

Seton



MAGAZINE

Under the Magisterium of the Catholic Church

JULY 2013



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St. Elizabeth Ann Seton,
Pray for Us!

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On the Cover:

The McMahon family at Michael's graduation.

Landscape photograph on Featured Family spread
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*“With you every day,
every step of the way”*



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There is a Great Story

behind every homeschooling family



Homeschooling is an adventure, and each family who embarks on the adventure has a unique story, touched and guided by Divine Providence.

We'd like to feature your story. If you have a story, or would like to share part of your adventure with us, please contact Christine Smitha at cmsmitha@setonhome.org

SHARE YOUR STORY AND INSPIRE ANOTHER FAMILY!

Letter from the Director of Seton Home Study School
Dr. Mary Kay Clark



St. Michael the Archangel

We sometimes hear about a “culture war” in our society, but the real war is a spiritual war for souls. Our society surrounds us with anti-Christian values: the newspapers and magazines in the stores, the fiction stories in the library, the “music” played in stores and restaurants, ipods, movies, television, online selections, and so on. The anti-Christian culture seems to be in the air we breathe, as Dr. William Marra once said.

We parents want to keep ourselves and our children pure and away from the negative sources which can become habit-forming. As we teach our Faith and teach how to live a Christian life, we know we need extra help. The best way to obtain spiritual help is by attending Mass and receiving Jesus Christ as often as possible in Communion. Jesus gives us the powerful graces to teach what we need to teach, and He gives the graces to our children to learn and to live according to what they have learned.

Our families receive powerful graces, daily help, and consolation from reciting the Rosary. When we kneel together as a family and ask the help of Jesus and His Blessed Mother, we are consoled and assured of great spiritual help.

There is another source of help that perhaps we do not often consider. That is St. Michael the Archangel. The prayer to St. Michael the Archangel was said for many years after daily Mass, and some priests are again saying it after Mass. Many people say it after praying the Rosary.

It was St. Michael the Archangel who fought Lucifer and, by the power of God, thrust Satan down to Hell (Rev. 12:7). In our daily battle against the evil one, St.

Michael is a special intercessor for parents struggling to keep their children from the devil’s wily temptations.

The prayer to St. Michael the Archangel is a powerful prayer which Pope Leo XIII wrote in 1884 and asked priests to say after every Mass. We now have a shorter version which, in 1994, Pope John Paul II asked “everyone not to forget it and to recite it to obtain help in the battle against forces of darkness and against the spirit of this world.”

The spiritual battle may seem hopeless at times as we view the anti-Christian activities of this current society. But the battle can and will be won, even in this world, as long as we and our children realize that the battleground is in the hearts and minds and souls of the children.

Twice Jesus spoke very strong words about children. Once, when the Apostles tried to keep the children from bothering Jesus, He said, “Allow the little children to come to Me and do not forbid them, for to such belong the kingdom of heaven.” Again, when Jesus was carrying His Cross, He spoke to the crying women of Jerusalem and said, “Weep not for Me, but weep for yourselves and for your children.”

In these current dark days when Satan is prowling the world to capture the souls of children, let’s be sure our prayers include the powerful St. Michael prayer:

Saint Michael the Archangel, defend us in battle. Be our protection against the wickedness and snares of the devil. May God rebuke him, we humbly pray; and do thou, O Prince of the Heavenly Host, by the Power of God, cast into hell Satan and all the evil spirits who roam throughout the world seeking the ruin of souls. Amen.





We have not finished up the book analyses due for the high school English course. Can my child be excused from this assignment?

We very rarely excuse a student entirely from an assignment, especially one as important as a book analysis. One of the most important aspects of a good education is critical analysis. In our society today, when so many Christian ideas and values are being questioned and even attacked, we and our children need to think clearly about the teachings of Christ and how we can defend them. We can do this only if we “practice” such skills, which is our goal with the analysis skills being taught in the writing of the book reports and book analyses.

Sometimes students want to take up the time doing other assignments and neglect this more intellectually demanding assignment. To facilitate completion, we suggest your student take a week off from the other assignments and read, study, take notes, outline, and write the book analysis. You might consider scheduling a week each quarter in which the book analysis is the one and only assignment.

If you have a high school student, consider helping your student analyze current speeches or arguments by elected officials. Help your high school student become involved with the current issues in the public square. Some homeschooling high school students join the campaign for the local pro-life candidate. Such interaction with candidates, their followers, and their opposition helps students develop analysis skills to a higher degree, and helps us all to keep Christian values in our society.

How long are records kept on the MySeton section?

Our plan is to keep indefinitely all tests, uploaded assignments, grades, and so on. However, once a family no longer has any students enrolled, there would no longer be

access to the MySeton page. In this situation, you could call to request items be emailed or mailed. Our computer department suggests that, if you want to be sure to have copies of test and assignments easily accessible, you upload them to one of the online storage sites, such as DropBox or Microsoft Sky-Drive. This will give you access to your files from any internet-connected computer.

I have friends who would like to homeschool but say they just cannot afford it.

In comparison to traditional private schools, homeschooling is extremely inexpensive. We believe that Seton is one of the least expensive homeschool programs, when you consider all that is included (books, counseling, record-keeping, etc.) at one price.

Sending a child to a public school is probably cheaper, but even that has expenses. A writer for the Boston Globe last year tracked expenses to send two children to a public school for one year. Her total costs were just under \$1600. It has been estimated that the average parent cost per public school child per year in the U.S. is \$688. Considering that Seton’s kindergarten program is only \$200, it is almost certainly cheaper to use Seton for kindergarten than to use a “free” public school.

To pay for homeschooling, your friends might try to find relatives who agree with them on the benefits of Catholic homeschooling. Parents should not be reluctant to ask for help, because relatives want the best for children in their families. Grandparents are often very willing to help with education costs.

If your friends are in a parish without a parish school, sometimes the church will help a family that wants a Catholic homeschooling program. The Knights of Columbus, a parish chapter or a regional chapter,

often give money for educational help for Catholic families. Seton provides a monthly payment plan option, plus discounts for additional children. Anyone who thinks he or she can’t afford homeschooling should call Seton’s admissions department to find out what the costs would actually be.

My son has done so well on the standardized test, I would like him to skip a grade level.

Regardless of how well a student scores on a standardized test, Seton rarely encourages skipping a grade level. The reason is that each grade level progresses a little more each year, and some new lesson with important instructions could easily be missed or not stressed in the next grade. Most importantly, each grade level expects a certain intellectual development, certain analysis skills, a certain ability to “read between the lines.” This is a process that takes time and brain development and cannot be rushed.

Rather than skipping, we suggest extra activities and more in-depth learning. Determine the particular interests of your child and structure the lesson plans to allow more time for those interests. You might find extra books on a topic, or have your child complete special projects, or whatever you can think of to stimulate learning.

Is it okay to continue homeschooling over the summer months? I think my children might benefit from that.

There are some families who continue homeschooling over the summer months for certain subjects, especially for subjects in which progress may be lost if the student has no practice for three months. The most common subjects parents like to continue are math and reading. Most students don’t read enough and have not since the advent of television, that is, for the past 60 years! Try to find some books that would be good reading as regards Christian family values, yet are not stretching too much in vocabulary or concepts that might be difficult. Consider starting a book club with other homeschooling families, or have a family book club. Choose the books and reward your child for every book read. Before television, summertime was a time for children to read, read, read!

You might have a student who loves science or history. Reward him for reading at least one science or history book per week. Consider having him talk at the dinner table about a book he has read, and what interesting facts he has learned.

Sometimes a student needs to keep practicing his math throughout the summer. You might find math workbooks, some with games or math puzzles. There are plenty of math games and puzzles on the Internet, often by grade level, which can be downloaded.

How much choice does a Seton high school student have in the selection of courses?

Many courses are required courses. Colleges expect students to have a certain number of credits for English, science, history, and government, and math classes. Colleges expect students to have two years of a foreign language, so there are not too many choices left. The trend in recent years has been to expect more of a core curriculum, with less variation among students. For example, most high schools are now requiring Economics.

We do offer quite a few electives, though. In most subject areas, such as English or math, we have required courses and electives available. In math, for example, we offer Accounting, Calculus, and Advanced Math, in addition to the required Algebra and Geometry courses. In English, we offer the electives of Shakespeare and World Literature. We also offer two computer courses: Introduction to Computers and Computer Programming.

The required courses are extremely important for students to do well on the SAT or ACT tests. High scores on these tests can make a huge difference to college costs. Colleges often give automatic merit-based financial aid to students who score a certain number on the SAT or ACT. Competitive scholarships often require a minimum score as well. A few hundred point difference on the SAT could mean savings of \$25,000 or more over the course of a college education.

Students should be thinking about college as early as ninth grade, and should arrange to visit prospective colleges as early as the second or third year of high school. A good deal of information about the colleges is available online. Look on the Seton website under Parent Resources, and scroll down to Colleges At-

tended by Seton Students. Click on the name of the college to go immediately to that college's website.

We have three high school curriculum counselors. You can find them on our website with their photos and backgrounds: Gene McGuirk, Bob Wiesner, and Chris Smith.

What are the most important subjects I should teach every day to my elementary children?

The most important subjects to teach every day are religion, math, reading and phonics, and composition (writing sentences and paragraphs). The second most important courses are English, vocabulary, and spelling. If you don't get to the history and science during the week, you can try to catch up over the weekend.

Make sure each child has a quiet place to study, where he or she has a desk and a bookcase for school books and materials. In a large family with several small children, some elementary students are continually distracted by the household activity. Many families have an area where all the children can study together, which makes it easy for a parent to supervise the work. However, most children need a quiet place where they can focus. If you have enough space, it is good to have a quiet personal space set aside for each child. Let your child decorate his or her study space with pictures or knickknacks to make the room appealing.

Put up a picture of your child's patron saint, which can be downloaded from the Internet.

How will the new Common Core standards affect Seton?

The Common Core State Standards (usually simply called Common Core) are a set of curriculum guidelines for public schools. These standards have been adopted by nearly all the states, which has brought concern to those who oppose national education standards. Many parents, and advocates of

smaller government, believe that national standards take control away from parents and local teachers, who have the greatest knowledge of the needs of individual children.

Homeschools and private schools are not subject to these curriculum guidelines unless they accept federal funds. Seton Home Study School accepts no federal funds. We will never adopt Common Core guidelines. Our concern is the passing down of timeless Catholic truths.

Because we at Seton Home Study School write almost all of our own books, we expect Common Core to have no impact on Seton's educational program. Regarding standardized tests, Seton students have always performed extremely well on standardized tests, and we expect this to continue regardless of any future changes made to the tests.

If you would like more information about Common Core and homeschooling, the Home School Legal Defense Association (www.hslda.org) has written many articles on this topic.

An outstanding Catholic who has investigated American education for a lifetime is Phyllis Schlafly. Look on the Internet for her articles on Common Core. She publishes the monthly Phyllis Schlafly Education Reporter, which is available on the internet.

Let us pray for one another

Every day at Seton, gathered before the altar at our noon Angelus, we offer prayers for our families and friends. We encourage you also to pray for other homeschooling families, especially those who may be suffering from illness, unemployment, or other crosses.



Life as a Child of Seton

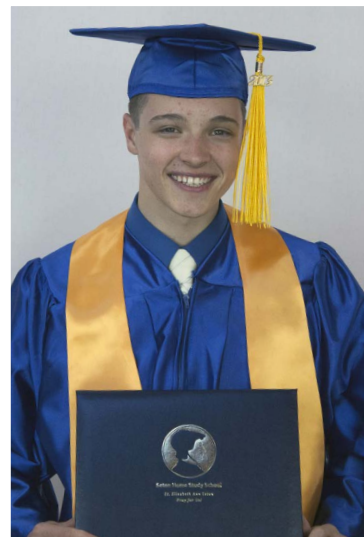
by Michael McMahon

Hello, I'm Michael McMahon, and I am thrilled to share my Seton experience with all of you. I live in Front Royal, Virginia, hometown of Seton Home Study School. Later this month, I will turn nineteen. I have been a Seton student all my life, and every one of my six siblings has used the Seton program. In May of 2013, I had the great joy and honor of graduating from Seton. It was such a wonderful feeling to finish one chapter of my life and look forward to starting a new chapter when I attend Christendom College this fall. Originally from Sheffield, Massachusetts, my family moved to Front Royal when I was three years old, primarily to be near Christendom and Seton Home Study School. Since then I have become what seems like a permanent fixture at the Seton building. I am, as some call me, a "child of Seton."

Being called a "child of Seton" is no overstatement. Looking back over my life up to this point, I realize that I have distinct Seton memories for each year. After all, my dad has worked at Seton for nearly seventeen years. In fact, at one time or another, everyone in my family has worked for Seton Home Study School. My eldest brother, Jonathan, worked for the computer department. Each of my sisters, Jennifer, Christa, and Jess, have worked at Seton, and currently my friend and big brother, Joe, works in the video department. As for myself, I have been Seton's lawn mower for the past four years. Even my younger brother, Tommy, has helped out at Seton functions. Needless to say, Seton and I have a long history together.

My earliest memories of Seton begin with celebrating my younger brother's birthday in the Seton bookroom after my dad got off work. While Seton's second grade books were where I learned read-

ing and writing, the Seton parking lot was where I learned to ride my bike as a little boy. My family and I would spend many weekends at the Seton building because it was such a friendly atmosphere for us. When I was six or seven, I recall playing all sorts of games at Seton: hide-and-go-seek, cops-and-robbers, tag, or any other great game we could think of. On weekends in the beautiful Virginia summer, my entire family would go to Seton, invite other homeschooled Seton families, and enjoy a wonderful night of companionship, root beer floats, s'mores, and a blazing bonfire as my dad burned the discarded wood pallets from the Seton warehouse. Each summer Seton would have an annual employee family picnic where all of us could enjoy hotdogs, hamburgers, volleyball, and swimming. I can remember looking forward to these picnics with great anticipation. However, summer was not the only time we spent at Seton. During the winter,



From left to right: The McMahon Family during a Civil War reenactment at Cedar Creek; Michael mowing the grass on Seton's property; Michael after serving Mass with Fr. Carr; Michael working on his studies.

my entire family would decorate the Seton lunchroom for the annual Seton Christmas party. My dad would get the Christmas tree, and we would bring Christmas music and hot chocolate to spend an enjoyable night of Christmas preparations at Seton. In more recent years, I have worked for Seton at the I.H.M. conferences Seton attends nationwide. Yes, my Seton experience is in a class all its own, and I thank God for blessing me with it.

Of course, by now you may be thinking that I did nothing outside of Seton. However, I have done a number of things aside from hanging out at Seton and following the curriculum. In fact, the flexibility of Seton's homeschooling curriculum has allowed me to enjoy many different activities. I am an avid basketball player and have played ball competitively for ten years. In grade school and through middle school, I was coached by none other than Deacon Mr. Eugene McGuirk, of Seton counseling. The past four years I played for my church's team, the St. John the Baptist Saints. I also played three years of tackle football for the parish's football team. Additionally, I have taken three years of piano and still enjoy playing it on my own. At my parish church I serve both the Traditional Latin Mass and the Novus Ordo Mass. I am also lucky enough to serve at the Human Life International Headquarters in Front Royal for Fr. Boquet, Fr. West, or Fr. Papa, as well as at the monastery of Dominican nuns in Linden, VA. We stay busy in my family.

Another great pastime I enjoy with my family is Civil War reenacting. Each year my brothers and I don our authentic uniforms and pitch our tents for a two or three day campout, participating in large reenactment events, such as the Battles of Antietam, Bull Run, Cedar Creek, and Gettysburg. We are part of a company that portrays the famous 20th Maine Regiment under the command of Lieutenant Joshua Lawrence Chamberlain. We were first introduced to this regiment by another Seton family that also enjoys reenacting. Reenacting is truly a thrilling historical experience. It is one thing to read about the great battles of the Civil War in Seton's *Christ and the Americas*, but it is an entirely new feeling to stand on the hallowed grounds, firing black powder Enfield rifles, while confederate reenactors come hurtling towards you in a charge, spurred on by their rebel yell. It's an exhilarating experience and a wonderful hobby to pursue, made all the better when pursued alongside other Seton families.

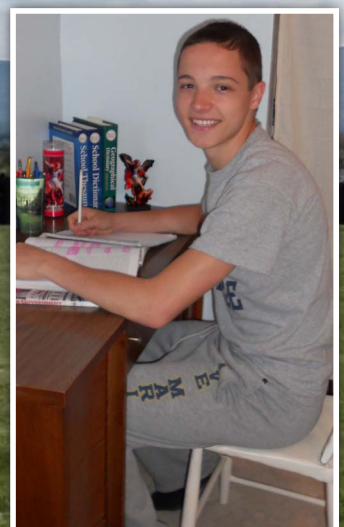
Living in the Shenandoah Valley, I am in the "bread basket of the Confederacy" and live very close to many great Civil War sites. In an hour's drive I can be at Ford's Theater or Bull Run or perhaps New Market. I am extremely blessed to live here and have these kinds of opportunities. As you can see, the blessings of being homeschooled never end.

My homeschooling experience with Seton has been truly excellent and I would

not trade it for the world. Through homeschooling with Seton, my family and I have come to know some incredible people and families. Nothing can compare with the lifestyle. In all my store of good memories, though, Seton's high school stands out as the best time of my entire Seton history. All the hard work, late nights, and long hours were entirely worth it when I was able to receive my diploma from Dr. Clark, along with 120 other graduates and their families at the commencement ceremony in May. For all you Seton students, make the graduation your goal. It is unforgettable and you can do it. To all my fellow graduates of 2013, I extend my sincere congratulations. I salute all the parents for choosing Seton, and I respect all the work done for our benefit.

In closing, I would like to thank my incredible mom for my Seton education; choosing Seton was the best thing you could have done for me, Mom! Thanks to you too, Dad, for all the good times we had at Seton. Of course, thank you to the Seton staff, especially my favorite counselor, Christine Smitha. Finally and above all, I thank our Heavenly Father for all the many blessings He has bestowed on me. For all you other homeschoolers, I pray you receive His blessings in abundance and enjoy the rest of your summer. I know I will. God bless!

It was wonderful to meet so many of you at the graduation in May and I would love to stay in touch. Maybe we can do that on the Seton Alumni Board, <http://alumni.setonhome.org>!

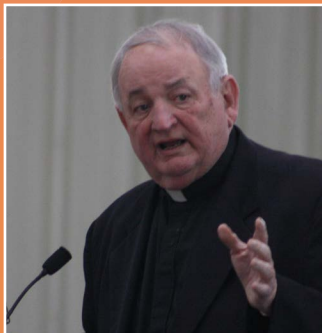




Congratulations CLASS

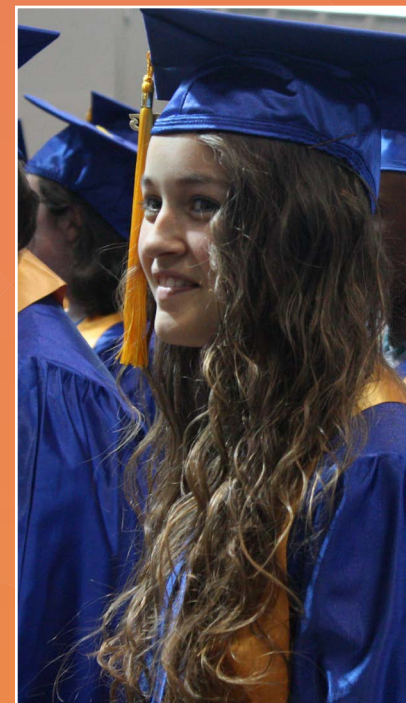
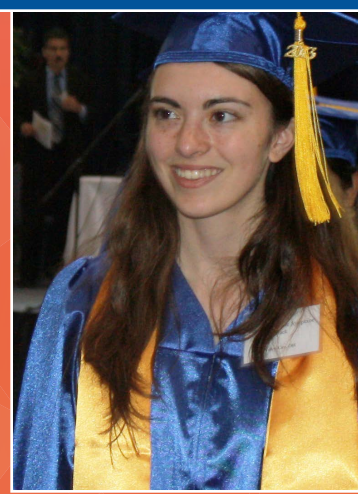


"And now it is your task, dear graduates, to carry this Hope out into the world. Hope in the lives of each one of us, is like a beacon on a hill. Even in the darkness of our secular society, others can see that beacon of Hope, and understand that, through perseverance, we all can reach our eternal goal."



Moments of 2013

"As much as a graduation is a day of looking back, however, it is perhaps even more a day of looking forward. Today is a day of Hope. Hope is the great virtue that helps us to look to the future not only with courage, but with anticipation and excitement."



Discipline: Establishing Authority

This piece by Ginny Seuffert is chapter 1 in her new book *It Doesn't Have to Be This Way: Common Sense Essentials for Raising Great Catholic Kids and Bringing Peace to Your Home*. For more information see below.



BY GINNY SEUFFERT

Some years ago, I taught the Confirmation class for our parish religious education program. The class was never rowdy or rude; my students were attentive and engaged – a pleasure to teach. A lovely lady from the parish volunteered to substitute when I was away one weekend. The following week, she told me the class had misbehaved so terribly that they had reduced her to tears. To tears! I was horrified and insisted each student apologize individually to her, but I was also quite surprised. What had turned my model students into monster brats? The answer was NOT that I exercised better control over the class; I didn't feel that I had to control them at all. They just seemed to mind me.

My “secret” was that, from the very first moments, I had established my clear authority over the class. Using confident body language, a firm and friendly tone, and a no-nonsense attitude, I let them know, right from the start, that I was in charge. The students and I had an unspoken agreement, that I would provide them with what they needed to be confirmed, and they in turn would pay courteous attention. That being settled, we could all enjoy our time together – and we did. The same principle applies to family life. Mom and Dad lovingly, but firmly, set the rules and the kids obey. Once that is understood and accepted, we can eliminate begging, whining, crying, arguing, yelling – well, mostly eliminate them – and family life becomes a pleasure.

A National Emergency

It is certainly no secret that American parents (taken as a whole; there are some lovely exceptions) have not accepted their own authority over their children. As a result, instead of enjoying family life, they find childcare a stressful burden, and home life an endless round of begging, pleading, ignoring, cajoling, and hollering in an effort to make their children behave. In our nation's public schools, educational journals claim that as much as half of a teacher's time is spent in “classroom management,” thus wasting the taxpayers' money and robbing better-behaved students of the education they deserve. In public, loud bratty children often turn dining out, shopping, or even a trip to the library, church, or park, into a major headache for parents and innocent bystanders. No one, not even a person with no children, is safe from public tantrums. Out-of-control kids are fast becoming the problem of every citizen.

The American Way?

We Americans value independence and autonomy as virtues, and hope our children will grow up to value them as well. For decades, child professionals have warned us that strong discipline and authoritative parents risk turning children into fearful little robots who will lack self-esteem, initiative, and imagination. Experts advise us not to inflict our own will on our kids, but to let them make their own choices. Misbehavior is simply a step in the growing-up process, a sign of immaturity that will be somehow magically resolved by the passage of time.

Actually, misbehavior is an opportunity for parents to establish their own authority and then use that authority to inculcate better patterns of conduct. In other words, parents take their longer life experience, their better judgment, their more developed sense of right and wrong, and the high expectations they hold for their children, and then they teach them virtuous right living. The key is

It Doesn't Have To Be This Way!



Common Sense Essentials for Raising Great Catholic Children and Bringing Peace to Your Home

This little book is short, sweet, and to the point. It is chock-full of practical, commonsense advice that has worked successfully for generations of parents. Ginny's experience as a mother of 12 and grandmother of 18 shines through topics including: how to call a truce in the mealtime and bedtime wars, good manners, proper church behavior, building a responsible and industrious work ethic, avoiding overindulgence, and much more.

Available now at www.setonbooks.com

OH, Dayton—July 12-13, 2013 (Fri.-Sat.)

IHM Dayton Homeschool & Parent Conference
 St. Peter Catholic Church Family Life Center
 6161 Chambersburg Rd
 Huber Heights, OH 45424
 Fri.: 2 pm – 8 pm, Sat.: 9:30 am – 3:30 pm
 Info: 540-636-1946
 info@ihmconference.org or
 www.ihmconference.org

CO, Centennial—July 12-13, 2013 (Fri.-Sat.)**2013 Rocky Mountain Catholic Home Educators Conference**

St. Thomas More Parish
 7071 E. Otero Avenue
 Centennial, CO 80112
 Fri.: 3pm – 8:30pm, Sat.: 8am – 5pm
 Info: www.rmchec.org or 303-750-9522

FL, Tampa—July 18-19, 2013 (Thurs.-Fri.)**IHM Tampa Homeschool & Parent Conference**

St. Lawrence Catholic Church – Higgins Hall
 5225 N. Himes Ave, Tampa, FL 33614
 Thu.: 2 pm – 8 pm, Fri.: 9:30 am – 3:30 pm
 Info: 540-636-1946
 info@ihmconference.org or
 www.ihmconference.org

**IL, Chicago—July 26-27, 2013 (Fri.-Sat.)****IHM Chicago Homeschool & Parent Conference**

North Central College – Residence Hall/Recreation Center
 440 South Brainard Street, Naperville, IL 60540
 FREE ADMISSION!
 Fri.: 2 pm – 8 pm, Sat.: 9 am – 4 pm
 Info: 540-636-1946
 info@ihmconference.org or
 www.ihmconference.org

NY, Tarrytown—August 2-3, 2013 (Fri.-Sat.)**IHM New York Catholic Homeschool & Parent Conference**

DoubleTree Hotel Tarrytown
 455 South Broadway
 Tarrytown, NY 10591
 Fri.: 2 pm – 8 pm, Sat.: 9:30 am – 3:30 pm
 Info: 540-636-1946
 info@ihmconference.org or
 www.ihmconference.org

MA, Lowell—August 9, 2013 (Fri.)**IHM New England Homeschool & Parent Conference**

UMass Lowell Inn & Conference Center
 50 Warren Street, Lowell, MA 01852
 12 noon – 8 pm
 FREE ADMISSION!
 Info: 540-636-1946
 info@ihmconference.org or
 www.ihmconference.org

not to form the children's will to robotically obey their parents. Rather it is to form their hearts and minds so they do the right thing, on their own, with less and less direction from their mothers and fathers, as the years go by.

Wisdom of the Ages

The wisdom of the ages, as well as our own good common sense, tells us this is the path to follow. Our great-grandmothers would have scratched their heads in bewilderment had we asked them if our children should respect and obey us. Although often lacking the benefits of a formal education, our ancestors knew it was not the role of parents to provide children with momentary happiness—or themselves with momentary peace—by satisfying every demand. They accepted that during childhood parents had the responsibility, even the sacred obligation, to teach their children a host of virtues beginning with obedience and respect. As children grew and matured, they inculcated courtesy, industriousness, hon-

esty, sincerity, purity, modesty, humility, selflessness, resourcefulness, and many more good habits of life. Our forebears knew that upright living was the source of a happy and productive life here on Earth, and eternal joy in Heaven. Parents understood that virtuous children are a joy to bring up, a source of gratification when they reach adulthood, and a comfort to their parents during their final years. I suspect our forebears often meditated on the Proverb, "A wise son makes his father glad, but a foolish son is a grief to his mother" (Prov. 10:1).

God's Will for His People

This proverb is still true and is confirmed by Judeo-Christian doctrine and tradition. "Honor thy father and thy mother" is the first of the Commandments that regulate how God's people are to treat one another. So important were well-ordered families to Hebrew life that the Law of Moses ordered that, "Whoever curses his father or mother shall be put to death" (Ex. 21:17). God tells the Israel-

ites to "Revere your mother and father" (Lev. 19:3). Parents have the obligation to instruct their children. "Raise up a child in the way he should go; even when he is old, he will not depart from it" (Prov. 22:6). Children have the responsibility to obey. "Hear, my son, your father's instructions, and reject not your mother's teachings" (Prov. 1:8). In his letter to the Colossians, St. Paul confirms this teaching for the early Christians: "Children, obey your parents in all things, for that is pleasing to the Lord" (Col. 3:20).

Mothers and fathers can assume their rightful authority over their children in the confident knowledge that Catholic teaching requires it and the experience of generations of parents confirms it. Everyday family life becomes more peaceful and serene, as children are a joy, not a burden. Best of all, parents are preparing their children to be responsible citizens in this world and saints in the next.



College Prep

PRIVATE GRADUATIONS

Graduation from high school is a big deal. Earning the diploma is a real rite of passage in a young person's life and should be recognized by great celebration. Although our graduation ceremony in May continues to grow in size each year, the majority of our seniors are still unable to participate in Seton's own corporate gathering. However, there are other options.

A growing number of parishes organize a Mass to honor all the graduates each year. Very often the pastor also allows for the actual presentation of diplomas after the Mass. Clearly the Eucharist is an entirely appropriate accompaniment to the importance of the event. Some parishes are also open to the idea of having a parish reception afterwards to further honor their young members. If there are a significant number of homeschooling families in the parish, this provides a great opportunity for a fabulous social gathering.

If for any reason a public recognition in the church is not possible, a group of families may consider renting a hall or using large family facilities for their ceremony. Perhaps there may even be a prominent local Catholic personality willing to deliver a commencement address!

Some families do find themselves in areas with few other families. In that case, there certainly is no reason not to have a small family gathering, with invited friends and neighbors.

And don't forget the party!

The Primrose Path

When I was about five or six years old, I remember that my maternal grandmother had a beautiful garden in her backyard that she spent many hours cultivating. Among her plants was a certain type of flower called the Evening Primrose, which is distinctive and somewhat unique insofar as, unlike most flowers that bloom once and eventually die, these little yellow flowers bloom every night. And the fact that we could watch them bloom every twenty-four hours made for quite an event. When my family visited her over the summers in Cleveland, Ohio, she used to call to us and let us know that these little yellow flowers were about to bloom. So, whether we were swimming, playing Scrabble, or picking raspberries in the side yard, we would all rush out to her patio and watch the majesty of God's creation unfold. At dusk every night, the flowers would bloom, and close every morning at sunrise.

I've always admired my grandmother's ability to care for a wonderful garden, but perhaps never so much as *this* summer, during which I have made an effort to re-create the Evening Primrose experience that is so memorable to me. I have grown to appreciate her efforts, because—as every spring reminds me—gardening is hard work.

A good way to start the landscaping project is by cutting back the dead plants and shrubs in the yard. However, when you get rid of these, you can only admire your work for a matter of minutes before you realize that tiny insects, who once called these dead plants “home” have just been re-located, and they're not happy about it. So, looking for new real estate, spiders and other critters find a way into your house. But once you eliminate the larger brush, you can now concern yourself with a more pressing concern: weeds.

Ah, the weeds. I have dirt patches in my yard that refuse to grow grass, even though I have used grass seed and fertilizer in order to repair them. On the other hand, there are also spots in my yard in which weeds stubbornly burst forth from the earth, like bad, uninvited guests who won't leave. You can weed-wack them; you can spray them with weed killer, but their friends will come back, sometimes, as Obi-Wan might say, “more powerful than before.” To stop these new weeds, you can lay down mulch, which is supposed to keep the weeds from coming back. It's a great idea, only when you go to the store to buy mulch, you might be thinking that five or ten big bags of mulch might be enough to do the trick. When you begin

to pour out the mulch bags, you realize why the guy behind the counter was smirking when you bought only five bags. No one needs *five* bags of mulch. You need *fifty* bags, at least. Of course, weeds tend to come up through the mulch anyway, so you spray weed killer again.

This whole process reminded me of a story.

A man once observed St. Francis of Assisi working in his garden, and so he asked him: “Brother Francis, if you knew you were going to die tomorrow, what would you do today?” Famously, St. Francis responded: “I would keep tending my garden.” It's a great line, illustrating a Catholic sense of duty along with a proper response to the Providence of God, but it's a shame that the story ends there. I would like to imagine that the man asked St. Francis a simple follow-up question: “Why?” To which St. Francis might answer: “It's because of the weeds!”

With all the work I've been doing in my yard, sometime during this spring and summer season, it has become clear to me that gardening is a lot like the spiritual life. I'm sure I'm not the first one to form a simile between the spiritual life and gardening (St. Francis probably noticed it, too), but maybe I'm the latest in a long line of people to experience this fact.

You would like to see beautiful flowers bloom all around you, but you can't even *plant* them before you rid yourself of the brush, shrubs, and weeds that threaten to take over your garden. Getting rid of these is kind of like going to Confession.

And beautiful roses don't just *appear* (gifts from the Mother of God notwithstanding). They have to be cultivated, nourished, and protected. That's akin to a good prayer life. In the homeschooling family, we fathers are gardeners of sorts. We work to mend our own spiritual lives while we help our children tend and nourish their own. We'd love to do a perfect job, but just when we seem to conquer one sin, another appears. And then it happens again. At times, looking at the work in front of us, it seems a little overwhelming. But we persevere, because we can have hope that in the corner of the little gardens of our souls, and the souls of our children, there are tiny flowers that bloom every day and adorn a path to Heaven, as a testimony to the grace of God.



BY JOHN CLARK

Education in the Family

SUMMARY OF A SPEECH BY
JOSE CARDINAL SANCHEZ

Several years ago, His Excellency Cardinal Jose Sanchez was the featured speaker at the Catholic Home Education conference in Manassas, Virginia. He had traveled from Rome in his position as Prefect of the Congregation of the Clergy to give support to Catholic homeschooling parents.

Cardinal Sanchez encouraged parents to educate their children in the Catholic Faith, as they are encouraged by the documents of the Second Vatican Council, which teaches not only that they are the primary educators of their children, but also that the Church is present in families through parents teaching their children.

The family is the “proper place” to grow in the Faith, said the Cardinal. The family is the domestic church and, through the family’s educational activities along with the ordinary events of daily life, it can best teach a knowledge and understanding of God, veneration and worship of God, a love of neighbor, and how to live a community life. “This is started and developed in the family itself.”

“Family catechesis can give the first lessons, the ABCs of Catholic doctrine.” The parents can best teach the meaning of God the Father, of God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit, and that we all belong to one family in Faith, which is the Church. Parishes should support parents by providing them with lesson plans or other materials to make catechetical instruction in the family successful.

Cardinal Sanchez gave parents several ideas about teaching the Faith in the home. “Teaching is not just transmitting truth, but giving witness, because teaching the truth without witness is not effective.” He pointed out that Our Lord at His Ascension told His disciples that “You shall be witnesses to Me.” Parents must not be just formal teachers but “give witness to the Faith.”

Witnessing is a “silent teaching” in the growth of the Faith. Parents give witness when they take their children to be baptized, or go to Holy Communion each Sunday, when they show respect for each

other, or do charitable works for family or community members. The growth of the Faith in children is strengthened by adding witness to verbal teaching. This witnessing is “felt more strongly in the family. Covering several chapters in the catechism is important, but witnessing gives strength to the teaching.”

While verbal teaching and witnessing are most important, parents need to take advantage of daily occasions to teach. For instance, when an event or item is read in the newspaper, take the occasion to teach Catholic doctrine.

Parents need to be constantly aware and alert for occasions to teach, as well as conscious of their responsibility to teach the Faith on a continuing basis to their children. Parents should develop a sort of “spontaneous” response to take advantage of every situation to teach Catholic doctrine. All circumstances can be interpreted as occasions to teach the Faith. In this spontaneous response to every opportunity to teach the Catholic Faith in the family, children will develop a strong Faith and resist temptations.

Signs and symbols should be displayed in the home as a reminder of our Catholic beliefs. For instance, crucifixes should have a prominent place. Images of Our Lord and the saints should be displayed. Holy water should be in our homes. Holy Scripture should have a “place of honor” for “we are pilgrims and this is the book that guides us.”

We should have certain practices as well as signs and symbols. Parents should supervise children, as a regular practice, in what they “see and hear, what comes into their minds” which can strengthen or weaken their awareness of Jesus Christ in their lives. Parents have a Christian duty to have more of those things which will help our children grow

in the Christian life, and avoid those things which produce a negative effect.

Parents need courage and fortitude when outsiders are critical, but we need to set an example as a family to other families, and not be ashamed to practice our Faith in public. Being faithful to the Lord, even in public, is how people became saints.

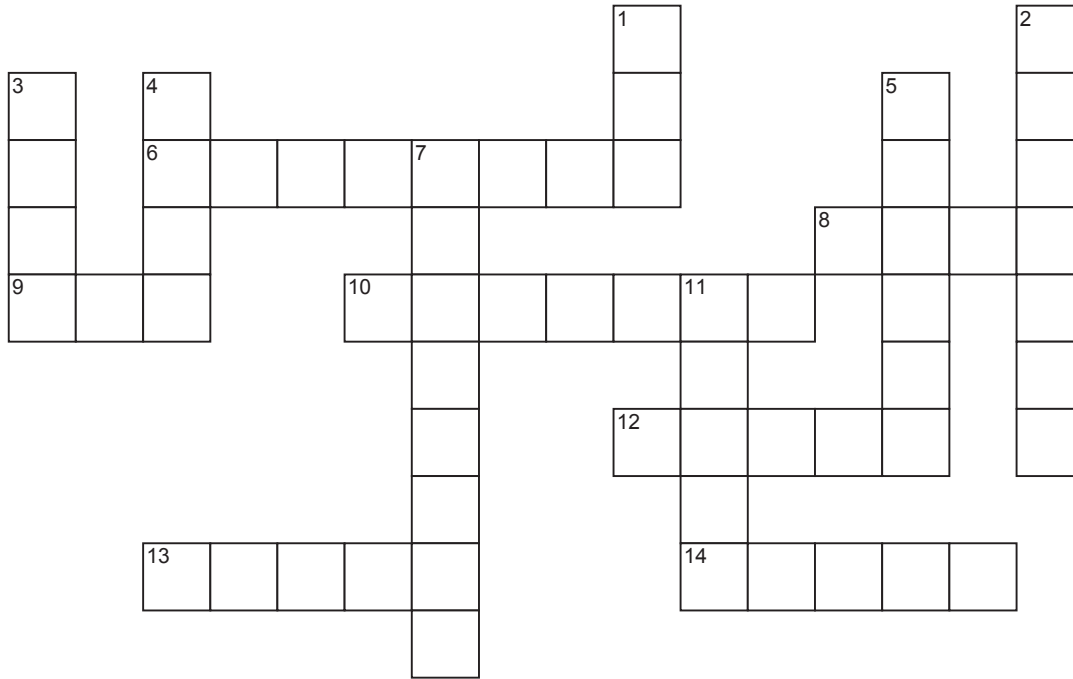
Another practice for the family is reading the Word of God. The family should have a practice of reading the Bible as a family. This is not only a wholesome practice, but teaches our children that the Bible is a source of our Catholic doctrines and the teachings are a source of strength in difficult times. Children could take turns reading, and parents should encourage spontaneous reflection on what is being read.

The family can also participate in the liturgical celebrations “at home, reading the Gospel and other readings of the Mass each day, or on Sunday, encouraging discussion and reflection.” Thus the children better participate in the Mass and in the reception of the Holy Eucharist.

The family must have a life of prayer. The law of prayer is the law of Faith. Prayer is a summary of Catholic doctrines, such as the Incarnation and Redemption. If there is serious meditation on the prayers, it will eventually be a review of the whole doctrine of the Catholic Church. Prayer strengthens our wills to do good.

All these things may require a certain reorganization of our habits. Make the home once again the center of family life. “But the things of God can only be done with the help of God’s grace. The thing which makes a man Christian is the grace of God. . . . I hope our Christian families can become centers for the growth of the Faith, and give witness to the Faith, which will be the source and also the strength of the society and of the Church.”

A Catholic Crossword



ACROSS

- 6 The Sixth Commandment: "Thou shalt not commit ____."
- 8 The Sixth Commandment commands all people to be ____.
- 9 The Eighth Commandment forbids us to ____.
- 10 The First Commandment commands us to ____ God.
- 12 God gave the Ten Commandments to ____ on Mount Sinai.
- 13 The Tenth Commandment forbids us to ____ or desire the possessions of others.
- 14 The Seventh Commandment: "Thou shalt not ____."

DOWN

- 1 The Third Commandment commands us to keep holy the Lord's ____.
- 2 The Fourth Commandment commands us to honor our ____.
- 3 The Fifth Commandment: "Thou shalt not ____."
- 4 The Second Commandment commands us to honor the ____ of God.
- 5 The Eighth Commandment also forbids detraction, which is the sin of unnecessarily revealing the ____ of others.
- 7 The Ninth Commandment commands us to be pure in our ____.
- 11 The First Commandment forbids us to worship ____.

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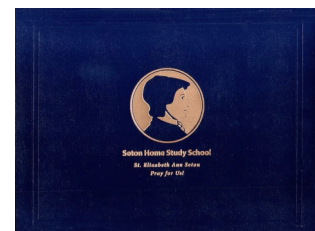
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PAPAL WISDOM

The Domestic Church

1655: Christ chose to be born and grow up in the bosom of the holy family of Joseph and Mary. The Church is nothing other than “the family of God.” From the beginning, the core of the Church was often constituted by those who had become believers “together with all [their] household.” When they were converted, they desired that “their whole household” should also be saved. These families who became believers were islands of Christian life in an unbelieving world.

1656: In our own time, in a world often alien and even hostile to faith, believing families are of primary importance as centers of living radiant faith. For this reason, the Second Vatican Council, using an ancient expression, calls the family the *Ecclesia domestica*. It is in the bosom of the family that parents are “by word and example... the first heralds of the Faith with regard to their children. They should encourage them in the vocation which is proper to each child, fostering with special care any religious vocation.”

1657: It is here [in the family] that the father of the family, the mother, the children, and all members of the family exercise the “priesthood of the baptized” in a privileged way “by the reception of the sacraments, by prayer and thanksgiving, by the witness of a holy life, by self-denial, and by active charity.”

Thus the home is the first school of Christian life and “a school for human enrichment.” Here [in the home] one learns endurance and the joy of work, fraternal love, generous—even repeated—forgiveness, and above all, divine worship in prayer and the offering of one’s life.

Catechism of the Catholic Church

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