

Seton MAGAZINE



Under the Magisterium of the Catholic Church

AUGUST 2013



“I am not going to homeschool!”

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of the joys of homeschooling

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Vol. 2 No. 8, August 2013

The Seton Magazine (formerly Seton Newsletter) is published monthly by

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Subscription Information:

Subscription is included with your enrollment.

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

Free online at www.setonmagazine.com

On the Cover:

The Alessandrini Family

Every day at Seton, gathered before the altar at our afternoon 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.

We are all united in the Communion of Saints, and God allows us through our prayers to uphold, support, and console other members of His Church. Let us, then, remember to pray for one another as we all walk the path of homeschooling, so that we may all join together in prayer, one day, in Heaven.





Mary, Queen of Heaven

We celebrate the feast of the Blessed Mother as the Queen of Heaven on August 22. The Visitation by Mary to Elizabeth recorded in the first chapter of the Gospel of Luke, hints at or foreshadows the future Queenship of Mary. Elizabeth, filled with the Holy Spirit, tells Mary, “Blessed are you among women.” The prophetic or fuller sense of this declaration must include the Queenship of Mary.

Mary is, indeed, “blessed” among all other women by being the only woman crowned as Queen of Heaven and Earth after the end of her earthly life. Mary’s reply to Elizabeth in her Magnificat also foreshadows the Queenship of Mary. Mary says, “henceforth all generations will call me blessed.” What better way for all generations to call Mary “blessed” than for them to give Mary homage as Queen of Heaven and Earth.

It is unlikely that Elizabeth or Mary knew by their prophecies that Mary’s blessedness would take the specific form of Queenship upon her death. Nevertheless, they did know that Mary would be supremely blessed in the future, and in a way not seen before, because she gave birth to the Messiah, the eternal King, who is also the Son of God.

Blessed Mother, Queen of Heaven, help the members of my family to fall to their knees in front of your Son, the King of Heaven and of all creation.



The Coronation of the Virgin, Diego Velázquez

Help us parents to teach our children to love and obey your Divine Son, the King of Kings.

Blessed Mother, Queen of Heaven teach us to realize that the life of humility, the simple life, the life which focuses on spiritual eternal values, is the way to eternal happiness with you and your Son in the heavenly court.

Look down on us, Mary, Queen of Heaven, with love and kindness. Help us to stay on the path Jesus has given us, to teach our children with persistence and dedication, and not to falter during difficult times and struggles.

Blessed Mary, Queen of Heaven, help me to teach my children the importance of doing their lessons with a sincere effort to please Jesus our King

and you, Mary, Queen of Heaven. Help those in my family to realize that our Catholic home schooling will bring us heavenly rewards as well as graces for others to remain faithful to the teachings of your Son Jesus. Help our children to remember the words of Jesus: “...I am a King”, but “My kingdom is not of this world.”

Blessed Mother, Queen of Heaven, help us and our children to be persistent in our Catholic home schooling duties. Help us to resist the temptations to seek comfort. Queen of Heaven, teach us to live the life of prayer and of devotion to duty as we are called to do by the sacrament of matrimony.

“HAIL, HOLY QUEEN, Mother of Mercy! Our life, our sweetness, and our hope! To thee do we cry, poor banished children of Eve, to thee do we send up our sighs, mourning and weeping in this valley of tears. Turn, then, most gracious advocate, thine eyes of mercy toward us; and after this our exile, show unto us the blessed fruit of thy womb, Jesus; O clement, O loving, O sweet virgin Mary. Pray for us, O holy Mother of God, that we may be made worthy of the promises of Christ.”

**Blessed Mother, Queen of Heaven,
pray for us.**



Dr Clark has been the Director of Seton Home Study School for more than 30 years. She writes two columns for the Seton Magazine and is the author of *Catholic Home Schooling*.

Your Questions... Answered

BY DR. MARY KAY CLARK

Why does Seton emphasize English while other schools, even Catholic ones, put much less emphasis on English?

Catholic schools traditionally have been strong in English courses to promote thinking and writing skills. Daily diagramming was almost as much evidence of a Catholic school as the Baltimore Catechism! Students in Catholic schools were always at the blackboard competing with diagramming long and complex sentences. There are still diagramming competitions, and some teachers have discovered how much students like them. Some diagramming competitions are on the internet. If you go on the internet at <http://grammar.ccc.commnet.edu/grammar/diagrams/diagrams.htm>, you can read this:

“When Joseph R. Mallon Jr. bumps up against a complex problem, he thinks back to a lesson he learned in high school from the Sisters of the Immaculate Conception. The Philadelphia-area school’s Catholic nuns taught him the art of diagramming a sentence. Once all the parts of speech lined up, Mallon pulled clarity from the chaos. It’s a process he uses today to tackle tough issues as chief executive and chairman of Measurement Specialties Inc. ‘Sit down quietly. Take (the issue) apart into its component parts. Make sure all the components fit together well. They’ve got to be well chosen, fit together and make sense. There are few (business) problems that can’t be solved that way, as dire as it might seem,’ Mallon said. ‘Sentence diagramming is one of the best analytical techniques I ever learned.’”

We emphasize language skills because these skills are so important to understanding the world, and to being able to influence the world. So many schools are not teaching language skills—such as critical reading and persuasive writing—that students with these skills will have a tremendous ad-

vantage in college and later in life. At Seton, we want to produce not only spiritually-grounded students, but also students who can share and defend their beliefs in the public arena.

We have recently received some emails from Seton about accreditation. Why is accreditation so important?

Accreditation is very important because it shows that Seton has been evaluated by a third party and found to be complying with generally accepted business and educational standards, and is fulfilling the promises that we make to parents and students.

Accreditation has some additional benefits to students as well. For example, some states offer certain exemptions from home schooling regulations for students enrolled in an accredited school. Some state university systems have special regulations which apply to home schooled students, but are waived if the student graduated from an accredited school. When a transcript is sent to a college from an accredited school, such as Seton, the college knows that the reputation of the school stands behind the transcript.

Another benefit of accreditation is the ability to transfer credits more easily. When Seton sends a transcript to another school, we prominently feature our accreditation on the transcript. This makes it difficult for a school to deny transferring credits, since often the new school is accredited by the same agency that accredits Seton.

It can be important to families to be able to explain to family and friends that their students attend an accredited school that maintains high educational standards.



We believe that Seton’s accreditation is good for all homeschoolers, even those who do not enroll with Seton. Seton’s accreditation is a public acknowledgment that home schooling is an acceptable form of education, which has been evaluated and approved by the same agencies which evaluate and approve traditional schools.

While we are accredited by AdvancEd and the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools, as well as recognized by the Virginia Council for Private Education, none of these organizations has ever questioned our Catholic curriculum. Their primary concern is more of a business approach: Does the school fulfill its commitments to the enrolled families? They want to see that we are continually working to keep up with technology and being sure our “employees” are keeping up with developments in their work areas. They want to survey our parents as well to determine if

parents are satisfied with our services.

Parents and students are an extremely important part of the continuing accreditation process, and we very much appreciate your help and cooperation.

“Seton’s accreditation is a public acknowledgment that home schooling is an acceptable form of education.”

I am new to homeschooling. Should I plan out the whole year ahead of time?

The Seton lesson plans are arranged so the lessons are scheduled out for thirty-six weeks, based on what we anticipate as the average work a student could do for each day. However, we believe that the parents need

to make the final determination about how much a certain student can do in a reasonable amount of time. What you will discover is that your student moves quickly through some subjects, and slowly through some others. That is where you can make adjustments, giving more time to a class period when it is needed, and less time when it is not needed.

For example, some students know their spelling words after one time through the first part of the lesson. You might consider having your student do some of the other exercises during the week, which you know is really just reinforcement, or, as some of us believe, the spelling sentences often teach about other things as well, such as information about saints or history.

On the other hand, if your great spelling student is struggling with a new math concept, cut down on the spelling time and use it for math time. This is why home schooling is so great, and works best for the student. The lessons are geared for the individual student, not for 30 children sitting in a classroom working on certain lessons that a publisher or an educator designed for a classroom teacher. The teacher does not always have the choice to slow down for her class, or take the time to help a particular student who needs more help.

We always say, "Adjust the program to fit the student, not the student to fit the program." The lesson plans are meant as a guide. They are your servant, not your master.

How much do I need to "record" the lessons I teach my children?

The answer to this question depends on your state laws and what you as a parent want. In some states, parents can comply with certain laws by submitting a "portfolio" of student work. If you plan to keep a portfolio, then recording more is probably better.

For purposes of showing your student's progress, you probably don't

need to save more than the specific assignments listed on the quarter report forms. If a quarter report form lists only weekly parent grades, you might want to save an item or two as representative of the work done. If you upload any work over the Internet to Seton, or if you take an online test, Seton keeps a copy of the test or assignment. As long as your family is enrolled with Seton, you will have access to your MySeton page, and you will always be able to view these items.

If you want to save a copy of an item which is not sent to Seton, you may want to scan the item and upload it to one of the many free online storage sites. By uploading a scanned item to an online site, you can be sure to have access to it even if your computer crashes or you get a new computer. There are many free online storage sites available, such as Box.Net and Microsoft SkyDrive.

Why can't I choose the books for my children for their book reports?

While we strongly encourage you to choose books for your children to read and to assign them to write book reports, our graders cannot read every book a parent may choose, and consequently cannot grade reports on such books.

We require only four book reports a year in the elementary grade levels, and for the first two reports, we give the student introductory sentences to get them started. The second two reports are on stories of saints which we send, so our graders are familiar with those stories. Nevertheless, we do hope that parents will encourage their children to read and write about other books.

My daughter has not quite finished up 8th grade, but she wants to move along to start 9th grade. What do you think?

We recommend that your daughter finish up her 8th grade work. This will generally make her better prepared for high school and make her more successful in high school.



If your daughter is struggling with certain subjects, have her finish up the easiest one first, then the second easiest, and so on. If her most difficult subject is last, she has behind her several successes and is likely to have a better attitude toward finishing the last. If you cannot help her with her most difficult course, consider having a tutor come by to help her finish up. There may be a retired teacher at your church who would consider helping your daughter.

I would like to enroll my second grader for the full program, but what would happen if I choose not to give tests for some subjects?

It is entirely optional for parents to give Seton tests. However, you need to be aware that if you do not give tests, we cannot put a grade on the Seton report card. In second grade, that is not particularly important since there is no issue with course credits. However, in the later grades, it may become more important for your son to show progress in all subject areas. If, for any reason, you need to produce documentation of your home schooling, grades earned from an accredited school are very useful.

Certainly, in the high school years, you will want a complete transcript for when your student applies to college. Even though Seton tests and grading are still optional in high school, we very strongly recommend using our grading and record-keeping services.



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"I am NOT going to homeschool!"

BY SUSAN ALESSANDRINI

The Alessandrini Family's unexpected discovery of the joys of Homeschooling.



"I am not going to homeschool!"

"I am not 'that' kind of mom!"

When my husband originally suggested that we homeschool, I declared that the Blessed Mother herself would have to sit down across the table and say, "Susan, you are going to homeschool," before I would try it. We are now finishing up our seventh year of homeschooling with Seton, and even though I haven't seen the Blessed Mother sitting at the dinner table, I do believe she is with us and watching over us. After seven years, not only am I convinced that I am "that" kind of mom, but I am convinced that our family is better because of it!

We read every Seton Magazine that comes to our house. I enjoy the new Feature Family section, and feel a deep connection with those families that want something different for their children and their families. My children, on the other hand, were reading these monthly family stories

and felt a strong need to tell our story. They kept saying, "Mom, you should tell them this," and "Mom, you should tell them that." I kept putting it off, but maybe the Blessed Mother is prompting me through my children!

It all began when my two girls were starting at the Catholic school. Ida was entering 2nd grade and Gabriella was starting Kindergarten. We had made payments towards the \$5,000 tuition for that school year. I had quit my job to stay home with my children, so why was I paying strangers (teachers) to be with two of my children for most for the day? All summer, the dollar signs had been rolling around in my head. Why were Kindergarten and 2nd grade so expensive? As our plan then stood, all four children would be attending that school eventually, and what would that cost?

With this big decision weighing on my shoulders, I had been going to daily Mass and Adoration and had met the nicest families. There was something different about the way these families interacted with each other and something very attractive about these moms. Their children were the kind of children I wanted my children to be friends with. I wanted what they had, but couldn't put my finger on what it was.

Now it was the week before school started. Uniforms were pressed and hung in the closet, book bags were tagged with "Alessandrini," girls had met their new teachers, and..... we decided to "bring them home"! That night, still in shock over what we had just done, I went online and pulled up Seton's website. This was the curriculum my homeschooling friends talked about all the time when we stood around in the parking lot after Adoration. I punched in 2nd grade and Kindergarten on the Seton website, and since then I have never looked back.

I did fool myself for a year or two thinking that everything about our family was still the same; we just homeschooled. Ha! This experience has really been more like having a baby, where life is never the same but everything changes for the better. At the beginning, I worried if homeschooling was the best decision for our family. Then we found ourselves needing to prepare quickly for it. I wondered how it would affect us. I lay awake at night trying to figure out how this was actually going to work. Eventually though, without even knowing it, I couldn't remember life before homeschooling. Now, so many years later, how could I ever give it up? It has changed us in ways we didn't foresee.

I love to tell people that when you homeschool, you can love and discipline your kids all day. They need both, and they can't get either in a traditional school setting. I also tell people that successful homeschooling is not just about what the kids are learning; successful homeschool-

"I love to tell people that when you homeschool, you can love and discipline your kids all day."



Captions clockwise from bottom-left:

The Alessandrini children; a family portrait of the Alessandrinis; the family at a Torch Run for the Special Olympics in 2012; Mr. Alessandrini with two of his children during a medical checkup; the children preparing for hockey practice.

ing is about what the mom is learning about herself, as well. Through the years of homeschooling, I have called the Seton counselors many times for many reasons. Sometimes I called for academics, but most often for how to make homeschooling work for us. Sharon Hassett has been a beacon of light for me. Her encouragement and simple advice has grown through the years to give me a sense of independence and confidence. No matter what I was struggling with - book reports or night shifts- she always reminded me



to keep going to daily Mass and weekly Adoration. She helped me find ways to make school more manageable and still have time for Mass. Very smart! The years of experience with academics that Seton has is so important to me, but perhaps more importantly, I have found a wealth of strong, committed Catholics at Seton who I can count on for support and prayers. As a result, I have become a stronger, more committed Catholic. Now there's a benefit I didn't expect!

As a homeschooling family, we are in a variety of extra-curricular activities. Some of them are: gymnastics, piano, art, choir, hockey, volleyball, soccer, and more! We do not participate in all of these because I'm trying to teach my children how

to "socialize." These activities grew naturally out of our family's character. Even before we started homeschooling, we were a very sporty family, involved in our church, and had many friends. I believe homeschooling has only helped us to become the active family God wanted us to be.

We live on the Southside of Chicago and my husband of 16 years is a police officer in a neighboring suburb. Even with working midnight shifts, being called out to work at all hours of the day, and handling the stress of his job, he continues to be my biggest fan. When people ask if his wife works, he says, "Yes, harder than me." They say, "Wow! What does she do?" The response is always a surprise to them! I think part of his motivation to homeschool, besides thinking I would do a great job, has been security. He loves his children like no other dad I've ever met, and his job and what he sees on a daily basis has an effect on how he wants to raise his kids. When he is at work and super busy, he has the peace of mind of knowing that his children are in the safest possible place and getting an education beyond what our local schools can provide.

I now have an 8th grader, 6th grader, 4th grader, and a 2nd grader. We started homeschooling for financial reasons, but seven years later, it has nothing to do with money. The reasons for homeschooling have changed from year to year. I have homeschooled for social reasons, religious reasons, academic reasons, and more recently medical reasons. My 6th grader, Gabriella, has a rare auto-immune disease of her eyes that was diagnosed 3 years ago. Her vision has to be closely monitored, but she is responding well to the infusions she receives once every 4 weeks and daily drops. Gabriella's disease was another confirmation of the "rightness" of our decision to homeschool. Rather than take Gabriella away from school and make her struggle with life (as would have been the case if she had been in a regular school), this "cross" was something we knew we could carry as a

family, and in fact, it has actually brought the whole family closer. Gabriella is not missing all the days of school that she would have in a traditional school. Addressing her needs is a "normal" part of our school program and it makes us who we are. Gabriella has a rotating schedule for taking each sibling for doctor visits and we sometimes include a field trip when we go into the city. This has helped develop deeper friendships among my children. Not only have we had the privilege of meeting some of the best doctors in Chicago that are nationally recognized, but they have met a one-of-a-kind family. Even my 2nd grader, Matteo, is asking the doctor how Gabriella's pressure is in her eyes this last visit! Her siblings care and they are involved!

More than anything else, I really just love being with my kids. Whether at church, the grocery store, or soccer practice, other people have remarked on how well-behaved, animated, spiritual, attentive, or affectionate my children are. We laugh, we pray, we sing, and we have our family inside jokes. And I thank God and the Blessed Mother every chance I get, that I have the opportunity to homeschool these four beautiful souls He entrusted to me and my husband.



The Habits of SUCCESSFUL HOMESCHOOLERS



As part of our ongoing efforts to support our home schooling families, Seton Home Study School recently commissioned a survey to try to discern the factors that contribute to success in the Seton program.

The questions we asked were meant to determine if there are attributes or habits which are shared by families who do very well home schooling with Seton.

In fact, we did find shared habits and attributes of very successful families. We found that some attributes and habits have a small impact on success, while others have a huge impact.

Among the factors we looked at were

1. number of home schooling students in the family,
2. level of support from both parents for home schooling,
3. use of Seton-provided resources,
4. organization and scheduling,
5. student gender,
6. parental supervision, and
7. hours per day spent home schooling.

Number of Home Schooling Students

We wondered whether families home schooling only one student would do better since the parents could focus all their attention on a single student. Or, would several students homeschooling together be able to help each other and so be more successful?

Our study found that families with more students tend to do at least as well as families with only one student enrolled. The spreading of parental attention to several students does not negatively impact homeschooling. In fact, families teaching three children tend to do even better than those teaching only one. We suspect that teaching more than one child often allows the students to help each other, either because they are at the same grade level, or because an older child might help a younger child.

Whatever the reason, our study suggests that success in home schooling does not require “starting slowly” with only one child. Parents who start out with two or three children home schooling can do just as well.

Level of Support from Both Parents

Our survey found that strong support of home schooling from both parents is a critical component to home schooling success. Our survey found that the mother’s level of support for home schooling is ex-

tremely high in virtually all families. This makes sense, because in almost all families, it is the mother who does the bulk of the actual schooling. If the mother is not supportive, home schooling is not likely to start at all.

However, the level of support from the father varies, and is a huge factor in success. The most successful home schooling families have a father who is very supportive. It certainly is helpful to the educational process if the father’s support translates to active involvement, such as teaching some of the classes. However, many mothers reported that simply having the strong support of the father is very important to the process. If the father does not support home schooling, this attitude is no doubt passed along, even subconsciously, to the children, who can then use the lack of father’s support to undermine the home schooling. Without the support of both parents, home schooling is less likely to be successful.

There are many reasons why a parent may not be supportive of home schooling, but we think the main reason is lack of information about home schooling. Some parents simply don’t have enough information about the impressive track record of home schooling, and the impressive accomplishments of home schoolers, over the years. Whatever the reason, it is crucial that both parents understand and support

the home schooling decision, and at least are united when dealing with the children.

Use of Seton-Provided Resources

We found that the use of Seton-provided resources—such as grading services, counseling, online supplemental materials—plays a very large role in home schooling success. Families who used Seton’s resources the most tended to have the most educational success. Also, these families viewed the grading services as very important to a student’s motivation and progress.

Insofar as perhaps some families did not know enough about what Seton provides, this finding leads us to the conclusion that Seton needs to do more to put the proper resources in front of families at the proper time. Seton being more proactive in offering services may lead to more successful enrollments.

Gender

We wondered whether the gender of the students, or the gender of the primary teacher—mom or dad—would make a difference to educational outcomes. It did not. Our survey found that both dads and moms can successfully teach either boys or girls.

Organization and Scheduling

We found that having and keeping a schedule is vital to home schooling success. Besides the home schooling schedule, it



is important to schedule other activities, such as children's chores. We found that a high level of organization helps families to schedule more activities and get more done. For example, families who reported a high level of organization are much more likely to have family prayer time, more likely to attend daily Mass, and more likely to participate in parish activities. The children of very organized families are more likely to have a part-time job and they are more likely to play team sports.

Success in home schooling is clearly compatible with the scheduling of outside activities. One does not need to be a hermit to home school. However, having and sticking to a schedule is of the utmost importance. In our survey, we asked parents what one piece of advice they would give to other parents and students. Most often, the advice from parents was, "Stick to a schedule."

Parental Supervision

We found that parental supervision, at least as far as keeping track of student work, is important to home schooling success. Students who are primarily self-supervised tend not to do as well as those

students with more parental supervision. However, we also found that the level of parental supervision needed varies greatly depending on the student. Self-supervision works well in cases when a student is highly motivated and organized, but not so well when a student is lacking in motivation and organization.

Interestingly, we found that the enthusiasm and confidence level of the students in their educational abilities did not affect their performance. Most students are confident they can succeed, but students without solid study skills are sometimes too confident. It needs to be impressed upon students that when they are struggling, they need to ask for help, either from their parents or from Seton counselors. Our survey found that some students and families are hesitant to ask the counselors for help, even when they are having significant difficulties.

Does the level of parental education matter to student success? According to our survey, it does not. We found little to no correlation between parental educational achievement and successful home schooling.

Amount of learning time

We wanted to know if more time each day devoted to home schooling translates to more educational success. While the amount of time needed to home school varies widely based upon circumstances and abilities of the students, our survey indicates that more time does make some difference to success. This may be for two

reasons. First, because students may learn more and do better on their assignments, which can lead to higher motivation going forward. Second, the extra time may mean that students are better able to stay on their projected schedule and not fall behind.

However, we did not find any straight line improvements. A twenty-percent increase in time does not always yield twenty-percent greater results. In fact, simply adding more time does not necessarily mean any greater educational achievement. What seems to be important is that families take enough time. Of course, what is enough time can only be determined in an individual case. Plus, more organization can mean less time is needed to accomplish the same outcome. Because organization and scheduling are so important, we would suggest that a family first look at those aspects before thinking about spending more time home schooling.



SUMMARY

In summary, we found that the main factors affecting student achievement are:

- **Parental support and supervision by both parents**
- **Scheduling and organization**
- **Use of Seton support services**
- **Right amount of time spent on schooling**

Families in which both parents are committed to home schooling, in which the parents take the time to supervise the work, in which a schedule is made and adhered to, who use Seton's grading and counseling services, and spend a sufficient amount of time each day home schooling are maximizing their likelihood of success.

We hope that understanding the factors that contribute to success can allow each family to consider its own situation, to see whether any changes might be made to create a better home schooling experience.

Secrets to Teen Motivation

BY SARAH ROSE

Are your teens always completing their research reports at the last minute, or not completing them at all? Do your teens complain that their school work is pointless? Did you recently begin homeschooling and do your teens miss their old school and old friends? Are they rebellious and disrespectful?

Parents wrestling with these dilemmas are fighting a moral and spiritual battle. To win such a battle, they must use moral and spiritual weapons. Fortunately, Jesus never gives us more than we can handle; He will provide parents with the means they need to help their children know and love Him and obey His Commandments. Ultimately, God alone, working with and never against the free will of teens, can change their hearts. As the head and heart of the home, however, fathers and mothers can create an environment in which God's grace can flow more abundantly.

Therefore, the first thing to be done is to ask for the means to create a loving Christian home. Pray. Pray without ceasing. Never doubt that God hears our prayers, though His answer may not come in the way or at the time we want. If at all possible, begin going to daily Mass. Take your teens with you, saying, "This will get you up in the morning," or "This will give us a much needed break from school work." Convey the spiritual benefits as well. Eventually, daily Mass will become a habit, not a chore.

Not every family can attend daily Mass, but every family can pray the Rosary every day. Our Blessed Mother gave fifteen promises to those who pray the Rosary. They can be found on this website: <http://www.ourladywarriors.org/prayer/15promise.htm>

One of Mary's promises is this: "The soul which recommends itself to me by the recitation of the Rosary shall not perish." Print a copy of these promises and

post it on your refrigerator. Pray the Rosary out loud in the living room or main room of the house every day.



"Every family can pray the Rosary every day. Our Blessed Mother gave fifteen promises to those who pray the Rosary."

Many teens go through a phase of rebellion. This is a common side effect of becoming independent. Children are becoming adults and must learn to live their own lives without depending on their parents for everything. At a time when your children are being influenced less by you and more by their peers, it is important that they have friends their own age with good Christian morals. Encourage your children to join a parish teen or pro-life group. Find a homeschool support group and join in their family activities, or start your own homeschool group. If you have only recently begun homeschooling, your teens may miss their old school friends. If at all possible, allow your children to continue spending time with their old friends. If these public or private school students are clearly having a negative moral influence on your children, be firm in limiting their time spent together. It would be better, however, to increase the number of good influences in your children's lives and let their old

friendships fade away than to forbid them to see their best friends.

Teens often struggle with laziness. As children, they bounced out of bed soon after sunrise, full of energy and enthusiasm. Now, if they had their way, they would play video games or spend time on Facebook or Pinterest until one in the morning and sleep until noon every day. Teens should be getting practice in setting their own schedule. However, in the "real world," college classes often begin at 8:30am, and many jobs require being at work at 8:00am. So continue starting homeschool lessons no later than 9:00am, or whenever your family gets home from morning Mass. If, despite getting an early start, your teens still procrastinate with their school work, teach them to set goals for themselves. Have them begin with their most difficult subjects, while their minds are fresh in the morning, so the rest of the day will be easy. Or, if they are still sluggish even after Mass and breakfast, find the best time of day for them and have them study their most difficult subject then. If your teens are still lazy about school, it might mean that you are not challenging them enough. If they simply do not care about school and say that school is pointless, you have a bigger problem. Try to find what they are passionate about and incorporate it into your lessons. If they are interested in science, plan a trip to a natural history museum. If they like history, visit an area of historical interest or participate in a reenactment. Teach your teens to set goals for themselves, both short-term and long-term goals. If they manage to finish all their work for the year before June, take them on a special trip.

The teen years are the time to look toward the future. Do they want to go



“Find an exciting book about St. Sebastian, St. Ignatius Loyola, or another ‘manly’ saint for your son. Your daughter might like reading about one of the many intelligent, independent women saints, such as St. Catherine of Siena or St. Teresa of Avila.”

to college? Contact colleges and find the average high school grades and SAT scores of incoming freshmen. Find what grades and scores must be achieved to qualify for scholarships. Ask your teens what kind of careers they want. Help gear their high school education toward their goals. If you are unable to motivate your teens with any goals and they still refuse to do their work, you may need to resort to “tough love.” Tell them, “Alright, if you don’t do your work, you can’t graduate. It will be hard to get a good job without a high school diploma.”

One final point is worth considering for parents dealing with rebellious or unmotivated teens: limit media. For the most part, watching TV is a waste of time. Worse, many movies and TV shows depict heroes with deplorable morals. Consider limiting TV time to one wholesome show per day. You might move the TV to an out-of-the-way place and bring it out only for family movie night. Make sure your teens are exposed to people worthy of emulation, not pop culture celebrities. Keep books and movies about the saints in your home. If, when they were younger, your teens grew up reading about and praying to the saints as their best friends, they will have no shortage of good role models. If your teens are not accustomed to reading about saints, it is not too late to start. Find an exciting book about St. Sebastian, St. Ignatius Loyola, or another “manly” saint for your son. Your daughter might like reading about one of the many intel-

ligent, independent women saints, such as St. Catherine of Siena or St. Teresa of Avila.

Music has a profound impact on the way teens think and act. Many songs have objectionable lyrics. If your teens are highly discerning, you may not need to limit their choice of music, but work on creating a Christian environment. This does not mean that you must forbid all music but Gregorian chant and overtly Christian bands. Classical music has been shown to stimulate intellectual development even in infants, so consider playing classical music as background music during some lessons.

The Internet has many positive uses in the homeschool. It is a powerful tool for research. Many English, math, and science tutorials are available for free. As every parent is aware, however, there is also much to be avoided on the Internet. Pornography is so prevalent that a child or teen can accidentally stumble across it. To limit the dangers of pornography, keep your teen’s computer in the living room or any room of the house that gets a lot of traffic. Many “historical” resources, online or in print, contain falsehoods and half-truths, especially when referring to the Catholic Church.

Always remember: the duty of parents is to provide for their children, both materially and spiritually. The family is the domestic church, the place where saints are born. With prayer, discipline, and perseverance, you can help your teens in their walk of faith.

COLLEGE PREP

MAKING THE BREAK

by Bob Wiesner

Suddenly it hits you: within a very few weeks, for the first time in your life, you are going to be more or less on your own, away from your family and in a totally new and unfamiliar situation. The normal reaction is a curious mixture of exhilaration and terror. Just how does one survive life without immediate family support?

Most colleges are all too familiar with various forms of emotional meltdown on the part of homesick students. Very often, major changes in life situations do bring about a difficult period of adjustment. But there are ways to mitigate the effects and maintain dignity and sanity.

First, immediately contact the Catholic chaplain and become familiar with the programs offered by the Church on the campus. Without spiritual support, you will be certain to flounder in short order. Use the Catholic presence as a means to find plenty of like-minded and spiritually compatible friends.

Second, stay busy. Put lots of time and effort into your studies, of course, but also make certain that you take advantage of extracurricular sports and entertainment. Leave yourself little time to realize how much you miss your family.

Third, stay in contact with your family! Even if they are hundreds of miles away, there are several interesting modern inventions called the telephone, email, post office and Facebook which allow for easy access to virtually anyone. When loneliness starts to rear its ugly head, give a ring to younger sis or Mom and Dad. They will be delighted to hear from you.

THE FATHER'S ROLE

7 Tips to Improve Your Homeschooling This Year

BY JOHN CLARK

At the beginning of every school year, I make a little personal checklist as to how I can improve homeschooling in the upcoming year. I don't always stick to the lists as well as I'd like, but I try. With the upcoming year approaching, just for fun, I'll share my list with you.

1) Give the teacher an apple.

Instead of being homeschooling mothers, if our wives were teachers in school, they would receive paychecks as a tangible sign of accomplishment. I feel bad that Lisa doesn't get a paycheck, but I have an idea. This year, when our children achieve academic successes, Lisa's getting prizes. I'm not kidding.

2) Go on more field trips as a family.

I'm not sure who invented field trips, but they tend to make an impact. For instance, when I was growing up, my mom used to take me and my brothers to Richmond to petition the state government for favorable homeschooling laws. That was our civics field trip; a few years later, I majored in Political Science. Instead of making field trips a once-in-a-while thing, we're going to do one or two field trips per month. And Daddy's coming along.

3) Help our children become better writers.

Partially due to influences such as the blogosphere, the level of writing in America has hit an all-time low. Therefore, I'm going to spend a few hours every week helping my children become better writers. Looking back, I think that one of the reasons that I love writing is that I was first published at the age of 10. It was a small Christian magazine, and I don't know how many people read it, but seeing

my name in print at age 10 seemed pretty cool. So my goal for this year is to help Demetrius (16), Tarcisius (14), and Philomena (12) each see their own article published in a magazine.

4) Help our children with public speaking.

I am currently reading John Shosky's book, *Speaking to Lead: How to Make Speeches that Make a Difference*. Shosky claims that 99% of speeches are basically worthless and accomplish nothing. Therefore, I am going to design a speaking class for our children. By the end of the year, the older homeschooled children will know how to write and deliver a speech -- a good speech.

5) Go to the library once a week.

Over the years, Lisa and I have had times we have gone to the library more than others, but one thing is for sure: the more we take them, the more they read. So this year, I am committing to having a weekly library night, in which we will take anyone and everyone who wants to go, to pick new books to read for the week.

6) Read books together.

For much of the homeschooling process, when my children are reading novels, they will tell me about the book, but I don't usually remember too many specifics about the book because it is usually something that I have read years before. So this year, I will read along with them some classic novels that I have not yet read. And it should be a lot of fun for both the children and myself to talk about the books together as we read them. (Now I have to make another list of books to read with the kids. Feel free to email ideas for reading, but please



note, I'm not reading anything by Emily Bronte or Jane Austen. I'm a guy.)

7) Spend more time coloring with my little children.

Author Robert Fulghum has written a considerable amount about the joy of coloring with Crayolas. I agree. In *All I Really Need to Know I Learned in Kindergarten*, Fulghum writes: "It's harder to talk about, but what I really, really, really want for Christmas is just this: I want to be 5 years old again for an hour. I want to laugh a lot and cry a lot. I want to be picked up and rocked to sleep in someone's arms, and carried up to bed just one more time. I know what I really want for Christmas: I want my childhood back." Maybe Fulghum understood something that ought to dawn on every parent: nothing makes you feel five years old again more than coloring with your five-year-old. And the little children love to know that you're helping them also with their "work".

There you have it. Seven tips for making this homeschooling year better than the last. As the year goes by, I'll let you know how I'm doing.



John Clark, a Christendom College graduate, holds a degree in Political Science and Economics. He is a popular writer and speaker at family and homeschooling conferences.

ROE VS. WADE

and the REPUBLIC

BY FR. MARK PILON



The decision of the Supreme Court on January 22, 1973 was a tragedy not only for unborn children who would die by the tens of millions over the next 40 years but also for the Republic which these men had a special obligation to defend in their capacity as judges. When they decided to reinterpret the Constitution to establish a right that no one had recognized for the first 200 years of this Republic, the right to kill unborn children, little did they know that they were really sounding the death knell of the Republic itself.

St. Augustine, in the second book of his masterwork, *The City of God*, bemoans the self-destruction of the great Roman city-empire and civilization that he loved so dearly. But he defends the Christian religion against the charge that it undermined the Roman state; he argues powerfully that what brought down the Roman civilization was the decline of morality among the Roman people and their leaders, and he traced this decline in large part to the influence of their devotees to the pagan gods who could do nothing to teach them true morality but did a great deal to encourage immorality in the very worship and honoring of the gods themselves.

Augustine cites Rome's own great men to defend his thesis that the depravity of Roman morals is what undermined the order and stability of the Roman state itself. He cites, in particular, the great Cicero who decried the destruction of the ancient moral culture of Rome, not perfect in itself to be sure, but far superior to what had taken its place in later times. In one section, Augustine quotes Cicero, himself quoting from the poet Ennius, in which Ennius wrote that "Rome's severe morality and her citizens are her safeguard." "This verse," says Cicero, "seems to me to have all the sententious truthfulness of an oracle." In Cicero's opinion, it was, as Ennius held, the "severe morality" of ancient Rome that safeguarded the citizenry and thus safeguarded the

republic itself. Augustine agreed totally.

But by the time of Cicero (106BC – 43 BC), things were already in severe decline and it all came tumbling down in the time of Augustine. He quotes Cicero once again;

"For what survives of that primitive morality which the poet called Rome's safeguard? It is so obsolete and forgotten, that, far from practicing it, one does not even know it. And of the citizens, what shall I say? Morality has perished through poverty of great men; a poverty for which we must not only assign a reason, but for the guilt of which we must answer as criminals charged with a capital crime. For it is through our vices, and not by any mishap, that we retain only the name of a republic, and have long since lost the reality."

How familiar all this is in our own day. Cicero bemoaned the loss of the ancient moral culture which was so "obsolete and forgotten" that his contemporaries did not even know it. Indeed Sallust, another great Roman orator and historian, (86 BC – 35 BC), is quoted by Augustine, in addition to Cicero, as a powerful witness to this devastating situation. Sallust charges that the morals of the citizens by his time had become "utterly wicked and profligate." These were not the charges of Christians who did not yet exist as such, but of noble Romans.

Does all this not sound a lot like the moral culture of a growing majority of our citizens, especially in the centers of "learning" today? Likewise very contemporary is how Cicero speaks about a central cause of this moral decline and pestilence: "Morality has perished through poverty of great men." He means the poverty of great leaders who also serve as moral examples to the republic's citizens. Our media and too many citizens today blindly dismiss the personal immorality of our leaders as inconsequen-

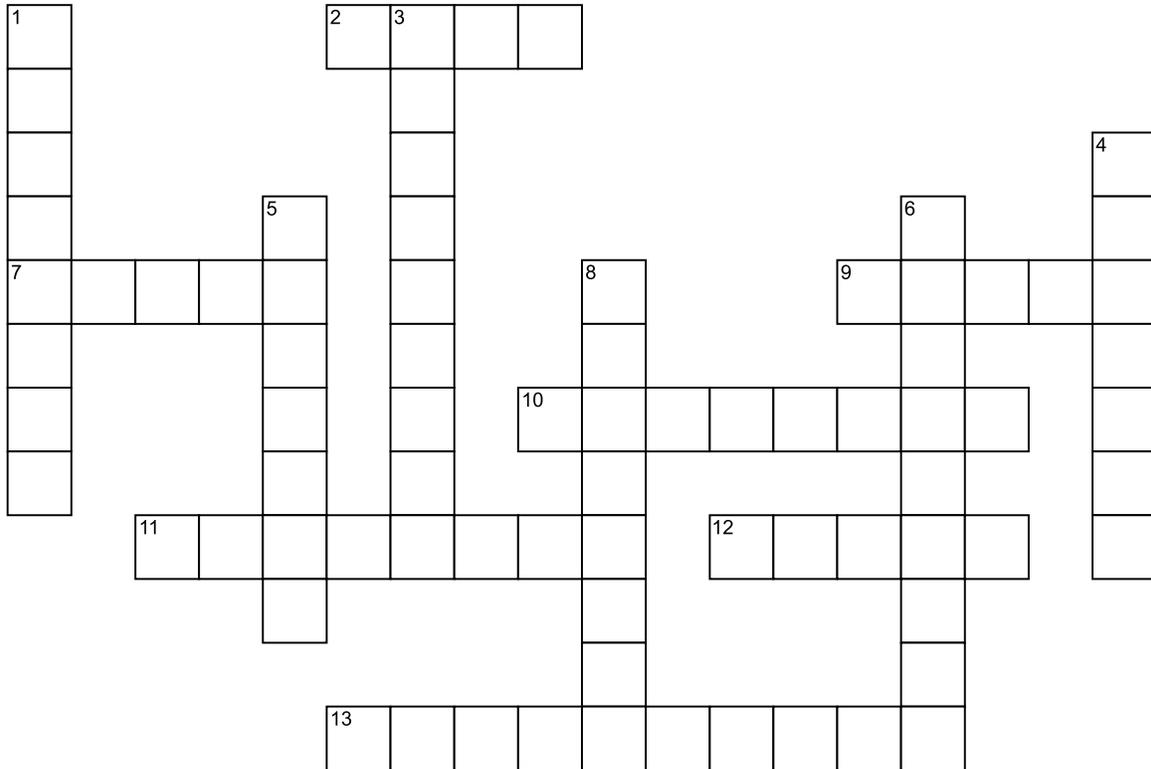
tial so long as they do our political bidding, as if moral leadership had nothing to with political leadership and the common good and the very survival of the state.

Then comes the conclusion of Cicero, and Augustine obviously: "For it is through our vices, and not by any mishap, that we retain only the name of a republic, and have long since lost the reality." That is the judgment on our own age as well. On January 22, 1973, the Supreme Court sounded the death knell of the American experiment. There is no worse immorality than the sanctioning and carrying out of the death of innocent children. The terrible and rapid decline of our society's general morals was inevitable once that line was crossed by the moral poverty of our leaders. And now we, like the Rome of Cicero, have a real poverty of leaders who can offer any moral example and leadership to help us out of this mess.

Is there no hope then? Yes, of course; Rome had hope after Cicero and Sallust since Christianity was about to be born and enter into Roman history. But by the time of Augustine, it was truly bereft of hope. Christ, and his moral teaching, had never taken full hold in the Roman world, and so that civilization began a slow death that terminated in the time of Augustine. We too may have a chance to reverse course, but not simply by employing political means, which in this case have a limited efficacy. The devil has too much influence in that arena for a clean sweep. It's the Gospel alone that can reverse this course and save a dying political order, and its people, from ever greater disasters.

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<http://littlemoretracts.wordpress.com/2013/01/22/roe-v-wade-and-the-republic/>

The Cardinal and Theological Virtues



ACROSS

- 2 The theological virtue by which we firmly trust that God will give us eternal happiness and the means to obtain it
- 7 Veracity is the moral virtue that disposes us to tell the ____.
- 9 Liberality is the moral virtue that disposes us rightly to use worldly ____.
- 10 The moral virtue that disposes us to acknowledge our limitations
- 11 The moral virtue that disposes us to bear up under trials and difficulties
- 12 The theological virtue by which we firmly believe all the truths God has revealed
- 13 The cardinal virtue that disposes us to control our desires and to use rightly the things which please our senses

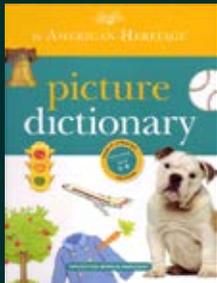
DOWN

- 1 The moral virtue that disposes us to be pure in soul and body
- 3 The moral virtue that disposes us to do the will of our superiors
- 4 The cardinal virtue that disposes us to give everyone what belongs to him
- 5 The theological virtue by which we love God above all things for His own sake, and our neighbor as ourselves for the love of God
- 6 The cardinal virtue that disposes us to do what is good in spite of any difficulty
- 8 The cardinal virtue that disposes us in all circumstances to form right judgments about what we must do or not do

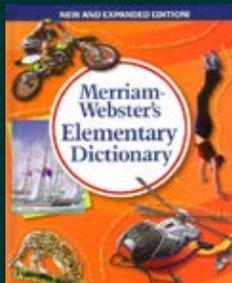
SOLUTIONS: charity, chastity, faith, fortitude, goods, hope, humility, justice, obedience, patience, prudence, temperance, truth.

Getting Ready for School

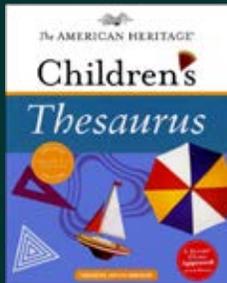
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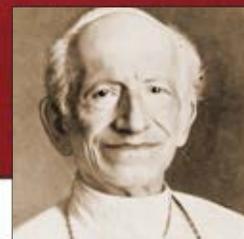
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The Family: Cradle of Civil Society

This is a suitable moment for us to exhort especially heads of families to govern their households according to these precepts, and to educate their children from their earliest years. The family may be regarded as the cradle of civil society, and it is in great measure within the circle of family life that the destiny of the State is fostered.

Consequently, they who would break away from Christian discipline are working to corrupt family life, and to destroy it utterly, root and branch. From such an unholy purpose, they are not deterred by the fact that they are inflicting a cruel outrage on parents, who have the right from nature to educate those whom they begot, a right to which is joined the duty of harmonizing instruction and education with the end [purpose] for which they were given their children by the goodness of God.

It is then incumbent upon parents to make every effort to resist attacks on this point and to vindicate at any cost the right to direct the education of their offspring in a Christian manner; and first and foremost, to keep them away from schools where there is risk of their being imbued with the poison of impiety.

Where the right education of youth is concerned, no amount of trouble and labor is too much. . . . However, let everyone be firmly convinced, first of all, that the minds of children are best trained above all by the teaching they receive at home. If in their growing years, they find in their homes the rule of an upright life, and the exercise of Christian virtue, the salvation of society will be in great part assured.

Sapientiae Christianae, Pope Leo XIII