

Seton MAGAZINE

Under the Magisterium of the Catholic Church

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Forging Faith and Family in Cebu



Habana Family

pg 16

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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,

I am so happy to end 2024 with this issue because so much of the content reflects places and people dear to me.

First, the Habana family is dear to me because Therese was one of the first guests on the Seton-sponsored podcast hosted by Ginny Seuffert and me. She was a lovely guest and patient with newbie podcasters; I am grateful to share her family story with you all.

Secondly, we highlight Ave Maria University in this issue, where my son Kevin is currently a senior. I can attest to the beauty of this school, and the article by Sarah Chichester reaffirms my belief that Newman Guide Colleges are producing adults who will usher in a better era.

Father Andrew Clark is also very dear to me. I've known him since he was a young college student, and his thoughtful writing about Advent is a blessing to this issue.

Finally, my very favorite pages are those you shared with us. The photos of so many beautiful families on the first day of the 2024-25 school year are the pages I keep turning back to and smiling over. Your joy in homeschooling is our joy and keeps us wanting to continue to bring you the means to give your children the best possible education.

We are ending a tumultuous year prayerfully here at Seton. We are always praying for our Holy Mother Church, the world, and each of you, who are faithfully building the kingdom of God, one lesson at a time.

God bless and keep you all: Merry Christmas and Happy New Year to all of us here at Seton.

Blessings,

Mary Ellen Barrett

Mary Ellen Barrett



St. Elizabeth Ann Seton, pray for us!

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The Habana Family

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First Day of School Photos 2024

From the Rodriguez Family



From the Evans Family



From the Dawson Family



See More First Day of School Photos on Pg 14



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How much input should I give to help my 6th grader with her book report?

While you don't want to dictate the exact words or sentences, you could point out a particular issue with a question, such as "Don't you think you should explain why the character made that decision?"

In other words, instead of giving a specific sentence or idea, ask a question for your student to think about what he needs to explain.

My kindergarten student is through the lesson plans in about 90 minutes. Do I have to come up with more things for him to do to fill up the time?

No. Remember, if your child were in a brick-and-mortar school for kindergarten, much of that time would be spent playing, listening to stories, or even taking naps!

You would also be traveling to and from school, waiting in lines, waiting for all the other students to finish their work, putting things away, etc. Enjoy the extra time together. Pre-K and K should always be fun!

Do I have to do everything that is in the lesson plans?

No, the only things you have to do for your student to receive a grade from Seton are those that Seton grades (part B on the Quarter Report Forms).

However, lesson plans are our best method to enable your student to do well on those things. Every child is different and comes from a different learning background.

If there's something that you are sure your child already knows, you can either skim through the lesson or skip it entirely. If there is a concept your child hasn't mastered yet, you may want to spend some additional time on that or use some outside resources.

Can you help me explain to my son why he should learn a foreign language?

There are several good reasons why learning foreign languages is critical for young Americans.

First, we live in an interconnected world where communication between people of different nationalities is essential. People who make important decisions in churches, businesses, and the government must read documentation or speak to people who use languages other than English.

Second, the structure of our language, such as the use of parts of speech, sentences, and idiomatic expressions, can be understood better when a foreign language is well known.

Third, knowing another language also enhances logical thinking and is known to help students achieve higher scores in college placement testing.

Finally, the Catholic Church is universal, and the knowledge of another language and other cultures is an excellent tool for helping people develop their Faith or bring them into the Lord's fold.

Seton Staff

Seton Home Study School Graduation 2025



Seton
Home Study School

- **Family Fest begins on Friday, May 30, at Seton Home Study School**
- **Mass for Families and Graduates on Friday Evening**
- **Graduation Ceremonies on Saturday, May 31, 2025, at Skyline High School in Front Royal, Virginia**

Seton will mail and email information to 12th graders, and a registration page will be available in early 2025.

Seton Educational Media



*A Wonderful Gift Selection
Begins on Page 25*

www.SetonBooks.com

How much time should I take off for the holidays?

How much time you take off depends partly on how you homeschool. For example, if you teach year-round, you may take weeks off. If, on the other hand, you are trying to follow the traditional school year, you may stick to shorter breaks.

It is typical to take off the Wednesday and Friday surrounding Thanksgiving and from the 23rd of December to the first Monday or Tuesday after New Year's. Another factor to consider is how on track your students are and how much time off they can afford.

It may be a couple of weeks, or they may need to work on that English assignment between Christmas and New Year's. In short, it's up to you!

*Theresa O'Connor, Academic
Counselor*

Do high school students need to do science labs? What are the requirements for submitting labs?

Only students seeking the Advanced Diploma are required to do labs. Those students need to do labs for three of their four science courses.

Labs are recommended for Physical Science, Chemistry, and Biology and may be done for Physics.

The Apologia Physical Science and Chemistry textbooks contain the labs, and Apologia makes it easy to find materials for these labs at reasonable prices. The lab materials are also available through SetonBooks.com.

We also have an excellent lab manual for Seton's *Biology for Life* textbook. That manual and the Saxon Physics lab manual are available through SetonBooks.com.

If you want more we also have a Biology Lab Set with Microscope and a Biology dissection kit at SetonBooks.com.

Directions for reporting and submitting labs are within the MySeton online course resources. For Biology, find these resources within SetonOnline.com, located on your MySeton page.

If you want to do more elaborate labs, consult esciencelabs.com.

*Manuel Vicente,
High School Science*



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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BY DEBBIE COWDEN

Do We Have a “Joyful Duty” to Thank God - ALWAYS?

I reviewed this EWTN Thanksgiving episode shortly after the fire. It was a perspective that stopped me in my tracks, as I was still dealing with the aftermath of the fire - as though God - or Mother Angelica - was letting me know that good WAS going to come from this! See the full episode of Mother Angelica Live Classics, “Thanksgiving: What Are You Thankful For?” which originally aired Nov. 22, 2011. Peace, Debbie



When Dave and I were married in 2015, the processional hymn for our nuptial Mass was “O God Beyond All Praising.”

My favorite line from the song is:

“And whether our tomorrows be filled with good or ill
We’ll triumph through our sorrows and rise to bless You still
To marvel at Your beauty and glory in Your ways
And make a joyful duty our sacrifice of praise.”

As newlyweds, we had no idea what that really meant until a few years later when our neighbor’s house burned down and damaged ours, displacing our family for an extended period.

A Test of Faith

What began as an idyllic summer day quickly turned into a nightmare, ushering us into the most difficult season of our lives. We faced obstacle after obstacle and became poster children for “Murphy’s Law.” It was a test of faith.

Although St. Paul in 1 Thessalonians 5:18 exhorts Christians to “give thanks in all circumstances,” it was hard to “give thanks.” I was sick of hotels, fast food, insurance claims, and inconveniences.

Not only that, but knowing how devastating the loss was for our neighbor, who lost everything, made me feel guilty for uttering the smallest complaint. After all, we still had our home.

When tragedy strikes, it’s not uncommon to turn in on ourselves and hyper-focus on survival. A serious illness, death in the family, sudden job loss, or an accident can disrupt both the normal operation of our home and our spiritual lives.

Thank You, Lord!

In the time following the fire, I was challenged by the wisdom of EWTN Foundress Mother Angelica, who faced innumerable sufferings in her own life, to thank God for my challenges and hardships:

“It takes humility to say, ‘Thank You, Lord.’ It takes courage to say, ‘Thank You for my cross. Thank You for my pain. Thank You for the tragedies in my life that raised me up to You.’”

It took time and tears, but now I can better recognize the many blessings God bestowed on us during

that season. Reminders of God’s promises were all around me: while clearing debris from our flower beds, we were graced by the presence of a butterfly with torn wings. Although she was injured, she could still fly.



And, although my husband and I were focused on tending to our children’s needs, God granted us the grace to accompany our neighbors on their recovery - fundraising for them, donating furniture to them, and even replacing the father’s bible with a replica of the one he had used for decades - the bible used by his father.

In gratitude, our neighbor dug up his rose bush (which would have been destroyed in the demolition) and gave it to us. Whenever I look at the rose bush, I pray for him.

Our Joyful Duty

Fulfilling our “joyful duty” to “give thanks in all circumstances” doesn’t mean we’re always smiling and nothing affects us.

The “joyful duty” we have, as mentioned in *O God Beyond All Praising*, is for us to make a “sacrifice of praise,” particularly in the hardest times, to choose to surrender to God, trust in His goodness, and maintain hope that He will bring about our good.

As the hymn says, that is how we can “triumph through our sorrows and rise to bless You still.” When we rise to bless the Lord in the hardest of times, our hearts are able to find ways to give thanks.



Staying on Track

When hardships disrupt family life, it can be challenging to stay on track. Our family is grateful for the flexibility afforded by Seton and the team of counselors on standby to assist when trouble comes. We knew a set schedule did not bind us, and we could take a break from our daughter’s lessons to focus on making our home safe to live in again.

No matter what suffering you’ve endured, I hope you’ll join me in honoring our “joyful duty” to give thanks to God in all things this Thanksgiving season and throughout the year!

I’d love to hear how you have exercised your “joyful duty” to praise God during difficult times. You can contact me at debbie@tiredcatholicparents.com

Family photo courtesy of Mystical Rose Photography



Debbie Cowden is the Senior Digital Media Specialist for EWTN Global Catholic Network and co-host of The Catholic Sphere on EWTN. She and her husband Dave have four children and have been homeschooling with Seton since 2019. They are small business owners and the co-authors of “*The Prayer Book for Tired Parents: Practical Ways to Grow in Love of God and Get Your Family to Heaven*,” proudly published by EWTN.



Ask the Experts: _____

How do You Avoid Unnecessary Schoolwork and Focus on the Essentials?

Three Veteran Homeschooling Moms Share Their Experience

Parents are in Charge...



The first thing I would tell parents who may be overwhelmed by the lesson plans is to realize they are in charge of their homeschool, and Seton Home Study is a tool to be used for their schooling, not vice versa.

The lesson plans can give the parent an idea of what is available to teach, but they do not have to be used fully. For example, I only use the Comprehension/Thinking Skills workbooks by fourth grade as their daily reading assignments.

At the beginning of the year, I let my kids take the first Saxon Math test to see if they can skip several lessons before we begin.

I also have learned that Saturday is a good day to finish up any assignments that didn't get completed during the week or to take tests so that they can start a new chapter on Monday.

“ ***Lesson Plans do not have to be used fully.*** ”

We also extend our school year beyond 36 weeks. These are a few examples of what I do, and I hope it helps others look for ways to tailor the lesson plans to fit their family needs.

Susan Brock, North Carolina

Define Your Why...



You have started your new school year, and you may feel intimidated. But with a little pre-planning and reflection, you can succeed in your homeschooling venture.

First, define your “why.” Why are you homeschooling your children? What are the positives you are aiming for? What are the negatives you want to steer clear of?

Second, define your goal. What is the end goal you have in mind for your students? Remember that, as Catholics, we need to keep an eternal perspective when setting goals.

With a clear vision of your why and your desired goal, you can decide what subjects are essential. For example, Reading is an essential subject. A student who can read and comprehend the materials can pursue any subject.

Similarly, math is a critical skill to master to accomplish basic life skills like counting, measuring, buying, selling, etc. Good writing is necessary for effective communication.

So, Reading, wRiting and aRithmetic have always been and continue to be the essential R's. Focusing on these essentials can help you feel more confident and less stressed in your homeschooling journey.

Teach the basics thoroughly. If your child masters a concept, assign only the odd or even practice sentences or problems. If science experiments and history timelines are too much right now, give your students enjoyable reading material that includes historical characters or scientific achievements.

It's important to remember that you have the freedom and the power to pare down and focus on the essentials.

Tara Brelinsky, North Carolina

Lesson Plans are Guides to Help...



Our family has always homeschooled year-round. That has helped us avoid the many weeks of review often done at the beginning of the school year.

We can continue where we left off from one year to the next. Lesson plans are guides to help parents as to how and what to teach. Often, they contain more material than what might be necessary to teach a particular concept or lesson.

It is good to go through the lesson plans and highlight important concepts to be taught.

Then, teach the lesson to the child and have them do a few practice problems with the parent either orally or on a whiteboard.

“Highlight important concepts to be taught.”

Assign only a few problems or items in the lesson to ensure they understand the concept. They don't need to complete every item on the page or multiple pages if they comprehend the lesson.

Vicky Coughlin, California

THIS IS WHY WE HOMESCHOOL



“The greatest benefit of homeschooling is that the family is the center of the children's lives.

They still have the opportunity to participate in outside activities such as sports, music, and dance. However, their lives are influenced mainly by their family, the liturgy, and other Catholic homeschooling families we enjoy spending time with.

The White Family – Glen Gardner, NJ



PHOTO CREDIT - THE RODRIGUEZ FAMILY

Make the Seton Program Work for You!

The day the Seton boxes arrive has always been fun in my house. But after the initial excitement of new things dies down, it's up to me to make this work and make it work for my family.

Since I am the primary educator in the home, it is important to treat that as a full-time job in the same way any teacher in a brick-and-mortar school would. This can seem overwhelming because while you are trying to plan your household duties and, your children surround you.

Homeschooling is a Full Time Job

Teachers in the local schools will come in early, stay a little later, or use a day or two during vacations. They are also afforded professional development and teacher service days to refresh and catch up. Homeschool moms have very little opportunity to refresh and catch up.

The key to making Seton, or homeschooling in general, work for you is to treat it like a full-time job because that is exactly what it is. Yes, some perks come with homeschooling: you can nurse the baby, run to the park, fold some laundry, and the like, but it rarely affords you the mind space you need to think and plan.

Carve this into Stone

Therefore, I encourage you to pick a weekly or monthly time and carve it in stone to plan, read the LPs, make your lists, and generally catch up. Do this in a library or coffee shop, and hire a sitter for a few hours, whatever it takes.

The lesson plans provide a variety of assignments for each child to complete, some meant to be graded by Seton, and others intended to be parent-graded. Some grades and subjects have extra assignments based on a child's interest or need for practice.



The Best Keep Secret

The best-kept secret in homeschooling is that you only need to do what you want to do.

If having a Seton-graded report card is important to you (and I highly recommend it for high school), then you only need to send in the assignments to be graded by Seton. Any other assignments are optional.

If a Seton-graded report card is unimportant, feel free to submit as little as you choose or even nothing for that subject. Some families like independent grading for English, Reading, and Religion and grade other subjects themselves. It's entirely up to you, the parent.

Extra Work is Optional

Often, I would see that one of my students needed extra writing practice, so I would assign most of the suggested essays to the LPs. Sometimes, they would need less math practice, so we could skip some of the extra problems on the pages and move on once a concept was mastered.

When it comes to history and science, the LPs are filled with additional suggestions and resources, and it is for you to decide if those work for your family; some years, they will, and some, they will not.

A Shortcut to Consider

Remember that history and science cycle through, so your student will encounter American and European history, life science, and general science more than once and in greater depth each time. If you do not have time for a deep dive into something one year, it will come up again.

“The best-kept secret in homeschooling is that you only need to do what you want to do.”

No education is perfect. There are gaps in every education because there is no way for anyone to teach everything every year. Seton is committed to providing as wide and generous an education for all of our families as possible.

We are here to help you navigate the best way to do this for your family in your current season of life. Our support is just a chat, call or email away. We are dedicated to helping you make the most of your homeschooling experience.

You are encouraged to contact us:

Counselors@setonhome.org | 540-622-5526

Or chat with us on your MySeton page



Mary Ellen Barrett is mother to 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*.



Seton Student Achievements
SHARING SUCCESS WITH THE SETON COMMUNITY



Joseph Places in Swim Championship

Besides swim practice and schoolwork, Joseph enjoys chess, soccer, violin, drums, altar service, and inventing projects using found materials.



Bryanna Graduates from FBI Explorer's Academy

Bryanna is interested in a career as a criminal psychologist or a lawyer, graduating from the FBI Explorer's Academy is a good step towards either.

setonmagazine.com/students

First Day of School 2024



From the Reyes-López Family



From the Bogdanov Family



From the Fox Family



From the Reyna Family



From the Jacob Family



From the Floyd Family



From the Armeli Family



From the Kazmierczak Family

Thank you to the generous families
who have shared their
“First Day of School” photos with us!

Your joy in homeschooling is our joy!
May God continue to bless you
and your family.



Forging

Faith and Family in Cebu



When we began homeschooling in 2013, my husband and I drafted this philosophy to guide us on our journey:

“We will homeschool our children to become the people God has called them to be. We will help them discover their strengths and nurture them to their full potential, while also helping them acknowledge their weaknesses and providing tools to improve upon them.”

We are a family of six with four boys, living in tropical Cebu, Philippines. Daddy Mark brings home the bacon while Mommy Therese takes care of everything else. Our oldest, Akio, is nineteen and a graduate of Seton. He is now pursuing Business Management at the University of the Philippines Cebu and is a member of the university’s varsity swimming team.

Miro, our second, is fourteen and in Grade 9. He is a triathlete, loves Science, and plans to join the military. Raio, our third, is thirteen and in Grade 8. He is also a triathlete, a jiu-jitsu enthusiast, and a speedcuber. He loves History and dreams of being an MMA fighter. Our youngest, Brio, is in kindergarten and has the highest energy levels among his brothers.

Our Inspiration to Homeschool

Attending the Catholic Conference in Colorado in 2012 was a transformative experience for us, largely due to the inspiring words of Danielle Bean. She has written several books on motherhood, faith, and Catholic family life. As the editor of *Faith & Family Magazine*, she has influenced many through her writing and discussions about raising children in the Catholic faith.

Her beautiful musings on motherhood and homeschooling deeply resonated with us, igniting a passion that has guided our journey ever since. Danielle’s insights and personal anecdotes about nurturing a family through faith and education provided practical advice and a profound sense of purpose and reassurance.

Her eloquence and sincerity made us realize the profound impact that intentional parenting and homeschooling can have on our children’s lives, and we have been committed to this path ever since, inspired by her wisdom and grace.

Why Seton?

We chose Seton Home Study School for our children because it provides an authentic Catholic curriculum. We love how homeschool-friendly it is, allowing our kids to learn independently while giving parent-teachers clear guidance and support through detailed lesson plans and an extensive online resource portal.

Homeschooling has given our family many beautiful gifts over the years. One of the most cherished aspects is the opportunity to grow in faith together as a family. We are witnessing our boys' milestones firsthand, from their first words to their academic and extra-curricular activities.

Our precious time together has strengthened our familial bonds, creating lasting memories and fostering a supportive environment.

Additionally, homeschooling has allowed our boys to pursue and focus on their interests, such as triathlon, enabling them to develop their passions and skills in ways that might not have been possible in a traditional school setting.

A Day in the Life

Our typical homeschooling day has evolved over the years. When the boys were younger, we started our mornings with a circle time that included morning prayers, daily scriptures, catechism, and discussing each other's resolutions for the week.

These days, we do this weekly since the older boys have different schedules. The boys spend their mornings studying and completing the school tasks they've scheduled for themselves.

Meanwhile, Mommy Therese spends time with little Brio for his lessons while also managing our café. The boys train with their team in the afternoons—swimming, running, or biking. On some weekends, we get together with fellow Catholic homeschooling families or travel within the country or abroad for the boys' races and tournaments.

The flexible schedule ensures they have enough time to rest between their training sessions and races while staying on top of their coursework.

Homeschooling Graces

Homeschooling is a gift that continues to bless our family, one day at a time, with grace. It's a journey we cannot walk alone, so we rely on the support of fellow homeschooling families in our community.

In difficult moments, when you question whether homeschooling is meant for your family, remember this: "God does not call the equipped; He equips the called."





AVE MARIA
UNIVERSITY

The Classroom of Silence

INTRODUCING MARY'S MARINES

BY SARAH CHICHESTER

There are classrooms on campus where acrid, dusty chalk has given way to pungent whiteboard markers.

There are classrooms on campus where the green or black chalkboard trimmed in oak or pine has evolved into a whiteboard complete with an aluminum tray.

But there is one classroom on campus where neither the rapid staccato of chalk nor the squeaky legato of the whiteboard marker is heard.

In this classroom, no one speaks audibly. Feet shuffle over the carpet. Someone shifts in his seat. A suppressed cough.

“Do you realize that Jesus is there in the Tabernacle expressly for you—for you alone? He burns with the desire to come into your heart.”—St. Thérèse of Lisieux

It is the “classroom of silence,” as Ave Maria University President Mark Middendorf calls it. It is the classroom where each of us can sit (or collapse, as the case may be, at least interiorly) at the feet of the Great Teacher.

Classroom of Silence

This is the classroom of Eucharistic adoration. It's the place of heart-to-heart encounters with Jesus, who is present body, blood, soul, and divinity in the Eucharist. Whether exposed in a golden monstrance or hidden behind the golden door of a tabernacle, He is really, truly, and substantially present in the Eucharist.

And while it is true that we can pray to God anywhere and that He is within us, it is especially powerful to adore Jesus in the Eucharist.



“My favorite thing is that no matter what’s going on in my life, it’s an opportunity for me to slow down and sit at the feet of Our Lord and really outpour my heart to Him and trust that He hears every prayer that comes from me,” said Adrienne Driver (’25), coordinator for the University’s Eucharistic adoration initiative, Mary’s Marines.

She continued, “I became a Mary’s Marine after a talk that President Middendorf gave. He really emphasized the importance of daily adoration, and I was convinced after that.”

“Doing a holy hour every day has completely changed my life. By going to visit Our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament, my relationship and friendship with Jesus has deepened beyond anything I could have done outside of His presence.”
—Sophomore, Psychology

Mary’s Marines is an inspiration of President Middendorf to invite students, faculty, and staff to spend 15 to 60 minutes daily in Eucharistic adoration. His inspiration came after listening to a retreat recording by Venerable Fulton Sheen.

Moved by the Retreat

The retreat moved President Middendorf to begin practicing a daily holy hour in his own life. In assuming his new role as President of Ave Maria in 2022, he invited others to experience the graces that he received before the Lord. Since then, Mary’s Marines have grown to 286 members.

“In the classroom of silence, in that adoration chapel is where God can speak to people on their unique and distinctive gifts given them to change the world around them,” President Middendorf said.

Dr. Sam Shephard, an associate professor of biology at Ave Maria and a Mary’s Marine, said, “I go for half an hour before work in the early morning. And sometimes that daily prayer can be really profound and beautiful and wonderful. I feel so close to God. And then other times I just sit there and say, ‘Lord, what are you doing?’”

“I think,” Dr. Shephard continued, “that the more of us there are from the different parts of the University that are in adoration, the more that it penetrates through into the heart of the mission.”

Mary’s Marines

In addition to the graces wrought throughout the times of personal prayer, each Mary’s Marine is assigned a religious sister from around the world to pray specifically for that Marine. “I thought it was really neat that I could have a sister praying for me every step of the way during my college years,” Driver said.



The student Mary’s Marines are currently being formed in the classroom of silence, a formation that they will bring into the world and that allows them to turn their hearts and bring their troubles, doubts, and failures to the Lord and to remember the greatest lesson: that they are uniquely known and deeply loved by the God they seek, who has been seeking them all along.

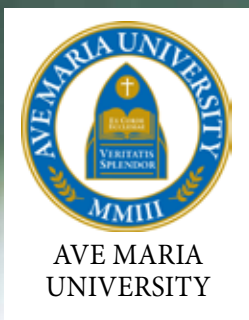
And all this can be done without one spoken word. In silence.

And, for all of us, especially when we cannot get to adoration but carry within us our worries and concerns, it’s important to turn—even for a moment—our minds and hearts to the Lord and simply repeat back to Him the perennial lesson He teaches us: I love you.



Sarah Chichester, *The Classroom of Silence*, *Introducing Mary's Marines* by Sarah Chichester, Ave Maria University Writer and Researcher, was originally published in the University's *Ave Maria University Spring 2024 Magazine - Issuu*.

Alumnus Profile





**DERBA
BOIVIN**

Seton Helped Prepare Me for Ave Maria University

A Little About Me

My name is Derba Boivin, a junior at Ave Maria University. I was born in Ethiopia and adopted when I was five. I have lived in Ave Maria since 2014.

I have always wanted to pursue a career in some type of service. As a young boy, I wanted to be a firefighter or a police officer. As I grew up, I became interested in investigative work in law enforcement, and now I feel called to serve our country as a Marine officer. This desire and calling led me to continue my studies at AMU in 2022, and I will graduate in May 2026 and join the Marine Corps.

Leadership Opportunities

I love Ave Maria University and what it stands for. It has given me the opportunity to pursue a career as a Marine officer and provided me with leadership opportunities on campus to prepare me for this role. I am a lead altar server for Masses on campus, a junior class representative on AMU's Student Government Association, and a member of our football team.

It's not only the leadership opportunities that I appreciate at AMU but also the entire school and culture. I especially love the Faith life on campus. With nine Masses offered daily, daily confession, a perpetual adoration chapel, and a chapel in every residence hall, I never have an excuse to miss Mass or not visit a chapel to pray each day.

The academic offerings at Ave Maria have truly been a blessing, as well. We receive an education rooted in the liberal arts and the Catholic intellectual tradition through a core curriculum that includes courses in theology, philosophy, literature, rhetoric, and many more. I am pursuing a communications major with a psychology minor, and I am confident this will prepare me for life after college.

How Did Seton Help You Prepare?

Seton Home Study School absolutely prepared me for success at AMU. I was able to participate in co-ops with other Seton students here in Ave Maria, which prepared me for social life at the university. One of the biggest advantages that a Seton education gives students to prepare for college is teaching them how to think critically, think for themselves, and write.

An AMU education requires a lot of writing, but I always feel prepared and able to accomplish my writing assignments because of the practice Seton gave me! Seton also taught me a tremendous amount about my Faith, and my knowledge and understanding have grown even more at AMU.

I encourage any Seton students discerning their college decision to strongly consider Ave Maria University. I truly think you will find a home where you can thrive. Come visit us!

His Love is Always New and Ever Young

BY FATHER. ANDREW CLARK



Advent is a time of graced expectation. As lights are put up on houses and trees are erected in living rooms across the world, the hearts and souls of Christian men and women find themselves filled with warmth and hope at the coming of Christ into the world.

In G.K. Chesterton's timeless classic, *The Everlasting Man*, he observes there is no other name on the face of the earth that evokes in the hearts of even hardened sinners the feelings that accompany the word Bethlehem. Yet, in the shattered world of sin and brokenness, Advent is often a time of great stress and even anxiety and fear.

Advent in Our Time

Families in our time are often scattered across many states and even countries, we are a transient people who seem at ease with a life of picking up and moving wherever job opportunities present themselves.

Homeschooling families are no different; in some sense, they are more mobile because they are not attached to a school community (though coops are becoming increasingly common, a good development in my view).

“What is new is the birth of Christ Jesus.”

Advent, then, is for many of us, a time of preparation to receive or travel to far-flung relatives, parents, and siblings who are only seen two or three times a year.

It is not news that anxiety and fear often accompany Christmas preparations. Many have observed this in recent decades, both in secular and religious outlets.

Often, the family to be visited or hosted contains members on difficult or even hostile terms with one another. This, too, is not new news.

What is new is the birth of Christ Jesus in the cave at Bethlehem.

Chesterton Insight

The longtime chaplain of Seton Home Study, Father Constantine Belisarius, frequently quoted Chesterton on the youth of God. Only a child, Chesterton observed, does not tire of the same activity over and over again.

A little girl will ask her dad to toss her in the air again and again and again until his arms ache and he finds that his child is much heavier than she was five minutes ago. She does not tire of the same joy; it is new each time.

A little boy will ask his mother to read him the same book every night before he goes to sleep. The same plot twist carries the same surprise and exuberance with each reading; it is new each time.

Prepare to Receive Him

After more than two thousand years, the Lord Jesus has not grown tired of being born into the home of every human family who will receive Him.

The grace is new each year, the love of the Infant King is more each Christmas, and the eyes of the Virgin Mary fall on the Nativity scene in every house with the same love which lighted on that first manger beneath the floor of the world.

“Our joy at seeing Him reflects His joy in seeing us.”

The expectation of Christmas in each of our lives is exceeded by leaps and bounds by the expectation that the Lord Jesus feels when we prepare to receive Him into our hearts.

We can almost see the Christ Child burying His face into His mother's neck as He squirms with excitement at the prospect of each family opening the doors of their homes to His Presence. Our joy at seeing Him reflects His joy in seeing us.

The grace of Christmas is new for you this year. Whatever brokenness and sin exist in your life, in the life of your spouse, the life of your family, or the life of your parish, none of it surprised the Christ Child. It is this He has come to deal with; it is your sin and your brokenness He has come to heal.

And it does not matter to Him how often you have confessed or failed to forgive those who have hurt you. It is His joy to be patient with us. It is His joy to bring us His forgiveness and His peace. Remember, He is like a child, and He never tires of doing what He loves: giving Himself in mercy.

Grace Renewed

On Christmas morning, when you attend the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, the Infant King will come down onto the altar into the unworthy hands of the priest. He will lie on gold in folds of linen and be broken to be given.

As you approach the altar, which is the manger, bring to Him all the anxieties, fears, and brokenness of this Advent. He is not afraid of our sins and is not ashamed to be found in our company. His grace is renewed for you. Your sins are old and tired. His love is always new and ever young, like that of a child.



Father Andrew Clark is the second of eight children. He was homeschooled before attending Christendom College, where he graduated in 2014 with a B.A. in History. He entered seminary formation for the Diocese of Arlington in 2017 and was ordained a priest on June 3, 2023. He is assigned as parochial vicar to Blessed Sacrament Parish in Alexandria VA. He is privileged to be one of Dr. Mary Kay Clark's many grandchildren.

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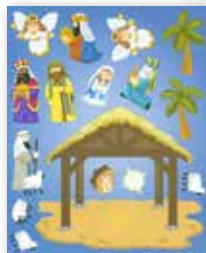


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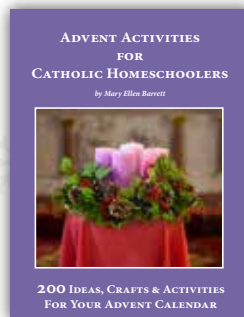
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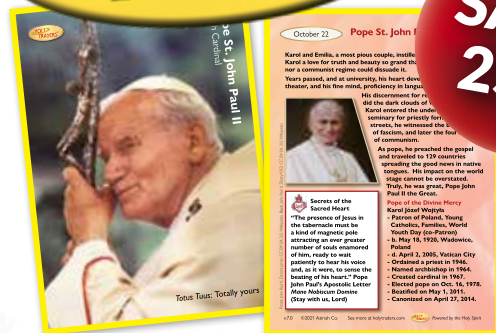


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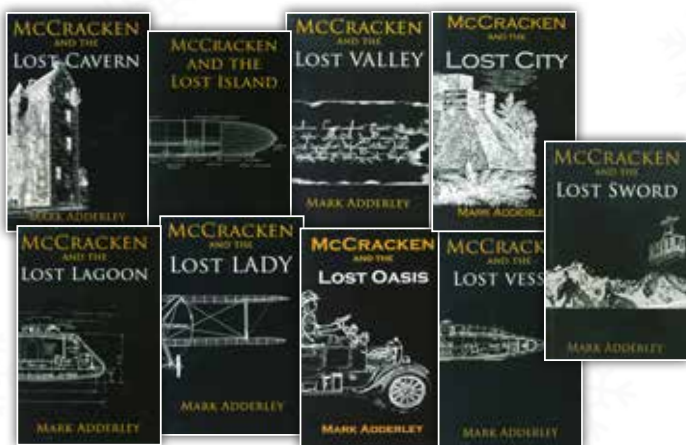


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Silvia Maresca - Special Services Academic Counselor



My connection with Seton Home Study School began in 2006 when my parents enrolled me and my siblings. I was in third grade and continued to be homeschooled through high school. Upon graduating, I wanted to work with children, so I studied Education.

After two years of community college, I

transferred to Seton Hall University, where I earned my bachelor's degree in Elementary and Special Education. In February 2022, I relocated from New Jersey to Front Royal, Virginia, and began working for the Seton Special Services Department.

It all Came Together at Seton

Here, my love for the Catholic Faith, education, homeschooling, and helping children all came together. It is a blessing each day to share in Seton's mission, and I am very grateful to Dr. Clark, and all the Seton staff, past and present.

I am the third oldest of six siblings. Since my parents are Italian, we grew up bilingual, with a great fascination for the Italian language, culture, and food. Outside of work, I enjoy cooking/baking, crocheting, singing in church choir, walking in nature, babysitting, reading, and spending time with family and friends.

The most memorable part of homeschooling was how closely it bonded me with my family. We were not spending hours of the day in separate classrooms or rushing from one activity to the next. Instead, we found ourselves learning, praying, sharing meals, singing, dancing, playing, and making memories together, which I believe would have been rare had we not been homeschooled.

As a Special Services counselor, I regularly assist parents in determining the best curriculum for their students. This may entail adjusting the level of classes, giving modified tests/assignments, or recommending alternate materials.

Treasure Your Homeschooling Years

Tailoring the curriculum to the student's specific needs ensures that they are not given unrealistic expectations but have the chance to achieve learning at their own pace.

My education and experience with homeschooling have taught me the importance of cultivating a positive family life where love for Christ is at the center. I strongly encourage parents and students to treasure the homeschooling years and not worry about making every day perfect.

When I was homeschooled, there were days when I did not even complete an entire math lesson, and we were always "behind." However, I know that if love and trust in God remain the priority, the graces will flow, as they did for me and my family.

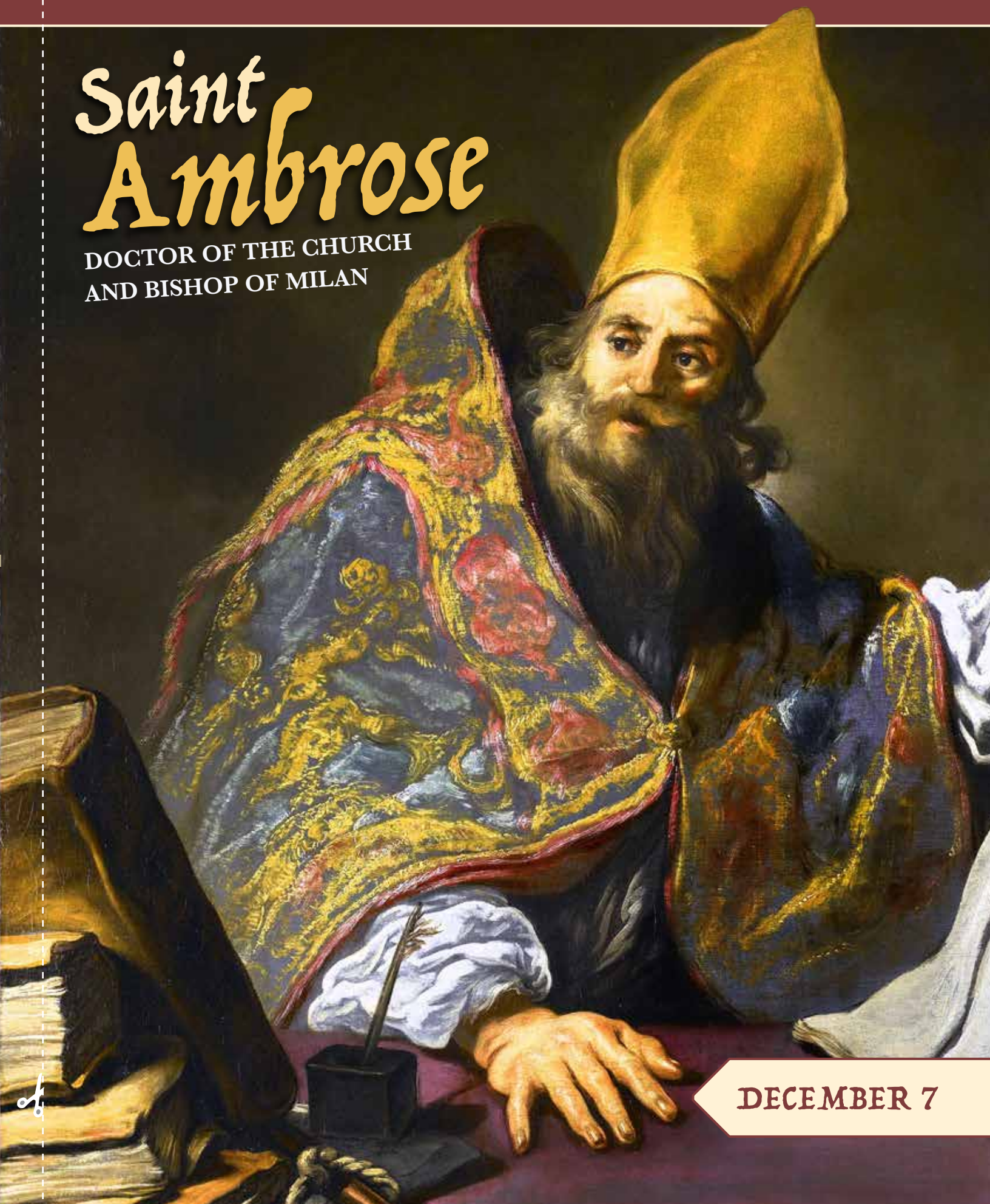
My favorite moments on the job are when parents share their children's learning achievements. This is very rewarding when working with students with disabilities because it is often more challenging to find the right strategies and the students have to put in greater effort to accomplish tasks. When parents take the time to express their joy with me, it truly makes my day!



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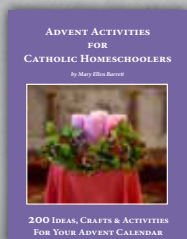
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Familiaris Consortio

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Pope St. John Paul II

November 22, 1981

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