

Seton Home StudySchool

Volume XIII, Number 9



“Under the Magisterium of the Catholic Church”



September 1996

Exaltation of the Cross

On September 14th, we Catholics celebrate the feast of the Exaltation of the Cross. It seems appropriate as we start our home schooling year to reflect on the Cross, the symbol of the sacrifices of Jesus Christ, and yet the sign of our salvation.

Our home schooling is often a path of sacrifice, but it is easier to bear when we recall, looking up at the cross of Jesus, that it is also the path of salvation for our children. What many of us have also discovered is that sacrifice is the path of salvation for ourselves, as parents.

In the early parenting years, we busy ourselves about the business of feeding and clothing and cleaning. It is not until our children reach five or six years old that we realize we need to be more serious about training and teaching.

It used to be so easy. Just send them off to school. “When does the parish school open?” mothers would casually ask.

Not so today. Today the pagan world infiltrates everywhere. Pagan culture even oozes through the tiniest cracks in the spiritual defenses of every institution dedicated to God, such as Catholic homes, parishes, and schools.

When I was growing up, the Catholic nuns taught that the cross was “a sign of contradiction.” Crucifixion was the Roman punishment for a criminal. But instead of seeing a criminal punishment, we see the ultimate sacrifice of the Son of God for you and me to open the gates of heaven to eternal happiness.

As the needle and scalpel were meant to be life-saving instruments of medicine, but now have become symbols of the death-dealing nature of drugs and abortion, so the cross was meant to be a death-dealing punishment for criminals, but now is a symbol of life and forgiveness through Jesus Christ.

In sacrifice, there is life and salvation. Only in giving to others, can we find ourselves. Only in giving to our children can we find God Himself. Only in giving Jesus to others, preaching the Gospel in our own little Domestic Church, to our own children, can we find the real joy of sacrifice, the real joy of the cross.

After St. Helena found the relics of the true cross in 326 A.D., the Church commemorated the feast of the Exaltation of the Cross. In the Eastern Catholic Church, it is considered a great feast day, with celebrations both before and after the feast, such as elaborate processions. In Eastern Europe, a piece of the

relic of the True Holy Cross was carried through the streets so that the sick and poor people had access to its life-giving miraculous powers. In the Eastern Rite Divine Liturgies, there is constant elevation of the cross, constant crossing of the priest and the people with the sign of the cross.

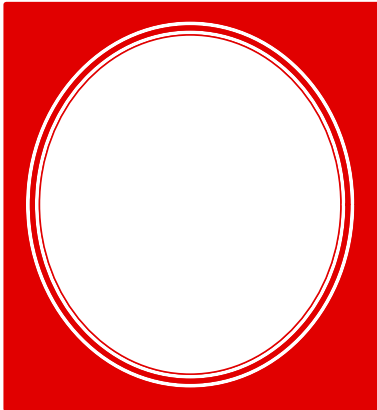
In a sermon, St. John Chrysostom said “The Cross is a trophy against the demons, a weapon against sin, a sword with which Christ pierced the serpent. The Cross is the will of the Father, the glory of the Only-Begotten One, the joy of the Spirit, ornament of the angels, fortress of the Church, the glory of Paul, stronghold of the Saints, the light of the whole world.”

The home schooling crosses and sacrifices are building up the Catholic church in this country so that the children will be a strong fortress against secular attacks. As little saints, they will be the stronghold, and their shining crosses of sacrifice will be the light which will make the pagans exclaim once again, “See how they love one another.”

-MKC

Inside . . .

Eight-Step Program	2
Breaking News	4
The Promised Land	5
Non-Catholic Program .	6
News and Notes	7
Evangelium Vitae	8



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Eight Step Program for Fathers

by Ed Gudan

In most home schooling families, the mother is the primary teacher. However, fathers still need to be involved in the project. Here is an eight-step plan for fathers to help.

1. Establish respect for the Mother and make sure that she is not taken for granted. The father needs to set the example of showing respect for the mother, and he needs to ensure that all the children show respect for their mother, that they do not talk back, and that they obey her. For example, this can be done by thanking mother for preparing dinner, for washing the clothes, for cleaning up our messes, and for all the other things she does around the house. At mealtime, everyone should wait until mother sits down at the table before you say grace and start to eat.

2. Ensure that there is discipline in the home school. The father needs to tell the children that they are to behave. For the younger children, you may need to remind them on a daily or weekly basis. It is helpful if the father calls home during the day; this sends a message to the children that dad is serious about the children behaving. Other times, the mother may call the father whenever the children get rowdy, and the father can talk to them over the phone. During some phone calls, all you may need to do is talk to the child and make the child realize that BOTH of you want him to behave; during other phone calls, you may want to go home and take care of the problem in person, if your job permits. Starting at the beginning of the school year, it is important to handle the discipline problems promptly and decisively, in order to keep them from frequently reoccurring during the year.

3. Have a high vision for the children. There is a lot of talk about building up self-esteem, but you do not build up self-esteem by giving your children empty

praises or having low expectations of them. You need to encourage them. Praise their successes and minimize their failures. Keep them challenged and let them know that you expect them to do their best. In our home, we have a policy that everyone in the elementary grades gets at least an A on each test and assignment, and everyone in the junior high and senior high grades gets at least a B. That does not mean that we are giving away A's and B's for mediocre work. What it means is that if a student gets less than a B on an assignment, I tell them that I know they can do better than that. We review the material and have the student do the assignment or the test over again. We end up spending more time in the subject, but that is the advantage of tutoring your children at home. It is more important for the children to know the material and understand it, than it is to finish the course quickly.

Fathers also need to help their children find and develop the talents that God has blessed them with. Give them projects in the areas where they have an interest or appear to have talents. After they are finished with their project, acknowledge their accomplishments and praise them for the qualities they exhibited: like perseverance, patience, quality work, or attention to details. As you show confidence in your children, they will become self-confident and have a self-esteem that cannot be shattered.

In addition to giving the children projects to do, we also give them chores. In fact, we put it in the lesson plans, and we make it part of the daily routine. The chores consist of simple tasks, like making their bed, cleaning up the room, dusting the house, etc. We do not believe in giving the children an allowance, but we do believe in paying them for particular jobs around the house, such as polishing Dad's shoes, washing cars, cutting the grass, raking the lawn, and

babysitting the younger children. This way, they learned that they had to earn money if they wanted to buy a special game, or toy, or gift. It taught them the value of money and how to handle it, and they learned not to ask their parents for handouts when they wanted to buy something. Of course, we didn't pay very much, and they found out that neighbors pay more for babysitting and mowing the grass than we did. So, our children developed babysitting and grass cutting businesses, and two teen-agers worked at a veterinary clinic; the experiences helped them to become very dependable, conscientious, and self-confident.

4. Realize that it takes a lot of time and energy to teach the children, especially if you have a strong willed child or a child with a learning problem. When you come home from work after your wife has been home schooling the children all day, you may find your wife disgruntled and exhausted. She may even be talking to herself, but that is a common occurrence among home schooling parents. In fact, it is so common that we call it a "Parent-Teacher Conference." Sometimes, all your wife needs is some adult conversation, after spending the day with a house full of children, 6 years old and under. I remember one day, when my wife was teaching one of the children phonics and how to read. She pointed to a picture of a hen that was labeled with the letters HEN underneath it, and asked, "Do you know what this is? See, it begins with an H; it's a He, He, He..." And the child responded with "He, He, He, Chicken!" It may be funny now, but situations like these can frazzle a woman. You fathers need to be understanding and give her the support she needs. At times like this, you may need to remind her that the child really is intelligent and will eventually learn how to read, or you may need to support her and let her know that she really is doing a good job of teaching.

5. Be willing to accept a different life style, especially when you have toddlers in the house. Your wife will have a very difficult time keeping the house clean, the laundry done on a regular

basis, and meals cooked on time. This is a sensitive issue because the wife wants to continue taking care of everything but just can't find the time to do it all, without running herself into the ground or shortchanging something. In order to make sure that she does not run herself ragged and that the home schooling is not shortchanged, talk with your wife about the groups and activities she is involved with and ways you and the children can help her. If your wife is heavily involved in community, or church, or other activities outside of the home, she may have to back off with her involvement in those activities. This will require discussion between the two of you and coming to a realization as to how much time those activities require and how much time is needed for home schooling.

Depending on your strengths and weaknesses, there are several things you can do to help her around the house. Talk about the areas where she needs help and discuss what needs to be done and who can do it. You may want to have a meeting with all the children and explain that they need to help around the house.

6. Teach some of the subjects. The best reason for choosing which subjects you will teach is that you enjoy it or have an interest in it. I know a father who teaches all of his children Latin and how to sing the Gregorian Chant; the children's singing is very beautiful, and they sing the Gregorian Chant once a month in church. As you teach the subjects, you never know what you are going to learn. The subjects I enjoy are math and science. During the years that I taught math to the children, I didn't learn any more math principles, but I did learn patience.

7. Support your wife. You need to discuss with her the problems she is having and help her to solve them. You and your wife complement one another. Often, the husband's strong points are the wife's weak points, and the husband's weak points are the wife's strong points. One area where you fathers may be able to support your wife is in the area of organization. When you are teaching

more than one child, organization becomes important. Somehow, you have to keep the subjects and grades and children sorted in a simple orderly manner.

For example, my wife needed a way of keeping records for each subject for each child. She ended up getting a small plastic crate for each child and used hanging file folders for each subject. That way, when she is working on the grades or quarterly reports for one of the children, she pulls out his plastic crate, and all the information is sorted by subject in the hanging folders. She also wanted a quick and simple way to create lesson plans for each child using the computer. So, I used a spreadsheet program like Lotus on the computer, to create a matrix that listed the subjects and the time for each subject in the left-hand column and the days of the week in the top row. Children in the junior high and high school grades can look at the assignments in the column for each day and start working on them while your wife gives individual attention to the younger students, who need more supervision. As your wife verifies each assignment is done, she checks it off or enters a grade in the lesson plan. At the end of the day, she can quickly verify if all of the assignments have been done, by making sure there are check marks or grades in each box in the column. At the end of the week, she has the grades for all of the tests on one sheet of paper.

Another area that requires a father's support is the classroom environment. Sometimes, when you conduct school in the same room and the same environment where the children are used to playing and talking, it is difficult to get them to focus on their studies and stop fooling around. What you may need to do is develop a classroom that has a school environment. We once converted our dining room into a classroom, since we weren't using the dining room for anything else. Others have converted a garage or a spare room into a classroom. You can put in bookcases and shelves for all the textbooks and reference material. You can put up bulletin boards, blackboards or whiteboards on the walls. It

can look and feel like an authentic classroom that helps the children realize that they are now in school and it is time to study and stop playing around.

8. Be committed to home schooling and give your wife encouragement. You need to be committed to home schooling, like you are committed to your marriage. It is a lifestyle, a way of living, a way of raising your children to be holy citizens of the Kingdom of God. You need to be convinced in your mind and your heart of the merits of home schooling, because there will be times when friends, neighbors, or relatives will cast doubts on your wife's ability to teach the children, but you need to remind her that with God's graces, she can do it. Remember the quote from Matthew 19:26, "For men, this is impossible; for God everything is possible." People will also talk about home schooling as being a radical thing that does not work, and that kind of talk weakens your wife's fortitude. Again, you need to combat those doubts and encourage her during those times of weakness and insecurity.

Let us not forget the importance of raising our children, and teaching them the Truths of the Catholic Faith, for our children are the future of this country and of our Church. Our very survival as families, as a nation, and as the People of God, depends upon this. Because Abraham was faithful in transmitting to his children the laws the Lord God gave him, his family was spared when God destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah. We are living in a Sodom and Gomorrah today, and like Abraham, we have to be heroically faithful in raising our children to know God, to love Him, and to serve Him in this world. As our Holy Father, Pope John Paul II always says, "Be not afraid!" You CAN do it, because God has given us all the graces necessary through the sacrament of Matrimony to teach our children. With God's help, it can be done. With His help, you and your spouse CAN raise your children to be holy and pleasing to God.

Puffing Away

It has recently been reported in this column that the incidence of drug use among the young has increased enormously during the Clinton Administration. This increase is particularly troublesome because drug use had been decreasing for the ten previous years. Indeed, the 1992 edition of an annual survey found that marijuana use by high school seniors had reached its lowest rate since the survey began in the 1970's.

The Washington Times reports that since 1992, marijuana use is up among 8th graders by 145%, among 10th graders by 112%, and among 12th graders by 80%. According to the new "drug czar," General Barry McCaffrey, marijuana use is especially dangerous because "A 12-year-old who smokes marijuana is 79 times more likely to have an addictive problem [as an adult] than one who didn't smoke marijuana."

Now we find out that several White House employees have had extensive and recent drug use. These were individuals whom the Secret Service rejected for security clearances, but the Administration intervened to get them clearances anyway. A random drug testing program was set up in the White House to monitor these employees. We are told that these tests never detected any current drug use.

The White House does not seem to be particularly concerned about this drug use by its own employees. When asked, Press Secretary Mike McCurry said of course he had smoked marijuana in his youth—hadn't everybody? With this type of attitude, it seems no wonder that drug use is increasing.

One can only hope that Gen. McCaffrey can do something to help reverse this incredible increase in drug use. But whatever he does, he'll have to do it without any help from the White House. Or maybe the White House ought to be the first target of his anti-drug message.

The Fruits of Choice

In a recent article in the Wall Street Journal (Aug. 14, A12), researchers Jay Greer and Paul Peterson report that they have found that the Milwaukee school choice program has been quite successful. According to their study, there is little or no improvement in test scores after the first or second year, but in the third and fourth years, students begin making impressive gains.



According to their study, in reading the voucher students were 3 and 5 percentage points above comparable public school students in their third and fourth years. In math, the voucher students scored 5 and 12 percentage points higher than comparable public school students. Hopefully, this trend will continue in future years.

For those who viscerally oppose any measure that takes a dime away from public schools, no evidence of success will matter. But such success in the limited Milwaukee program certainly seems to invite a larger program and more study.

Teaching Everybody

One of the interesting, and false, claims of public school educators is that public schools have to educate everybody, while private schools can pick and choose. This isn't true because public

schools can and do expel students, sometimes a lot of students.

But besides the students expelled by the public schools, there are also many students with learning or behavioral problems who are turned over to private schools. In a recent article in the Wall Street Journal (Aug. 21, A14), Janet Beales notes that there are over 3,000 private schools in the United States that enroll almost 100,000 students with disabilities.

One of the success stories is the Sobriety High School in Minnesota which specializes in teaching young people with drug and alcohol problems. Most of the tuition is paid by the state. It costs taxpayers only \$3500 a year, far less than the state pays for the average student.

Michigan Maniac Strikes Again

What to do about Dr. Kevorkian? In late August, he began killing patients at better than one a day. The definition of terminal illness he uses keeps getting looser and looser. In one August case, he "assisted" a woman who apparently had no physical problem at all, at least nothing an autopsy could determine. On another fine day, he dispatched two women with multiple sclerosis.

Apart from the blasphemy of declaring himself the master of life, the most horrible part of Dr. Kevorkian's practice is that he is not just Dr. Death but also Dr. Despair. He holds out no medical help to his patients. He holds out no prospect that maybe problems can be overcome or managed.

And what does it do to the people with similar problems left behind? How do other people with MS feel knowing that the good doctor is ready and willing to help you end it right now if you're having a bad day.

Where does it end? Can we be free of this scourge only if Dr. Kevorkian himself catches a dread, horrible, terminal disease? Of course, with the good doctor's scorn for life, he might kill himself over a hangnail.

Non-Catholic Program

Not long ago we received a call from a mother who had just ordered the Calvert School curriculum. When she received the books, she was surprised to see that the program is not Catholic, in fact, not even Christian.

Calvert has recently been recommended by some Catholic home schooling leaders. There is no doubt that Calvert program has a well-established reputation. But, because of the name Calvert and being located in Maryland, some people are confused. The Calverts were prominent Catholics who played an important part in the early history of the state of Maryland. However, the Calvert home study program was never a Catholic program.

The home study program offered by Calvert offers no religion. The textbooks are strictly secular, mainly from Macmillan and Harcourt-Brace, major publishers of public school textbooks. The lesson plans offer no further Christian or religious information or insights.

So, one wonders why Catholic parents, concerned about teaching the Faith to their children at home, would use a non-Catholic program when there are Catholic programs available.

At Seton, we are constantly striving to improve the materials to reflect the teaching of the Church. The Seton handwriting and the spelling series were the first produced to teach the Faith in the Seton program. Then the Vocabulary texts and the Reading for Comprehension workbooks were rewritten to teach Catholic children Catholic values. The readers, most of the histories, and the music are Catholic. Seton has written Catholic phonics books in grades 4 and 5, and Catholic science books in grades 1, 2, 4, 7, and 8. Seton will soon have available the new Faith Through Art for Young Catholics 8, as well as Catholic art books for grades 1, 4, and 7. A new Catholic Kindergarten phonics book will be available in just a couple of

months. Catholic English workbooks are in the writing stage.

For those considering Calvert, here are some other observations.

Flexibility

Certainly, a major topic of concern for parents is flexibility for the purpose of individualizing the curriculum for the ability of the individual student. At Calvert, a straight grade level is offered, and no adjustments are made for customizing the program to meet the individual needs of the student. In fact, the placement test is a VERY brief one given to all students who apply, in whatever grade.

At Seton, while most students take all the courses at a particular grade level, our counselors work to make sure that if a student is ahead or behind in a subject, proper level materials are sent. In fact, if a parent calls and asks for a change in the grade level of one or more subjects, we send the requested materials as a matter of policy since we believe that parents are in charge.

Lesson plans

Seton is always improving on the day-to-day lesson plans, and has recently updated and upgraded our plans to be more user friendly, easier to use, and more attractive. Many of the plans sent out this year include graphics, such as boxed-in English rules, interesting illustrations, or borders to highlight weekly divisions.

Our lesson plans often include information which supplements the textbook, but we try to limit this at parents' request to necessary explanations. However, it is important to include the Catholic perspective in the lessons and we add this without hesitation.

The lesson plans at Calvert generally are longer because they include extra work assignments. For instance, almost

50% of the lesson plans in the eighth grade science are worksheets. The Calvert tests tend to be given less often, after each 20 lessons, but they are longer tests than Seton's. Grades from Calvert are based on tests only; there is no consideration for daily work grades.

Cost

The Seton eighth grade program offers numerous subjects for \$470 (or a little more for a monthly payment arrangement). Calvert offers no payment plan. For \$490, Calvert parents receive half the number of subjects as Seton parents, and less than half the number of textbooks.

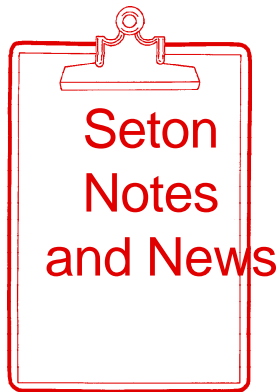
For example, at the eighth grade level, Seton offers the subjects of religion, English, vocabulary, reading, spelling, arithmetic, science, history, art, music, and P.E. For eighth graders, Calvert offers English, reading, vocabulary, arithmetic, science, and history. Lists of spelling words are found in the reading lesson plans.

Counseling

For the \$490 to Calvert, books, lessons, answer keys, and tests are offered. Calvert also sends three notebooks, pads of paper, pencils, a ruler, protractor, & compass. Lessons with answer keys must be returned, but books may be kept. Advisory service is provided for an extra \$250.

For \$475, Seton offers double the number of books, lessons, keys, tests, and quarter report forms. (Of course, you don't have to use all the materials, but they are supplied.) In addition, Seton offers counseling services, report cards, diplomas, achievement awards, transcripts, letters of recommendation, SAT information, and accreditation from the Northwest Association of Schools and Colleges.

Besides Calvert, there are several other secular and Christian programs. But parents need to be aware that a non-Catholic program simply cannot provide the grounding in the Faith which a Catholic program provides.



Conferences

Indianapolis, IN: September 21, 1996, at St. Augustine Home for the Aged. Seton Conference with Indianapolis Catholic Home Schooling Apostolate. Father Charles Fiore: Church Teachings and Home Schooling; Ginny Seuffert: Home Schooling in the Large Family; Mary Kay Clark: How to Avoid Burnout; Dr. William Marra: Catholic Culture in the Home Schooling Family; Mr. Edward Gudan: The Father's Role in the Catholic Home Schooling Family; Panel on Discipline.

Houston, TX: October 5, 1996. Seton Conference with Apostolate of Roman Catholic Home Schoolers. University of St. Thomas, Jones Auditorium. Father Pablo Straub: Teaching the Sacraments; Dr. William Marra: Catholic Culture in the Home Schooling Family; Ginny Seuffert: Home Schooling in the Large

Family; Mary Kay Clark: How to Avoid Home Schooling Burnout; Dr. Mark Lowery: The Father's Role in the Catholic Home Schooling Family; Panel on Discipline.

Chicago, IL: November 8-10, 1996. The Round Table for Catholic Home School Leaders. Write to The Round Table, 5936 W. Eastwood, Chicago, IL 60630.

Seattle, WA: January 18, 1997. Seton Conference. Speakers: Fr. Pablo Straub, Dr. Mary Kay Clark, Dr. William Marra, Mrs. Ginny Seuffert. Other speakers TBA.

Long Island, NY: March 1, 1997. Seton conference.

Minneapolis, MN: March 15, 1997. Seton conference.

Returning Books

If you are finished with your books for the year, we do encourage you to return them to Seton as soon as possible. Getting books back means that we can reuse books rather than having to purchase new books. This keeps prices down for everyone.

If possible, it is best to send books by UPS rather than the post office. UPS seems to be better at delivering boxes undamaged. If you need help in packing and sending the books, Mail Boxes Etc. or other similar companies can help.

A packing list is enclosed in each box of books which notes with an asterisk which books should be returned. If you are unsure as to which books should be returned, you may call Seton and talk to the book return department.

E-Mail Grade Reports

If you would like to receive an e-mail copy of grades, please send a message to Seton@Shentel.Net.

Those who receive grades by e-mail will still receive a mailed copy of the

grade report. E-mail grade reports should be sent within 24 hours of the time that the grades are entered in the computer at Seton.

Quick Notes

Seton Mass is from 8 to 8:30 A.M. daily, so oftentimes no one is available for that half hour to answer the phones.

Diplomas are sent automatically to our high school graduates. If you did not receive yours, please give us a call.

You can communicate with Seton via mail, phone, fax, e-mail, computer modem, or internet. A web site will be available shortly. (See the box in the lower left-hand corner of this page for phone numbers and addresses.)

Quarterly reports are important for us to evaluate the continuing work of students. If all the work is sent at the end of the year, it is too late to make constructive comments.

Report cards are sent to all those who send in papers for our Seton Parent-Teacher Assistants to evaluate. If you prefer not to send paperwork and not receive report cards, you have that option. However, we have no special prices for this option.

Textbooks are often available which are not listed in our catalog. If there is something you want, we may have it. We are adding titles frequently. Call the Seton Educational Media department at 540-636-9996.

Flexibility is our motto: Adjust the program to fit the child, not the child to fit the program. You may call one of our curriculum counselors to help you make adjustments if necessary.

Nationally normed standardized tests are sent to our enrolled children when the third quarter graded papers are sent back from Seton. If you have chosen not to send papers in for your enrolled child, you are still entitled to receive these standardized tests. Just give us a call.

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