



Seton Home Study School

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“Under the Magisterium of the Catholic Church”

September 1998

The Holy Cross

September is a month in which we celebrate two feast days which have special meaning for us home schooling mothers and fathers.

The first feast is the celebration of the Birthday of the Blessed Mother on September 8th. We home schooling mothers especially are reminded about our own responsibilities as mothers of little innocent children. We Catholic home schooling parents are to shape and form the souls of our children through the sacraments and the sacramentals. We are to live the liturgical year in very positive ways, by word and by example, in our little home monastery, our domestic church. We must ask the Blessed Virgin Mary to help us to teach our children the deeper meaning of the Catholic Faith as we celebrate the feasts of the liturgical year.

The second feast day is the Exaltation of the Precious and Lifegiving Holy Cross on September 14th. In the Eastern Rite churches, the Cross is celebrated especially as a sign of glory and victory, with great ceremony spread over a period of eight days. The prayers of the Eastern Liturgy offer us serious meditation in relation to our family and home schooling.

“Come, all you nations, let us bow in worship to the Blessed Cross of the Lord through which eternal justice came to us. He who deceived Adam, the first man, was conquered by a tree, and the same who fettered the

royal creation by his guile, has been cast down into nothingness.

“The serpent’s venom has been washed away by the Divine Blood of Christ, and the curse of the sin has been lifted by a rightful sentence when the just Christ was condemned unjustly. By God’s plan, death that had come from a tree would be conquered by a tree, and suffering would be healed by the suffering of the Lord.

“Glory be to the active Presence of Your Providence in our lives, O Christ our King. Through Your Presence, You have wrought salvation for all, O You Who are gracious and the Lover of Mankind.”

An important message for our children is that just as Jesus suffered on the cross to redeem us from the consequences of sin, namely from eternal death, we need to suffer our daily crosses in reparation for our sins and the sins of others. Through offering up our daily crosses, we can not only help others to turn to Jesus and the sacraments, but also shorten the purgatory time of so many for whom there is no one to pray.

“Offer it up for the souls in Purgatory” was a regular and daily refrain in the old Catholic schools and in our Catholic homes. Whatever hardships we had to bear as school-age children, we bore as opportunities to show our love for Jesus and others.

Another important message we can give our children on the feast of the

Exaltation of the Holy Cross is the message of the Love of God, our heavenly Father and Creator, and His Son, Jesus Christ. God the Father was willing to give His only begotten Son as a lowly human being in the mystery of the Incarnation in order to save us from eternal death. Jesus, by dying on the cross, gives us the possibility, as we unite ourselves to Him, of eternal happiness, a happiness we cannot even imagine, as St. John wrote in his first letter.

Let us meditate on the words of the prayers for this feast day. Each phrase of these prayers offers us and our children an opportunity to come to a deeper understanding of what we are about in the true apostolate of our home schooling. Let us give our children the spiritual weapons they need to bear their crosses as they home school. Also, let us help them to see the cross as a wonderful sign of contradiction to the pagan society and a joyful sign through which we can attain eternal life.

“Joy to you, life-bearing Cross of the Lord, invincible triumph of Orthodoxy! You are the gate to paradise, the strength of the faithful, the stronghold of the Church. Because of you, corruption no longer has any meaning nor any power.”

Inside . . .

Questions	2
Thing of Beauty	4
College	5
Guidelines	6
Notes and News	7
Canon Law	8



Questions We Are Asked

by Dr. Mary Kay Clark
Director, Seton Home Study School

I have two children in high school. What do you recommend as far as their taking courses together?

The courses most frequently taken together by siblings in high school are religion, science, history, and foreign languages. Obviously, English and Math cannot be taken out of order. The 12th grade advanced apologetics cannot be taken in younger grades. We encourage courses being taken together when possible. The discussions by the siblings not only help them to learn the material, but offer an opportunity for brothers and sisters to become real friends as they work and learn together.

I recently received the scores for my children for the standardized achievement tests, the CAT and the CTBS tests. How concerned should I be about those scores?

The standardized test offers an objective evaluation which can be valuable to parents to see how much the child has learned and retained separate from content just learned the previous week. If the child is focused, and if the tests are given over a period of several mornings in a fairly relaxed environment, it can be accurate. Nevertheless, children in the primary grades often are not good test takers, and parents need to be sensitive to their own

child's test-taking skills. If scores are lower than anticipated, or lower than is usually seen on the daily work, parents should do their own in-house testing on those subject areas. Standardized testing is often a valuable tool, but it is only one tool of many.

It seems that Seton has a great deal of writing assignments in high school. Is it all necessary? Why do students need English as well as Grammar and Composition, as well as World Literature and American Literature?

We encourage courses being taken together when possible. The discussions by the siblings not only help them to learn the material, but offer an opportunity for brothers and sisters to become real friends as they work and learn together.

Reading, writing, and thinking skills are basic skills needed by everyone, but particularly by Catholic leaders or those who wish to influence people around them.

At Seton, we consider all our English courses essential. The English 9 & 10 courses contain some grammar, but mostly analytical skills which need to be

expressed in proper composition form. The semester of grammar and the semester of composition are necessary to make sure that all students, especially those newly-enrolled, have the skills to do the work in the other high school classes. Practice is the only way to learn grammar and composition.

In the 10th and 11th grades, we also have textbooks in World Literature and American Literature, originally published for Catholic high schools. These are valuable courses for becoming familiar with outstanding writers and their works. Although there is some writing for book reports, these are basically survey courses. Educated people should know these authors, which many politically-correct colleges are not teaching any longer.

The 11th grade English course is excellent for high level analysis of characters and high literary writing. The 12th grade English course uses a Catholic British literature textbook, yet continues to encourage analysis and composition.

Do you have a new policy about shipping high school books?

One of the problems we have had in the past is that some students do not finish up one or two subjects in the previous grade level, but want the books for the next year shipped. We have accommodated those students, only to find that when the student is ready to be in a graduation ceremony or attend college, one or two subjects from

an earlier grade remain incomplete. Our policy now is that the next year's materials will not be shipped until the previous courses have been completed. This is the normal policy in other schools as well.

My son is going into the 9th grade, but I am concerned about his taking the SAT test to obtain high scores for a scholarship to college. How can I prepare now?

Our courses at Seton are preparing high school students for doing well on the SAT, particularly the Language Arts courses. The math courses are important also, both the Algebra and the Geometry, which are both included on the test. A third area on the test is Vocabulary. Seton offers an elective vocabulary course which is written with the SAT test in mind, but the best way to develop vocabulary is to read, read, read. High school students should, if at all possible, read a book every week or two.

In addition, large cities have centers where high school students can attend classes to prepare for taking the SAT test. These are expensive but well worth the money if you are trying for a scholarship.

Practice tests and tips are now available through CD-ROMs which are done on the computer. Seton offers a workbook, *How to Prepare for the SAT*, which offers past SAT tests, and gives tips on analyzing the questions.

Families with students in 11th and 12th grade should receive a college information package

before the middle of September. If you have not received this information by September 11th, please call Bob Wiesner at Seton.

We are hearing you speak more about accreditation standards. How exactly is that affecting Seton?

We are pleased that the Northwest Association of Schools and Colleges has not attempted to control our curriculum. Their standards are more related to the business end of the school. However, the most important message from the NW Association is the importance of doing what we say we will do. In other words, if we say the grades on the report cards are a result of taking certain tests, we cannot give grades when tests are not taken. More than the

accreditation standards, we think this involves integrity and honesty.

Some parents have said that they don't think it is necessary for their child to complete this or that assignment. Seton's daily assignments are recommendations, and parents have full authority to make such decisions. However, if Seton is to put a grade on the report card, those particular tests or book reports need to be done.

The colleges which our graduates attend are relying on our integrity and honesty in giving high school grades on the report card. The accrediting association visited Seton to verify that we are in fact doing what we say we are doing.

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Preparing Your Child for College

Mary Alice Rice, M. A.

*Assistant Professor of French and English,
Christendom College*

Now that the new academic year is underway and enthusiasm has not entirely worn off, it might be a good time to think about a few hints on how better to prepare your juniors and seniors for college. No, I am not talking about revising the high school curriculum or about teaching the guys not to throw a red sweatshirt and white underwear into a washing machine set on "hot." This article, written from the professor's point of view, covers some areas in between the two, and most of the principles can be applied equally in college and in the workplace.

First, home schoolers can succeed in college. In certain areas they have advantages over students coming from a regular classroom situation. However, there are some skills usually gained in the classroom which do not come automatically to home schoolers, and it is these which I want to address.

The simplest area is classroom etiquette. Occasionally, former home schoolers forget that they are now part of a herd, and this means that sometimes they just have to suffer. For example, they will have to get to class on time and with books, notebooks, and pens. They should not get up in the middle of class to adjust the windows. Ten minutes into the lecture they must not wander out to use the bathroom or get a drink of water (if it's not enough of an emergency to risk the humiliation of asking permission, just wait!). And if there is a dress code, encourage them to observe it cheerfully even if they have done their work in pajamas the past 12 years.

Second, students have to learn to think with a pen and paper. Computers are wonderful, but when your child sits down to write his first essay exam in history, the laptop, the spell check and the grammar check will all be stashed under the desk. This means that he will have to 1) write legibly, 2) spell correctly,

and 3) compose sentences sufficiently grammatically correct for the teacher to be able to understand his answers. What's more, the student will have to do all this within, say, 50 minutes. So, as your child takes his high school exams, occasionally set a time limit, make him write his answers in longhand, and then have him check his own spelling and sentence structure. (Remember, no grade is ever raised when the professor has to puzzle over what is written, and no professor has an obligation to learn to read a particular student's sloppy handwriting in order to give him a higher mark.)

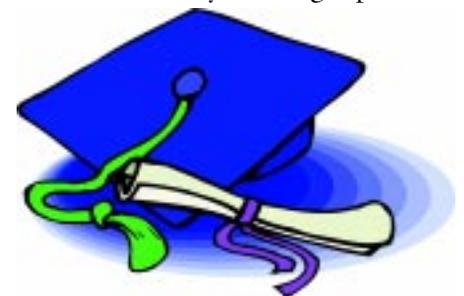
Third, insist that your child learn to take good notes on what he hears. Since there are very few opportunities in the normal home schooling setting for listening to a lecture, taking notes, then being tested on the material, you may have to create the situations. Have him take notes on the homily at Mass, on an EWTN program, or on a talk at a public library. (It doesn't matter if he thinks the subject is boring—there'll be a few boring lectures in college as well—but it's better if it's a topic about which you know more than he does.) Three or four weeks later, write and administer a test based on your understanding of the topic, not on the student's notes. The student must not discuss the subject with you; he has to rely on what he has written.

If after several practice sessions your child still obviously has trouble taking good notes, have him record the lecture while taking notes and trying to understand what is being said. Later in the day have him play back the tape and fill the gaps in his notes. All studying for the test, however, must be done from the notes, not from the tape, for the point of this exercise is to learn to recognize and record important ideas and to ignore extraneous details. For most people, distinguishing an important idea from a less important one in a lecture which is heard only one

time is a skill which must be learned. Though outlining and précis writing can be helpful in taking good notes, there is no substitute for practice.

Another problem (particularly troubling for home schooled girls) during the first few weeks of college is learning that your best on a particular day is not always your absolute best. Most home schooling programs do everything they can to assure the student's success. For example, home schoolers seldom have two major exams on the same day and they can delay an exam if necessary. This is good, but the student has to be aware that in college, as on a regular job, the work will usually continue on a predetermined schedule, and the student will simply have to do the best he can each day and go on from there. (College professors are not ogres, and if there is serious illness or a real problem they know about, they will be more than happy to help the student. I'm not talking about the problems like ordinary headaches and roommates with broken hearts.) If an "A" student has soccer tryouts, choir practice, and an unscheduled dorm meeting on Monday night and three chapter tests on Tuesday, he just might make a "B" or two. Help him learn to view these "failures" as just part of life in the real world, to wash his hands of the matter, and to go on to meet the next challenge. After all, learning to set priorities, to accept limits and to use time wisely is a major part of the college experience.

Last of all, if there is even the slightest chance that your child will be going to college, make him write, write, write. If you're pretty sure he's college bound, make him write even more. Don't opt out of essay questions. Don't opt out of book reports. In writing, as in all things, practice makes perfect, and if your child has been assiduous in his writing, his college valedictory speech will sound better than even you thought possible.



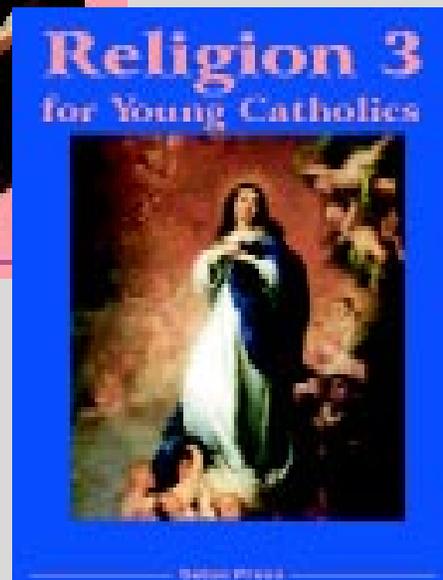
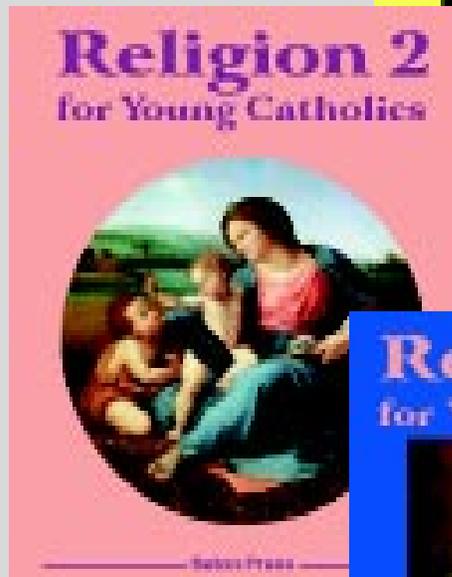
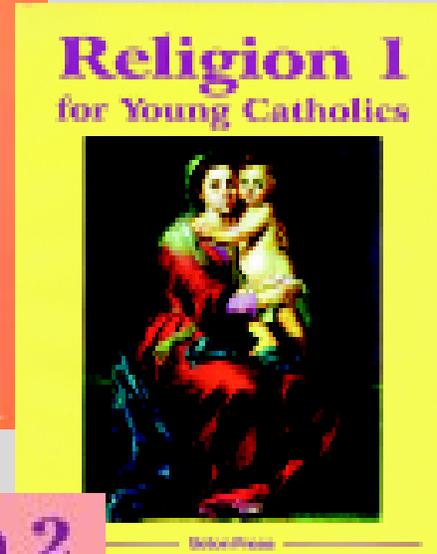
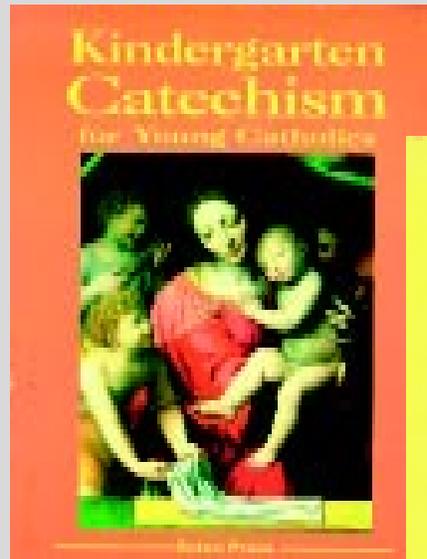
Guidelines Again

Seton would very much prefer not to be involved in the issue of diocesan religious education department guidelines for home schoolers to receive the sacraments of First Holy Communion and Confirmation. The continual phone calls make this practically impossible, and we feel that in justice, we need to reassure our parents of their responsibilities and rights in this matter.

We want to remind our parents that we have been selling for many years a little booklet by a canon lawyer, which was written specifically for Seton home schooling parents by Dr. Edward Peters. Dr. Peters is himself a home schooling father, and has written articles about this issue in several magazines. The pamphlet "Home Schooling and the New Code of Canon Law" is available from Seton for \$3. We recommend that you purchase two or more copies as you will want to give them to friends and pastors.

The Catholic Home Schooling Network of America has just printed a new booklet called "Responsibilities and Rights of Parents in Religious Education," which is available from CHSNA for \$10. Write them at P.O. Box 6343, River Forest, IL 60305. The chapter headings are: Parents & Catechesis, The New Articulation of Parents as Principal Educators, Rights of Parents Rooted in the Sacrament of Matrimony, Parents as Principal Educators, Why Parents Must be Principal Educators, The Development of the Teaching of Vatican II in Subsequent Documents of the Church, Parents as Principal Catechists, Diocesan Regulations in Relation to Parents' Rights, and Recommendation of Two Existing Diocesan Policies.

New Religion Books from Seton Press





Information about Seton conferences is sent by mail to home schoolers on our mailing list in the state, and usually to surrounding states as well. Conferences include talks as well as the sale of Seton textbooks and supplemental books. Costs are borne by Seton. If your support group is interested in having a conference in your area, please call Mary Lou Warren at Seton.

Sending in Tests

Please send in the quarterly tests each quarter. Many students have sent all four quarters at the end of the year. This is not good education, because it gives students no opportunity to benefit from any comments or chance to better their answers on future tests. It also slows down the process of grading for all the students.

Seton is hiring more full-time in-house teacher-graders, and believes that papers will be returned more quickly

this year. At the moment we have nearly 30 elementary level teacher-graders, about 3 or 4 per grade level. In eighth grade, for example, the work is done by three full-time in-house teacher-graders. In addition, one part-time at-home teacher-grader who was a math major and is a home-schooling mother, grades the Algebra $\frac{1}{2}$.

Round Table

The Sixth Annual Round Table of Catholic Home Schooling Leaders will be meeting in Houston on Friday, Saturday, and Sunday, November 6, 7, and 8. All local and state Catholic home schooling support group leaders, or leaders associated with programs, publications, or associations, are cordially invited. The purpose is to discuss mutual concerns, issues, and problems, and to discuss solutions. For further information, please contact Harry Leonard: phone: 281-482-4271; fax: 281-482-1116; e mail: harryl@worldnet.att.net; internet: www.Rc.net/org/arch.

HSLDA Discount

If you want to join the Home School Legal Defense Association, you can get a \$15 discount rate by giving them the Seton Home Study School Discount Number: 297239. HSLDA helps home schooling families, keeps leaders informed about proposed state and national legislation, and sponsors Christian leadership conferences.

New Database System

Due to the growth of Seton, we need to install a new database system which will serve the growing number of students as well as the variety and complexities of the Seton business. Seton, as you know, has become a publisher of Catholic textbooks, as well as a distributor of textbooks.

The new database system is very expensive, and we ask first, that you keep us in your prayers as we stretch our budget beyond its normal boundaries, and second, that you ask Our Lord to send us one or more large donations.

Your Church Bulletin

We encourage you to place an ad or notice in your own church bulletin for Seton Home Study School. It need only say "Catholic Home Schooling. Write Seton Home Study School, 1350 Progress Drive, Front Royal, VA 22630; or call 540-636-9990; fax: 540-636-1602; Internet at www.SetonHome.org; or e mail: info@SetonHome.org"

Congratulations

To *Rosemary Shannon*, of Fort Wayne, Indiana, who scored a perfect 800 on the verbal section of the SAT test.

To *Brian Donlon*, of Charlottesville, VA, who received a Navy ROTC Scholarship to the University of Virginia.

To *April Anderson*, 14, *Mary Anderson*, 11, and *Gabrielle Anderson*, 9, of Batavia, Iowa, who were winners in a nationwide contest suggesting ideas for future articles in the "Country Kids" section of *Farm Journal* magazine.

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Executive Editor:
Dr. Mary Kay Clark, Ph.D.

Editor:
James Price, M.Ed.

Seton Counselors (dial 540 plus these numbers)

Religion/Sacraments: Fr. Hermley, Fr. Constantine: 636-9990
High School English: Mark Gallagher: 636-2342
High School Math: Don Valaike: 636-1846
High School Guidance/Testing: Bob Wiesner: 636-2238
History: Bruce Clark: 636-6870, Ext. 122
Elementary: Jacinta Blackl: 636-1755
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Home Schooling Mothers: Janet Hartley: 636-9990
Learning Disabilities: Pat Walker: 636-6870, Ext. 152
Elementary Graders: Beth Seton: 636-6870, Ext. 149
High School Graders: Melissa Olt: 636-6870, Ext. 138

Code of Canon Law

Title III: Catholic Education

Canon 793.1. Parents as well as those who take their place are obliged and enjoy the right to educate their offspring; Catholic parents also have the duty and the right to select those means and institutions through which they can provide more suitably for the Catholic education of the children according to local circumstances.

Canon 794.1. The duty and right of educating belongs in a unique way to the Church which has been divinely entrusted with the mission to assist men and women so that they can arrive at the fullness of the Christian life.

Canon 798. Parents are to entrust their children to those schools in which Catholic education is provided; but if they are unable to do this, they are bound to provide for their suitable Catholic education outside the schools.

Title II: The Obligations and Rights of the Lay Christian Faithful

Canon 226.2. Because they have given life to their children, parents have a most serious obligation and enjoy the right to educate them; therefore Christian parents are especially to care for the Catholic education of their children according to the teaching handed on by the Church.

Title VII: Marriage; Chapter VII: The Effects of Marriage

Canon 1136. Parents have the most serious duty and the primary right to do all in their power to see to the physical, social, cultural, moral, and religious upbringing of their children.

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