

# Seton



# MAGAZINE

Under the Magisterium of the Catholic Church

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## FR. DANIEL SEDLACEK

ALUMNI PROFILE

PG 6



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*Educational Media*

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**CHRISTMAS SPECIALS**

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## Letter from the Editor

Dear Readers:

This month marks the twenty-fifth anniversary of my marriage to David. To you younger families, this may seem like an eternity but, in fact, the years have flown by at an astonishing rate. Eight children, two apartments, two houses, four minivans, one giant van and countless other things have added up to a quarter of a century worth of great joy, many sorrows, hard work, many changes, laughter and (some) tears. I wouldn't trade one moment of it. We fit, he and I, and our life together is surely God's plan for us since never would we have planned it ourselves. In this season of thankfulness, I am truly grateful for the gift of this man and this marriage.

Husbands and wives, when open to God's grace, make each other better and closer to what God wants for us. When you read John Clark's essay about his and Lisa's own quarter century mark (Happy Anniversary!), what leaks out all over is his great love for his lovely wife and her great love for Our Lord. Surely this has made them more of what God wishes of them and that radiates to those who know and love them. It's a beautiful story.

On the more practical front, Cheryl Hernandez shares her clever learning tricks which can have your children spouting the Gettysburg Address in no time. A mom needs a few tricks up her sleeve!

Since Advent is nearly here and Christmas is coming, we invite you to peruse our Christmas insert with an eye towards some lovely gifts that reflect our beautiful Catholic faith and love of learning.

We here at Seton Magazine would like to wish all of our readers and their families a most blessed Thanksgiving celebration, filled with wonderful memories for your families and, of course, lots of good food!

Blessings,  
Mary Ellen

*Mary Ellen Barrett*

**P.S.**

Look for the Special December/January issue  
arriving before Christmas!



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# Guardian Angels

BY DR. MARY KAY CLARK

In November, we Catholics are encouraged to think about the Poor Souls in Purgatory, and to pray for their souls. The Church realizes that during the year, it is easy to neglect thinking about Purgatory and those suffering there. The Church understands we would rather focus on the celebration of the saints on their feast days.

My mother often thought about Jesus and His love for those in Purgatory. She was a professional artist who painted her version of Jesus on the Cross, Who suffered because of the sins of all those who sinned and were to sin in the future, and thus would suffer the consequences. She painted a dramatic face of Jesus with only the shoulders and top of His chest. We see his eyes looking at us in silence, but full of meaning. His life-size face in the 2 ½ foot painting seems to say, “Look at what I have done for you. What are you doing for me and for others?”

From those eyes and His message, most of us conclude that Purgatory is likely where we will spend some time before reaching our eternal reward. We will know we deserve every minute of it... because we did not take advantage of doing good when we should have, or doing bad when we knew better.

My mother painted another small picture, only one foot in height, but large in meaning. It is a painting of a Guardian Angel, but with an expression that says: “I am here with you to remind you that you must do good every day, that Jesus has given you great gifts, the greatest being the Catholic Faith.” The Guardian Angel seems to remind me of words my own guardian angel is saying: “Don’t embarrass me by your sins. After all, I will need to be in Purgatory with you.”

While we certainly pray more often in November for the souls in Purgatory, we need to pray for those suffering souls every day all year. We need to pray for those who were weak and gave in to sin in times of difficulty. We need to pray for those who need help while they are still alive and are giving in to sin. We need to pray to our Guardian angel and their Guardian angels to help all of us to reject the temptations to sin.

Right after the day dedicated to praying for the souls in Purgatory, we pray for All Saints. The Church is perfectly correct in celebrating the holiness of the lives of All Saints, who rejected sin and lived with love toward Christ and those around them. Somehow, however, we must continue day after day after day, to pray for the souls in Purgatory. I am counting on my seven sons and daughters-in-law, and my nearly forty grandchildren to keep praying for me, and for my husband Bruce, for many years to come. In addition, many religious orders, such as the Franciscans, pray daily for the souls in Purgatory, including Masses for those whose relatives and friends send Mass requests.

Many of us Catholics receive “Enrollment Cards” from several Catholic organizations, most of them dedicated to teaching seminarians or for living expenses for elderly priests or for missionaries working among the poor and in foreign countries. This kind of financial aid along with prayers to help others to live a better life while accepting the Catholic Faith, can be “gold” in our “journey” from our Purgatorial time toward eternal life.



*Almighty God, Father of goodness and love, have mercy on the poor suffering souls and grant them your aid, especially to my parents and ancestors, and to all my relatives alive and yet to be born. O Lord, grant eternal rest to all the souls of the Faithful departed. Amen.*



Photo CC Fr Lawrence Lew | Flickr



**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 5th grader's handwriting is typically sloppy and careless. He seems forgetful as he frequently does not capitalize the beginnings of his sentences and omits end punctuation, regardless of my constant reminders. Can you suggest any ways I can assist him?**

This seems like a simple question, but in reality is fairly complex.

First, there is a difference between handwriting and punctuation. Regarding handwriting, some children (especially boys) have difficulty with the fine motor skills involved. Students may simply not be able to do much better than they are doing. Plus, in this time of everything being done with keyboards and touch screens, children typically don't have anywhere near the practice in handwriting that they had in the past. So, you might want to consider whether your son is being deliberately sloppy and

careless, or is doing the best that you can reasonably expect.

Second, you want to be sure that your son actually knows how to punctuate and capitalize properly. For a student who may not have had much practice, there are many rules to follow. Make sure your child knows the rules well.

Third, if your son is new to home schooling and is learning many new concepts, his abilities may already be stretched to the limit. It may be very difficult for him to concentrate on writing about a science or religion or history concept while also trying to remember all the grammar and punctuation rules.

If you are sure that your son is not doing his best, then you need to find some source of motivation. Different things motivate different people. You can try negative

motivation; for example, you could have him entirely rewrite a page if there are capitalization or punctuation errors. You could give some type of prize for producing a perfect paper on the first try. For children who care intensely about their grades, you could try marking his grade down for these errors. After all, improper punctuation and capitalization actually is a wrong answer.

**My daughter is currently doing English 4 and is struggling quite a bit with some of the lessons. Are there any other supplements or tutorials to help her?**

Seton has provided a number of Video Diagramming tutorials to help with understanding of the grammar lessons for 2nd, 3rd, and 4th grade.

You might consider obtaining lower level English books as supplements, since these may have simpler explanations of

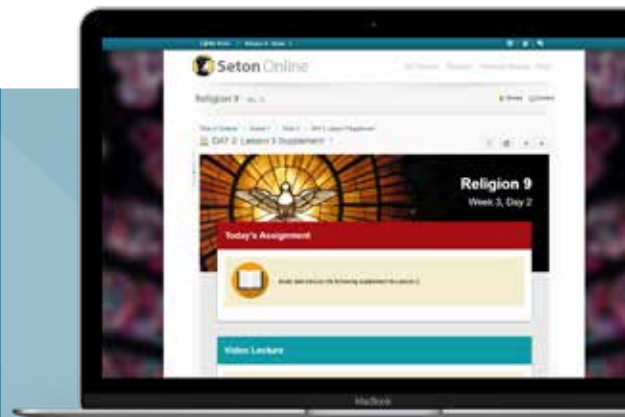
## NOW AVAILABLE: RELIGION 9 ONLINE

Religion 9 Online is now available for new students or as a free upgrade to students currently enrolled in the print version of Religion 9.



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**Will my student lose any progress in the course by upgrading to the online version?**

This course is aligned to the print version of Religion 9, so your student can jump in exactly where he or she left off. Your student will not lose any progress in the course by upgrading to the online version.



concepts. For a 4th grader you might try the 3rd grade book, or even the 2nd grade book.

English is a very important subject, not just for learning how to read and write well, but even for learning how to follow and think about arguments. It's important that students have a good foundation in the early grades.

**Can my son take a high school course with his sister in 9th grade? It would be easier for me and they work well together.**

It is not unusual for an 8th grade student to move up with a 9th grade sibling in a course for which the younger student are doing very well. The most common courses taken by 8th graders with a 9th grade sibling is religion, science, and math. Actually, we encourage parents to teach a course to two students in adjacent grades. It is easier for moms and it is more fun for (most) children to work together.

Many students in 8th grade take high school level courses. Since students need a certain number of credits to graduate, it's great to get some of these credits early, which takes some of the pressure off students later in high school.

**Do I need to submit my son's outline for his paragraph which I will upload for grading?**

While Seton does not grade the outline for the paragraph, submitting an outline is important for three reasons. First, an outline is required not just by students but by anyone who wants to write a good paragraph or

composition. Second, it is important to establish the habit of writing an outline before writing any kind of composition in any grade level in any subject.

Finally, the grader can see if the student is following his own outline. Seton has found that students who write and follow an outline write better paragraphs. Be sure both of you watch the Seton paragraph tutorials for paragraph assignments.

**I have been thinking about paying my high school daughter to help teach a couple of classes to my younger ones.**

This works well in many families if the younger children don't resent the older sibling. Some parents pay their high school student to help teach, and some pay the younger student for A grades for a week. Using relatives to help is a great idea.

Using an outside tutor may seem to be helpful, but it should be someone you know well, preferably a friend from church. There are also online sites, such as tutor.com, which offer tutoring services. Parents need to be very careful before allowing their child to interact with a tutor.



**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*.

**How does the online course work?**

The online functions allow students to access the same excellent academic content from the print course in an interactive way and is augmented with new multimedia features.

The content in the print version is aligned with the content in the online version. This allows students to use the online course whenever they are able, but if circumstances prevent them from accessing a computer over a period of time, they can easily fall back to the print version to stay on track. In this way, the parent and student can work out the proper balance of print and online in a way that is suited to their circumstances. The online course is completely flexible. It is not taught live nor on a predetermined calendar schedule.



TO LEARN MORE, VISIT: **WWW.SETONHOME.ORG/SETONONLINE**



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



# FR. DANIEL SEDLACEK

## ALUMNI PROFILE

### HOW LONG WERE YOU HOMESCHOOLED THROUGH SETON, AND WHAT DID YOU LIKE ABOUT THE EXPERIENCE?

I was homeschooled K-12 through Seton, so I am a lifer!

My experience of homeschooling with Seton was overall very positive, although it was not always easy or fun. One year in middle school, I did not keep up with my school work and had to be in school all summer. However, each August/September, I always looked forward to getting my new textbooks in the mail and starting a new year of learning.

What I liked about my education with Seton was the set structure of the Lesson Plans for each course. It enabled me to see the big picture, to plan ahead, and to focus on what subject or work might require more time to learn.

I liked that the Catholic Faith permeated the entire curriculum. It helped me learn the reason for education is neither to make money nor even for personal edification, but to come to know the Truth and to serve Him. My Seton education helped me to encounter Jesus Christ in a non-trivial way and to get to know Him personally. I believe my Seton education nurtured my vocation to the priesthood and helped me to discover it and respond to it in faith.

### HOW DID YOUR SETON EDUCATION HELP YOU NAVIGATE THE COLLEGE EXPERIENCE?

At first, I thought it would be hard to go to a “real school” after having been homeschooled my entire life. After adjusting to the fact I had to go to classrooms, listen to a professor, and learn how to take notes (this adjustment took me a week or two), I discovered my education with Seton prepared me well for college. I appreciated the solid education I had received in literature/reading comprehension and writing skills.

The ability to read and write well (both grammatically and thoughtfully) continues to serve me well. I also appreciate the Catholic culture that my Seton education helped form for my family and me, especially knowledge of Catholic practices and Church history. This broad Catholic formation helped me navigate through encounters with ideas, lifestyles, and attitudes which were contrary or hostile to Catholic beliefs and practices.

### WHAT ARE YOU DOING NOW?

I was ordained to the priesthood on June 25, 2016. I am a diocesan priest serving in the Diocese of La Crosse, Wisconsin, which is my home diocese. I am working as parochial vicar (assistant pastor) of two parishes while also working as chaplain and campus minister at a Catholic Middle School and High School.



I especially enjoy working with the young people of both parishes and at the Catholic schools. My eight years of seminary built upon the foundation of faith and knowledge I received with my education at Seton. What I received from my Seton education helps me to serve the People of God every day.

### WHAT GIVES YOU PASSION OR MOTIVATION IN YOUR CURRENT OCCUPATION?

The salvation of souls! But this is not a cliché “Seton-y” answer. The salvation of souls is not an abstract concept; it is quite concrete. To help people grow in greater understanding of their Catholic Faith, to provide for others the grace they need to “work out their salvation” using the Sacraments, to build up the community with prayer, fasting, and works of mercy: this is the work of “saving souls.”

To offer a patient and listening ear in the Confessional, to pray the Liturgy of the Hours with and for the Church, to preach the Gospel in homilies and in actions, to encourage others through small acts of kindness, to help others encounter Christ and His saving work in the Paschal Mystery: these are parts of the purpose and mission of the priest. The desire for others to attain their true good, that is, their salvation, is probably my primary motivation in doing my work.

Another thing that helps my motivation is experiencing true joy when I see Christ working through me to touch others. The life and work of a priest of Christ is mysterious, but it is also incredibly fulfilling.

### ANY ADVICE FOR CURRENT SETON HIGH-SCHOOLERS?

The point of education is not only to gain knowledge but to form our hearts, souls, and minds so we can recognize and accept the truth. And this Truth is not a thing, but a Person. All truth leads



to the Author of Truth. When tempted to give up on something or some subject, remember that God can use us and our knowledge in ways which we would never guess or imagine. No sincere effort in education is a waste.

Being a student is your current “vocation” and thus how you will grow in holiness by serving God and your neighbor. The actual day-to-day work of education is also a training ground for virtue. Homeschooling is very conducive for growing in self-discipline, self-motivation, accountability, prudence, and patience. The content of a Seton education is good, but do not limit yourself. If you are able and interested, I recommend also taking AP level courses or college classes.

Above all, I recommend going to Mass and Confession as often as is prudently possible and praying every day for God to help you discover and follow the vocation He has given to you. Here is a good one:



#### Prayer to Know My Vocation

Lord, I want to be happy in this life  
And spend eternity with You in the life to come.  
From the first moment of my existence,  
You knew my vocation.  
Please help me discover Your plan for my life.

Help me to know myself.  
Help me to overcome my fears.  
Help me to want what You want.  
Help me to trust You completely.

Send Your Holy Spirit into my mind and heart  
So I can see the gifts You have given me  
And hear Your call to serve the Church.  
Increase my desire to bring others to You  
And to help them reach heaven.

Mary Most Holy, Mother of God,  
Pray for me, that I can discover my vocation  
And have the courage to respond in faith.  
Amen.

# DUSTING FOR THE FINGERPRINT OF GOD

BY JOHN CLARK



Last month, Lisa and I celebrated our Silver Anniversary, which means for twenty-five years now, my beautiful wife and her nondescript husband have been walking into various public places together, causing people to wonder: “Why is *she* with *him*?” Following the accepted guidelines of Emily Post, most people have exhibited the courtesy to ask this question in silence, yet one person keeps asking it aloud—namely: me.

I was married at the age of 21. People commented that’s very young, but I’ll tell you a little secret: if she had said “yes,” I would have married Lisa when I was 17. Of course, her plans were a little different; she didn’t even agree to date me until I was 19. But I knew that a life with Lisa would make me happy. For all the wisdom I was lacking, for all the things I didn’t know, I knew this. There were so many evidences of that happiness to come, but I could condense them into a single one: Lisa loves God.

One story illustrates that fact perhaps better than any other. Lisa had come from her home in hot and sunny southern California to attend Christendom College in the much colder climate of northern Virginia, which is where we met. One winter morning, it began snowing on campus, and Lisa—unaccustomed to seeing little frozen flakes falling from the sky—ran inside to announce to everyone the astonishing event that was occurring outside: “Guys, you have to come see this!” So everyone went outside and looked at the gray sky and the silvery snow gently and quietly gliding to the ground; then, they saw Lisa’s face: her brown eyes wide open with amazement, her cheeks and nose turning rosy red due to the cold, and they heard her giggling with glee. Lisa’s

response seemed incompatible with the normalcy of what was occurring, and the crowd was largely unimpressed, essentially saying: “Ok. It’s snowing. And...”

But Lisa’s excitement could not be contained. For Lisa, this event did not signify a mere drop in degree that turned water into snow. It marked the degree of God’s love for her and for the whole world. In Lisa’s eyes, God had reached down and touched the Earth, and the snow served as evidence, providing a dusting for the fingerprint of God. In my eyes, Lisa bore the fingerprint of God.

Many of us, even many of us Catholics, can grow complacent about God’s love for us. Often, our response is: “Ok. God loves me. And...” Growing up, there may have even been a time I felt like that myself. The truth is, I don’t remember; if I ever felt that way, Lisa helped me forget. Lisa has shown me how to approach God, how to love God with affection, how to allow myself to be loved by God. She has shown me the wonder of it all. I know it’s hard to imagine or believe this if you have never met her, but Lisa approaches God and Creation with the same newfound excitement of that winter day in the snow. Albert Einstein reportedly commented: “There are only two ways to live your life. One is as though nothing is a miracle. The other is as though everything is a miracle.” In a world that increasingly views nothing as a miracle, Lisa really does view everything as a miracle—the miracle of God’s love. Lisa’s viewpoint has proven contagious. Since the day we met, and especially for the past quarter-century, Lisa has helped me become a person who views everything as a miracle, too.

As we look back on the previous twenty-five years, it’s tempting to look ahead to the next twenty-five. But we have set our sights far beyond that. Because authentic Christian love always envisions not merely a temporal realm, but the heavenly one. In his Homily on Ephesians, Saint John Chrysostom counsels that husbands communicate this Christocentric and eternal vision of love to their wives:

“FOR THE PRESENT LIFE IS NOTHING. AND I PRAY, AND BESEECH, AND DO ALL I CAN, THAT WE MAY BE COUNTED WORTHY SO TO LIVE THIS PRESENT LIFE, AS THAT WE MAY BE ABLE ALSO THERE IN THE WORLD TO COME TO BE UNITED TO ONE ANOTHER IN PERFECT SECURITY. FOR OUR TIME HERE IS BRIEF AND FLEETING. BUT IF WE SHALL BE COUNTED WORTHY BY HAVING PLEASED GOD TO SO EXCHANGE THIS LIFE FOR THAT ONE, THEN SHALL WE EVER BE BOTH WITH CHRIST AND WITH EACH OTHER, WITH MORE ABUNDANT PLEASURE.”

For two and a half decades, Lisa and I have shared a life together, and we continue to share our greatest hope. The hope is that one day, we will walk into Heaven together, hand in hand, with all of our children. For my part, I suspect that our fellow saints may look at us and ask: “Why is *she* with *him*?” And I will respond with the answer that is increasingly and unmistakably confirmed with every passing day: “Because God loves me.”

Happy Anniversary, Lisa!



**John Clark** is a homeschooling father, a speech writer, 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.”



# Which Diploma Track is Right for You?

BY NICHOLAS MARMALEJO

**S**ituated in the northern end of the Shenandoah Valley, Seton resides at the base of the oft-hazy Blue Ridge Mountains. As a transplant from the Midwestern flatlands, I find living in Appalachia to be a never-ending adventure. No matter which road one travels, each invariably leads to scenic vistas and America's most storied hiker highway—the Appalachian Trail.

Trekking even a segment of the Appalachian Trail—let alone all 2,200 miles of it—is a praiseworthy and inspiring feat. At Seton, we believe that obtaining one of our diplomas is a similarly demanding and laudable achievement, one that will prepare you for the many other paths you will walk in life.

Oftentimes students and parents will call Seton's Guidance Department, asking which diploma and track is best for them. My answer is generally cautious and always the same: it depends on where you want to end up and how hard you want to work.

As with completing any significant hike, attaining a Seton diploma requires total commitment and a willingness to work through difficulties. In fact, any path worth walking is not without some adversity. Yet while “in every life a little rain must fall,” as the saying goes, we don't want you to be deluged, either.

Seton offers three diploma tracks to provide a guide or compass for you to reach your goals. Take note that it is okay to switch your diploma goal at any time, should the need or desire arise. Which diploma you receive is determined at the end of your final year with Seton, when all of your credits and courses are tallied.

The most fundamental track is Seton's General Diploma. It provides a student with Seton's most basic, solid Catholic education. It's everything you need and nothing you don't. There's plenty of room for electives and it is designed to allow the student maximum flexibility for them. Can you use this track to get into college? Yes, absolutely. Many have and will continue to do so—you are not somehow a lesser student or person if you go the General Diploma route. In fact, a student in this track would be taking most of the same required courses needed in the other diploma tracks.

However, not all college admissions departments are created equal. Each is looking for different things. To give our college-bound students a more competitive edge, Seton developed its Academic Diploma pathway. Like the General Diploma, a minimum of 22 credits are needed. However, in contrast to the General Diploma, the Academic Diploma requires two consecutive years of a foreign

language and an American Literature class. In Seton's experience, this track features a fail-safe course recipe for successfully gaining admittance into most colleges.

Finally, there is the Advanced Academic Diploma. This diploma was designed to give the most enterprising and ambitious students the option to take the toughest coursework available to them through Seton. Specifically, it is designed for students whose strengths and interests are in the areas of Math and Science and who desire to attend a service academy or the most competitive Math-Science schools.

When some people see Advanced Academic Diploma in the diploma tracks of the High School Catalog, many of them instinctively desire to pursue this prize. This aspiration is certainly natural. After all, who does not want to be “advanced academic”? Yet it is not the best choice for the majority of students.

Why? First, it is considerably more challenging and rigorous than the other diplomas in terms of both time and effort. Both the student pursuing it and his or her family will typically be tested greatly in their commitment to the diploma and its demands. Remember, in going this route, a student will be taking the most arduous high school course load possible. It is the most demanding Appalachian Trail of high school diplomas.

For the record, to Seton's college partners, not to mention other institutions familiar with Seton's curriculum, each of Seton's diplomas is considered a highly-respected accomplishment. An impressive transcript with all of the Advanced Academic Diploma coursework requirements is great, but preventing unnecessary academic burn-out in a promising student is even a greater imperative.

In the end, it is absolutely more important for a student to do better academically and personally while completing fewer courses than to try to do every course and not perform so well. Finding the right balance for students—while still giving them a competitive edge—is the real key to success in learning and achievement. Fortunately, this is an approach that works well in any of Seton's diploma tracks and on the trails in the world beyond.



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.



# 5 Ways to Sneak in Learning When They're Not Looking...

BY CHERYL HERNÁNDEZ

**We all know that** homeschooling is not compartmentalized. It isn't limited to four hours in the morning, plowing through the workbooks and checking off the assignments in the lesson plans. Homeschooling is a way of life, a way of not only educating but forming our children in knowledge, skill, and virtue — at every moment of the day.

So, how can we maximize that learning and increase our children's education when they are not “doing school”? Here are ideas to get you thinking. All are inexpensive (or free), and all involve little or no technology — just simple, tried and true ways to “sneak” in learning and have fun doing so.

## Look around you

Nearly every square inch of our schoolroom walls is covered with posters, pictures, maps, and quotes. My children spend a lot of time in there, so why not make it a visual learning opportunity? I figure, if they are going to stare off into space during school time, they may as well be learning the order of the planets from the sun (strategically located on the ceiling).

And more than once, I've been told from one of my kids, when I catch them reciting the Gettysburg Address or the Precepts of the Catholic Church, they learned it from one of the posters in the school room. Some quotes that they will belt out at opportune moments come from the many we have tacked on the walls and ceiling.



Many educational websites sell posters, depicting everything from the digestive system to the leaders of the Revolutionary War. You can even find and print smaller versions online for free. Changing them periodically keeps it fun and fresh, too.

Another great (and easy) way to display educational information is with laminated placemats. Search “educational placemats” on Amazon and dozens of different ones come up, illustrating everything from rocks and minerals to sign language to types of musical instruments. My youngest daughter brings them out at lunchtime and “assigns” each child to one. More often than not, the kids will use them, not to put their food on, but to “read” them, trading between each other. Often, I'll find them quizzing each other on woodwind and string instruments or debating which country has the coolest flag.

Placemats with maps are great to use as well. This year, one of my daughters is taking American History, so I hung a placemat of a US map over her desk. Another child is taking World History, so a map of the world hangs over hers. The US state capitol placemat has always been a favorite of ours, pulled out frequently during dinner, as my husband loves to challenge the kids to beat him in memorizing all fifty.

One homeschooling mom I know uses a large map of the world as a tablecloth, putting a clear plastic sheet over it. Her kids learn geography as they zoom their match box cars around the world — brilliant!

## Listen up

Auditory aids, like visual aids, are also perfect for sneaking in learning. One way is to have classical music playing in the background. Just by listening, they are soaking up the complexities of the music and developing an appreciation for its beauty. A good way to learn about classical composers is to purchase (or borrow) one of the many CD sets, like “Classical Kids” or “Maestro Classics” that, in a compelling story format, introduce the composers and their music. A car ride is a great time to listen to these — and the kids get even more from them if they have been exposed to the music at home.

Audio theatrical drama is also a wonderful way to have them learn while listening. When my children were young and playing with their dolls or Legos in the playroom, I would pop in a cassette (remember those?) of a saint story. Dramas by Regina Martyrum were their absolute favorite (still available as downloads). My older ones will tell me listening to these stories is how they fell in love with the saints. We have since added Glory Stories from Holy Heroes to our collection. Before a recent family road trip, I purchased audio dramas by the Augustine Institute, which were excellent — although, because of their intensity, probably not for younger children. Over the years, we have invested





in many audio dramas, and I can tell you even my older kids will often turn on one of these to listen to as they work on a project. Family audio favorites include not just saint stories, but stories of heroic virtue, historical figures, or even theatrical dramas of favorite books (Focus on the Family has excellent ones). Many parishes have made available to their parishioners a free membership with [formed.org](http://formed.org), another wonderful resource for Catholic audio dramas.

## Apprentice them

One of the best ways to sneak in learning is to have your child by your side as you work — on anything! From the time our oldest son could run around the backyard, he was constantly by my husband's side as he worked — changing the oil in the car, cleaning the shed, chopping down trees... yes, even repairing the roof (sometimes, moms just need to look away). Now, our youngest boy, 9, is growing up the same way, and my husband depends on him as his right hand "man." This hands-on learning is priceless, not only as a method of teaching, but also as a way to spend time with our children. My kids have done the same with me in the kitchen, learning how to do everything from simply making a cup of tea to roasting a turkey. By the time each of our oldest five left for college, they could prepare a full home-cooked meal, including planning and shopping for the ingredients (and washing up, as well!). This happens by including the children when they are very young to work alongside you — cracking an egg, fetching something from the pantry, or stirring the cookie dough. As they get older, they help with more complex preparation, and soon, they are running the show by themselves. Making it a fun, natural event to "apprentice" becomes an invaluable source of learning.

## Take it apart

Many children love to take things apart and discover what is inside. As soon as they were old enough to understand safety rules, we gave our children anything that was broken — toasters, microwaves, or computers. My son, especially, would happily take them apart, trying to "fix" them. Meanwhile, he was learning the components of an appliance and how to work with tools. Eventually, he actually started to fix them. When he got older, he could build or repair anything around the house. Now he is a third-year engineering student.

Another great way to get the kids to learn about building (and following directions) is to hand them the box of shelving you just ordered (or anything else to be assembled). Rather than do it yourself, give it to them. Start with very simple things and work your way up to more complicated things. This works even better if they have been helping you build things since they were very young (see above). The worst thing that can happen is you must rebuild it yourself, but chances are, your child will be so thrilled to be given this opportunity to prove himself (or herself), he will read and follow the directions carefully. Nothing builds confidence more than doing something by yourself — from laying out the parts carefully, reading and following the directions, to the satisfaction of seeing the final product being used.

## Tell me a story

One of the easiest, most fun ways to sneak in learning for our children is to ask them to retell stories. We do this often in car rides. Since my kids were very young, I would ask them, as they sat next to me, to tell the story of David and Goliath, "The Three Billy Goats Gruff", or any other story they know well. The ability to retell a story is not just a fun way to pass the time — it is an important, useful skill. When a child retells a story, he must think about the events of the story carefully (increasing his ability to retain information) and tell them in chronological order, using his own vocabulary. He must keep the audience engaged by using different inflections of his voice. If you start with Aesop's fables or fairy tales — things he knows well — you can eventually work up to something he's learning in history, literature, or religion. Occasionally, you can even ask him to retell the homily at Mass (because you were walking outside with a fussy baby and missed it). He will probably catch on to you "sneaking in learning", but make him do it anyway.

A wonderful advantage to this is your children will grow up to be story-tellers. Like a musician who has a repertoire memorized and can sit down at any piano and play without her music, a child who has practiced retelling stories, in her own words, "owns" those stories, and they stay in her mind.

Homeschooling and family life provide endless opportunities for learning. Not all of it must be done from textbooks and not all of it from technology. Plant a garden, train a dog, learn to play chess, build a fort, listen to Bach's Inventions, write a haiku...

A child encouraged to learn new and different things, making it a natural part of his life, will become someone who develops a deep love for learning... and that is a priceless gift.



**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.



# College Board's Advanced Placement Examinations

BY JEFF MINICK



As most of you know, Seton Home Study offers a rigorous curriculum for students. Through many writing exercises, you learn the art of the essay. You assemble a storehouse of knowledge in history, science, mathematics, and foreign languages. You develop critical thinking skills. As a result, you should enter college or the workforce equipped with an academic prowess and a Catholic faith designed to keep you in good stead for the rest of your life.

But did you know you can put those academic skills to work, even before leaving high school?

Let's look at the College Board's Advanced Placement Examinations.

Besides the SAT and other examinations, the College Board offers the AP exams every May, three-hour tests in college-level subjects ranging from Latin to world history, calculus to biology, composition to chemistry. Students scoring well on these tests may receive college credit for the subject, advance into a higher course, or both. Colleges across the country are familiar with these exams, and a good AP score adds luster to your admissions transcript.

We at Seton encourage you to take AP exams, but to do so, you must appreciate your own responsibilities and the nature of these exams.

First, understand that Seton Home Study does not administer these exams. Other than pushing you to excel in your studies, we can offer only encouragement and a thumbs up. You are responsible for all arrangements and studies regarding an AP exam.

Next, go to the online AP site for the exam you are considering. You'll find a link for the College Board site at the end of this article. Read over the requirements for the particular exams that interest you. Don't be daunted by this information, but don't be over-confident either. If, for example, you are a weak writer, avoid taking AP exams that require those skills.

Next, you must find a nearby public or private school that will allow you, as a homeschooler, to take the exam. If you skip this step, all that study may be for naught. So, I repeat: **If you want to take an AP exam, your first step is to find a school that will allow you to take that exam or exams at their testing site.** This year, each AP exam costs \$87. The public high school used by my students charged



the students \$100 to take an exam, a fee that the students and I regarded as a bargain.

Once you have found a testing site, you must prepare for the exam. Usually, you should begin this preparation in the fall. For example, we will assume you are aiming for the AP US History exam (APUSH). You are a rising junior, and Anne Carroll's *Christ and the Americas* is your primary textbook.

Besides studying that book and following your Seton lesson plans, purchase a second American history book and a test preparation book designed specifically for the APUSH.

The textbook I favored over my years of teaching APUSH to home school students was Kennedy and Cohen's *The American Pageant*. I'd recommend buying the AP edition. Rather than buying an expensive new textbook, look online at used booksellers and purchase a copy there. Even if the book is several years old, the information is basically the same.

You'll find test preparation books available for nearly all AP tests. Over the years, my students and I used Barron's *APUSH, 5 Steps to a 5*, and the Princeton Review's *Cracking APUSH*. Barnes and Noble bookstores carry these books, and you can easily locate them online. Each book has its strengths and weaknesses. You might even consider purchasing two prep books, if only to use the practice tests they contain.

Go to the College Board AP site for your particular test and read what the Board tells you about the exam you're taking. This site explains what you need to study for the exam. Frequently review those parts of the site that give you the specifics of the exam.

The APUSH test in May consists of two parts: an hour of multiple choice questions derived from short passages and a two-hour written exam during which you must respond to prompts based on various documents. To prepare for the latter, **write at least one essay per week**. To acquire prompts for your essay, use your prep book, the AP site, or various other online sites. Finally, find a capable grader willing to read and evaluate your essays.

If you have other homeschoolers in your area interested in APUSH, consider forming a study group. Often, this group will push you in your learning, and the other members may offer insights and thoughts that have slipped past you. Warning: A study group can provide solidarity and increase your knowledge, but if you're not studying, it's no longer a study group. Have fun, but keep on track.

A tutor for you or for your study group can also provide great help. My AP classes met for two hours a week, returning home with about six more hours of academic work. After a few years of this schedule, I realized I was as much a coach as a teacher. Look for someone, who not only knows the subject, but who also will hold you accountable for your work.



Then comes May, and you sit in a classroom for close to four hours, filling out paperwork and taking the test. The scores arrive in July. You receive a 4 on the test, a good solid score, and add it to your transcript. You also take the AP biology test, but score a 2. You leave that low score off your transcript, and when the time comes to send your scores to the colleges where you've applied, you contact the AP folks and tell them to send only the APUSH score.

This is one more reason AP exams are win-win situations for students. **You** determine which scores get sent out and where.

Now, two caveats:

First, some of the AP exams, including the APUSH, are under fire for becoming "politically correct." From what I have seen, that charge is valid. This transformation, however, doesn't mean you should avoid the tests or fail them. It just means being a good reader and a strong student of history and applying those skills to whatever questions the test asks of you.

Second, the AP exams are secular tests graded by teachers and professors from around the country. There are ways to give your faith a voice in the test, but you must do so in a way that will not give offense to a prejudiced grader.

We will address these and other topics regarding the AP exams on the Seton Home Study website. If you decide to take the AP, please be sure to read these tips.

**The address of the official AP site is: <https://apstudent.collegeboard.org/home>**

A simpler place to gain an understanding of the AP may be found at: <http://www.studypoint.com/ed/ap-credits/>



**Jeff Minick** is the Latin Counselor at Seton Home Study School. He has spent the last twenty-five years teaching Henle Latin to hundreds of home-educated students. He is the father of four, all of whom were homeschooled, and grandfather to twenty-one, three of whom he homeschooled.



# *Saint Catherine of Alexandria*

VIRGIN AND EARLY CHRISTIAN  
MARTYR

RANKED AMONG THE FOURTEEN HOLY HELPERS

**FEAST DAY - NOVEMBER 25**

PATRON SAINT OF PHILOSOPHERS, APOLOGISTS,  
AND YOUNG GIRLS





# Are you ready to share **your story**?



Every month, we highlight a homeschooling family, alumni, or student 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](http://www.setonmagazine.com/family-story)



## Seton Student Achievements

SHARING SUCCESS WITH THE SETON COMMUNITY

## Calling All Seton Students!

Have **you** recently earned/won an award?

Have a success story? Achieved a goal?

**Share your achievements with us!**

Each of these achievements are recognized by individuals or organizations that may or may not be affiliated with Seton. We are happy to pass on the news and share them with the rest of the community to inspire and encourage each other, and to see what other Seton families are up to.

Submit your photo, your achievement and how homeschooling has helped you succeed!



**Gabriel** | My story, *The Locked Cell*, won first place in the literary Art Contest at the North Idaho Fair!

[setonmagazine.com/students](http://setonmagazine.com/students)

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# Seton

*Educational Media*

See inside for **CHRISTMAS SPECIALS**



## Essential Words for the Family

If we can realize that everything is God's gift, how happy will our hearts be! Everything is His gift. He is our strength!

Saying "thank you" is such an easy thing, and yet so hard! How often do we say "thank you" to one another in our families? These are essential words for our life in common. "Sorry", "excuse me", "thank you".

If families can say these three things, they will be fine. "Sorry", "excuse me", "thank you". How often do we say "thank you" in our families? How often do we say "thank you" to those who help us, those close to us, those at our side throughout life? All too often we take everything for granted!

*Pope Francis*  
*Sunday, 13 October 2013*

