



Seton Home Study School

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Nativity of Mary

September is a new beginning for most home schooling families as we start the new home schooling year.

September can be a new beginning in our spiritual lives as well. We celebrate the beginning of the redemption of mankind on September 8th, the birthday (nativity) of the Blessed Virgin Mary. Meditating on the events relating to this feast, we can be inspired in our own home schooling.

St. Anne, the mother of the Blessed Virgin Mary, understood, perhaps from Mary's birth, that Mary had a special role to play in God's plan of salvation. Mary herself certainly knew at a very young age that she had an important part to play in the redemption of mankind. Though the coming of the Archangel Gabriel at the Annunciation may have been a surprise, certainly God, in conjunction with St. Anne, prepared Mary in her spiritual life from the days when she was very young.

St. Anne prepared her daughter for the highest level of spirituality, and then entered her into the Jewish temple-convent. A holy and saintly woman herself, St. Anne must have recognized the unique holiness of Mary. Probably very soon after Mary was born, St. Anne knew that Mary was created by God for a very special purpose. Without doubt, St. Anne was the first to recognize the sinlessness of Mary.

St. Anne is usually depicted in paintings, icons, and statues teaching the young Mary with a book in her hand. St. Anne taught her the truths and

doctrines revealed by God to the Jewish people in the Old Testament. Though St. Anne may not have completely understood the role that Mary was to play in the redemption, we can be sure that she dedicated herself to the teaching of Mary as far as she was able, teaching her especially about the coming of the Savior, the Messiah.

St. Anne became more holy herself in the teaching of Mary, discussing with Mary the truths of God. Mary's total innocence must have deeply affected St. Anne and St. Joachim, and probably brought them new spiritual and doctrinal insights. Certainly it was their awareness of Mary's total innocence, her total life in God, her unusual height of wisdom and understanding of spiritual matters that caused them to enter Mary into the temple-convent when she was still a very young girl.

In one of the liturgical prayers, we read, "Anne, divinely wise, you carried in your womb the Mother of God, the Immaculate One who gave life to Life." Living with little Mary gave her parents divine wisdom, the kind of wisdom that can only come from one completely empty of all sin, from one who is "full of grace."

In a novena prayer to St. Anne, we pray: "St. Anne, you are a model for spouses, parents, and grandparents. The first grace I beg of you is the grace to love more and more sincerely the sweet Virgin Mary, Mother of God and my mother, and Jesus, my Lord and my God."

St. Anne should be a special patron for us home schooling parents. She

understands our desire to teach and train our children to be holy and to attain eternal happiness in heaven. She understands our desire to bring our children closer and closer to Mary and her Divine Son, Jesus Christ.

St. Anne and the Blessed Mother know better than we ourselves the role that we and our children have in the redeeming of our American secular society. St. Anne may not have fully understood the role her daughter was to play in the redemption of mankind, just as we do not fully know the role our children are to play in the future of our society. Like St. Anne, however, we need to trust in God our Father, and we need to keep the highest goals of sanctity in our own lives. Through our good example of the Marian virtues, our children can learn to be holy and keep their innocence.

Many of us have learned that our children, in their innocence, can lead us parents to higher holiness. Many of us have learned that our children, when they are not so innocent, can give us the opportunity to practice Marian virtues and even thus lead us to high holiness.

Our Mother of Perpetual Help is always ready, is always by our side to give us the faith, the courage, and the strength to persevere.

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Questions We Are Asked

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

How can I help my son enjoy reading? He is in third grade and is continuing to struggle with it.

After religion, the most important subject a child needs to learn is reading. This is one subject we cannot delay or put off. This is one subject we need to keep working on each and every day, though it may be best to do it in short time periods.

There are several things you need to do. First, make sure your son has no vision or hearing problems. Second, go back over the phonics lessons, starting even with first grade. Be sure he knows his phonics. If he does not, take the necessary time to review, every day for perhaps twenty minutes four times a day. Give him materials to read at the phonetic level he can handle. Put off teaching some of the minor subjects until you are able to raise his reading level to third grade.

Once you are convinced that your child knows his phonics, start him reading books at a lower level than third grade. Give him reading that is easy. Ask the librarian for fiction and non-fiction titles that are easy reading. (Be sure to read them yourself to make sure they don't contain anti-Christian ideas.)

Spend time reading with him, alternating sentences. He reads a sentence, then you read a sentence. Insist on proper pronunciation and inflection.

Since you need him to be an independent reader, consider rewarding him for reading a book on his own. You could give him one or two books a week to read on his own, giving him ten cents or another reward for each book he reads.

To make sure that he is understanding what he is reading, he cannot

be "paid" for his book until he gives you a report. This report should be five to ten minutes long. He must tell you the story in his own words, tell you why he thinks the author wrote the book or the purpose of the book, and finally he must tell you if this book will help him in any way, or has it influenced his thinking or made him change his mind about something.

Home schooling support groups could consider having book clubs. One month the children could read about people in American history, another month children could read about scientists.

There are many little lives of the saints available for young children. Check out the book lists for Daughters of St. Paul, TAN Books, Ignatius Press, and Neumann Press. Remember also that the "classics" are classics because over a period of several generations, kids have enjoyed reading these books. Children are more motivated to read when they read a book they don't want to put down!

Most libraries have book club programs. The children are given certificates to buy ice cream or other treats. The more books they read and report on, the more certificates they can earn. Home schooling support groups could consider having book clubs as well. One month the children could read about people in American history, another month children could read about scientists, and so on.

This kind of program helps children to develop a love for reading. In this day and age, it takes extra effort for children to "work" at reading when the television, video, computers, and all sorts of technology are competing for your child's time. If it works, try it for any age child, even into high school.

I have decided not to enroll some of my children until they reach high school age. Do you have any tips for me for teaching my younger children?

The main problem we see when students are home schooled and do not come to us until high school is in the area of writing. It is difficult for parents to make their child write a book report, paragraph, or essay if the child just won't do it.

Sometimes parents are happy when the children read and read. They love reading and they read a book or two every week. However, there is often no indication that the child has comprehended accurately or analyzed the ideas in relation to Catholic teachings. It is impossible to write a report without thinking. That is why it is so important for children to write and write as well as read and read. We recommend that you buy a word processor or computer and have your children use it for writing original paragraphs, poems, short stories, critical analyses, letters to the editor, current events reports, and so on. At this time when good quality computers can be purchased for less than \$500, there is really no reason why any home schooling family should be without a computer.

Reading textbooks help children develop thinking skills. The advantage of having readers with selections and discussion questions on a grade level is that it forces the child to analyze what he has just read. Putting events of the story in order, comparing and contrasting ideas or characters, and pulling out examples to prove a point are simply invaluable exercises that must be started earlier than high school.

I am a new home schooling mother, and I find that members of the local support group disagree about contacting the local superintendent or state department of education. What is your opinion?

The first thing you need to find out is what is the law in your state. If you don't have a copy of your state law, we can send you a copy, or you can find it on the Internet by going to the Home School Legal Defense Association web site at www.hslda.org.

We would never advise people not to follow the law in their state. However, in most states, many home schoolers do not contact local or state authorities no matter what the law is. This is because most Christians believe some of the home schooling regulations are illegal, unconstitutional, or immoral. Home schooling is legal in every state.

Our general advice is to have as little contact with government authorities as possible. We include two chapters in the book *Catholic Home Schooling* which deal with contacting authorities.

A few states, like Virginia, have a religious exemption. This means that families who believe that the home schooling regulations are against their religious convictions are not bound by the home schooling regulations. We have noticed that when parents write their local superintendent, they usually receive a copy of the regulations, but there is no mention of the religious exemption.

The home schooling movement in this country is very important for many reasons. It is forcing honest educators to think more about the monopoly they have forced on the citizens of this country for more than a hundred years. It is forcing parents to consider alternatives. It is forcing Christians to think about the importance of their values. It is forcing working parents to evaluate their role as parents.

The home schooling movement is a quiet but steadily-growing movement affecting primarily families, but also schools and colleges, work places, men and women's role in the family. It is

affecting the Catholic Church, the role of pastors, bishops, and parents in education.

Considering all these factors, it is important that you stand up for what you believe and the teachings of the Church.

What do you think about teaching a foreign language to a child in fifth grade?

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It is wonderful if you can teach a foreign language to any age child, even a little baby. Whenever parents can speak more than one language, they should use both languages in the family with the children. It develops a part of the brain that is important and, when developed, will allow a person to learn even more languages quickly. If grandparents can speak more than one language, they should teach the grandchildren.

In most situations in this country, however, parents speak only one language. Therefore, either parents must learn a language along with their children, which is a wonderful idea, or parents must find a tutor or a program for children, which is another good idea.

We don't offer a foreign language course in the elementary grades simply because there is so much else to learn that is required by the states. However, if parents believe a child can handle it,

the first year high school foreign language courses could be taken in seventh or eighth grade. However, the language should be kept up all through high school because most colleges require entering freshman to take a foreign language.

My parents and married siblings are all strongly opposed to my home schooling. I know I am doing the right thing because I have been a teacher and will not allow my son in a school. Is there anything I should say to them?

I notice that you are from a small rural area. In these areas, family is very strong, which is good, but ideas which are different and go against the traditional family practices are more strongly opposed. In big cities where so many alternatives are available and being practiced, relatives are more open to new ideas.

Your strength, your courage, your wisdom, and graces, are coming from God and His Blessed Mother. That is what needs to keep you strong. As long as we live, there will always be battles for us Catholics. After all, the Son of God was crucified for teaching the truth to His own chosen people. We must accept crucifixion ourselves in many different ways.

I would recommend that you stay off the subject for now. Perhaps in the years to come, you might show them something that your child has accomplished, a special book report or a science project. For now, keep your family in your daily prayers, and enroll them in a perpetual Mass association. Meanwhile, try to find a good Catholic home schooling support group. Even one other supportive Catholic family will help you and your son.



The Importance of Home Education

by Benjamin D. Fisher

Seton Home Study School Graduate

Throughout our country's history, the family has been an integral unit in our society which has given us the ability to function as an organized government. Without the support of the family unit, the foundations of society as we know it would fall. Also, proper education which is comprehensive and detailed is one of the best defenses against our modern culture, which is seemingly trying to drag the youth of our day into the inability to function in the world. Finally, the strengthening of the Faith in our youth is absolutely necessary for them to be able to guard themselves against the permissiveness of the age. In my experience, home schooling is the answer to all of these concerns and prepares our youth for responsible and holy lives.

First of all, home schooling is one of the best ways in which to educate children. As a recent graduate of Seton Home Study School, I have found that home education is superior to any of the other schools I have heard about or been in. Perhaps the primary reason for this is the ability to go at my own pace, which gives me the freedom to study more both what I don't quite understand and what I really enjoy. This attention to detail is impossible in the normal classroom atmosphere. For instance, before our family even had heard of homeschooling, I was enrolled in the local public school. Not being really talented at grasping mathematical concepts, I had fallen behind the rest of the class, mostly because the class had to keep going when I still didn't understand yesterday's concepts. When we started homeschooling in my sixth grade year, my skills began to improve with the better attention to concepts. Now, as a high school graduate, I have no problem with math, and will probably major in Aerospace Engineering. Homeschooling gave me the skills necessary to study what I wanted to.

Home schooling also benefits the family, and serves to strengthen and guard it against the pressures of the world to lose the faith that Christ has given us. I can say that the experience of home schooling has benefited my life greatly, primarily through the closeness between myself and my parents. Consequently, under the guidance of the Church, my parents have been able to detect and help me rectify the faults that are prevalent in my nature and temperament. This teaching in the Faith I have received from them has given me the ability to discern the truth and love our Lord. Finally, their guidance has enabled me to become a better and more responsible adult in today's world. This closeness has also given me a greater love of them, which in turn has strengthened the familial bond.

Communication is the key to any relationship, and it is even more critical in the affinity between parent and child because they must live in harmony

together if the unity of the family is to be preserved. In my experience as a home-schooled student, I have found that the benefit of more constant parental association has given me the ability to communicate with them more fully. In fact, the highest benefit I have received through homeschooling is the ability to communicate with my parents in a respectful and loving fashion. This communication lays the foundations of the parental role model and leads to greater understanding in the family. Ultimately, the parents are a role model in home schooling as the way in which their children should hold fast to the Faith and the values it proclaims.

In conclusion, home schooling has given me an excellent education under the Seton Home Study curriculum. It has given me the social skills of dealing with others in the workplace, and given me kindness and compassion in dealing with younger children. Most especially, it has given me a love and respect for my parents, and a sense of responsibility, both of which I have found indispensable for true Catholic life in the world.

All Glory & Honor be to God Alone!

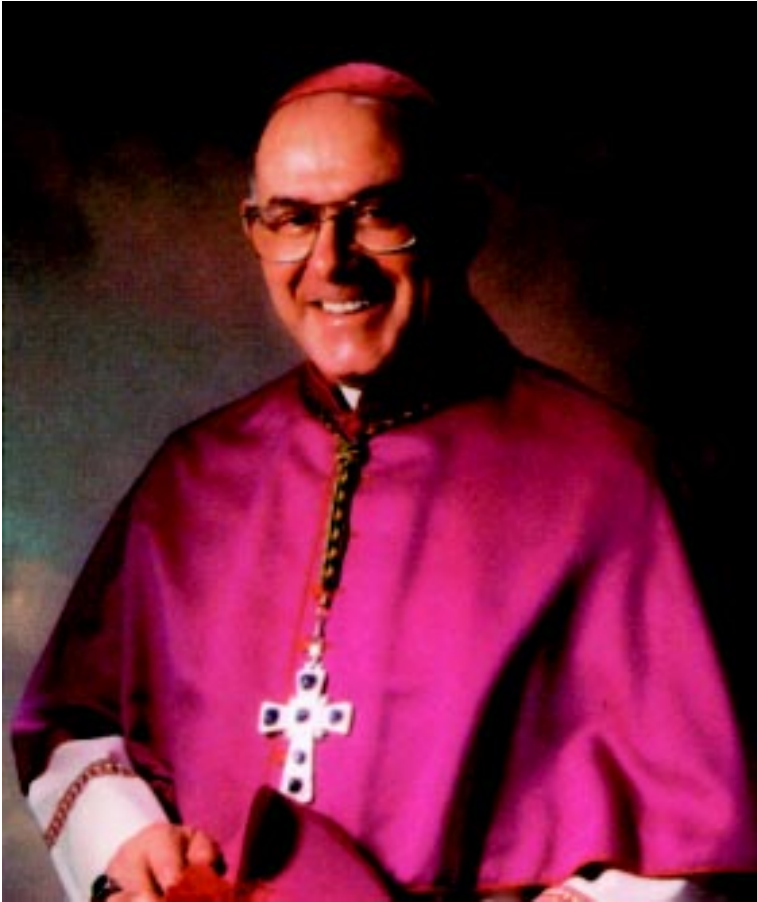
Poetry Winner

Last year, Seton Home Study School student Rosemary Shannon wrote the winning poem in the Sursum Corda poetry contest. Here is her winning poem:

To Mary, Mother of Mercy

Dear Mother, years ago, imbued with grace,
 You had the love to bid the Savior come.
 You knew the aching need the human race
 Had for your Son, the great redeeming One.
 Sweet Mother, filled with mercy, you did not
 Count all the swords that soon would pierce your heart,
 And even to this day you've not forgot
 The little lambs that wander off apart.
 With "yes" once more upon your lips you go
 To point each one to your beloved Lord,
 And mercy is your brightness even though
 Each straying hoof has sharpened keen a sword.
 Dear Mother, haste again to little lambs
 And hide us safely in the Shepherd's hands.

Arlington Diocese Celebrates 25 Year Anniversary



Bishop Paul S. Loverde

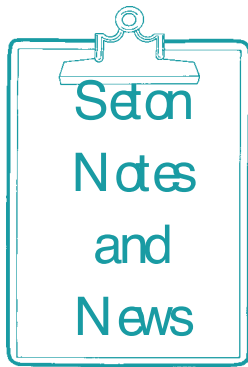


Arlington Diocese Coat of Arms

Seton Home Study School joins the rest of the Arlington Diocese in celebrating the 25th anniversary of the founding of the Diocese. The Arlington Diocese was created on August 13th, 1974, from 21 counties carved out from the Richmond Diocese. Since that time, the Arlington Diocese has seen incredible growth. From 136,000 Catholics in 1974, the Diocese has grown to 336,123 Catholics today. The growth of population has been mirrored by a growth in the number of priests serving the Diocese, which regularly ordains priests in large numbers. During the episcopate of our last bishop, John R. Keating, 84 new priests were ordained, and more than 20 new churches were dedicated.

Seton is proud to be part of the Arlington Diocese and to contribute to the spiritual life of the Diocese. Front Royal has become a center of Catholic education and cultural activity, with Christendom College, Human Life International, and Seton basing their apostolates here. Under the guidance of Fr. William Reuhl, St. John the Baptist Parish in Front Royal recently completed a new church to accommodate its growing needs. St. John's averages about five new families every month. About half of the children in the parish are home schooled.

May God continue to bless the Arlington Diocese and all those living and working in it.



Conferences

Information about Seton conferences is sent by mail to homeschooling families 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. Half-day conferences also available. 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.

Many state and local groups are now sponsoring their own conferences, inviting various Catholic vendors and curriculum providers. Seton is anxious to participate at these conferences as a vendor. Dr. Mary Kay Clark would be happy to be a speaker in exchange for a vendor table plus travel expenses.

Also, Seton would be happy to share expenses by providing speakers, such as those on our regular program or others, especially priests and home schooling

fathers. Ginny Seuffert, mother of twelve children and home schooler for many years, is a favorite speaker who offers her homeschooling tips with fun and humor.

This past year, Seton sent information to everyone on the Seton mailing list to families within 100 miles of the non-Seton conferences at which Dr. Clark was a speaker. These conferences showed a dramatic increase in attendance.

Boston, MA. Seton Family Home Schooling Conference. Oct. 9, 1999. Co-sponsored by the Boston Area Catholic Home-schoolers. Book Sales: Bring your Catalog! Rev. Robert Hermley on Church Teachings on Home Schooling; Mrs. Virginia Seuffert on A Practical Guide for Home Schooling K to 12; Father James McLucas on Emasculation in Contemporary Culture: the Danger to Catholic Fatherhood; Mr. Paul Sullivan of Magdalen College on Home Schooling for College; Dr. Mary Kay Clark on Cultivating Catholic Culture in Our Homes; Home Schooling the High Schooler; Panel by Mrs. Seuffert and Dr. Clark: Answering your questions on Teens and Discipline.

Denver, CO. Family & Home Schooling Conference. Oct. 23, 1999. Co-sponsored by: Denver Area Seton Home Schoolers, Catholics United for the Faith, including Emmaus Road Publishing and FOCUS; Knights of Columbus Council # 7502. Representative from Archbishop Chaput invited to say Mass. Book Sales: Bring your Catalog! Rev. Robert Hermley on Church Teachings on Home Schooling; Mrs. Virginia Seuffert on A Practical Guide for Home Schooling K to 12; Dr. Mary Kay Clark on Cultivating Catholic Culture in Our Homes; Mr. Curtis Martin on Focusing on the College Years; Restoring the Hearts of the Fathers; Panel by Mrs. Seuffert, Mr. Martin, Dr. Clark: Answering your questions on Teens and Discipline.

The Round Table

Seventh Annual Meeting of Catholic Home Schooling Leaders meeting. San Antonio, TX. November 19-21, 1999. Sponsored by Catholic Home Schooling Network of America, as well as Catholic Home Schoolers of San Antonio. To discuss national issues, or local issues which appear around the country. Canon lawyer will be present.

Accounts Overdue

Seton has been compelled to charge late fees to those seriously overdue in their monthly payments, that is, more than sixty days overdue. We still have over \$100,000 in overdue accounts receivable. We have now hired Hal Brock as our Accounts Receivable collector. If you have an overdue account, he will be trying to reach you to arrange payment.

For the sake of the Seton apostolate, we ask that all those on the payment plan, please make their payments on time.

California Office

Seton has opened a California Office in the Los Angeles area. Student records for California students will be kept on file. Seton representative, Mark Gallagher, is available to visit support group curriculum fairs and conferences. Contact Mark at Seton Home Study California, 44751 Date Street, Suite 8, Lancaster, CA 93534. Phone: 805-948-8881; email at setonca@networkone.net.

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Mother of the Redeemer

Through her mediation, subordinate to that of the Redeemer, Mary contributes in a special way to the union of the pilgrim Church on earth with the eschatological and heavenly reality of the Communion of Saints, since she has already been "assumed into heaven." The truth of the Assumption, defined by Pius XII, is reaffirmed by the Second Vatican Council, which thus expresses the Church's faith: "Preserved free from all guilt of original sin, the Immaculate Virgin was taken up body and soul into heavenly glory upon the completion of her earthly sojourn. She was exalted by the Lord as Queen of the Universe, in order that she might be the more thoroughly conformed to her Son, the Lord of lords (cf. Rev. 19:16) and the conqueror of sin and death." In this teaching Pius XII was in continuity with Tradition, which has found many different expressions in the history of the Church, both in the East and in the West.

By the mystery of the Assumption into heaven there were definitively accomplished in Mary all the effects of the one mediation of Christ the Redeemer of the world and Risen Lord: "In Christ shall all be made alive. But each in his own order: Christ the first fruits, then at his coming those who belong to Christ" (1 Cor. 15:22-23). In the mystery of the Assumption is expressed the faith of the Church, according to which Mary is "united by a close and indissoluble bond" to Christ, for, if as Virgin and Mother she was singularly united with him in his first

coming, so through her continued collaboration with him she will also be united with him in expectation of the second; "redeemed in an especially sublime manner by reason of the merits of her Son," she also has that specifically maternal role of mediatrix of mercy at his final coming, when all those who belong to Christ "shall be made alive," when "the last enemy to be destroyed is death" (1 Cor. 15:26)."

Connected with this exaltation of the noble "Daughter of Sion" through her Assumption into heaven is the mystery of her eternal glory. For the Mother of Christ is glorified as "Queen of the Universe." She who at the Annunciation called herself the "handmaid of the Lord" remained throughout her earthly life faithful to what this name expresses. In this she confirmed that she was a true "disciple" of Christ, who strongly emphasized that his mission was one of service: the Son of Man "came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many" (Mt. 20:28). In this way Mary became the first of those who, "serving Christ also in others, with humility and patience lead their brothers and sisters to that King whom to serve is to reign," and she fully obtained that "state of royal freedom" proper to Christ's disciples: to serve means to reign!

from *Redemptoris Mater*, Pope John Paul II, 1987

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