

# Seton MAGAZINE

Under the Magisterium of the Catholic Church

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*Do Your Best.  
Let God Do The Rest.*

The Nelson Family - Pg 12



**The stay-at-  
HOMESCHOOLING  
MOM  
Podcast**



## What's New in 2024!

Mary Ellen Barrett - pg 9

**We are Called to Lead  
Our Family Prayerfully**  
Dr. Mary Kay Clark - pg 10

**Eliana and Friends  
Make a Sainly Movie**  
Student Profile - pg 18

**Advice en Español**  
Manuel Vicente - pg 19





# 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.

**LETTER FROM  
THE EDITOR**

*Dear Readers,*

Happy New Year! I hope that you all had a lovely Christmastide with family and friends.

First, I would like to express my and Ginny's gratitude for the great response to the podcast. This issue shares a behind-the-scene look at how we create the podcast and includes a big announcement.

I felt so grateful to our young student profiled this month, Eliana. Considering how much garbage is made into movies, having a young lady work so hard to bring about a quality film gave me so much hope for the future. Go, Eliana!

We hope you enjoy Dr. Clark's article about family prayer. We have an enormous collection of Dr. Clark's writings that our newer families have never had the opportunity to read, and we hope to share some of them in upcoming issues. We are immensely grateful for Dr. Clark's wisdom and expertise.

Finally, I hope you all take the time to read our featured family story written by Jennifer Nelson. I was so impressed by Jennifer that I invited her to be a guest on the podcast. Her joyful spirit is infectious, and her deep faith informs everything she does, and she does a lot! I found her to be such an inspiration, and I know many of you will as well.

This short Ordinary Time barely gives us breathing space to prepare for Lent; time is relentless. I hope you enjoy these late winter days. I am trying very hard to be fully present in each season and prayerfully discern what God wants from me each day, which is not easy for a rusher and doer such as myself. Pray for me, dear readers, and know I am praying for you.

Blessings,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Mary Ellen Barrett".

Mary Ellen Barrett



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The Nelson Family

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# WHAT'S NEW IN 2024! PAGE 9



**Be Informed  
and  
Laugh Out Loud!**



# Contents—



- 6** **Your Questions Answered**  
*For Homeschooling Families*
- 8** **Stay-at-Homeschooling Mom Celebrates Its 1st Anniversary**  
*Mary Ellen Barrett*
- 10** **We are Called to Lead Our Family Prayerfully**  
*Dr. Mary Kay Clark*
- 11** **Financial Aid for Families**  
*Joseph Strickland*
- 12** **Do Your Best. Let God Do The Rest.**  
*Jennifer Nelson*
- 15** **In the Schoolroom: One Small Change Can Change Everything**  
*Mary Ellen Barrett*
- 16** **Ask The Experts: How Do You Restart School After Christmas?**
- 17** **This is Why We Homeschool**  
*The Reyes-Ortiz Family*

- 18** **Eliana and Friends Make a Sainly Movie**  
*Student Profile*
- 19** **Advice en Español**  
*Manuel Vicente*
- 20** **Success is Built on "Keep Trying"**  
*John Clark*
- 22** **Staff Profile:**  
*Joe Sparks*
- 23** **St. Thomas Aquinas**  
*Saint Poster by Emily Praise*



# your Questions ANSWERED

FOR HOMESCHOOLING FAMILIES

## **We're halfway through the school year. What should I do?**

If your family follows the traditional Aug/Sept - May/June school year, the winter months should see your students entering their third quarter.

Now is a good time to step back and see where they are across the board. If you have a high schooler, will be transferring schools, or will need end-of-the-year records, this half-year check-in is especially important to avoid a stress-ridden, mad dash at the end of the year. Remember that all Seton-graded assignments must be done, uploaded (or sent in), and graded before a complete report card or transcript can be issued.

Upload all outstanding assignments, so your student's MySeton page reflects their progress. See where they are and how many assignments they have left. If you're in the 3rd quarter in all subjects, perfect!

But, more likely, you have students who have already finished some subjects, are still in 1st or 2nd quarter for others, and have others that they haven't even started. Time for some recalibration!

Figure out when you want to finish and, working back from that date, set realistic goals. Decide if you're okay with going into/through the summer with one or two subjects. Your students will have to double down on subjects they have yet to start or are seriously behind on, and they have probably neglected these subjects because they find them more difficult.

Plan for resistance and strategize to overcome it as best as possible. Find the time of day, the place, the parent or sibling, or whatever motivates them and use it. If something in the material is stumping your student and you, contact the counselors by phone, email, or chat. It's what we're here for!

*Theresa O'Connor, Academic Counselor*



## **I think my child could benefit from Seton's Special Services curriculum. Can I switch to that curriculum in the middle of the year?**

Switching to Special Services can be done at any point of the year, and it is typically very easy. Your first step should be contacting a Special Services counselor to discuss your concerns, what modifications are available for your student, and any other relevant information.

If you want to adopt one course only, we will process that directly and send you any needed special services materials. If you want to adapt more than one course, you may speak to the Seton Admissions Department, pay the fee, and then Special Services will process the course changes.

The Special Services Department provides curriculums for students with a wide range of disabilities, including dyslexia, pervasive developmental disorder, Down syndrome, Aspergers Syndrome, and Attention Deficit Disorder. If you have questions, don't hesitate to contact us at [ssdept@setonhome.org](mailto:ssdept@setonhome.org). Our phone number is 540-622-5576.

*Special Services Staff*

## **I have friends who are looking to change schools. Can they transfer during the school year?**

Absolutely! We recognize that the need for a change in school can arise at any time during the academic year, so we offer flexible enrollment options. We're pleased to provide year-round open enrollments, accommodating students who wish to enroll or transfer at any point during the school year.

If a student has completed the first half of the school year at their previous school, we typically recommend a half-year enrollment. While only two quarters would be graded for this enrollment, we reduce the enrollment cost by \$100, and we provide all the materials for the entire year. This allows students to fill in any gaps and allow for a smooth transition to homeschooling.

For high school students transferring to Seton, we require records of any courses already started at their previous school. All new students from 2nd grade or higher will be emailed an assessment test when they enroll. This test ensures that students are well-placed in our program, allowing them to get the most out of the courses they enroll in.

*Joseph Strickland, Admissions Counselor*

# My fifth-grade son won't listen to me. He says I'm not a real teacher.

**I just removed him from public school and enrolled him in Seton. He thinks the whole thing is a joke. What can I do?**

He thinks you're not a real teacher because you're his mom. He's seen you in your pajamas with your hair all fuzzy and your face marked with wrinkles from your pillow. What do you know? You're just mom.

He doesn't remember when you taught him how to eat. He doesn't remember when you helped him take his first steps. He can't recall when you showed him how to laugh or clap his hands or hug his teddy bear. He doesn't

remember any of that. But this doesn't mean he doesn't know, deep down, that you taught him all those things.

You will remind him, gently, over time, by being there. Be with him when he's learning how to diagram sentences or add up numbers or memorize history facts. Stay beside him. The same way you stayed with him before, when you taught him how to talk, how to brush his teeth, make his bed, tie his shoes, pour his orange juice without spilling.

Look up from your coffee cup, your phone, your own inner doubts and smile at him and know that you're both learning together. He's learning to trust you again, to believe that you will teach



him, real, important things. Things that matter. Things that he will carry with him for the rest of his life. And you are reminding yourself that you really are his teacher. Believe it. Soon, he will believe it too.

*Heather Hibl, Academic Counselor*



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UNIVERSITY  
OF DALLAS



Encouraging students to continue their Catholic education by attending solidly Catholic Colleges after high school.

# The Stay-at-HOMESCHOOLING

Seton  
Home Study School



## MOM Podcast

## Celebrates its 1<sup>st</sup> Anniversary!

BY MARY ELLEN BARRETT

**Once** upon a time, a few very smart people at Seton Home Study School thought that homeschool moms might enjoy a podcast geared specifically to them. Something to encourage and inspire them and help give them a boost on the hard days. They mulled this over for a little while and then, at a meeting, sprung it on veteran homeschooling mom Ginny Seuffert and me. We immediately thought this was a crazy idea.



Both of us thought we were not what moms wanted to hear, but after some persuasion, we decided to try it. “How hard can it be,” we said. “We talk all the time. This is no different.”

We were very naïve. Running a podcast is a lot of work, especially when your technology depends on iffy internet connections and you live in a house with a bunch of other people, dogs, neighbors with lawnmowers, and the occasional fire engine roaring past.

To give you an idea of what is involved, I live on Long Island, New York. Ginny lives in rural Kentucky and occasionally in Chicago at her son’s house. I have a work-at-home husband, seven kids, and a dog. Ginny has a dog and husband and, in Chicago, six grandchildren.

When we have tech troubles, which happens, we both shout for my daughter Bridget, a rising senior who wishes to have a career in Information Technology. Bridget comes running and usually solves the problem by being patient with what I’m sure she thinks is my complete inadequacy. I need to schedule us when my husband works in his office in Manhattan so I can

have our shared office to myself, or I use my daughters Bridget or Erin’s room because the both have hardwired connections to the internet. I am a roaming podcaster.

We are getting better since we have developed some routines, but we still run into the occasional wall.

### Behind the Scenes

For example, we once got through a whole episode and were complimenting each other profusely when I discovered I hadn’t hit record. Another time, Ginny’s microphone stopped working, so I called her and held my phone up against my microphone. These behind-the-scenes views are why you need to pray for our incredible engineer and producer Jason Loughry; the man is earning heaven every time I send him a recording.

This may sound chaotic, sometimes it is, but we are having a lot of fun, addressing important topics, and interviewing great guests. We are learning a lot along the way, mostly never to fear new things.

I know I speak for Ginny when I say how grateful I am for all the support from our listeners and the staff at Seton. If you have not yet checked out the podcast, my favorite episodes are *Enrichment*, *How to Fit it in*, and *Coping with Burnout*. I cannot pick a favorite guest because they have all been great, so please check them out.





# What's New in 2024!

**59 Episodes available at  
[Setonhome.org/podcast](https://setonhome.org/podcast)**

## Friendships and Conversations

I have known Ginny Seuffert for almost twenty years and as a good friend for almost ten. In that time, we have had many, many conversations about homeschooling: how to do it, the culture of it, its effect on society, and the changes that have occurred in the movement since she started in 1989.



The Stay-at-Homeschool Mom Podcast is an outgrowth of that friendship and those conversations. With the support of Seton Home Study School and many other generous sponsors we have been blessed to bring to our listeners those conversations and host so many enjoyable

guests, from Father Mark Mary Ames, Colleen Billings, Emily Malloy, to everyone's favorite therapist Dr. Ray Guarendi.

## Making Your Show Better

As we passed our one-year anniversary we thought it fitting to review how it is going and how we will proceed. Having written and recorded about sixty episodes to date we were feeling a need to step back and recharge creatively. In other words, we needed a short break.

So, we asked a few key Seton employees who interact daily with parents and students to share their wisdom. These recordings will become season two episodes, which we hope you will tune in to hear.

John Thorp is the Director of Guidance at Seton and assists with the entire college application process. From helping parents get the transcript together, to advising students about recommendations, Mr. Thorp is a wealth of information about

what can be a grueling process. Draper Warren is Seton's Director of Admissions and the founder of Catholic Harbor, Seton's online community for the thirteen-year-old and up student. Mr. Warren shared his experience of having a similar message board as a Seton student and how that experience inspired him to create a safe place where students could interact and form lifelong friendships. Over three million posts in six years have proven his instincts about this need were correct.



Patty Graham is the Director of Seton Testing and an expert in all the standardized tests available to parents who need to provide such things to their school district or who merely want to check their student's progress. Mrs. Graham shares information about assessment and diagnostic testing and even I, old homeschooler that I am, was surprised at what I did not know.

Finally, two of Seton's counselors, Laura Fusto and Mary Connolly, joined us to share tips for getting reluctant students to write. This is often a homeschool mom's Waterloo and Mrs. Fusto and Miss Connolly have such good advice.

Ginny and I have been blessed in this crazy endeavor, and are looking forward to sharing more with you on the podcast so look for us the first week of March 2024.

# We are Called to Lead Our Family Prayerfully

BY DR. MARY KAY CLARK

These words from Dr. Clark in December 2017 bear revisiting.

Shortly after Jesus was born, an angel appeared to Joseph in his sleep, warning him that the Baby Jesus was in grave danger. The angel said that the evil King Herod, fearing that a young boy would someday take over his throne, was sending his soldiers to murder all little boys who were two years old or younger in the land.

To protect Jesus, the angel told Joseph that he must leave Bethlehem in the dark of night. He was told to immediately rise from his bed and take Mary and Jesus to safety in Egypt. Many believe that another angel was sent to Joseph to help him along on the dark journey. The little Holy Family would follow the angel down the unfamiliar path, with just enough light provided by the angel.

Joseph instantaneously responded to Heaven's command to protect his Child. Joseph understood that his Holy Child would sacrifice His life for the salvation of men and women throughout time. Joseph knew that Jesus was destined to open the very gates of Heaven, bringing many people to eternal happiness. Joseph knew that his Holy Child would save men from their sins, and that the love of God would pour forth upon the Earth as a manifestation of His incomprehensible mercy.

Joseph followed the path of sacrifice for His Son. He rose in the middle of the night, helped Mary wrap Baby Jesus in warm clothes, hoisted them upon the back of his donkey, and, pulling them behind him, began the long, cold, and dark journey to a new, warm, sunny, and peaceful land promised by the angel.

For several years, Joseph and Mary raised Jesus in safety, in the once foreign land of Egypt, living the quiet life of a carpenter's family. The Holy Family also helped their new neighbors to learn about Revelation. They helped their neighbors to reject the practices of a pagan society. They surely helped other families to learn about God's love for them and His concern for their sufferings.



Through prayer, some parents have come to believe that they must take on the responsibility to protect and to educate their children through Catholic homeschooling. For some, perhaps it seemed like the dark of night when they made that decision. Perhaps they sensed that while Herod tried to take children's lives, modern-day Herods are trying to take their children's souls. But like Saint Joseph, they have responded, in effect: "Not on my watch."

Though their decisions may have been obvious, that doesn't make their decisions any easier. Homeschooling parents often take a path without the help or support of family members or friends, and often without the certainty of a well-traveled route. So these parents pray to their children's guardian angels for help—for the spiritual guidance to make the best decisions for their children. And so, they walk by faith, leading their children along the way.

The Holy Family's Flight to Egypt causes us to reflect on the events of our own home schooling family, and how we parents should proceed. Whereas the protection of

his family led Saint Joseph away from home, the protection of our own families leads us back home.

St. Joseph, during this Christmas season, help us to realize the importance of being strong and dedicated parents. Help us to affectionately devote our lives to helping our children save their souls by learning the Faith. Help our children to recognize the spiritual value of learning about God's love.

St. Joseph, help our children to realize that by following the teachings of their parents, by being obedient and studying their Catholic home schooling lessons, like the Holy Family, they will be protected from the dangers of our society. St. Joseph, help our children to lead our society as educated, practicing Catholics who want our country to be the Christian nation it is called to be. And to become the men and women that we all are called to be.



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*.



# Financial Aid for Families

BY JOSEPH STRICKLAND

**A**t Seton, we are committed to making Catholic education accessible to as many families as possible. We offer financial aid and try to assist as many families as possible, but our primary focus is helping those with the greatest financial need.

Since our financial assistance is limited, we prioritize families who are experiencing exceptional hardships.

There are no deadlines to apply for financial aid, but if you are in a hurry to receive your shipment, please apply early. It often takes us a week or more to review your request, especially in our busy enrollment season of July-September.

We will reply to your email to let you know if we have any additional questions or whether we can offer your students financial aid. If we can make you an offer, we will specify the amount for each student and provide instructions for applying that to your enrollment.

## How to Apply

To apply, email [financialaid@setonhome.org](mailto:financialaid@setonhome.org) and give a little explanation of your financial situation and the causes of the financial hardship. This helps us determine how much we could offer and ensure aid goes to those most in need. Providing a rough estimate of family income is especially useful.

**For more information, please visit:**  
<https://www.setonhome.org/financial-aid>



## How You Can Help Seton Families

**We** offer a variety of ways to donate to the Financial Aid Fund. You can make a one-time or recurring donation through PayPal at <https://www.setonhome.org/scholarship-fund/>

If you prefer to donate by check, it can be mailed to:

Seton Home Study School  
**Attn: Financial Aid Program**  
1350 Progress Drive  
Front Royal, VA 22630

Checks should be made payable to "Seton Home Study School," it's important to write "Financial Aid" in the memo line to ensure your donation is directed appropriately.

You can also donate to the Financial Aid Fund when you enroll online. On the payment tab of your online enrollment, there is the option to add a donation to the fund.



## Every Donation Helps

Every contribution, regardless of the method, significantly impacts our ability to provide quality Catholic education to those in need.

Thank you for considering a donation to our Financial Aid Fund.

# Do Your Best. Let God Do The Rest.

BY JENNIFER NELSON

I don't often talk to myself, but there is always the exception. I remember one day early on in our homeschooling journey when my oldest two were in second grade, their sister in Pre-K, and the rambunctious toddler had just covered herself in a sharpie marker. While I tried to teach, the toddler made herself a literal piece of work.

I put her in her crib and told the other three I had to walk outside. As tears came, I talked loudly to God. "Why did you call me to this? It is too hard. I can't do this. I'm failing them."

If I had a towel to throw in or a flag to wave, it would have been on that day. Because I did give up that day. I gave up the white knuckle hold I had on my life, my kids, our homeschool, and my plans, and I surrendered them to Him.

"I can't do it but YOU can, God. Please give me the grace to teach them." I felt God speak to my heart. When I came inside, I announced we had a new motto for our homeschool: "Do your best. Let God do the rest."

Since that was our motto, I painted it on the wall of our school room. It was a reminder to us to show up each day and give it all we could. If it wasn't perfect, if we didn't finish everything we set out to do, it would be ok. God would help us do what had to be done.

We gave our school to Jesus, and, at the start of each year, asked a priest to come in for a back-to-school blessing. I decided to give our best to Jesus by going to daily Mass with my kids each day.





Beginning the day in prayer and receiving Jesus in the Eucharist helped me surrender all of the expectations of the day and know that if all else went to literal poop (thanks, septic back up) we did the most important thing for the day, receiving Christ. It would all work out.

In these past nine years, we have been through a septic back up, a flood that destroyed our homeschooling room (we are now schooling wherever we can find space), three miscarriages, a high risk pregnancy, caring for my mom through various medical issues, surgeries, 4 newborns, and a COVID illness that took me out of commission for two weeks.

If you would have told me the day I walked outside to talk to God (ok, more like cry out to God), that we'd be able to continue loving, laughing, and educating through these storms, I probably would have laughed.

If you would have told me that in these nine years in addition to homeschooling I would be the founder of an international ministry that spreads devotion to St. Gianna or author a children's book, I would have told you that was impossible.

But here's the thing: nothing is impossible for God. When you say, "I surrender," to Jesus, you're giving up to the One who

is the source of all strength and the One who loves your family more than you do! The One who has the easy yoke and the light burden. The One who wants to take on your burden.

"If you would have told me that in these nine years in addition to homeschooling I would be the founder of an international ministry that spreads devotion to St. Gianna or author a children's book, I would have told you that was impossible.

We surrendered our children to Him at birth and our homeschool to Him in 2014 and every day since. Surrender to Jesus is not "throwing in the towel" and it's not "giving up." It's giving yourself, your family, and your homeschool over to the One who has great plans for you. He will give you everything necessary to love, educate, and care for your family.

All we have to do is wave our white flag, receive the Precious White Host, and let God do the rest.





# *With Love from the Nelson's*





# in the **Schoolroom**

BY MARY ELLEN BARRETT

## One Small Change Can Change Everything

**Are** you the type of person who is naturally organized? Who is hard-working and focused? Who works first and plays later?

Me either. At least not by nature.

By nature, I'm a sleep late, slow start, read books, and snack all day person, but of course, that would not support my family in its homeschool mission, my work at Seton, or my parish volunteer positions. I've had to become the type of person who is an early-rising, organized, hard worker who plays when the work is finished. By play, I mean I read or embroider.

When I read the book *Atomic Habits* by James Clear, this quote really spoke to me:

"The ultimate form of intrinsic motivation is when a habit becomes part of your identity. It's one thing to say I'm the type of person who wants this. It's something very different to say I'm the type of person who is this."

I strive to be the person who is a good homeschool mom, a clean housekeeping homeowner, and a loving and cheerful wife. I want to be those things, and some simple habits have made that possible.

## Be the Person You Want to Be

January is a time to refresh and to reflect on how we want the coming year to go for ourselves and our families. Consider developing three new habits over the next three months to help you be the person who does (fill in the blank). Here's how:

1. Start by getting up fifteen minutes earlier than you do now. Use the time to get a head start on the homeschool day, check the lesson plans, find the pencils, and set out the books.
2. Greet your spouse when he returns home with a smile and a hug. Just stop what you are doing for a minute and do this.
3. Put whatever you use in the kitchen away the moment you finish with it—dirty things right in the sink or dishwasher, food right back in the fridge/pantry.

Starting a new habit can seem overwhelming, so start small this January and see how little things really add up.



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



Ask the Experts:

## How Do You Restart School After Christmas?

*Three Veteran Homeschooling Moms Share Their Experience*

### *Ease into Academics...*



Harder than going back to school after summer break is the dreaded back to school after Christmas and Epiphany. (At least in my family).

The holidays are over, the darkness of winter is upon us, Lent is fast approaching, and everyone is in the doldrums. Or are they? My family has done some versions of most of these to ease into school again.

**“Take in all the season has to offer.”**

Consider the age and number of children and do what works for you. Celebrate Epiphany. We, as Catholics, know Christmas begins Dec 25th, not ends. Take in all the season has to offer. Remember to fill yourself, as you can't pour from an empty cup.

Ask Mary to be with you in guiding these children and ask the Christ Child for His special blessing upon them.

Ease into academics. Do three subjects a day for a couple of days, then four, then tackle the whole curriculum. Start planning something fun for spring break/Easter. It could be as simple as a family campout in the backyard.

**“Make that first week back as fun as possible.”**

Make that first week back as fun as possible. Maybe we do pajama week or maybe have hot chocolate while everyone works on the floor together. Have a backwards day. Eat breakfast for dinner and dessert for breakfast.

Finally, one famous year, we held a “whine fest.” I allowed everyone to complain about going back to school for as much as they wanted for 15 minutes. Then, it was time to get going.

***Kristin Brown, Virginia***



## Freshen Up Your Homeschool...



The holidays offer so many extraordinary opportunities for joy, wonder, and activity.

Whether it be extracurricular events like co-op parties and craft fairs or family experiences like traveling to visit distant relatives and carrying on long-standing traditions, the season's busyness tends to lift us out of our established homeschool routines (physically, mentally, and spiritually). And while that change is typically positive, returning to our homeschooling studies after the holidays can feel daunting. However, a little bit of pre-planning reduces the letdown post-holidays.

My favorite method for freshening up the school day after the holiday whirlwind is to clean the house or, more specifically, the school cabinet. I first clear the clutter before we pick up where we left off. I throw out all those old papers, broken crayons,

half-inch-long teeth-mark imprinted pencils, and eraser remnants that have accumulated over the months. I reorganize the bookshelves and shake the crumbs out of the kids' pencil boxes. Without making many purchases, I bring our school space back to how it was when supplies were shiny and new at the start of our school year.

Though I do not make any major overhauls to our curriculum at this stage, I reassess what was working well and what was not before the break. Then, I make small alterations to the schedule, reading list, or planners as needed.

Freshening up my homeschool before commencing studies goes a long way toward avoiding the post-holiday blues. And it does not require much. A couple of hours of elbow-grease, purging, and organizing reinvigorates the space and, by extension, those of us returning to schooling within it.

*Tara Brelinsky, North Carolina*

## Find Occasions to Celebrate...



We have been homeschooling for 23 years, and I had to really think about how we have been able to keep things going after the holidays.

I am someone who thrives on a schedule, so for the most part, our school day does not change with the new year.

One thing that does help keep the kids in joyful anticipation carried over from the holiday season is that we have at least one kid's birthday per month beginning in January and going through till June, with one more in mid-summer. Each kid has their own "advent" of their birthday and the special attention due to it.

This joyful expectation is shared among the children, even those who are now adults and keeps the spirits up after the holidays.

*Susan Brock, Virginia*

## THIS IS WHY WE HOMESCHOOL



### The Greatest Benefit of Homeschooling?

**Freedom!** And learning more about the One True God, who loves us.

We chose Seton Home Study School because it is a solid Catholic program that provides great support to parents to help children succeed. What we love most is the flexibility to attend daily Mass and learn at our own pace.

Catholic Tradition and Academic Excellency are our priority for the education of our child. We have found both at Seton.

**The Reyes-Ortiz Family - Augusta, Georgia**



*The photo was taken at our parish, St. Benedict's Catholic Church. I am wearing a yellow t-shirt.*



## STUDENT PROFILE

# Eliana and Friends Make a *Saintly* Movie

In May 2023, I (Eliana) thought it would be really fun for the kids at our parish and around our diocese to put together a movie about the life of a saint. I started thinking about possible saints, which families to invite, and other things like that.

Once we decided on Saints Francis and Clare of Assisi, we took the idea to our priest. We got Father's permission, and the project began: inviting families, choosing dates, etc. I started to write a script and completed it in July. It's important to me because I think it was a great summer project.

The kids grew closer to each other and God. We learned about the lives of two great saints. We laughed and enjoyed many good times. For many years, I've always thought it would be really fun to do something like this, and two great movies made by kids on the Catholic website "Formed" really inspired me as well.

### *What did you do?*

I wrote a script with many roles and did my best to put the whole thing together. Of course, it wouldn't have been possible without my mom and older sister's help!

We had a total of thirty kids from ages 1-15 in our movie. We meet numerous times a week at our parish to practice and memorize our lines. Within a month or so, things began to take shape.

We made costumes and found places to film. We even convinced our parish priest to participate, and he kindly played the role of Fr. Antonio in the movie. Once the movie was filmed, my sister and I edited it, which took a couple of weeks.

Once it was done, we had a movie night at our church on October 8th. It was a great turnout and so much fun. In fact, we've already started planning another one!





## Did homeschooling help?

Like many homeschoolers, I usually don't finish school for the year until late May or early June. The flexibility of homeschooling helped all of us kids spend more time on our movie. And when the movie continued into the early school year, we could still dedicate time to our movie during the school day. Anytime someone asks me what my favorite part about homeschooling is, I always say the flexibility!

## Your interests?

I enjoy doing simple work around the house, like washing dishes, cooking, dusting, etc. I am active in church groups, such as Faith Formation and a Bible Study my older sister leads. I am very much a bookworm and also enjoy spending time outdoors.



## Your favorite subjects?

Art, History, and Math. Art because I love the fact that artists can express their love for God through painting and drawing. History, because reading about the past can help us feel more grateful for the blessings we have today. Math, because I enjoy doing it, and it's also challenging.

## Your future?

No matter what I end up doing, I want to dedicate myself to Christ and serve Him through others.

# Advice en Español



## ¿Qué importancia tienen las clases de lectura (literatura) en los grados 4 a 8 y las clases de inglés en los grados 9 a 12?

How important are the reading (literature) classes in Grades 4 to 8 and English classes in Grades 9 to 12?

**Estos son los más importantes del plan de estudios después de las clases de religión. Prácticamente ninguna otra materia contribuirá más al desarrollo de la mente de los estudiantes.**

These are the most important subjects after the religion classes. Practically, no other subject will contribute more to developing the students' minds.

**Esta pregunta y respuesta se debe a la experiencia de los consejeros de Seton con familias donde el inglés es el segundo idioma. Hemos visto que los estudiantes de ESL a menudo posponen las clases de lectura e inglés hasta el final del año escolar.**

This question and answer is due to the experience of the Seton counselors with families where English is the second language. We have seen that ESL students often postpone reading and English classes until the end of the school year.

**Los estudiantes, por naturaleza, prefieren evitar enfrentar los difíciles desafíos de estas clases. Hay varias razones.**

1. La falta de experiencia en inglés de la familia y de la ayuda que pueden brindar.
2. Muchos estudiantes provienen de escuelas públicas y necesitan que se les enseñe a analizar los personajes de los libros y novelas que leen.
3. Los exámenes y ensayos de estas clases son más difíciles de completar, ya que los estudiantes deben escribir oraciones y párrafos completos.

Students, by nature, prefer to avoid confronting the difficult challenges of these classes. There are various reasons.

4. The lack of the family's English experience and the help they can provide.
5. Many students come from public schools and need to be taught to analyze the characters of the books and novels they read.
6. The tests and essays for these classes are more difficult to complete, as the students must write complete sentences and paragraphs.

**Esto continuará con sugerencias sobre cómo solucionar estos problemas.** This will be continued with suggestions for how to remedy these issues.

*Manuel Vicente, Academic Counselor*

# Success is built on

BY JOHN CLARK

# “KEEP TRYING”

“Do or do not. There is no try.”

So says the little Jedi Master Yoda in *The Empire Strikes Back*. Yoda says these words in response to Luke Skywalker after Luke states that he’ll “give it a try.”

Since that movie was first shown in theaters four decades ago, Yoda’s saying has worked its way into pop culture. Chances are, someone has said it to you, and/or you’ve seen the saying as a meme. Well, I’ve had about forty years to think about it, and I think Yoda was wrong.

There IS try.

I know what you’re thinking: Wait a minute! John’s wrong. He’s missing Yoda’s whole point. Yoda is saying that if you choose to do something in life, give it everything you have. That’s how things are done!

I understand Yoda’s point. I really do. But I still don’t agree. And I am going to make a very bold statement here: It’s high time we congratulate trying. For that matter, it’s time we congratulate trying and failing.

Why?

Largely, because it is not always in my power to succeed. To use a baseball analogy, life is not all about hitting doubles and triples and home runs. As every baseball player from Little League to the American League can tell you, merely hitting the ball hard does not guarantee success. In the year 2021, a New York Yankee player named Aaron Judge hit a ball that traveled 119 miles per hour off his bat, making it one of the hardest-hit balls in all of baseball history. But on that play, not only did Judge make an out, but it resulted in two outs: a double-play. On the way back to the dugout, should the

message for this great player be: “Do or do not. There is no try?” Here’s my message to him: Sometimes you can do everything right and still “fail”—whatever that means. And that’s ok. But better than ok, it’s great.

Life is about plate appearances. It is about showing up, stepping up to the plate, and, with apologies to Master Yoda, trying. Take a swing; put the ball in play. After that ball is in play, there’s not much you can do to influence what happens next.

You know what’s not ok? Not trying. Not trying means refusing to put yourself in a situation in which failing is likely or even possible. That’s not ok. Yoda’s pithy maxim provides an out: “Do Not.”

Excuse me? “Do Not” is superior to “Try?” How did you get to be a Jedi Master with that sort of logic? The problem is not that people are trying and failing. The larger problem is that they’re not trying at all. They simply opt for “Do Not.”

## THE SECRET TO SUCCESS

I’m not the first to notice that the current generation of children seems afraid to fail—so much so that some children are not even put into positions where they could fail. That’s not good. In her book, *The Gift of Failure*, Jessica Lahey observes, “We have taught our kids to fear failure, and in doing so, we have blocked the surest and clearest path to their success.”

And that’s just the point. The man or woman who tries (and fails) the most also tends to succeed the most. I have written books for major publishing houses and speeches for presidential candidates, but before that, I was rejected by publishers...a lot. In fact, as I write this, I can say that I have







received half a dozen rejection letters in the past few months. Guess what? I'll keep trying. I know I'll have both failures and successes. And so will you if you just keep trying!

Years ago, Kipling insisted that manhood included the ability to "meet with triumph and disaster, and treat those two impostors just the same." Why "impostors?" Because these are things that, very often, we cannot control.

What can we control? What is not an impostor? Trying.

Sometimes, trying means you'll fail. But you'll discover what I discovered, and Babe Ruth discovered some years ago: "Every strikeout gets me closer to my next home run."

One last point. For reasons that you may never understand, some people might want you to fail. Some will stand ready to criticize your efforts—your trying. Turns out, President Theodore Roosevelt had something to say about that:

"It is not the critic who counts; not the man who points out how the strong man stumbles, or where the doer of deeds could have done them better. The credit belongs to the man who is actually in the arena, whose face is marred by dust and sweat and blood; who strives valiantly; who errs, who comes short again and again, because there is no effort without error and shortcoming; but who does actually strive to do the deeds; who knows great enthusiasms, the great devotions; who spends himself in a worthy cause; who at the best knows in the end the triumph of high achievement, and who at the worst, if he fails, at least fails while daring greatly, so that his place shall never be with those cold and timid souls who neither know victory nor defeat."

Keep trying.



**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*.



# STAFF SERIES

*A chat with those who serve you!*



## Joe Sparks - Multimedia Development Director

I direct the Multimedia Development department here at Seton. I'm blessed to collaborate with a fantastic team of artists and designers, all of whom are passionate about what they do and bring considerable talent and professionalism to their work.



The Multimedia Development department is responsible for anything involving multimedia, which is quite a lot when you stop and think about it. Any new book or lesson plan redesign goes through this department, where our designers and artists make the materials as beautiful, intuitive, and useful as possible for parents and students alike. In addition to book and lesson plan design, we are also responsible for all SetonOnline high school courses.

But even outside of the course materials, plenty of other tasks keep us busy: things like the Seton podcast, photography, videography, and the audio-video work at the annual Seton graduation are handled by our staff. The variety of work can sometimes be dizzying, but such an assortment brings excitement to our daily tasks and ensures that we always have fresh challenges to face.

In all of our design work, whether a new book design or a SetonOnline course, our goal is to provide a design that is beautiful, helpful to the student and permeated with a strong and traditional Catholic identity.

## How it Started

I was introduced to Seton back in the early 1990s. After a few years in the public school system, my parents decided to homeschool me and my siblings. In total, I was homeschooled with Seton for almost ten years. That experience gave me a solid and robust Catholic education and a deep familiarity with the Seton program, which has proven invaluable in my work here.

Another element that strongly defined my experience with Seton was the online community. While in high school, I had the opportunity to participate in online message boards for Seton students and eventually worked with a few other Seton students to build our own student forum.

Through these venues, I met numerous fellow Seton students with whom I went on to develop strong and abiding friendships. Through these online student communities, I met Draper Warren, currently head of Seton's Admissions department. Draper eventually recruited me to come and work at Seton many years later. Catholic Harbor, Seton's student message board, was inspired by our shared experience in these student communities.

## The Rewards

Realizing that every new book we design or every online component we develop helps students receive a thoroughly Catholic education is immensely rewarding. I am blessed to be able to work for an institution that helps guide students to academic success and assists parents in transmitting the Catholic Faith to their children.

A little about myself, I live in Front Royal, up in the mountains outside town, with my wife and seven children. Of those, five are of school age and are enrolled with Seton.





PATRON SAINT OF CATHOLIC COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES,  
EDUCATORS/TEACHERS, PHILOSOPHERS/THEOLOGIANs, AND STUDENTS



SAINT  
*Thomas*

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## *Food for Our Journey*

*Dear young people, learn to “see” and to “meet” Jesus in the Eucharist, where he is present and close to us, and even becomes food for our journey. In the sacrament of Penance, the Lord reveals his mercy and always grants us his forgiveness. Recognize and serve Jesus in the poor, the sick, and in our brothers and sisters who are in difficulty and in need of help.*

*Enter into a personal dialogue with Jesus Christ and cultivate it in faith. Get to know him better by reading the Gospels and the Catechism of the Catholic Church. Converse with him in prayer, and place your trust in him. He will never betray that trust!*

**Pope Benedict XVI**  
**Message for the Twenty-Sixth World Youth Day**  
**August 6, 2010**

