolled in the Duke TIP (Talent Identification Program) Talent Search which helps gifted students discover their abilities and advanced to the Grand Recognition Ceremony!



Alex | I signed a National Letter of Intent to swim for the Men's Swim Team at Missouri University of Science and Technology. I will join the Miner's team this fall when I start college!

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

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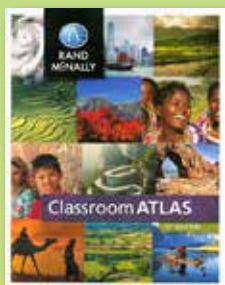
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What Makes a Family Holy?

How do we keep our faith as a family? Do we keep it for ourselves, in our families, as a personal treasure like a bank account, or are we able to share it by our witness, by our acceptance of others, by our openness?

We all know that families, especially young families, are often “racing” from one place to another, with lots to do. But did you ever think that this “racing” could also be the race of faith?

Christian families are missionary families. ...They are missionary in everyday life, in their doing everyday things, as they bring to everything the salt and the leaven of faith! Keeping the faith in families and bringing to everyday things the salt and the leaven of faith.

*Pope Francis
Holy Mass for the Family
October 27, 2013*

