

# Seton MAGAZINE

Under the Magisterium of the Catholic Church

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The Kerbis family portrait



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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.

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.



# LETTER FROM THE DIRECTOR



## Our Lady of Lourdes

BY DR. MARY KAY CLARK

On February 11, 1858, the Blessed Mother appeared to Bernadette Soubirous in Lourdes, France, when Bernadette was only fourteen years old. The “lady” appeared to be only about sixteen, wearing a white veil and a white gown with a blue sash. She carried a large rosary with white beads on a golden chain. She had a golden rose on each of her bare feet. The Blessed Mother appeared to Bernadette eighteen times.

The Virgin Mary’s explicit message to the faithful through Bernadette was to “pray and do penance for the conversion of the world” and to have a chapel built at the site of the apparition so it could be a center of pilgrimage. The Blessed Mother directed Bernadette to dig in the ground and, ultimately, a miraculous spring bubbled up from the ground. Immediately, there were many cures from the water. Eventually, a shrine was built as the Blessed Mother had asked, and miraculous water from the spring has cured thousands of people, some with terminal afflictions.

The apparitions at Lourdes have other, more implicit messages from God to the world—a world that has become increasingly secularized from the nineteenth century to this day. Western societies have increasingly ignored God’s Word and their own foundations in the Judeo-Christian culture. While the science of the conception of a human being was not well understood until the nineteenth century, the Bible, ancient Israel, Jews loyal to the Mosaic Law, and all Christian societies had always implied or explicitly taught that killing an unborn

child is a serious sin and crime. The apparitions to Bernadette came at a time when Christian nations were beginning to accept the pagan practice of abortion while, ironically, science in the nineteenth century was showing that a new and unique human being comes into existence at conception, not at a later time in the mother’s womb.

Several important truths are implicit in Mary’s words identifying herself: “I am the Immaculate Conception”. These truths include the following:

(i) Original sin exists and no merely human arrangement without God can fundamentally improve things.

(ii) A world of sin and death was never meant to be: the sinlessness of Mary shows both the sinless world that existed before the Fall and the sinless world of Heaven that is restored to all the faithful through the Incarnation and Paschal Mystery of Our Lord Jesus Christ.

(iii) A human being is a person endowed with an immortal soul and inviolate dignity at conception, not at some later time in the womb or only at birth.

(iv) The Church has the power to infallibly declare truths of Revelation from God. Pope Pius IX had infallibly declared the Im-

maculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary as a truth revealed by God, or a dogma of the Catholic Faith, just a few years before the apparitions on December 8, 1854.

Other aspects of the apparitions at Lourdes remind the faithful of other important truths:

(i) The apparition itself and the cures that result from the miraculous spring remind the world that God does intervene in the world and performs miracles beyond the laws of science.

(ii) Mary’s call for a chapel and for processions remind man that worship of God is his highest activity on Earth.

*O Ever Immaculate Virgin, Mother of Mercy, Health of the Sick, Refuge of Sinners, Comforter of the Afflicted, you know our wants, our troubles, our sufferings. Look with mercy on us.*

*By appearing in the Grotto of Lourdes, Immaculate Mother, you were pleased to make it a privileged sanctuary, from which you dispense your favors. Many sufferers have obtained the cure of their infirmities, both spiritual and corporal. We come, therefore, with complete confidence to implore your maternal intercession. Obtain, O loving Mother, the grant of our requests. Through gratitude for your favors, we will endeavor to imitate your virtues that we may one day share your glory.*

Petitions to The Immaculate Conception can be placed online at <http://en.lourdes-france.org/>. Holy water from Lourdes is available at The Lourdes Bureau, Marist Fathers, 698 Beacon Street, Boston, MA 02215.



Dr. Mary Kay 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: A Handbook for Parents*.



# your Questions ANSWERED

BY DR. MARY KAY CLARK

## **Is it necessary to teach so many subjects every day?**

Parents need to make the final decision about the importance of every subject. We believe that certain subjects should be taught every day, such as religion, math, English grammar and composition, phonics and reading comprehension. History and science are a close second, but for the lower grades, could be done on the weekends, or in the evenings, perhaps with Dad. Spelling and vocabulary could be done only a couple of times a week, but if your child is weak in these areas, you should try for more days a week. Most states require art and music at least. Physical education does not need to be structured, but it is important for children to get plenty of fresh air and exercise every day.

If possible, try to have history, science, spelling, and vocabulary every day, even if only for 20 minutes per day. These subjects often can be “taught” by an older sibling if necessary. A grandparent or another relative might like to come once a week, or more often, to help out on a subject or two.

## **I like a regular schedule for the home schooling “classes” but some of my friends like to have the children work on whatever topic of interest comes up.**

The fact is that things get done when they are scheduled. Your friends take their daughter to ballet class when the teacher schedules it, and not when your daughter feels like going. The soccer coach insists that the boys show up at a certain time so all the players will be present at the games and practices.

Getting things done means scheduling a time for things to get done. If we want to be sure our children are learning their math, we need to schedule a math class every day. In academics, students will forget what they learned if they don’t review it often.

If there is not a daily schedule of study, meals, chores, getting up and going to bed,

home life becomes hectic and frustrating for everyone. An individual might decide to live an unstructured kind of life, but a family with several children cannot thrive without at least basic structure.

Good health demands planned meals, planned exercise, and planned cleaning of clothes and cleaning of the house. Planned time for housework and study and hobbies and music lessons make accomplishments possible. Experience has shown that people, especially children, like to know what to expect and when to expect lessons or sports or outside activities. Children need to know what is expected of them and when they should be prepared for the daily lessons or activities. Such mental and physical preparation is likely to produce success.

## **I would like to organize my home better to accommodate our daily homeschooling, but I am frustrated about how to begin.**

If you know other homeschooling families, ask around and see if any feel confident about the organization in their home. Ask if you could visit and see how they have accommodated the homeschooling activities. While you would not likely copy their exact ideas, they should give you ideas.

Many families have a place where Mom does active teaching, while the other children are in another room, either at their own desk or at a table in the dining room or a family room. It is important that you either can see all the children or can be aware of what the children are doing. Televisions and computers need to be kept out of their reach unless you give permission.

It is important to have each child’s materials gathered together in one location so things can be found quickly and easily. Some families use bookcases, while oth-

ers use large plastic containers, available at K-mart and similar stores. Most families have found that homeschooling is easier and more efficient if you have less furniture and if each piece of furniture has its permanent safe place. Many homes have too much furniture which needs to be cleaned, or moved to clean behind or under it. Becoming detached from excessive material things isn’t only good spiritually; it also makes the home run more smoothly.

It is also important to a well-maintained home to keep appliances working. You need to keep the stove, refrigerator, toilets, and sinks working properly. It is also important to have a good dishwasher, garbage disposal, washing machine, and dryer. These time-saving appliances are essential to free up your day for teaching several children. If you have a choice between saving a little money versus saving a lot of time, you’re almost always better off saving the time.

*Reading biographies of great Catholic thinkers and great political thinkers can be the first step in creating a better society, for which we are in great need.*

## **What do you consider the most important subject to teach every day?**

The most important subject is religion. We are homeschooling because we want to teach Catholic values and the Catholic Faith to our children. Most homeschooling families in this country are Christian families who see that the public schools have completely eliminated religion from their classrooms. America was founded on religious principles, but with the intense movement to eliminate religion from our country, from our culture, from our schools, and from our children, we must take take seriously the responsibility to teach the Faith to our children.

The second most important subject

to teach is reading, first phonics, then literature. There is an abundance of good literature available, if not in print, then in electronic format, available either for free on the Internet or for a small fee on iPad or Kindle. Before television and computers, children were reading a few hours every day, which developed their intellect and ability to consider ideas.

One of the best kinds of reading is biographies of great inventors, preferably biographies which include the inventor's process of thinking which led to the inventions. This stimulates the thinking process and should help our young people increase their analytical skills in a variety of areas. Reading biographies of great Catholic thinkers and great political thinkers can be the first step in creating a better society, for which we are in great need.

### **My husband has lost his job and I don't know how I can continue home schooling.**

There is no doubt that the current economic situation has severely impacted many families. But, your children's education is of the utmost importance. If you think homeschooling is best for them, then somehow a way must be found to keep going.

Have you tried grandparents, uncles and aunts, other relatives, friends, priests, former homeschooling parents, and others who might help so that you can continue homeschooling? The Knights of Columbus help families in need, especially in regard to Catholic education. Some local and state homeschooling organizations receive money from HSLDA and other organizations to help homeschooling families in need. Some older families who are no longer home schooling may be interested in helping other families in some way; contact your local and state homeschooling organizations and support groups.

In cases in which both parents must work, homeschooling schedules will need to be adjusted, or new arrangements made. Since many families are in the same predicament, you may be able to get together with other homeschooling families to set up up some group schooling. Group classes allow some parents to work while others teach.

Many people realize the importance to our communities of teaching Catholic values to future citizens. Remember, you are not asking for yourself but for the future of the community. Everyone has a vested interest in Catholic-educated future citizens.

### **Do you recommend breaks during the school year?**

Parents need to decide what is best for their family. Obviously, if a baby is due during the year, Mom needs to plan for some time off. Perhaps the school year could start a couple of weeks early to plan for time off later. Some families start earlier, in August, sometimes even partial days, to plan for two weeks at Christmas, or two weeks at Easter. Some families do half-days throughout the summer, except for a two-week vacation. Some parents have children read for their books reports while on vacation. Some families take a week off at the end of each quarter. Homeschooling can adjust to the family schedule and family needs, which shows the children how Catholic education is a part of daily life, no matter when or where.

### **My high school student would like to take a part-time job, as well as take a class at the local community college. I am reluctant about it.**

The months and years go by quickly, and some things need to be done in certain years. If the high school courses are not completed by the time your student is 18, it would take monumental persuasion and effort to make him continue to take the high school courses at a later age. Our society pressures young people to be finished with high school by a certain age and, as much as we like to emphasize the importance of a quality education, the pressure to just finish is certainly there.

If the course at the local community college is one that Seton can accept, then he is continuing on track to finish his high school. A part-time job would be beneficial only if he is obtaining training in an area in which he intends to make his life work. Otherwise, we recommend he lets that go while he concentrates on his high school courses.

Some students take a year off after high school to work a full-time job or two part-time jobs to make money to start college. This is a better idea than having a part-time job interfere with high school study time and graduation.



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Dear families,

As you probably know, Seton Home Study School is in the process of renewing our accreditation. Surveys of students and families—some of which we have already done—are an extremely important factor in renewing accreditation.

Seton's primary accreditation review will come this fall, so we will be conducting a series of surveys throughout this year. Our accreditation agency, AdvancED, has set a survey participation goal for us of 40%. Last year's surveys achieved participation of slightly above 20%. That means, as good as the participation was last year, it needs to be even better this year.

Of course, our true goal is a 100% participation rate, because we know that every family has important information to tell us. No other family is exactly like your family, so no other family's participation can replace yours. As we head into the next round of surveys, please seriously consider participating. We're all in this together!

God bless all of our families and all of our homeschooling endeavors.

*Mary Kay Clark*



# Joy in the Heart

by Heather Kerbis

A large homeschooling family seems natural to us now, but in the beginning, homeschooling was not on our radar. We were married relatively young, in our very early 20s, and assumed our children would go to the classroom for education. My husband Paul was educated in public elementary school and graduated from Catholic high school. I graduated from public school. Thus, homeschooling was neither a quick nor an easy choice for us. However, just as we cannot imagine our family of eight children being any smaller, we also cannot imagine a life without homeschooling.

## Give it a Try

The decision to homeschool was complex. Paul worried about whether the children would be educated well, have friends, play athletics, etc. On the other hand, I had several homeschooling friends and saw how it operated firsthand. Since he and I were on different sides of the fence, so to speak, we agreed to start out on a trial basis, taking one year at a time. Neither Paul nor

I felt boxed into a decision. If it worked out the first year, we would continue. If it did not, we would enroll them in school and proceed as so many families do.

One of Paul's teachers from his high school years, a priest, really encouraged us both to homeschool. He observed large numbers of homeschooling families and was very impressed with their gracious children and how these homeschoolers interacted with all ages. He told us how older children spoke with adults easily and yet knew how to include little ones in their outdoor games after church dinners. There were no fights or nervous parents worried about their children's safety. He also spoke of how well-educated the older ones proved to be. His stories and encouragement helped provide the confidence we needed to make the attempt.

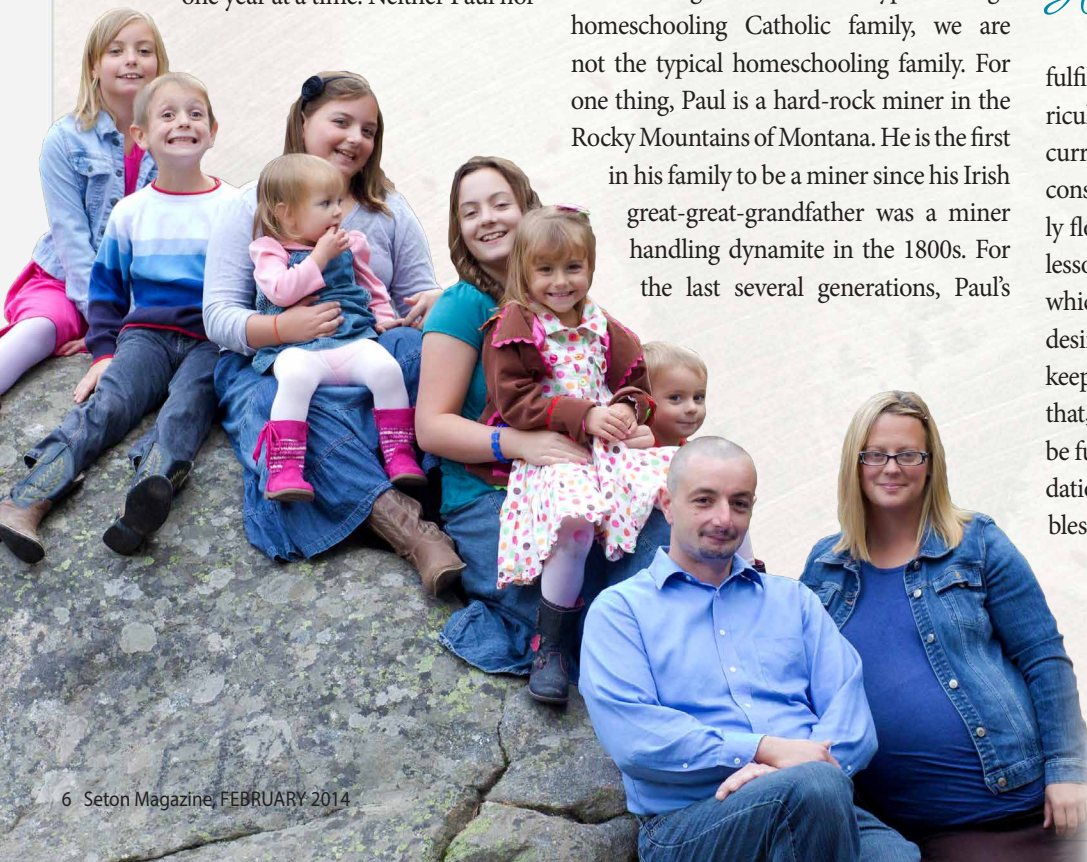
Although we are the "typical" large homeschooling Catholic family, we are not the typical homeschooling family. For one thing, Paul is a hard-rock miner in the Rocky Mountains of Montana. He is the first in his family to be a miner since his Irish great-great-grandfather was a miner handling dynamite in the 1800s. For the last several generations, Paul's

family farmed in Iowa and Missouri--the heartland of America. Fortunes changed for his farming family at the turn of this century, as it did for thousands of farmers all over, so he searched for a job which would be more secure and offer a comfortable income. His work entails mining palladium, the mineral used in catalytic converters to improve air quality from automobile exhaust. As a miner, his work schedule is not typical of most working fathers either. He moves back and forth between day and night shifts with four days on and four days off. An enormous homeschooling benefit for us is that our children spend more quality time with their dad than they would if they attended a school. Paul also has a teaching gift as the math and science teacher. He has a marvelous way of explaining difficult concepts, which is not as strong in my teaching gift.

## How We Work

Our goal is balance in all things. To fulfill this balance, we use the Seton curriculum for our academic study. This curriculum offers us significant study in a consecutive manner. One year's study easily flows into the following year's grade. The lessons are at a very strong scholastic level, which is what my husband and I strongly desire. Seton makes it much easier for us to keep on track and increases my confidence that, when they graduate, our children will be fully educated. A good educational foundation on which they can build is such a blessing.

As Catholics, we attend Mass and practice daily prayers as a family: before meals, evening Rosary, prayers of petition, prayers to saints. We also have special devotions to St. Therese



the Little Flower, and the Infant of Prague, especially through His Nine Hour Novena. Seton's use of Catholic teaching effortlessly woven throughout the textbooks supports us in our faith. The tension brought on by too many diverse influences in children's lives is eliminated through homeschooling and Seton's Catholic emphasis from beginning to end. Stunning, classic, Catholic art from ages past is also offered to help them learn the basic Catholic tenets. Even young non-readers learn through pictures, and topics throughout grade school and high school are reinforced with pictures.

We have learned that organization and consistency is the key to a happy homeschool day. School starts around 9:00 AM, following prayers, breakfast, and completed chores. The independent learners begin where they left off with occasional instruction, while the younger ones sit at the table with an individual instructional approach. It is heartwarming to watch the ones not yet ready for preschool climb up on a chair at the table and include themselves with things like coloring, even though they hardly know how to hold a crayon. By the time they are in kindergarten, they already have a wide knowledge base. I am amazed by the way our own children reveal humanity's ingrained desire to learn. Really, all we have to do is open the doors for them.

Studies are finished according to the individual child's learning strengths and weaknesses, but most are finished by early afternoon. Each day seems to have a different focus: music lessons one day, soccer practice another. Through the local homeschool co-op, the children have PE once a week—canoeing, flag football, parachute games, and the list goes on. We are a rather active family with backyard swimming in the summer, jogging and bicycling all

year, and hiking in the mountains most of the year. Several children participate in 2k and 3k runs held during local celebrations. We have also become organic gardeners with much of the backyard now a garden. Different children plant little personal garden plots, and learn so much about botany. There is gardening/science excitement every day in the summer; they also love garden snacking. Of course, we can and do freeze the bounty, learning about germs, cleanliness, and consequences of not paying attention to detail. The children take lessons in piano, flute, violin, fiddle, and cello. Two of the children are involved in a children's orchestra that puts on two concerts a year; four are involved in a summer fiddle club with a street concert on July 4th and at the local farmer's market; all participate in the usual recitals that go along with all those instruments. Our family enjoys a variety of activities in an effort to become well-rounded citizens of our Church and our community.

### *A Good Bubble*

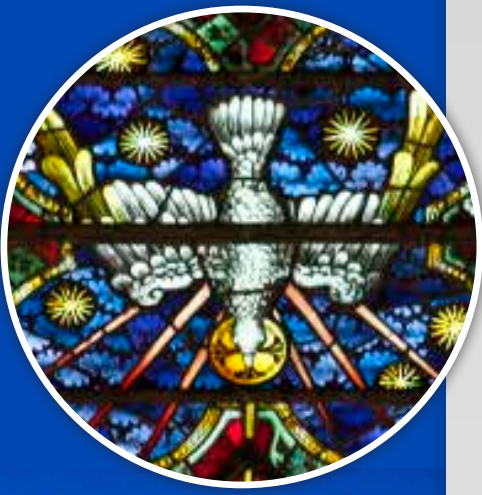
Homeschooling allows us to observe our children's many talents—perhaps my greatest joy is seeing how some of my children are natural-born teachers. While I am teaching one student, others automatically help those who need something explained to them. It inspires me to see how love for one another drives them to help. Their teaching activity fulfills that old adage: "to learn something well, teach it." Hearing their conversations, I know they truly understand and retain concepts and subjects that were previously taught. As parents, this is a wonderful reward and encouragement for our time and effort!

We truly like the "bubble" which homeschooling creates for our children. As almost everyone knows, much of our soci-

ety seems to rudely intrude into the family—tugging a child one way, pushing another child a different way, spinning the family in circles—all of which increases tension within the family. The homeschool 'bubble' insulates children from much of that tension so that, as they grow they have the opportunity to know and be true to themselves. Putting children on an educational "conveyor belt" for 12 years of their lives is not the ideal, and it truly hinders them from growing into the whole persons God intended them to be.

Of course, the end result of the experiment we began so many years ago is that we discovered homeschooling works out wonderfully! Both Paul and I have been enthusiastically on the same side of the fence for several years now, and together, we've never looked back. In this time of homeschooling, we have become an extremely close family, and know for a fact that the homeschooling itself has been instrumental in generating this close bond. Creating confidence and trust between siblings through quality time together is a by-product of homeschooling, and it means everything in the world to me!





# Catholic, Root and Branch



We are sometimes asked why Seton's materials are so saturated with Catholic content. There are a myriad of reasons, but first and foremost, we fill our curriculum with Catholic content because we know that in God's plan, the purpose of education is not simply to learn facts, but to prepare souls—curious combinations of intellect and will—for eternity. Education, from this perspective, is a hugely important, yet delicate, task.

Children take what is available in their environment and make it part of themselves. If children grow in the nurturing soil of Catholic Truth, then that Truth will become part of them. If they grow in the arid soil of the secular world, then that aridity will become part of them.

Pope Pius XI said, *"It is necessary not only that religious instruction be given to the young at certain fixed times, but also that every other subject taught be permeated with Christian piety. If this is wanting, if this sacred atmosphere does not pervade and warm the hearts of masters and scholars alike, little good can be expected from any kind of learning, and considerable harm will often be the consequence."* Seton Home Study School seeks always to create in its curriculum that "sacred atmosphere ... permeated with Christian piety," of which the Holy Father spoke.

Scripture itself provides the basis for what we do at Seton Home Study School. In the Old Testament, we find the Jewish practice of wearing phylacteries—small scrolls containing sections of the Law—bound to their heads and arms (near the mind and heart), as a symbol of their remembrance of God's Word, their love for the things of God, and their submission to His Will (Ex. 13). In Deuteronomy we read, *"And these words which I command thee this day, shall be in thy heart: And thou shalt tell them to thy children, and thou shalt meditate upon them sitting in thy house, and walking on thy journey, sleeping and rising. And thou shalt bind them as a sign on thy hand, and they shall be and shall move between thy eyes. And thou shalt write them in the entry, and on the doors of thy house"* (Deut. 6:6-9).

Again, Proverbs tells us. *"My son, forget not my law, and let thy heart keep my commandments. For they shall add to thee length of days, and years of life and peace. Let not mercy and truth leave thee, put them about thy neck, and write them in the tables of thy heart: And thou shalt find grace and good understanding before God and men"* (Prov. 3:1-4). Although in Matthew's Gospel, Christ condemns the Pharisees for hypocritical wearing of phylacteries (Mt. 23), He never denies the principle upon which the practice was founded. It is good and desired by God that we should surround ourselves with the sacred, with the things of our Faith, with all that is true, holy, and lovely, as St. Paul put it to the Philippians (Phil. 4:8).

## Our Catholic Heritage

And, as Catholics, why would we want anything else? There is a wealth of culture in our Catholic heritage. In a certain sense, all the saints, all the Catholic art and architecture and stories, all the achievements of Catholics in history and science are our birthright. Together, they constitute a most remarkable gift to us from our Faith, that same Faith which inspired the creativity and genius of our predecessors. We should rejoice in these things, and want to know as much as we can about them because they are part of us and part of what our Faith has given to the world, not to mention the foundation upon which we can build our own faith-filled offerings to the contemporary age.

When a person really believes in something, is inspired by something, or loves something, he wants to share it with everyone around him. Just think of the countless love songs that have been written down through the ages. Half of the world's classical music was inspired by love, and every other popular song on the radio is a love song. When you truly love, you can't help but shout it from the rooftops.

In effect, that's exactly what all the Catholic artists, architects, and musicians of the past were doing. The glorious cathedral of Notre Dame de Chartres in France is a shout of the



faithful, proclaiming their love for God to the highest heavens. The musical settings of prayers and Mass parts of the Renaissance composers are filled with the tenderest melodies and richest harmonies, once again expressing the glories of the Creator and the gifts He has given His people. The saints in their virtues, the martyrs in their deaths, the theologians in their writings, all shout to the world of the truth and beauty of Catholicism because they overflowed with love for Christ and His Church. In our own small way here at Seton, we wish to become part of that witness to the world. We love the Faith. We love the Church. We know God is good, and we know His gifts are beyond compare. How could we do otherwise than share that magnificent truth everywhere possible?

## Knowing and Loving the Truth

On the other hand, in this day and age, it is as much a responsibility as it is a joy to spread the Faith and share the sacred in all we do. While Seton's textbooks and lesson plans proclaim the Good News, nearly every other influence in society today is sending out a message utterly and completely antithetical to the truths of the Faith. There is little Catholicism to be found in popular culture. The stores, the streets, the theaters, television programs, newspapers, and magazines are all opposed to Catholicism, either directly or indirectly. It is our responsibility to combat this attack on truth.

If a student were to receive a purely intellectual instruction in the Faith, he or she would know the Truths that the Catholic Church teaches. But there is a vast gulf between knowing the Truth and

loving the Truth, between knowing virtue and loving virtue. That is why great literature and stories of saints are so important. We can tell our children to be honest, but that will not make them want to be honest. We can tell our children to love others, but that will not make them want to love others. But if we tell them the story of a boy or girl who loved heroically, our children will want to be like that. Conversely, when they read stories about those who lack virtue, they will not want to be like them.

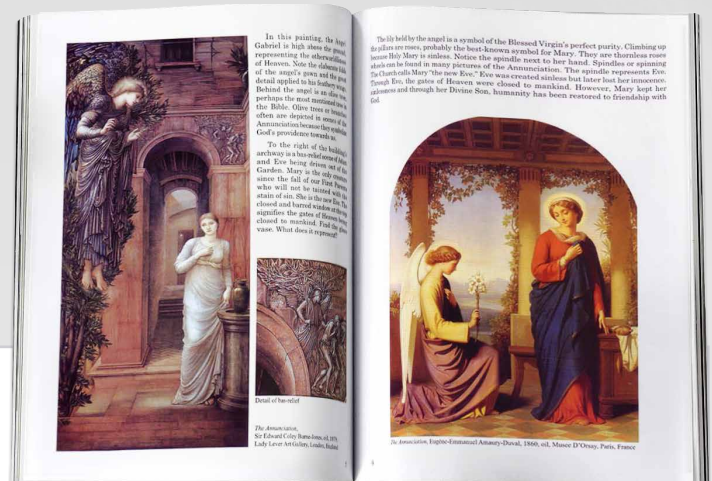
At Seton, we teach the doctrines of the Faith and the Ten Commandments. We tell stories of right and wrong and the triumph of good over evil. We put before our students the witness of men and women who knew what was right and had the courage to do it, who used God's grace and the inspiration of faith to make a difference in their societies. In short, we surround our students with Catholicism so that they will grow up to be well-formed, thoughtful, creative, proud, and confident Catholics who can make a difference in this world on their way to being with God in the next.

The four Ross children each said a Rosary a day for five days last week. How many Rosaries total did the Ross children say last week?

It has been said that there is no such thing as Catholic math. Sentences such as the above, often found in Seton's math word problems, show that you can have Catholic math. And you can have Catholic science, Catholic spelling, Catholic phonics, Catholic history, and—well, you get the idea.

Besides word problems, Seton brings a Catholic perspective to learning in several different ways:

- **ART** – Seton puts great Catholic art in most of our books. We not only use great paintings as cover art, but we also include many pictures of churches and cathedrals around the world. Great Catholic architecture shows that beauty in the service of God is a goal for Catholics always and everywhere.
- **HISTORY** – Seton's history books give a Catholic perspective to controversial historical questions, especially regarding questions upon which secular authors are often biased against the Church.



- **LITERATURE** – Truly great literature touches upon eternal themes, such as the nature of humanity, the meaning of life, and our responsibilities to each other. Catholicism, by giving a unique and substantive answer to these questions, has inspired numerous authors to create master works of literature.
- **SAINT BIOGRAPHIES** – In many grade levels, students read and write a book analysis of at least one saint biography per year. Beyond actual biographies, stories of saints are told in history and literature classes.
- **LESSON PLANS** – In those cases in which Seton has not produced its own books, and so must use secular books, the lesson plans we provide give a Catholic viewpoint. This Catholic perspective is especially important in areas of history, science, social studies, and economics, in which the teachings of the Catholic Faith have much to say about how we view the nature of the world.

# Flexible Schedules

Seton's mission is to provide materials to parents to teach their children what is necessary for Catholic children to be successful in this world and in the next world. Seton wants to help Catholic children to be leaders in their families and communities, as well as to reach their eternal reward.

Traditional schools may have the same goal, but classroom education poses a variety of problems. In a classroom situation, the children must learn the same material at the same time in the same manner. Some children cannot learn at the same pace or in the same manner as the majority in the classroom. Sometimes teachers, who have different students each year, are not aware of the best way for the majority in their classroom to learn. After their classroom schooling, young adults often struggle with learning on their own because it is so different from their 12 or 16 or 20 previous years of classroom schooling.

Former Seton students often write us letters thanking us for helping them to learn independently, to learn to be their own teachers, to learn to take responsibility for their education. Some former students write from college in their first year, telling us they help other students. Sometimes they write us in their last year of college, telling us that they were successful and made the Dean's List because of their independent study skills. Sometimes they write us such letters in graduate school; sometimes they write us when they start their first job.

We encourage parents to adjust the learning method and the time schedule to suit the needs of each child. Parents can work with the older students to work out a realistic and successful method and study schedule. Students can progress at their own rate or at the rate suggested in the lesson plans.

We homeschooling parents recognize differences among our children, including the way they learn, the best time of day for them to learn certain subjects, or the way they respond to certain educational activities. Seton gives parents and students the freedom to adjust the day-to-day schedule and adjust the learning techniques to meet the learning style, abilities, and needs of each student.

Last year, Seton surveyed our families to find out how the amount of time spent on schoolwork relates to success in homeschooling. We found that generally more time spent homeschooling means more success. However, there is a point at which the value of more time begins to go down. If this were charted on graph paper, the value of more time would go up steadily at first, but then begin to level off.

The important thing for parents is to find out what amount of time spent on schooling returns the most value. That is something which is different for every family, and indeed for every child. One child may be able to work on school for three hours a day, and another for five hours a day. The child who can do school for only three hours a day will not benefit much from working another two hours. Pushing a child beyond his or her capabilities will bring only frustration to both parent and child.

Seton's oft-repeated motto is: **Adjust the program to fit the child, not the child to the program.** Put another way, the lesson plans are your servant, not your master. They are meant to give you some structure, but you should not feel that your children must do every assignment every day.

As we parents sometimes struggle with arranging the day-to-day schedule, we must keep in mind that our first priority is the eternal salvation of our children. We also want to teach our children the skills they need to go out in the world and change laws or attitudes to reflect the teachings of Jesus Christ.

Flexibility in the schedule and method is important, but we should not be so flexible that we skip teaching religion. When teaching religion, the lesson plans offer day-to-day assignments, but these can be oral or written, depending on the student's ability to retain the information. The younger children have a text-workbook as well, which helps younger students to remember what they learn by writing out specific answers.

After religion, the next most important subjects are phonics and reading, because these courses determine how successful students will be in later studies. These courses for beginning readers are so essential for



all future learning that parents need to take whatever time is necessary to make sure their children learn phonics rules and the application of phonics rules. Reading to young children can inspire them to want to learn to read for themselves.

Whenever you teach a lesson in phonics, be sure to follow it up with a reading lesson, moving your finger along the lines as you or your child reads. Continually point out the word examples in the sentences which relate to the latest phonics rules, until the phonics concepts become automatic in your child's reading.

After religion and reading, the next most important subject is math. It is important that your children do their math regularly, so that the concepts are retained. However, you can cut down the time you spend on math by not having your student work as many problems. For example, if a workbook page has 20 problems, you can have your child work out all the even-numbered problems. If your child works all those problems correctly, there may be no need to work the other problems.

The subjects other than religion, reading, and math are somewhat less important, and you can skip these on days when you don't have enough time to do everything. In the early years, first through fourth or fifth grade, approach science and history as reading exercises. Don't worry too much about your child remembering specific science details or historical dates as much as understanding what he or she is reading at the time. Children are more likely to remember details if they are understanding full-sentence concepts. You will find out as your child studies the same topics in later grades, that the lessons read about in the early years turn out to be lessons remembered.

# 2014 Conferences

The following is a list of Catholic homeschooling conferences where Seton will offer materials for preview and sale, as well as a \$30-per-child enrollment discount (grades 1-12)

For additional conferences, venues, vendors, and contact information, visit:

[www.setonhome.org/conferences](http://www.setonhome.org/conferences)

## **TN, Nashville - March 14, 2014 (Fri.)**

IHM Tennessee Homeschool & Parent Conference  
Aquinas College

## **NY, Long Island - March 21, 2014 (Fri.)**

IHM Long Island Homeschool & Parent Conference

## **LA, Covington - March 29, 2014 (Sat.)**

Roman Catholic Homeschool Association of Louisiana  
"Catholic Homeschooling: A Way of Life"

## **FL, Jacksonville - April 3, 2014 (Thurs.)**

IHM Jacksonville Homeschool & Parent Conference

## **GA, Atlanta**

### **April 10-11, 2014 (Thurs.-Fri.)**

IHM Georgia Homeschool & Parent Conference

## **MO, St. Louis**

### **April 11-12, 2014 (Fri.-Sat.)**

2014 St. Louis Catholic Homeschool Conference

## **AZ, Phoenix - April 12, 2014 (Sat.)**

2014 Arizona Catholic Homeschool Conference

## **TX, Houston**

### **April 25-26, 2014 (Fri.-Sat.)**

IHM Houston Homeschool & Parent Conference

## **CA, Santa Clara**

### **April 25-26, 2014 (Fri.-Sat.)**

NCCHC

(Northern California Catholic Homeschooling Conference)

## **WI, Milwaukee - May 2, 2014 (Fri.)**

IHM Wisconsin Homeschool & Parent Conference

## **IN, Indianapolis**

### **May 2-3, 2014 (Fri.-Sat.)**

2014 Quo Vadis Catholic Homeschool Conference

## **MD, Mt. Airy**

### **May 16-17, 2014 (Fri.-Sat.)**

IHM Maryland Homeschool & Parent Conference

## **NC, Charlotte**

### **May 23-24, 2014 (Fri.-Sat.)**

IHM Carolina Homeschool & Parent Conference

## **NJ, Berlin - May 24, 2014 (Sat.)**

15th Annual CHAPLET Catholic Homeschool Conference



## 2014 New GPA System

Over the years, Seton has tried several different methods to transform a student's official 100-point Seton grade point average (GPA) into a 4-point GPA. The 4-point scale was designed to convert letter grades into a number so that grades could be averaged. Since Seton always gives quarter and final grades as numbers on a 100-point scale, a 4-point average is like trying to put the proverbial square peg in the round hole.

There is no one correct way of converting from 100-point to 4-point, and each possible method seems to be good for some students but bad for others. Also, each of the conversion methods we tried gave some Seton students a disadvantage compared to schools which use letter grades and true 4-point GPAs. This is because schools that use letter grades and 4-point GPAs generally use a 10-point-per-letter scale, meaning that 60 to 69 is a D, 70 to 79 is a C, 80 to 89 is a B, and 90 to 100 is an A. Seton's grade scale, however, has always gone from 70 to 100, so Seton uses a 7-point-per-letter grade scale. This does not matter much internally for grading, because almost all Seton grades are numeric, rather than letter grades. However, it has disadvantaged some students when converting to the 4-point scale, because grades under about 90 would convert to higher 4-point grades if Seton used a 10-point-per-letter grade scale rather than a 7-point-per-letter grade scale.

As mentioned above, there is no perfect way to convert from a 100-point scale to a 4-point scale. However, because we want to be as fair to our students as possible, we are implementing a new system for the 4-point grade scale. **Because the 4-point grade scale makes most sense when grades are given as letter grades, and each letter represents 10 points, the new system will give a student the 4-point GPA that he or she would receive if Seton used that grading scale.** In other words, Seton will still keep the grading system we currently have, but when generating a 4-point average, Seton will now use a 10-point-per-letter scale. The new 4-point GPA will, as closely as possible, correspond to the 4-point GPA used by other schools.

Please bear in mind that a student's official Seton GPA is the student's 100-point grade average. This new system of generating a 4-point GPA will not change the student's 100-point grade average. Also, it does not change the passing grade for a course, which remains 70.

When dealing with colleges or other agencies, it is Seton's policy to report the student's 100-point average as the student's GPA, unless a 4-point average is requested.

We believe this new system will be the most fair to all students. It will not change the 4-point GPA for any student with an average of 94 or higher, which converts to a 4.0 GPA under the new and old system. Students with averages below 94 should see their 4-point GPA increase. We believe that the new system will not lower the GPA for any student.

In order to generate a student's GPA under the new system, subtract 60 from the student's 100-point average, and multiply the remainder by 0.121212. For example, for a student with a 100-point average of 90, the formula would yield:

$$(90 - 60) \times 0.121212 = 3.636$$

*There are no ordinary people.*

*You have never talked to a mere mortal.*

*Nations, cultures, arts, civilisations—these are mortal, and their life is to ours as the life of a gnat.*

*But it is immortals whom we joke with, work with, marry, snub, and exploit—immortal horrors or everlasting splendours.*

*(C.S. Lewis, The Weight of Glory)*



*Please see back cover for offer worth 50% off John's book!*

## *Immortal Love*

Every St. Valentine's Day leaves men at a loss for telling their girlfriends or wives how much they love them. Very often, whether a dozen red roses, a box of chocolates, or a hand-written poem, nothing seems to suffice. If you homeschool husbands find yourself in this predicament, don't feel too bad. We've all been there. In fact, I've always been there.

For all my adult life, I've tried to find those special words, that arrangement of human expression that adequately illustrates how much I love Lisa. I have consistently failed.

Not that I haven't tried. I have. And I've had a long time to try. Most of my life, in fact.

I have previously written about how I chased Lisa for almost two years before she agreed to date me, and over a year from that date before she accepted my proposal. All in all, I've been pursuing her since I was seventeen years old. Even at the tender age of seventeen, the thought of spending the rest of your life with someone is daunting. In fact, it can be quite scary. Yet, love reaches a point at which the thought of not spending your life with your beloved is even scarier. I hit that point quickly and definitively, but not surprisingly.

A relationship of a quarter-century has other memorable signposts.

I remember the first day I knew I wanted to see Lisa again tomorrow.

I remember the first time I knew I wanted to marry her.

I remember thinking, just one year after our wedding, how a woman like this was such a great natural mother.

Yes, it was a wonderful pursuit. But as I have come increasingly to realize, this life—this part of the journey—is only one chapter of the story. Chasing her, it seems, is my lot in life, because the next step of this excursion continues. It is to follow her to Heaven with our children where the everlasting splendour of true love is perpetually fulfilled. I know that this earthly life is not enough—nothing less than eternity is sufficient for true love. I know that ours is an immortal love, finding its fulfillment only in the presence of God.

I think that this transcendental nature of love is the reason we cannot locate the words. Perhaps my chosen career as a writer is my lifelong effort to try. I fail, but I am strangely comforted that I'm not alone.

The great poets—those whom history remembers with particular fondness, such as Dante, Browning, and Shakespeare—are congratulated for discovering their extraordinary words. Everyone compliments them on how well they articulated their affection for their beloveds. But I'll make you a gentleman's wager that each of them remained unsatisfied at how inadequately he expressed his love.

As the devout Catholic who kneels before the Blessed Sacrament in the solace of silence can tell you, words only take you so far. It is the silent serenity of the presence of love that engulfs our hearts and stills our souls.

BY JOHN CLARK

Maybe that's the lesson we all need to learn: that the richness of love succeeds where the poverty of words fails.

To the wives reading this: I suspect that you are bothered by your husband's imperfections and foibles. We do not know the right words. We forget to take out the trash. We are thinking about our baseball team when we should be listening to you.

But when we're singing along to love songs in our cars on the way back home to you, it is you we are singing about.

For now, our love finds its expression in things of understated magnitude. It is present in the otherwise unexciting conformities of life, like paying utility bills, navigating routes to work each sunrise, and sounding out consonants with our children. For now, that is what immortal love looks like. But remember there will come a moment with the Author of love, when flaws will fade, in a place where the fog will clear and love's perfection will be experienced for the first time.

As we all celebrate St. Valentine's Day, my humble advice and my hope for you homeschooling wives is simple. Please look for your husband's love in places like these—because it is there. Like the stone on your finger, we have blemishes, but like the diamond, we are yours.

Happy St. Valentine's Day!



**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.

# Surviving in a Secularized Society

Monsignor Ignacio Barreiro-Carambula directs the Rome office for Human Life International (HLI). These are selections from his article for the Fall 2013 issue of *The Latin Mass: The Journal of Catholic Culture and Tradition*. He starts by quoting a speech given by Pope Francis on March 22, 2013:

“There is another form of poverty! It is the spiritual poverty of our time, which afflicts the so-called richer countries particularly seriously. It is what my much-loved predecessor, Benedict XVI, called the ‘tyranny of relativism,’ which allows everyone to create his own criterion and endangers the coexistence of peoples. But there is no true peace without truth.” With greater strength, we have to present to the World the saving truth that was incarnated in Jesus Christ. As the ethical values inherited from Christianity that once upheld our societies come to their final destruction, we should understand that there is no common good without reference to the principles taught in a constant way by Catholic doctrine.

It is of the essence of liberalism to be relativistic: “Relativism, which justifies everything and treats all things as having equal value, assails the absolute character of Christian principles.”

We see how this relativistic spirit has entered into the catechesis in many countries where the truths of the Faith are not taught with clarity, due to an anti-dogmatic mentality. To condemn this evil spirit of relativism that dominates the contemporary world requires a substantial amount of courage because it is the cornerstone of the secular society in which we live. We fall into relativism when we do not have the courage to condemn politicians and judges who call themselves Catholic and yet vote against the most basic teachings of the Church on faith and family...

In society, we can see signs of decadence worldwide. In a particular way, we can see it in countries that have legalized abortion and the so-called “marriage” between persons of the same sex and the adoption of children by same-sex couples. These

are consequences of a gender ideology that is profoundly anti-natural. This ideology has been used in some countries to criminally persecute opponents. ....

The Church has the obligation to lead society through her preaching, through her public worship, her formation of youth in schools and universities, and the word and example of a multitude of lay Catholics who are active in society...

... We have to see these realities with supernatural hope. Hope does not mean being firmly convinced only for salvation in Heaven, but also that He will give us the means as we struggle in this world. Christ will give us the resources to fight discouragement; He will sustain us during times of abandonment. This is particularly important because living in and observing contemporary society, it is easy to feel prone to discouragement and to be dominated by a sense of abandonment, even by the Church. The Lord, in furnishing the means of salvation, will furnish not only the spiritual means but also all the necessary natural means. One of those natural means is a society that will assist us in the practice of virtue and not a society that would lead us into immorality as is happening with contemporary society worldwide...

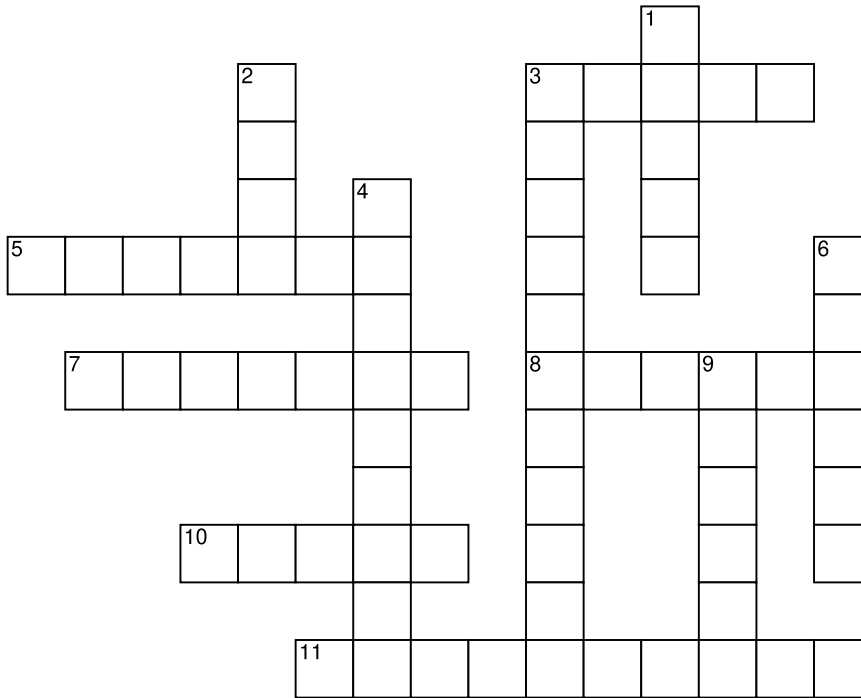
Our impatience makes us doubt what is certain but we should never doubt that God’s assistance will arrive. Our impatience can be motivated by a personal feeling of having reached the limit of our waiting ability, an inclination that in some circumstances is understandable, but which we should combat with prayer, the frequent reception of the sacraments, and with the advice and encouragement of friends. We need to cultivate a *sensus fidei* (a sense of faith) and a sense of the nearness of the Providence of God that will lift our spirit from the suffocating network of the structures of social sin that dominate our society. Our impatience can have good motives... but we should never despair. The Lord is far more concerned than we are for the salvation of all His children. He will always find means to



offer salvation to all who are ready to accept it. We can be sure that in a not too distant future, the Lord will send Saints who, with prophetic strength, will preach the Faith. ... Look at France, at the thousands upon thousands of demonstrators that continue to keep a constant and unrelenting opposition to the monstrosity of the legalization of same-sex “marriage”; that is certainly a sign of hope...

We should never forget that Christ is the Lord of history.

# CATHOLIC SAINTS



## ACROSS

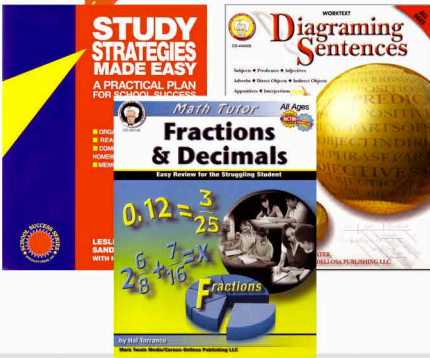
- 3 Eastern Europeans; St. Methodius and his brother are known as the "Apostles to the \_\_\_"
- 5 Josephine \_\_\_: an African saint who was captured by Arab slave traders in the 19th century; her feast day is on February 8.
- 7 Our Lady appeared near this town in France in 1858.
- 8 This saint is mentioned in the Roman Canon of the Mass; she was martyred in Sicily around the year 253.
- 10 This saint was the brother of St. Methodius.
- 11 Our Lady of clue #4 appeared to this saint.

## DOWN

- 1 The last name of Francisco and Jacinta, two of the seers of Fatima; their feast day is February 20.
- 2 The feast of Paul \_\_\_ and his companions is celebrated on February 6; they were martyred in Japan in 1597.
- 3 She was the sister of St. Benedict.
- 4 This saint was martyred in the third century; many people give cards to their loved ones on his feast day.
- 6 His feast day is February 3rd in the Latin Rite.
- 9 At Mass on February 3rd, one can receive a special blessing of this part of the body.

# 2nd Semester Supplements

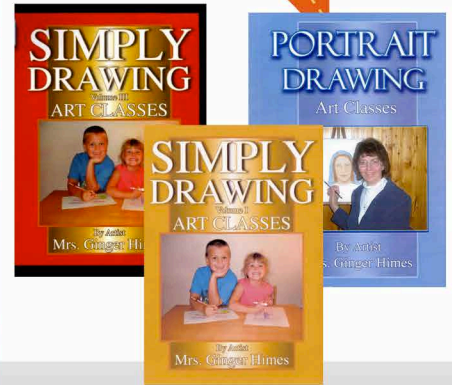
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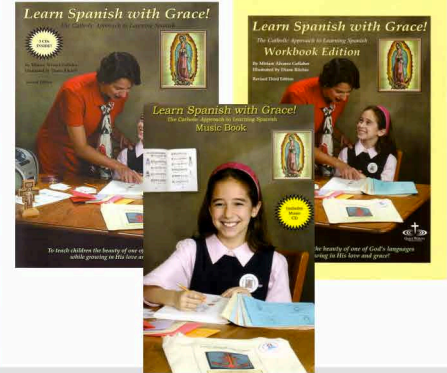
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Science Kits & DVDs



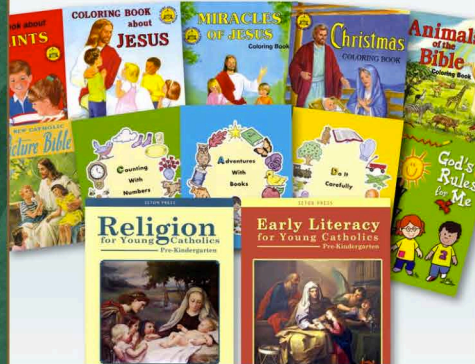
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## Like John Clark's articles? You'll love his book!

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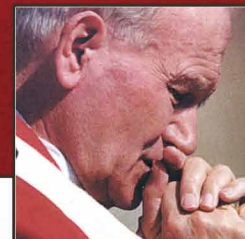
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## PAPAL WISDOM



### *Letter to Families*

If it is true that by giving life parents share in God's creative work, it is also true that by raising their children they become sharers in his paternal and at the same time maternal way of teaching. According to Saint Paul, God's fatherhood is the primordial model of all fatherhood and motherhood in the universe (cf. Eph 3:14-15), and of human motherhood and fatherhood in particular. We have been completely instructed in God's own way of teaching by the eternal Word of the Father who, by becoming man, revealed to man the authentic and integral greatness of his humanity, that is, being a child of God. In this way he also revealed the true meaning of human education. Through Christ all education, within the family and outside of it, becomes part of God's own saving pedagogy, which is addressed to individuals and families and culminates in the Paschal Mystery of the Lord's Death and Resurrection. The "heart" of our redemption is the starting-point of every process of Christian education, which is likewise always an education to a full humanity.

Parents are the first and most important educators of their own children, and they also possess a fundamental competence in this area: they are educators because they are parents. They share their educational mission with other individuals or institutions, such as the Church and the State. But the mission of education must always be carried out in accordance with a proper application of the principle of subsidiarity. This implies the legitimacy and indeed the need of giving assistance to the parents, but finds its intrinsic and absolute limit in their prevailing right and their actual capabilities. The principle of subsidiarity is thus at the service of parental love, meeting the good of the family unit. For parents by themselves are not capable of satisfying every requirement of the whole process of raising children, especially in matters concerning their schooling and the entire gamut of socialization.

Bl. Pope John Paul II