

Seton



MAGAZINE

Under the Magisterium of the Catholic Church

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A DUFFEL BAG EDUCATION

Around the World with
the Tolsma Family

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COVER PHOTO

The Tolsma Family



Dear Readers,

Seton Home Study School serves students in six continents and fifty-four countries worldwide, and we regard that as both a privilege and a great responsibility.

Striving to meet the needs of families in all corners of the globe is a challenge but met with prayer, confidence in the materials we provide, and desire for the success of each student enrolled. The Q & A pages have fascinating details about our international families.

I love the story of the Tolsmas, our featured family. They have lived through some challenging times as they travel worldwide for the State Department, but they have also had some wonderful experiences.

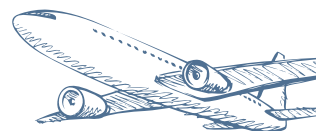
Seton Elementary Academic Counselor Christina Nutt wrote a fantastic article about navigating the Seton book reports. We know how challenging this can be for many students, and Christina has excellent advice.

I encourage you to visit our feature about Belmont Abbey College. BAC is one of our partner colleges, faithful to the magisterium and friendly to homeschool graduates. It's an excellent college choice for Seton grads, one of whom wrote about his experiences as a student at BAC.

I am so grateful to begin another year as a Seton mom and an employee. I sincerely hope that 2022 brings great happiness, peace, and the blessings of God in all your endeavors.

Blessings,

Mary Ellen Barrett



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SUBSCRIPTION INFO:

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

MISSION
STATEMENT

The mission of Seton Home Study School, an international Catholic institution, is to ensure that all of its students thrive intellectually and spiritually using a Christ-centered, educational program that empowers them to live the Catholic Faith while embracing the academic and vocational challenges of the twenty-first century.

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THIS IS WHY WE HOMESCHOOL



Why Do We Homeschool?

I love the freedom that homeschooling gives us to use the style of learning that best fits my kids.

The flexible schedule also makes it easier to complete tasks and join sports and other activities.

We chose Seton because it's a good Catholic school with helpful counselors who understand the student's and parent's needs.

The Quito Family - Dubai, UAE

your Questions ANSWERED

FOR HOMESCHOOLING FAMILIES

We live outside the U.S.A. Can we enroll in Seton?

The short answer is yes, absolutely! But I'd like to also give you some background and recognize our remarkable international community of Seton families.

When Seton Home Study School was started in the mid-1980s, the focus was on serving students in the United States and Canada. Seton had a small number of families in Australia and the Philippines, but even by 2013, the number was small.

In August 2013, only 109 families were enrolled outside the United States and Canada, including 32 families in the Philippines and 30 families in Australia. No other country had more than eight families enrolled.

Explosive Growth

However, in the last few years, enrollments by families living outside the United States have exploded. As of the end of 2021, Seton has approximately 1,400 families enrolled outside the United States. The largest group is in the Philippines, with more than 400 families.

Next in the list of non-US enrollments comes Canada, with approximately 270 families. (Because most Seton-enrolled families in the Middle East are from the Philippines, the total number of enrolled Filipino families is about 700.) After Canada comes Qatar and the United Arab Emirates, with more than 100 families each.

We have also added many families in Central and South America. Together, the countries of Colombia, Honduras, Mexico, Ecuador, and Guatemala add more than 200 families to Seton's total enrollment.

*Today, Seton has approximately
1,400 families enrolled outside
of the United States.*

Besides these families in many countries, Seton also serves numerous US military families stationed worldwide.

It's hard to say precisely why Seton's non-US enrollment has grown so much, but factors may include:

- the availability of reliable internet around the world makes it easier for families to learn about us
- similarly, reliable internet access means that assignments and tests do not need to be mailed back and forth
- more families around the world want their children to learn in English
- the effects of Covid-19 made homeschooling more accepted in many countries



Qatar Seton Families Formed Volleyball Team for Children

Nov. 30, 2021 - 30 kids and 19 families turn out to promote healthy lifestyle and good mental habits guided by Eugene Ausan, Philippine National Team varsity player alumni. Go Team Seton!

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Making it Easier

Seton has responded to the influx of non-US families by making it easier for students to enroll and by giving the best service we can to those families.

For example, when the Covid-19 troubles began, the postal service of the United States and other countries became unreliable, at the same time as homeschooling was becoming more needed.

We switched our shipping from the US Postal Service to DHL International as a response. DHL is very reliable and can ship materials from Virginia to almost anywhere in the world in about one week.

Seton supports Filipino families by having a representative in the Philippines to help answer local questions. Our Philippines representative also serves families worldwide by being available on chat during the nighttime hours in the United States.

This means that we have live chat available almost 24 hours a day, Monday through Friday. (Our chat service includes an automatic translation function that allows us to chat with families in several languages. We do many chats in Spanish but have also chatted in Portuguese, Arabic, Italian, and other languages.)

For our Spanish-speaking families, Manuel Vicente, high school academic counselor, is available to help you in Spanish by phone or email. We also can provide grade reports and transcripts in Spanish.

*We have live chat
available almost 24
hours a day, Monday
through Friday.*

Connect with Families

Would you like to contact other enrolled families in your country? We maintain a list of enrolled families who want to connect with other Seton families.

Although it's easier in the United States to find families living close to each other, whatever country you are in, it's possible that we can put you in touch with other Seton families in your country.

The Catholic Church is for everyone, and Seton strives to serve Catholic families everywhere. Whether you live in Lima, Ohio, or Lima, Peru, we're here to help you pass on the Faith to your children.



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



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UNIVERSITY



Belmont Abbey
COLLEGE



BENEDICTINE
COLLEGE



CHRISTENDOM
COLLEGE



JOHN PAUL THE GREAT
CATHOLIC UNIVERSITY



FRANCISCAN UNIVERSITY
OF STEUBENVILLE



MAGDALEN COLLEGE
OF THE LIBERAL ARTS



THOMAS AQUINAS
COLLEGE



OUR LADY
SEAT OF WISDOM
COLLEGE



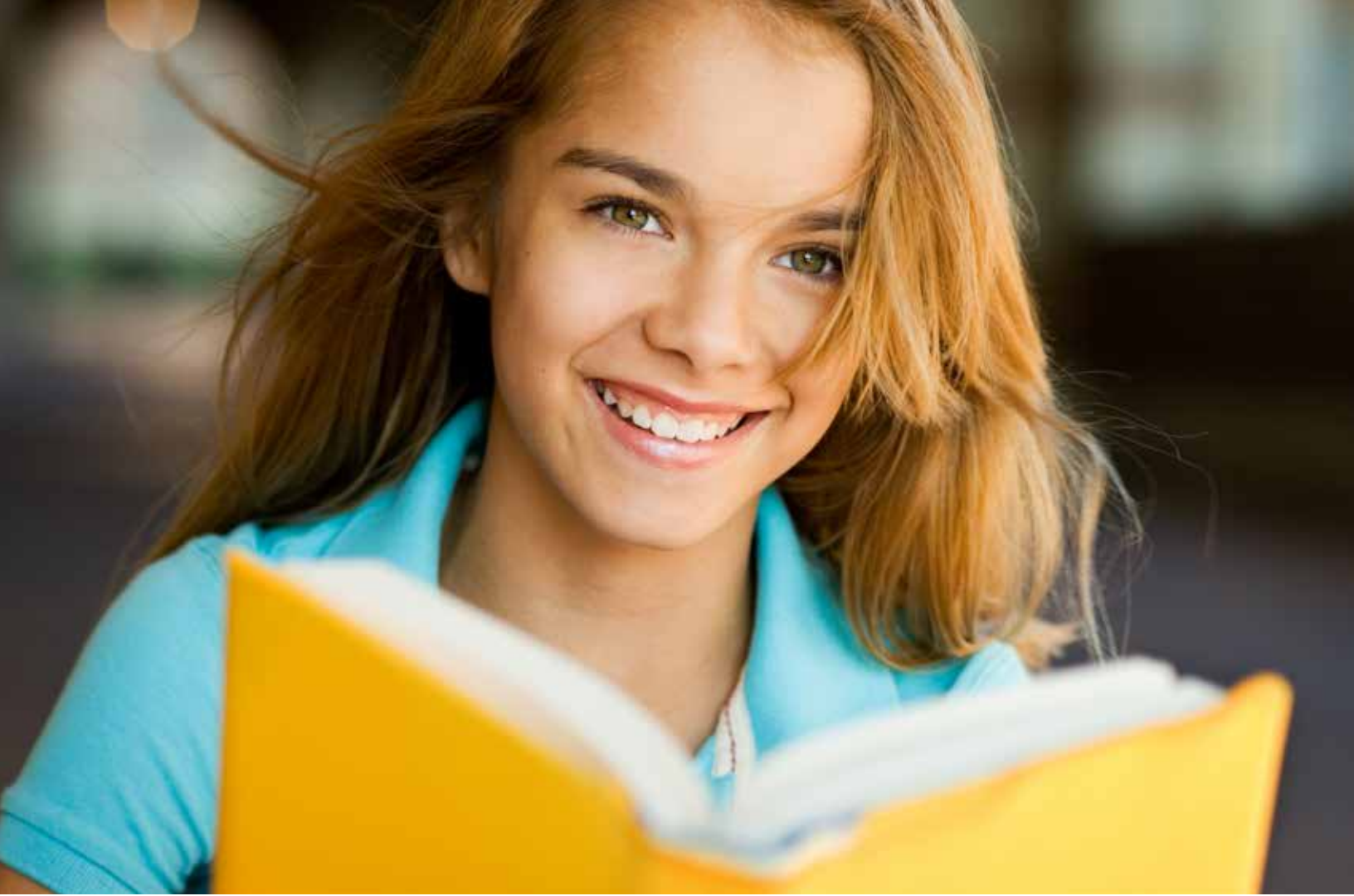
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setonhome.org/colleges



BY CHRISTINA NUTT

Navigating the Seton Book Reports: A Few Tips from Our Counselors

Imagine that you are reading through your student's Lesson Plans. You notice the assignment "First Quarter Book Report." Peeking over your shoulder, your fifth grader sees the title and makes a face. "Mom, do I *really* have to write that?"

It's no secret that writing assignments can sometimes feel like sailing through uncharted waters. Perhaps your students are new to writing book reports. Or maybe they've written dozens of book reports but can't seem to "get into it" this time.

The writing process can stretch on like a journey with no end. The good news is that setting goals and making a plan can help simplify this process for both you and your students. Below, we've gathered some tips and strategies to help your students navigate as they embark on their writing "journey."

Your New Best Friend: The Book Report Handbook

Families sometimes worry that they will have to come up with book report topics and guidelines on their own. Thankfully, Seton has streamlined this process, providing a complete Book Report Handbook for grades 4-8. It contains an introduction to each of the First and Second Quarter novels and a pre-written opening paragraph and topic sentences.

For the Third and Fourth Quarter saint biographies, the handbook contains information on how to structure the book reports. In these quarters, students are free to write their own topic sentences. The handbook also lists virtues and character traits from which students may select their topics.

The Book Report Handbook is your go-to resource when writing book reports. If you think you may have misplaced your handbook, don't hesitate to contact Seton's Academic Counseling Department. We will be happy to send you a new copy if needed.

Set Reading and Writing Goals

A common problem with book reports – or any writing assignment – is procrastination. We all know how it goes. For one reason or another, the book report is put off until the last week of the Quarter, delaying grading and taking the focus away from other assignments.

By the time students sit down to write, they have completely forgotten what they read. We recommend setting reading and writing time goals to keep students on track. Some families plan to read the books and write the book reports within the first two weeks of the Quarter, saving other, less critical reading assignments for later. Setting a specific time frame and limiting students to two weeks reduces procrastination.

Another approach is to schedule daily book report “work sessions” of 20–45 minutes per day. During this time, students should be able to read one or more chapters (depending on reading level) and take notes on what they've read.

By the time they've finished the book, students will have enough information to write a book report.

Of course, life happens, and plans change. That's okay. The beauty of homeschooling is its flexibility, and it is easy to modify writing goals. Try to set goals that are doable for your family. If needed, re-evaluate after a few weeks and make changes.

The important thing is that you are working towards your writing goal. Setting writing goals and creating a time frame can help students and parents keep track of time and stay on top of the book report assignments.

Talk It Out

Sometimes, putting words on paper can feel intimidating, and staring at a blank page doesn't help. In cases like this, it's often helpful for a student to “talk it out” or discuss ideas for his book report before even beginning to write. Start with an overview of the story – have the student tell you briefly about the title, setting, and main character. Read the introductory paragraph in the Book Report Handbook.

As you'll see, there are usually three topics, one for each middle paragraph. Students are often asked to give examples of a particular virtue or character trait in the middle paragraphs. Focus on only one at a time.

When discussing virtues or character traits, first ask your student to explain the virtue in his own words. If needed, look up more ambiguous characteristics such as “reliable” or “noble” in a dictionary or online. Ask clarifying questions. “How does a reliable person act? Can you trust a reliable person?” Then, have the student describe two to three specific instances when the main character showed this virtue. Ask further questions

such as “Tell me what happened.” “What did the character do?” “How did he/she react?” “How did he/she show the virtue of ____ here?” After describing each example, the student should type or write down what was said. At this point, don't worry about writing perfect sentences – just take quick notes.

The Book Report Handbook is your go-to resource when writing book reports.

You can check for grammar and spelling later when grouping the sentences into paragraphs. Before you know it, your student will have all the examples needed to complete his book report.

Search for Clues

Although book report topics often focus on character traits and virtues, authors usually do not directly tell us about a character's virtues or qualities. Authors rarely write, “Johnny Tremain was reliable when he...” This exercise requires students to use critical thinking skills as they read about a character's actions and determine their defining virtues.

I often tell students that writing a book report is like a detective searching for clues. A detective must carefully examine actions, words, and other evidence to solve a mystery. Clues, once gathered, might point to a specific culprit or motive.

In writing a book report, students may not have “hard evidence,” but they need to “search for clues” by carefully evaluating a character's actions and words. They can do this by learning to ask questions. How does this character react in difficult situations? What do his words and actions tell us about the kind of person he is? How does he treat others? Do his words and actions point toward a particular character trait or virtue?

Teaching students to approach book reports like a detective by “searching for clues” can help them write better book reports and develop their critical thinking and analytical skills.

When in Doubt, Call Seton's Counseling Department.

Sometimes a simple phone call or email can help a student over the “writing hump” of book reports. We are always happy to help! If you or your students have any questions about the book reports, please contact us here in Seton's Academic Counseling Department.



Christina Nutt holds a B.A. in English Language and Literature from Christendom College. She enjoys teaching composition and writing skills, playing music with friends and family, and hiking in the beautiful Shenandoah Valley.

From Crayons To Keyboards

BY JOHN CLARK



To pass Seton's online American Government course, each student must write a rebuttal to the infamous Roe v. Wade decision. Specifically, the students must explain how Judge Blackmun's majority decision was legally and constitutionally incorrect.

Over the years, thousands of students have passed the class, and we have seen some magnificent papers. It is no exaggeration to say that some of these papers are not merely on a college level but rival the professionalism of America's top legal journals. The logic and insights of the students routinely pass those of Mr. Blackmun. In many ways, that course and that assignment are a microcosm of Seton's educational philosophy.

*It's little wonder why
my Mom worked
long hours.*

I wrote this course several years ago, and I have graded more than five hundred submitted term papers during the past year. At first, you might consider that a grim thought: grading term papers about abortion for hours on end.

I'll admit, rarely does a day pass that I don't think about the case and peripheral issues like quickening, ensoulment, or privacy. I wonder how the ultrasound picture of a preborn baby appeared on the cover of *Life Magazine* in 1965, yet in 1973, Judge Blackmun seemed unaware that ultrasound technology even existed. I pray for the babies who died as a result of this case.

Never Look at the Waves

Yet, when I read these papers, I see hope. When I read these papers and consider how many students have written these papers over the years, I become increasingly convinced that Roe v. Wade will be overturned—and when it is, it would not surprise me if a Seton student helps overturn it. And not only because of what they have learned in American Government class but what they have learned in all their classes for years.

And what is it they have learned?

To answer that question, it helps to look back to Seton's early days in the mid-1980s. Back then, when my mother and the Seton staff sat down to write a K-12 curriculum, it was a daunting task that seems even more daunting in retrospect. Had she stopped to think about the quixotic nature of it all, she might have wavered. But she never stopped and never wavered. I discovered a certain genius in that: Never look at the waves.

It's little wonder why my mom worked long hours: she had 13 years of curriculum to help write. But I remember well, as I stood by the copier at the age of 15 and collated lesson plans, that these men and women were driven. They were driven by the grace of Faith, always keeping one particular thing in mind: every class, every subject, every grade must be imbued with the Catholic Faith. From Algebra to Zoology, from Handwriting One to History 12, Seton would be a Catholic program. It would be enlivened with the light and truth of Faith.

The infusion of Catholic Faith has been an unwavering commitment.

I remember writing my first online course for Seton back in 2013 and telling my friends that I was writing a "Catholic Economics" course. Upon hearing this, they would often ask, "Economics is Economics. How can you have a Catholic Economics course?" I would answer, "Are you kidding? We have a Catholic Phonics course."

When I began to write the American Government course, I spent a few weeks reviewing the Civics courses in both private and public schools. In my research, I noticed something rather odd: none of these courses discussed the virtue of justice. Considering the role of justice in society, this omission is shocking.

But neither did these courses bother to define "law" or "rights" or "liberty." None of them even discussed the nature of government—as in, why do we have government at all, and where does government's authority originate? These courses simply explained that there are three branches of government and that a bill can become law. They never discussed why a particular bill should become a law.

The Seton course does not have those glaring errors and omissions. Instead, it addresses those thoughtful questions and builds upon what the Seton students have already learned, beginning in kindergarten.

The truths once written with colorful crayons in workbooks are now composed on keyboards in black and white. In all that time, the message has developed, but it has not changed.

Driven by the grace of Faith...Seton would be a Catholic Program.

By the time the Third Quarter Roe v. Wade assignment comes along, they're ready and able to write a dissenting opinion against America's most notorious court decision.

As high school students, they write those assigned papers for their teacher. But the day is coming when their arguments will be heard across America and across the world.

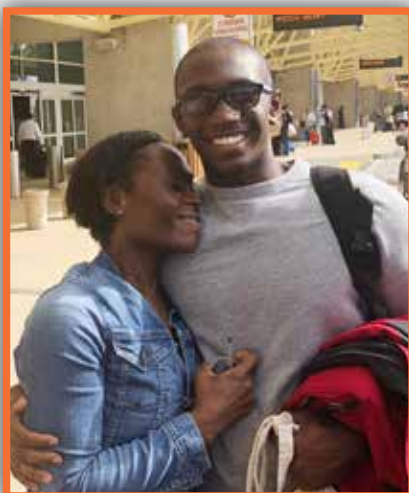


John Clark is a homeschooling father, author of *Who's Got You* and *How to be a Superman Dad*, a speech writer, an online course developer for Seton, and a weekly blogger for *The National Catholic Register*.



Seton Student Achievements

How Has Homeschooling Helped You Succeed?



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Going the Distance for a Higher Education

BY NICK MARMALEJO

The idea of studying abroad often arises from a mixture of cultural fascination and educational intrigue.

At least, that certainly was the case for me. Earning my state teaching certificate at a Virginia university provided a glimpse of what higher education in the United States seemed to offer in the subject of education. My teachers were skilled, but questions addressed to them about the further study of education at the graduate level did not yield inspiring responses.

But discussions with a wily Welshman named Gareth, however, did.

Gareth was one of my classmates also seeking a Virginia teaching certificate. A veteran middle school teacher with a fast wit and a big laugh, Gareth regularly demonstrated in both class and conversations outside of class a keen understanding of student needs and classroom and school demands. It did not take long for my classmates and me to realize he was likely a rock-star teacher.

Gareth and I talked much about the UK, its culture, and what school was like in Wales. Even though I considered him a natural educator, the positive impression he left also convinced me that he had excellent training as a teacher. I promised myself that if I ever did another degree, no matter the subject, undertaking it at a UK university would be the goal.

New Educational Horizons

Years later, I followed that commitment. I enrolled in the University of Bath MA in Education program for distance learners.

The experience, even as an off-campus student, was stellar. My teachers—called tutors—were bright and engaging. The university was always prompt and keen in responding to me. Even though I worked an ocean away, regular communication from the school and its social media operations provided me with an authentic connection to what felt like the everyday vicissitudes of campus life.

I was delightfully surprised that my virtual link to the school did not feel superficial or contrived. This sense was enhanced constructively by the tact and well-devised composition of the program's curriculum.

While I would have thoroughly enjoyed learning on-site and the many wonderful distractions to my studies that situation would offer, going through the program solely as a distance learner yielded a very positive experience. It also has provided me with several points for further reflection.

Lessons for Homeschoolers

1. Success in and satisfaction from the program was determined mainly by my engagement with my tutors and their feedback. Their encouragement and expectations bolstered me when assignments seemed daunting.

2. A similar dynamic can emerge with Seton students who find it difficult to focus and finish. In such situations, it is time to call the Seton counseling department and talk to the academic counselor about the subject in question. It will help get you moving and on the right track.

3. Motivation and discipline are especially crucial in any distance learning program, as all homeschoolers know or soon discover. This does not change at the higher levels.

4. When it comes to schooling at a distance, interaction with fellow travelers along the academic pathway provides the essential context for learning. Reaching out to teachers, whether at Seton or elsewhere, should deepen your connection to the school, academic purpose, and sense of personal meaning.

5. Another ingredient for success in distance education is setting high standards and being selective when choosing your program. Not all distance education programs are created equal. Some programs merely tick boxes. Others are quite challenging and worthwhile.

6. Consider as well your learning style and preferences. How will the program assess you? Will it be through creating projects or participation in an online forum? Or will it be solely through long research papers on a particular subject? The importance of picking a program that synchronizes with your favorite types of assignments cannot be overstated.

7. With all else being equal, follow your intuition when selecting a program, choosing the one that resonates the most with you as an individual.

Sometimes it takes a while to recognize the subtleties that initially attract us to a school or learning pathway. A place or direction that strikes you as right or best is often the one that will provide the highest prospect of academic success and opportunity moving forward.

Had I not already had a positively meaningful on-campus learning experience as an undergraduate, being solely a distance learner at the college level would have felt less satisfying. The knowledge garnered may be the same, but the how and learning environment is still quite different.

As a homeschooler assessing future college or learning opportunities, it is vital to recognize that there are always good and bad trade-offs to the type of program you take and its location.

When considering life after Seton, parents and students should remember that being a distance learner or homeschooler is not for the faint of heart.

Your Seton Advantage

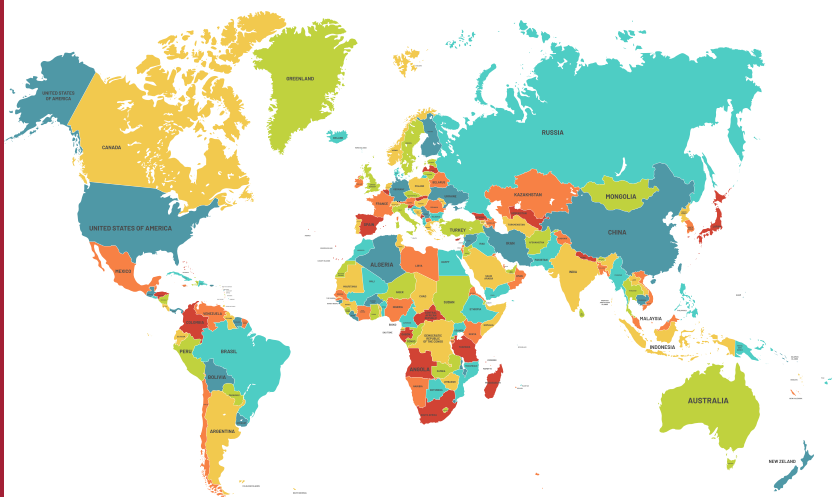
The Seton program is indeed challenging. Success at Seton is an indicator of both knowledge and the skill in navigating obstacles to personal motivation and learning.

The good news is that Seton students are thus often at an advantage when it comes to thriving in higher education.

So please reach out to Seton when you or your student needs help so we can continue to provide you with the support and tools you need.



Nick 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 four children.



Word to the Wise:

While valuable and potentially superior, a degree from a foreign country may not be accepted as equivalent to the same-named degree in your native country. There are several institutions whose primary purpose is to assess a foreign educational program in terms of its equivalency in the US.

In the case of Gareth, as far as the state of Virginia was concerned, his documented classroom experience and an undergraduate degree from a foreign country were not enough to provide him with a teaching certificate in the US. So be sure to do your due diligence on how a program will likely transfer to your native country.

C'est Magnifique: The Great Benefits of Learning a Foreign Language

BY JEFF MINICK

Several years ago, when I spent some time in Rome, I asked the concierge whether there was an institution close to the hotel that taught Italian to foreigners. She gave me the information, then added, "But why would you want to learn Italian? Nearly everybody here speaks English."

He who knows no foreign languages knows nothing of his own.

She was on target. The British Empire helped spread the use of English to foreign shores, and since World War II, with the emergence of the United States as a world power, English has become the world's universal language. In addition, technology offers more and more devices that can immediately translate non-English texts and the spoken word into English.

English-speaking students may wonder, why do I need to study a foreign language? What's the point of spending several years learning something I may never use?

Let's take a look.

Pollywogs to Polyglots

Learning a foreign language helps you understand your language better. As the 19th-century German author Goethe writes, "He who knows no foreign languages knows nothing of his own."

In Latin, for example, declensions and conjugations act as a toolbox for building our skills in other languages. Several Latin students in the classes I once taught to homeschoolers later told me that the French or Spanish classes in which they enrolled in college were made much easier by their knowledge of lingua Latina. They were no longer tadpoles in the rivers and lakes of foreign languages.

And some people continue to supplement this structure of the language they've

built. Saint John Paul II was a polyglot, speaking at least eight languages fluently, including English, Polish, and German, and of course, Latin. While some of us may be gifted in our linguistic repertoire, it's also true, as my students and John Paul II both discovered, that learning one language other than our own makes it easier to add to that stock.

A Playground of the Mind

Evidence also suggests that learning a foreign language can hone our intelligence. The online article "10 Benefits of Learning a Second Language" reports that "people who speak more than one language have improved memory, problem-solving and critical-



thinking skills, enhanced concentration, ability to multitask, and better listening skills.” They also “display signs of greater creativity and flexibility.”

The same case can be made for higher mathematics. Both these subjects exercise the mind in ways that differ from the study of English literature or history. Their complexity acts as a gymnasium for the brain.

College and the Workplace

Most four-year colleges require a minimum of two years of a foreign language for admission. So if you’re planning to attend one of these institutions, you’ll need credits in French, Spanish, German, Latin, or some other language.

And while enrolled in the university, you might consider continuing your language education. To speak Spanish in the United States is clearly an advantage, and large corporations often look for job candidates who have tucked some foreign language into their résumé.

Moreover, if your university offers overseas study, you have an incredible opportunity to enhance your skills in this department. And if you’re interested in Spanish, you can often find plenty of native speakers in your backyard.

Sometimes there are unforeseen gifts as well. Recently I met an American woman via email who graduated from college with a degree in computer science. Wanting to investigate her Italian family tree before joining the workforce, she took lessons in that language in America and Florence and headed to Sicily to look up her uncles and aunts. Today she lives in Tuscany, is married to a native of that country with whom she has three sons, and operates a successful tour company for visitors to Italy

The Keys to Success

The language programs in our schools, the resources available via the Internet, and access to travel make learning a second language easier than ever.

The keys to success in this venture are motivation and perseverance.

When I was in a military school for my first 18 months of college, I studied Russian. Less than a year after leaving that classroom, all I could say in Russian was “Hello,” “Good-bye,” “Comrade,” “I love you,” and “I surrender.” Oh yes, and the first two lines of “Silent Night.”

No motivation.

Meanwhile, in graduate school, I faced a situation where I had to pass a basic reading test in French. Without describing the circumstances, suffice it to say I became desperate enough to study French for 10 to 11 hours daily for three weeks and passed the test with flying colors.

I was definitely motivated.

Citizens of the World

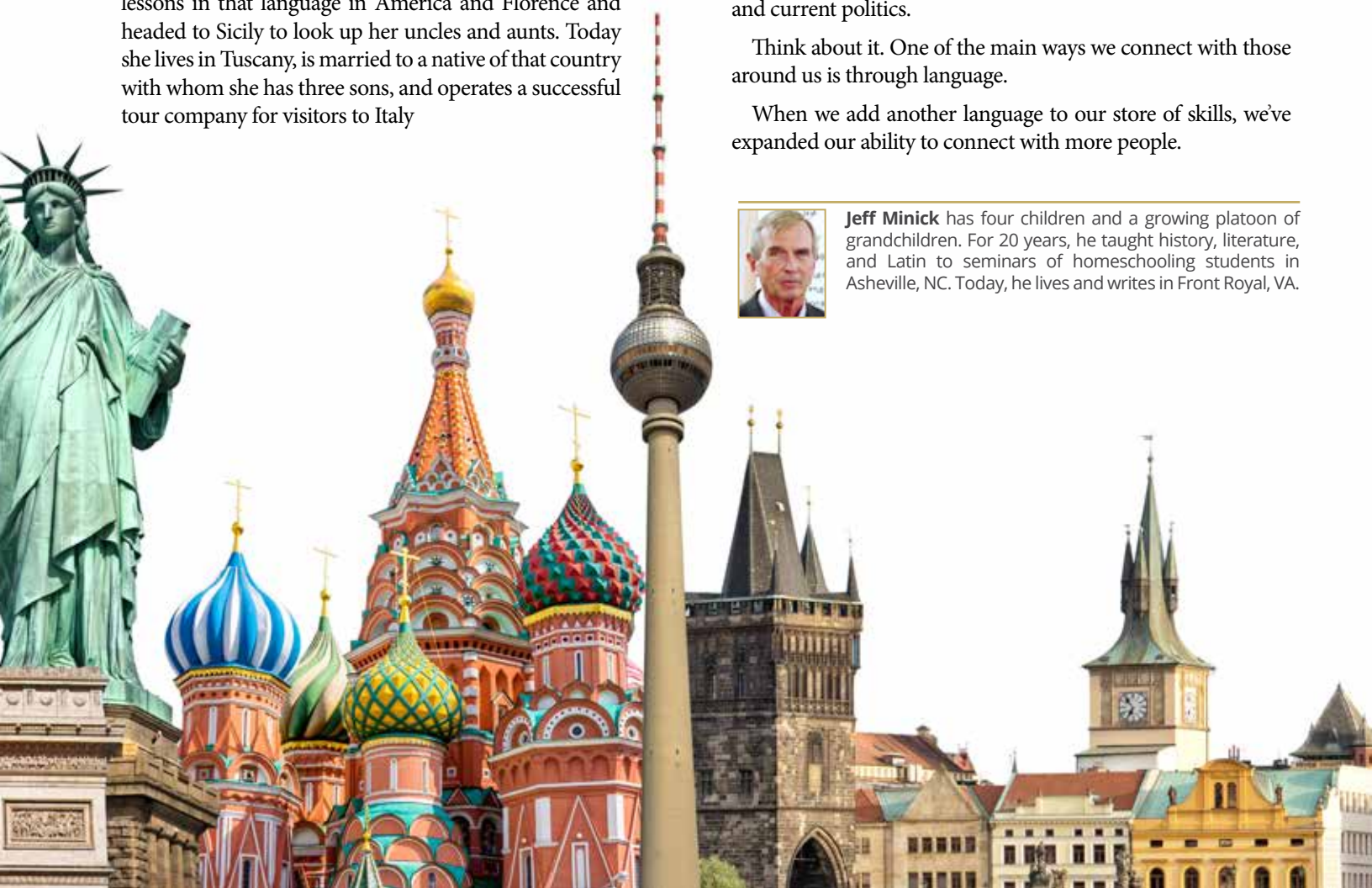
Finally, by tackling a language, we usually become more aware of the country’s history, literature, art, and popular culture whose language we are working to acquire. If we’re learning French, for example, we may learn more about Paris, French cooking and music, the paintings of the Impressionists, and current politics.

Think about it. One of the main ways we connect with those around us is through language.

When we add another language to our store of skills, we’ve expanded our ability to connect with more people.



Jeff Minick has four children and a growing platoon of grandchildren. For 20 years, he taught history, literature, and Latin to seminars of homeschooling students in Asheville, NC. Today, he lives and writes in Front Royal, VA.





A DUFFEL BAG EDUCATION:

Around the World with the Tolsma Family

- with Jeff Minick

On January 23, 2020, the city of Wuhan began shutting down because of COVID-19. The drastic measures taken by the government, which lasted until the following April, included complete isolation in the home, with groceries delivered to the front door.

And the Tolsma family was in danger of being locked down as well.

Luisa and Scott Tolsma, along with their three children, Joseph, Cecilia, and Marcela, had lived in Wuhan for six months when the pandemic broke out. Scott, an Information Management Specialist for the U.S. Department of State, was working on the computer systems in the consulate. When the order came for Americans to leave the country, chaos ensued.

“When we left Wuhan,” Luisa says, “we were allowed to take one carry-on for each person and two large suitcases. I had 30 minutes’ notice to close down the house where we were living. We left most of our personal belongings behind. We didn’t know where in the States we were going until we were in mid-flight on the plane.”

After landing in Alaska and then being quarantined at an Air Force base in California, the family spent the next few months in Arlington, Virginia. When Scott returned to China in June 2020 to work and to secure the belongings they’d left behind, Luisa took the children for five months to Asheville, North Carolina, to be near her family.

For the past year, the Tolsma family has lived in Belgium, where Scott now works and where Luisa teaches her children using the Seton Home Study School.

In 2004, Scott and Luisa were married in Asheville’s Basilica of Saint Lawrence.

Since then, they have lived in places as varied as Russia, Mexico, Paraguay, Lithuania, and of course, Wuhan, China.

GRAMMAR: MISSING IN ACTION

These frequent moves brought educational challenges to the Tolsma family. Luisa was particularly concerned about the failure of some of these schools to teach grammar and spelling to their students. “It was in China that I noticed the gaps in the language arts,” she says. “They didn’t teach the basics. When we were evacuated, I began researching homeschooling and discovered Seton’s excellent grammar reputation. That’s when I called them early on in the pandemic. When our flight landed in Arlington, the Seton materials were waiting for us.”

Luisa laughs when she describes their later trek to Brussels. “I put all our Seton books, binders, and note cards into three duffel bags, and off we went.”

Today 14-year-old eighth-grader Joseph is enrolled in the Brussels International Catholic School, which is run by the traditionalist religious order, the Institute of Christ the King, but he uses Seton to supplement his schooling in Spanish and Math. 12-year-old Cecilia, grade 6, is a full-time Seton student, as is her sister Marcela, a 5-year-old first-grader.

A SHORT FAMILY HISTORY

Because Luisa’s father was a Peruvian diplomat, as a child, she lived not only in Asheville but also in Spain and South America. Spanish was her first language, and her mother taught her English as she grew up. She attended excellent Catholic schools overseas, graduated from high school in Asheville, and entered the University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill, where she soon met her future husband, Scott. He majored in computer science and math, and Luisa won her degrees in international studies and Romance languages.



HOMESCHOOLING PLUSES

Luisa is grateful for the Seton program for several reasons. She is delighted with the grammar and spelling programs, and gives this example of the benefits gained from the Seton approach. When a Latin teacher at the International School was struck by Joseph's grasp of grammar mechanics and asked how he had gained such proficiency, Joseph offered his Seton grammar book as the explanation.

Luisa also appreciates Seton's Special Services department. Cecilia struggles with reading, spelling, and math. Some of the schools they had attended earlier offered little help in her daughter's academic struggles. This trend continued in China. Thanks to Seton and her perseverance, Cecilia has made enormous progress in her academic studies.

Finally, Luisa likes the detailed lesson plans. "It's a nice road map for a person that doesn't have a teaching background, and I know I'm not creating gaps in my kids' education. And then there's the flexibility not found in an institutional school setting. If I see the kids understand a concept, we can take a test and move on or expand on a difficult topic."

CHASING THE FAITH

In addition to some of these academic roadblocks, these international moves have also brought challenges to the Tolsma family when practicing their faith.

"We hit a wall in China," Luisa says. "The popular culture doesn't value God or any other deep sense of spirituality. This made the culture extra difficult for my kids to understand. And it was tough to find a Mass. The closest English Mass was two hours away, and at the nearby Chinese Mass, we drew too much attention as the only foreigners."



Today in Brussels, that situation is much improved. The Tolsma family is active in the parish L'Église Conventuelle du Couvent Saint-Anne, which is associated with the International School and offers the traditional Latin Mass. Joseph is very involved as a server and plays the clarinet during services when he's not on the altar.

"Many of the kids who go to the school and their families attend Mass there," Luisa says. "It's our lifeline to other people. Recently we met another American family that also homeschools."

SCHOOL DAYS AND RECREATION

When asked for details about a typical school day, Luisa emailed this response to Seton:

"We usually rise early to get in our prayers and chores before sitting down for school. We eat breakfast as a family while listening to Catholic Sprouts' podcasts or sermons from our priests back in the U.S. I start school with Cecilia at 8 a.m., working on Phonics, Math, and English, her hardest subjects. Marcela gets dressed, does her chores, and plays for a little while during that time. She starts her work around 9 a.m. She completed the Seton Pre-K program

and is nearly finished with her kindergarten work. We started working on the first-grade books in Phonics, English, Spelling, History, Math, and Science. We try to practice Spanish every day through read-alouds and workbooks. Cecilia is also taking a middle school Spanish conversation course through Homeschool Connections."

In their time away from work and school, the family enjoys biking—"Belgium is very bike-friendly," Luisa reports—hiking, visiting museums and historical sites, and family read-alouds, with the most recent shared story being a translation into Spanish of *The Little Prince*.

GRACE, FAITH, PRAYER

When asked what advice she might give to families considering homeschooling, Luisa pauses a moment, then says, "I would tell them to have confidence and do your research and pray. And give yourself grace because sometimes you feel a lot of pressure."

Faith, persistence, adaptability, grace, and courage when life throws a curveball. These make up the wings that allow the Tolsma family to fly.

Invite the World to Your Homeschool Group

BY MARY ELLEN BARRETT

I live outside of New York City, in one of the most ethnically diverse places in America. It's been my good fortune to know people who hail from other places or have strong ethnic backgrounds of which they are very proud.

This broad range is a blessing because, while travel certainly broadens your horizons, it also costs money, and as a mom of a large family, I don't globe hop too often.

I can, however, take advantage of the beautiful people in my local homeschool groups who have been born and brought up in other countries or who have traveled extensively.

Fortunately, we are getting back to in-person events in our area, and we can revisit International Night, an event that has been an enormous success. I've laid out some simple steps for you so you can plan a similar event for your homeschool group.

"A mind that is stretched by a new experience can never go back to its old dimensions."

Oliver Wendell Holmes

For our event, we invite several local friends from other parts of the world to speak about their experiences growing up in different places and how it differs from what children in America may experience in America.

We have a mom from Taiwan, a family from Russia, a grandma from France, a mom and dad from Ukraine, a Korean dad, a local parish priest from Nigeria, and a marine family who has lived all over the world. We are excited to hear about these places.

I am always a huge advocate of taking advantage of local resources. Parents, grandparents, parishioners, and people from the community are usually delighted to share their knowledge and experience with others, so why not plan a few events around the locals who can share their experience and widen everyone's horizons.

It could inspire your family to travel or study in another country or at the very least give you a glimpse into the lives of God's children in other lands.

Planning International Night

1. Depending on how many people participate, scheduling the event in an ample space such as a church hall or community room at the library might be worthwhile.

It will be more fun if many families both participate and attend so that an ample space can be helpful. A big backyard or local park would work as well; make sure to have a rain date in mind.

2. Ask each family to pick, in order of preference, three countries which they would like to represent. These choices will allow the organizer to assign each family a country they want to study and avoid having multiple presentations of the same country.

3. Assign a small family fee to cover expenses. Ten or twenty dollars per family should be plenty.

4. Give each family specifications on how much space they can use. Should they bring one or two six-foot tables? Can they have a pop-up tent? Decorations and signs? Is there room for a game or a dance demonstration? Encourage everyone to be as creative and colorful as possible with their displays.

5. Create one aspect of the region that each presentation must include. For example, each country must have some information about the patron saint of that country.

6. There is no such thing as a party without food, so it makes sense for each family to bring a dish representative of their country to sample. Any dishes with allergens should be labeled clearly for safety's sake, and they should be easy to eat in a festival-type setting.

Giving Glory to His Work

The real goal of your homeschool group's International Night is to share how our brothers and sisters in faith live and celebrate around the world while having fun, should not be lost in the details of planning. Start small with a few families, and let the momentum carry you through.

The world is large and beautiful. Showing our gratitude to God for His remarkable creation by learning and sharing about other cultures gives glory to His work and helps us better understand how loved we all are by our heavenly Father.



Mary Ellen Barrett is a 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 number of books. She is the editor of the *Seton Magazine* and also a contributor to *The Long Island Catholic*.



OH THE PLACES YOU'LL GO!

LITERATURE, HISTORY, AND INTERNATIONAL SHORES

BY JEFF MINICK

MANY high school students, including those enrolled with Seton, take some sort of world history course.

Such a global survey of people, places, and events is necessarily broad and superficial.

But this study of other countries helps students deepen their understanding of such events as the French Revolution, the vast changes brought by Peter the Great to Russia, the colonization of Australia, and the rise and fall of different dynasties in China.

*English Literature offers
some of humankind's finest
writing ever produced...*

Typically, this foray into the past is followed by an American history course. Seton wisely includes the study of American government during the senior year.

But suppose you want to dig deeper into the story of one particular country? Suppose you become entranced by India or Japan, Russia or Italy, and want to learn more about those faraway lands?

While Seton is an English-centric curriculum, we encourage students in our international community to explore the great literature of their country as well. As an extra benefit students have the opportunity to read the works in their native language.

You can, of course, explore the history of such nations online or through books, reading about the heroes and villains of that distant place, its contributions to world civilization, and the struggles its people have endured.

You can also look to literature for insights into that past.

The Third Cycle

In the seminars I once taught to homeschoolers, we followed a three-year cycle of history: world history and literature, U.S. history and literature, and British history and literature. Students could hop into this program at any point, but the idea was to follow this plan of study.

I chose to teach that final course for several reasons. My academic background was in medieval English history. The United States has stronger connections with Britain than with any other nation, and I wanted students to learn about a country and a culture other than their own. Moreover, English literature offers some of humankind's finest writing ever produced.

The students benefited from these dual courses. Not only did they receive credit for both history and literature, which of course meant more work for them, but they were able to make connections between the events of Britain's past and their relationship to the poetry, plays, and stories produced during different historical epochs.

But suppose you want to dig deeper into the story of one particular country?

British Literature

In my course on British history and literature, we used DK Publishing's *History of Britain and Ireland* as our guide to the past. The 1991 version of *Prentice-Hall Literature: The English Tradition* was inexpensive and readily available online, a thick textbook abounding with historical sketches, poetry, plays ranging from Shakespeare's *Macbeth* to Shaw's *Pygmalion*, and short stories and essays by the truckload.

In addition to selections from this text, students read other literary works, classics like *Everyman*, *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, and Kipling's *The Man Who Would Be King*. Also, more contemporary stories like Geoffrey Household's *Rogue Male*, Dodie Smith's *I Capture the Castle*, and P.G. Wodehouse's *Right Ho, Jeeves*. I selected these books for their variety, their portrayal of England at different times in history, and in hopes that they might appeal to the students.

We read poetry and scenes from plays aloud in the classroom, and in a move that some might regard as cruel, I required students to memorize the first 18 lines of the "Prologue" to Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales* in its original Middle English. Besides writing numerous papers, students engaged in all sorts of classroom exercises, discussing, for instance, Kipling's story in relation to our own country's policies in Afghanistan or laughing as have millions of other readers at the foolhardy hijinks of Bertie Wooster in *Right Ho, Jeeves*.

In short, we stepped out of our native land, crossed the Atlantic, and dove into another culture.

More Exotic Excursions

You can use this same technique of using literature to dig into the culture and history of a land and apply it to most countries around the globe.

An exploration should turn up literary treasures from other countries - India, China, Egypt, and more...

For example, mature students wishing to know more about Norway can learn about the Vikings by reading Norse myths or about medieval Norway by diving into Sigrid Undset's Nobel Prize winner, *Kristin Lavransdatter*, a trilogy set in the 14th century.

Victor Hugo's massive novel, *Les Misérables*, is filled with, among other things, French history, philosophy, and the manners and customs of the 19th century.

Those wishing to learn more about Russia, its Revolution, and its dreary aftermath might take up Boris Pasternak's *Doctor Zhivago* or Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn's *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich*.

An exploration online or in the local public library should turn up literary treasures from other countries—India, China, Egypt, and more—that will give readers a sense of what life was like in the past.

Ties That Bind

When we read such literature, we do more than learn about the past or the character and culture of the people who inhabited a particular era. In the best of the world's literature, these international journeys through books should also make us more aware of the similarities among human beings, their joys and sorrows, triumphs and defeats. The cultural differences between a banker in China and her counterpart in Mexico exist, but these in no way erase the bonds of their common humanity.

"To become more fully human" is a phrase frequently employed by Catholic writers and religious. When we learn more about the culture of another country, when we enter into the minds and hearts of its people through its stories, we are ourselves becoming more fully human.

Deo gratias!



Jeff Minick has four children and a growing platoon of grandchildren. For 20 years, he taught history, literature, and Latin to seminars of homeschooling students in Asheville, NC. Today, he lives and writes in Front Royal, VA.

in the **Schoolroom**

BY MARY ELLEN BARRETT



Pope Francis's Empanadas



Pope Francis is the first South American Pope to be elected in the whole history of our Holy Mother Church. He hails from Argentina, which has a cuisine heavily centered around beef.

Argentina is known worldwide for having the most delicious beef, credited to the diet of the free-ranging cows mainly fed on pampas grass.

In several interviews, the Holy Father has mentioned that his favorite food is empanadas. Empanadas are made from a flour-based dough, fashioned in a hand pie shape with a meat filling. The humble empanada originated in Spain in the early 1500s and was brought to South America by Spanish settlers, where it became popular as a hearty and portable meal for workers.

Pope Francis generally eats a very light diet these days, baked chicken, vegetables, and salad, but his favorite treat remains the empanada.

Here is a recipe, (adapted from *Bon Appetit* September 2021), so you too, can enjoy the Holy Father's favorite dish.

Ingredients:

- 3 Tbsp. extra virgin olive oil, divided
- 2 lb. ground beef (20% fat)
- 2 medium onions, chopped
- 2 small or 1 large red bell peppers, seeded, and chopped
- 2 Tbsp. ground cumin
- 2 Tbsp. paprika
- 1 Tbsp. dried oregano
- ¼ tsp. cayenne pepper
- 1½ cups low-sodium chicken stock or broth
- 2 tsp. sugar
- ½ cup golden raisins
- 3 Tbsp. tomato paste
- 3 packages (12 each) Puff Pastry Dough*
- ½ cup pitted green olives, rinsed well, cut in half lengthwise
- Kosher salt and ground black pepper

Preparation:

Heat 2 Tbsp. oil in a large pot over high. Cook beef, breaking up with a spoon, leave it a little pink until browned but not completely cooked through. Transfer to a medium bowl with a slotted spoon, leaving as much fat in the pan as possible.

Reduce heat to medium and cook onion, bell peppers, and the remaining 1 Tbsp. oil, stirring, until tender but not browned, 6–8 minutes; season with salt and black pepper. Add cumin, paprika, oregano, and cayenne and cook, stirring, until fragrant, about 1 minute. Add chicken stock, tomato paste, reserved beef, and any accumulated juices to the pot. Stir in sugar, 4 tsp. salt, and ¼ tsp. black pepper.

Bring to a simmer and cook, stirring and scraping up any brown bits, until most of the liquid is evaporated, 15–20 minutes; taste and season with salt and black pepper, if needed. Stir in raisins. Transfer to a medium bowl, cover, and chill for at least 3 hours and up to three days before baking.

Preheat oven to 375°. Let dough sit at room temperature for 15 minutes to soften. Remove dough from the package. Keep the sheets you aren't working with covered in a damp dishtowel. Using a small plate as a guide, cut four circles from the dough. Place 2 Tbsp. filling in the center of each round. Top with 2 olive halves and brush water around half of the outer edge of each round. Fold round over filling and pinch edges with a fork to seal and crimp edges.

Transfer empanada to a parchment-lined sheet tray about an inch apart. Cover with a damp dishtowel until ready for the oven. Repeat with the remaining rounds (you'll get about 12 empanadas on each tray).

Bake empanadas, rotating tray halfway through, until golden brown and slightly darker around the edges, 25–35 minutes. Let stand for five minutes before serving.

*You can eliminate the cutting into rounds step if you find empanada pastry dough.



Seton Student Achievements
SHARING SUCCESS WITH THE SETON COMMUNITY



Grace Starts Community of Philosophy Enthusiasts

I started a community of young philosophy enthusiasts called PhilosophYouth.

We held discussions several times a week on different philosophical topics, from whimsical moral dilemmas based on movies or shows to the metaphysics of time and the nature of knowledge.

Soon after we launched PhilosophYouth, the Filipino online magazine *When In Manila* featured our group in their magazine.

We have held monthly conversation-focused workshops featuring professional philosophers and plan to continue these workshops.

We also collaborated with the NYU Philosophy Forum, and I led the PhilosophYouth Breakout Room and connected with more high school and college students interested in philosophy. Since starting PhilosophYouth in April, we have reached students from over ten countries. We plan to create local chapters to help make our discussions more accessible to people from different areas.



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

setonmagazine.com/students



Finding a Home at Belmont Abbey College

BY JULIA LONG

Home. Students and faculty use that word frequently and repeatedly to describe the Honors College at Belmont Abbey, Belmont, North Carolina.

"This is a special place that pulls people in and becomes home," said Dr. Christine Basil, Associate Professor of the Honors College. A 2011 alum, Basil was part of the Honors Institute under the guidance of Dr. Gene Thuot.

The Institute left a lasting impact, allowing her to develop academically, spiritually, and personally. When Basil graduated, she didn't expect to return to the Abbey but found herself missing it.

"When I heard that Joe Wysocki was working with leadership to relaunch the Honors College in the Fall of 2018, I knew I had to be part of it. I wanted to come home," said Basil.



Dr. Joseph Wysocki, Dean of the Honors College, graduated from the Abbey in 2004. When entering college, Wysocki dreamt of being a prosecutor, but as he spent time in the Honors Institute with his mentors Dr. Gene Thuot and Abbot Placid Solari, he began to consider a different path.

Inspired by his experience and the Great Books' impact on his life, Wysocki returned to the Abbey sometime after graduation and partnered with college leadership to create a complete Great Books program. Wysocki never lost sight of his home and the distinctive experience the Abbey offers.

Transformational Learning at the Honors College

The Honors College is an all-encompassing journey to discover the world through a critical eye, study the Great Books and their impact on the world, and prepare for a future that focuses on goodness and beauty.

"Communication today is a bit of a lost art," said Dr. Wysocki, "so we want to create conversations that ask hard questions and spur profound articulations. Once students get to the heart of the problem and



communicate that to people who think differently than they do in a rational manner, conversations can move forward. We're teaching our students to have the right blend of boldness and humility."

Through an immersive study of authors regarded in the tradition of the West as extraordinarily influential, penetrating, graceful, and wise, students create a strong foundation for how to live well in the world today.

Seeking Excellence and Virtue

The balance between passion and practicality sets the Honors College apart from other Great Books programs. "We want our students to know how to live well, but we also want them to make

a living. Here, students pursue a discipline like Business or Marketing and apply Great Books thinking to it. The great thing about this approach is that we have students from all disciplines coming together and learning how to live well,” said Dr. Wysocki.

A big part of living well is nurturing students’ spiritual growth and the desire to glorify God in all things while developing deep friendships and incredible memories.

At Belmont Abbey, students attain excellence in their professional and personal lives by pursuing beauty, goodness, and truth.

Thriving in the Honors College and Beyond

Drs. Wysocki and Basil create a very intentional community at Belmont Abbey. “We are all about shaping character here, but that only happens when you create a culture of love,” said Dr. Basil.

The relationships between students and faculty are an essential part of that culture, and it begins with an investment in people. Wysocki and Basil are deeply committed to providing students with a transformational experience that teaches them to live well, be bold enough to ask the right questions, and be confident enough to work through challenging issues. This genuinely transformational program gives students a home that encourages intellectual curiosity, deep friendships, and strong spiritual growth so that they will have a profound impact on the world around them.

Learn, Seek, and Thrive in the Honors College at Belmont Abbey.



Julia Long holds an MA in Communications and manages Belmont Abbey's Public Relations, Social Media, and Branded Communications. She lives in Gastonia, NC with her husband, daughter, and two cats, Einstein and Galileo.



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Seton Alumni Profile: Anthony Klein

Hi, I'm Anthony Klein, an English major, minoring in great books, medieval studies, and (hopefully!) modern languages. I plan to graduate from Belmont Abbey in 2024.

Finding the Right Fit

I found the Abbey in the summer of 2018 after telling my mom that I wished there was a summer camp for people who read books. After an Internet search, we found Belmont Abbey College's Schola Program on the Newman Guide website.

It seemed like a perfect fit. Schola is a week-long adventure with a diverse group of fellow high school nerds hosted by Honors faculty and students. After attending, I was hooked. I knew then that I wanted to join the Honors College and pursue my education in an atmosphere that supported and stimulated my love of truth, beauty, and the things that matter.

Falling in Love with the Abbey

My time at Belmont Abbey has been epic. My favorite thing about the Honors College is the seminar-style classes heavy in student participation. These classes promote involvement and make me wrestle with modern problems, guiding me to understand better how to pursue virtue and excellence.

Most of the classes I take at the Abbey are Honors classes, so I have grown very close to my classmates. The result is a healthy community of like-minded individuals. The community culture here is incredible and important; I can't stress it enough. The Honors College fosters cultivation in the arts, so we try to attend symphonies and go to the Abbey Players theater productions together.

Life in the Honors College combines strong academics with incredible opportunities for friendship and connection.

How Seton Prepared Me For College Life

Coming to college, I was immediately thankful for my Seton education. Seton's rigorous writing load prepared me for the writing demands in college, and the required readings gave me a solid foundation for the literature I study here. Seton gave me all the tools I need to succeed in my academics, and I'm incredibly thankful for that. I love the Honors College and Belmont Abbey has helped me grow in meaningful relationships with God, others, and myself.



Ask the Experts:

What are Your 2022 Goals for Your Homeschool?

Four Veteran Homeschooling Moms Share Their Experience

Teaching Independence



Paul and I have a simple road map for our parenting style. Teach your kids to grow from dependent to independent to dependable.

What are these stages?

When the kids are babies and toddlers, they are dependent on you and your hubby for everything. You feed them, you bathe them, you dress them.

Then as they grow, you start teaching them how to brush their teeth and take a bath by themselves. Then a few more years and they get to choose their clothes. These years are the independent stage.

Then as they grow older, you have to teach them the value of buying for others out of their own hard-earned money. Or when they're at that period where they are responsible not just for themselves but also for others. These years are the dependable stage.

There's no specific time frame for these stages. It is different for every child.

“*Seton Materials are so Wonderfully Made that Self-Learning is Easy!*”

This year, we have two elementary and two high school homeschooling students. This year's goal is greater independence.

Seton has helped us on our road map because of their magnificent lesson plans and books! Seton materials are so wonderfully made that self-learning is easy. The instructions are clear and straightforward for both parent and student.

Here's to a healthier, safer year ahead for everyone!

Denice Price - Philippines

Preparing Them to Stand Strong



By the time you read this, my youngest will have made his first confession and will be rapidly on his way to receiving his First Holy Communion in the spring.

My first and foremost goal in 2022 is to prepare him for the life-changing reality of the True Presence in the Eucharist. Other than that, I hope to finish 10th, 9th, 6th, 4th, and 2nd grades strong, for my children to learn well, spend the summer thoughtfully, and begin their next year's journey refreshed and eager to learn. I hope to continue homeschooling all my children, to continue my volunteer work, and finally get around to reading the hundred-some books on my "To Be Read" list.

I want to protect them from the world's evils while preparing them to stand strong. I want to foster a home that can be a refuge from the troubles of the world and a place where my children can learn, love, and be loved. I want my children to continue to develop habits of self-organization, virtue, and, most of all, holiness.

“To Protect them from the Evils of the World...to Stand Strong.”

Author's note: So you know we are a very “normal” family, I also asked my children what my goals should be:

15-year-old said, “To survive homeschooling us all.”

14-year-old: “To let your children do whatever they want.”

7-year-old had my favorite answer: “To give us so much sugar we can stay awake for 17 days straight.”

Kristin Brown, Virginia

In God's Care



Every day has its joys and sorrows, and I have learned to put my trust and hope for our school year in the care of God's Providence and not so much on specific goals of my own making.

Since this is our 21st year of being enrolled with Seton Home Study, our goals are very much the same year after year: to educate our children for life and eternity.

Three of our children have already graduated from Seton, and in 2022, our fourth child will graduate. He

is making a final sprint towards the finish line and is determined to finish his year ahead of schedule—mid-winter or early spring.

“To Educate Our Children for Life and Eternity.”

Having only four to homeschool in the upcoming school year will be bittersweet but filled with hope for my children's futures as I see them take what they have learned and apply it to their own lives.

Susan Brock, Virginia

Being in the Present Moment



After more than 20 years of homeschooling, I'd have to say that my goals going into a new year aren't radically different from previous ones.

Experience has taught me that consistency and flexibility are essential ingredients in homeschooling. Well, they are critical ingredients for peace and success in life, generally. So, my goals in 2022 are to continue honing those skills which aid my family in remaining consistent in their educational endeavors and flexible in their day-to-day living.

Present moment living is the best way to develop those skills. In 2022, I plan to continue being in the present with my children: at the school table, the dinner table, the chapel, etc. Rather than worry away the time with a litany of what-ifs and someday-dreams, I will invest my time and energy in each

day's lessons, chores, and experiences. If the last two years have taught us anything, it should be that our static plans are quickly upended, but that's okay when we focus on what matters most: our eternal goals.

“Focus on What Really Matters Most: Our Eternal Goals!”

In 2022, I plan to enjoy every day as though it is a unique and unrepeatable gift. My goal is to continue doing those things involved in working for my family, let go of those things that aren't, and entrust it all to the One Who works all things for the good of those who love Him.

Tara Brelinsky, North Carolina

STAFF SERIES

A chat with those who serve you!

MaryRita Gies, High School English Counselor



A native of Chester County, Pennsylvania, MaryRita Gies joined Seton's full-time staff five months after completing her Bachelor's in 2020. She has two older brothers, two younger brothers, and a sister bringing up the rear of this procession of siblings. She humorously puts it, "I was sandwiched between two sets of brothers for eight years until my sister was born."

During her coming of age years, MaryRita's father worked as a landscape caretaker for a private estate while her mother managed the house and saw to the children's education. Homeschooled from pre-K to second grade, MaryRita entered public school for a short time, returned to homeschooling, and from grades 5-12 attended a classical Catholic academy, Regina Luminis. Her exposure to some of Western Civilization's most significant works of literature began here.

After graduating from high school in 2016, MaryRita enrolled at Christendom College, earning a bachelor's degree in liberal arts. "I took several courses in English lit," she says, "and I almost chose literature! But I decided to major in theology instead. I realized that I loved literature because it points to what theology studies more directly. All the same, I've always enjoyed analyzing works of literature. Now that I work at Seton, I get to do that full-time!"

After graduating from Christendom, she worked for a short time in a daycare center back in Pennsylvania before joining the staff at Seton. "That was quite a change," she says. "At the daycare, I was on my feet all day. Here I spend most of my time at my desk." She pauses, smiles, and says, "One reason I like working for Seton is that there's much common ground here. We spend time talking with each other, and those conversations give us a sense of community."

As an academic counselor in high school English, MaryRita spends her days emailing students or talking with them by phone. "I enjoy working with the students and helping them fine-tune essays. I also enjoy helping them figure out what to write about, sparking the conversation that can get the wheels in their head turning so they can think it through themselves."

To help her students thrive, MaryRita also encourages them to read and review their course manual and study the rubric for explanations of an assignment.

Her passion for literature comes through in her thoughtful take on books and reading. "Students should try and read from a Catholic perspective, but sometimes a literary work is good on a natural level," she says. "I want to encourage students to evaluate literature from an analytical perspective and get the good out of it that they can, whether that would be an example of virtue or an example of human brokenness."

Away from the office, MaryRita enjoys riding her bike, listening to podcasts and audiobooks, and singing and playing the piano with her fiancé, Conor Trzybinski.



Seton Magazine's Saint Poster Collection

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The image displays a collage of various Saint posters from Seton Magazine's collection. Visible posters include:

- Saint Lorenzo Ruiz**: Patron Saint of the Philippines, Filipino Youth, People Working Overseas, and After-Schoolers. September 28.
- Saint Josephine Bakhita**: Patron Saint of Victims of Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking and Sudan. "LOVE THE LORD AND HATE FOR THOSE WHO DO NOT KNOW HIM. WHAT A GRACE IT IS TO KNOW GOD!"
- Saint Dominic**: Founder of the Dominicans. August 8. Patron Saint of Astronomers and the Faithful Account.
- Saint Joan of Arc**: The Maid of Orleans. Feast Day - May 30th. Patron Saint of Soldiers and France.
- St. Dominic**: Patron Saint of Preachers. Feast Day - August 28. "When We see the Poor and the Sick We see Jesus."

Saint Marianne Cope

Sister of the Third Order Regular of St. Francis



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Forming Young People

I urge you, then, never to lose that sense of enthusiasm and concern for truth. Always remember that teaching is not just about communicating content, but about forming young people.

You need to understand and love them, to awaken their innate thirst for truth and their yearning for transcendence. Be for them a source of encouragement and strength.

*Pope Benedict XVI
Meeting with young university professors
August 19th, 2011*

