



Seton Home Study School

Volume XVI, Number 10

“Under the Magisterium of the Catholic Church”

October 1999

Theotokos

In the month of October, we recall again that the Blessed Virgin Mary is a model for us home schooling parents, especially as she agreed to trust God and to follow His Will at the Annunciation.

In agreeing to carry the Son of God in her womb, in agreeing to raise the Son of God, she was agreeing to be a channel of grace by bringing Jesus to all of us in the world. With her assent, Mary became the Christ-bearer. In the Byzantine Rite of the Catholic Church, the Blessed Mother is often referred to as the Theotokos, meaning “she who bears God.”

When we decide to teach our children at home, when we decide to give our children the richness of the Faith on a full-time daily basis, when we decide to bring Christ to our children through the daily lessons, events, activities, experiences, and Mass, we are in reality following the Blessed Mother by becoming Christ-bearers ourselves.

When the Blessed Virgin said, “Be it done unto me according to your word,” she accepted without question all that that acceptance meant. So we must accept our daily difficulties and misunderstandings by others. Our home schooling often causes misunderstandings, even unkindness, by friends and relatives who don’t realize our sacred mission, our sacred vocation, to be Christ-bearers for our children.

The Blessed Virgin Mary accepted the will of God the Father to be a Christ-bearer, and she trusted her Father in Heaven so much that she accepted in silence whatever difficulties He would send, even misunderstanding by those she loved and those closest to her, even by Joseph until the angel came to Joseph in a dream.

When the Blessed Virgin Mary went with Joseph to Bethlehem, the city of their

own ancestors, the city in which their own relatives resided, nevertheless, no one gave them a room in which to bring Christ into the world. They had faith that God the Father would provide, and indeed He provided a stable, a humble private place among the lowly animals.

When Mary bore the Messiah in that humble place, she did not need to go out and advertise. She trusted that God would use her to bring to her Son those of the world who were seeking the Truth. And so they came! To the humble shepherds, who were faithfully looking upward to the sky for the sign that the Messiah was coming, God sent angelic messengers to show them where to find the Truth. Even the rich and wealthy and powerful of the world who are looking for Truth will be sent a sign to show them the Christ.

As we home schooling parents remain quietly teaching and training our children in our homes, as a family attending frequent or daily Mass in humility and in obedience, as we walk quietly through our community, those looking for Truth will see our home schooled children as “bearers of Christ.” They will come and ask to know “What Truth do you have that makes you and your children look and act differently? How can I obtain that Truth for my family?”

When Mary was told by Joseph that an angel said they were to flee to Egypt with the Christ Child, certainly the whole history of the Jews in Egypt, the story of the boy babies being killed at the time of Moses, must have come to her mind. Yet she had Faith in God her Father in Heaven that He would protect her and her family.

All of us home schooling parents at some time wonder why God puts us amid those who are antagonistic to us

because we are Catholic and home schooling. We must grow stronger in our Faith in God the Father. He will protect us in the midst of those who not only do not understand Christianity, but are about the business of killing, or support the killing, of little ones, either their bodies while they are in the womb or their souls in the government schools.

Mary knows what it means to be betrayed by one’s own. Her beloved Son was not put to death by the traditional enemies of the Jews. He was put to death by His own chosen people! Why should we home schooling families be surprised that our own Catholic relatives and friends, even those in our parishes and dioceses, are opposing us?

“By their fruits you shall know them.” We need to keep our eyes on Mary, our model and our mother. She will continue to produce children who are looking Heavenward like the shepherds and kings. She will continue to produce children who will be called to the vocation of the priesthood and the religious life. She will teach us what we cannot understand, how God must in His own way demonstrate that Love can change lives.

“Remember O most gracious Virgin Mary, that never was it known, that anyone who fled to thy protection, implored thy help, or sought thy intercession, was left unaided.”

- MKC

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Questions We Are Asked

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

This is my first year home schooling. I have four children, all boys, in grades 7, 5, 3, & K. I have two preschoolers. How can I manage? I feel overwhelmed with problems in the family.

Crosses are the ladders to heaven. Many families call us about family problems. Trials in life should make us turn frequently in trust to Our Lord and His Blessed Mother. How we deal with these crosses are lessons we teach our children. These lessons in the practice of the virtues of acceptance, patience, and perseverance are more important lessons than reading, writing, and arithmetic.

Remember too, that you will continue to have crosses and difficulties whether you homeschool or not. Putting your children into a school won't solve medical problems, make the children better behaved, or necessarily make your life any easier or simpler.

In the past, fathers were home to help. It is common now for fathers to leave the home early, travel a great distance, and not return until dinnertime. This causes real stress on mothers as they must deal with all the situations in the family for many hours each day.

Please consider asking your husband to be the "supervisor" of the family homeschool. Your seventh grade boy could be under the supervision of your husband. Your husband could look at your son's work assignments for the day before leaving for work. He could check the work when he comes home. Your husband could work with your son in a more formal class situation on Saturday for an hour or so.

All children, but especially adolescent boys, respond well to having their dads work with them, whether with schoolwork or with chores or field trips. Your husband could help with at least one subject with the younger boys, perhaps on the weekend.

Consider having your oldest boy help as a teacher assistant. Take a subject in which he could use some review of foundational concepts, and have him "tutor" your son in the fifth grade. Both boys will benefit, not only in the academics, but also in becoming close friends. Building this kind of relationship between children will last a lifetime. These kinds of close growing up experiences will be remembered as special treasures. As parents themselves later, they will encourage this same kind of family life in their children.

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In the same way, consider asking your fifth grade boy to help with the third grade boy, and the third grade boy with the kindergarten boy.

Keep in mind that the priority courses need to be taught every day. Every morning when the children are most ready to learn, teach the necessary subjects, such as religion,

reading, math, English, spelling, and vocabulary. If possible, teach reading and math for 30 minutes in the morning and thirty minutes in the afternoon.

Secondary subjects in the elementary levels, such as history and science, could be taught once or twice a week, or done on weekends with their father. These subjects could be learned but not tested; grades are not necessary in these subjects at the elementary level. For your seventh grader, perhaps your husband could work with him on Sunday afternoons, although your son may be able to do these subjects by himself.

Prayer is essential for success in home schooling. Be sure that you start each day with prayer, and that the rosary is said every day. Consider spacing the decades out over the day, saying only one or two decades at a time. Have prayer constantly on your lips and encourage your children to be always in a prayer mode. Train them to automatically turn to their guardian angel or patron saint when they struggle with a math problem or English concept.

Teach your children to become independent learners to some extent. After you have explained a concept and watched a child do the first couple of problems or assignments, insist that he must try three times to figure it out and say at least three short prayers or ejaculations before coming to you for further explanation.

Sometimes a student should skip a problem which seems difficult and in doing further problems, might be able to come back and redo the difficult one. Your seventh grader is old enough to do a few problems, look up the answers to make sure he is doing them correctly, and then continue doing the assignments.

With boys, often the problem is slow handwriting because of the slower development of the small hand muscles. Consider having the older children learn to work on the computer for some of their

assignments. Also consider cutting down on some of the written assignments. Instead of having the child write out all twenty of the vocabulary or spelling definitions, only assign the ten or fifteen which you think are most important.

As you can see, lots of little tips and ideas often make the difference. As time goes on, your homeschool lifestyle becomes smoother and you fit the ups and downs into the basic pattern. Basic to any successful family life, of course, is daily prayer by everyone in the family.

We have been enrolled for two years in the same grade level, and are just now getting around to sending in all four quarters of work. Would you please grade the papers and send the next year's books?

It is important for parents to realize that by not sending in the work for each quarter as it is finished, or for each high school subject as a quarter is finished, the children's education and/or recording of grades and credits suffers.

If you do not wish to take advantage of our grading service, that is entirely up to you. However, if you do want us to grade your children's papers, but the work is not sent in as each quarter's work is finished, the children cannot possibly benefit from our suggestions because too much time has passed.

In addition, we are constantly working to upgrade, revise, improve, re-align the work assignments, most frequently as a result of parental suggestions and comments.

A while ago, a family with three enrolled children sent papers which were four years old, all subjects, all quarters. They wanted us to grade them immediately, so they could get their new books. While this is an extreme case, more and more test papers are coming in that are two or three years old. Because of the revising of tests, we no longer have the keys available, which makes it difficult to grade the tests.

If your child is enrolled in our high school program, and for some reason the child returns to a local high school but the grades are not complete for the year(s) your child was with us, we cannot grade your child's work two or three years later. If you decide to home school on your own, but you want Seton grades from courses taken two or three years previously but not completed, we may not be able to grade the tests. New revised tests may need to be sent.

In earlier generations, there was a lot of work to do; children did not have time to fight and argue, and they were too tired after their chores or after jobs outside the home.

How do you deal with a nine-year-old child who resents everything her sister, fifteen months younger, does? Her younger sister learns quickly.

The wonderful thing about home schooling is that good and strong relationships can and should develop among brothers and sisters. However, it sometimes happens that an older child who is struggling with schoolwork, or having problems being obedient, becomes resentful of a younger child who does well in school, who enjoys working hard, who learns easily, or who seems naturally obedient.

The problem is, of course, a spiritual problem, and must be solved primarily through spiritual means. If at all possible, attend daily Mass as a family. Pray together daily as a family. The children's guardian angels and patron saints must be invoked frequently and daily, by you and by your children.

Good Catholic television and radio shows or videos can help your children (just as bad shows can hurt

them). Try to watch the beautiful daily Mass on Mother Angelica's EWTN television network. Also, your children can learn the virtues of obedience and charity by watching videos of lives of the saints (available from Seton). The saint videos are presented in cartoon format for the younger children and as live action movies for the older children.

One reason why children get into trouble these days, boys with fighting and girls with bickering, is that they don't have enough to do. In earlier generations, there was lots of work to do; children did not have time to fight and argue, and they were too tired after their chores or after jobs outside the home.

Give your daughter more work to do. She should have some regular household chores, such as washing dishes or making her bed. Some jobs, however, could be paid, such as planting flower bulbs in the garden. Outside jobs are especially recommended because the fresh air causes the oxygen to circulate in the blood and helps children to become refreshed and feel better in general. Your daughter might take up a hobby or an activity, such as music lessons, in which she could do very well and excel, and not be worrying about being jealous of her younger sister.

Unkind remarks and unkind treatment of brothers and sisters cannot be tolerated. There must be consequences for these unkind remarks, which are more serious than similar remarks against friends or strangers because of the injustice to family members.

There should always be an explanation in spiritual terms about why the action was wrong which can be given at the same time as the punishment or immediately following the punishment.



Book Reports

After math and English questions, we probably receive more calls about book reports than any other subject.

Parents find that many children do not like writing book reports. The problem is often that some children do not like the process of handwriting, and they especially do not like writing something over again to make corrections.

We encourage you to have your child write book reports or paragraphs or essays three times to improve their final copy. However, using a computer makes the necessary changes less time consuming and less agonizing for children and parents.

Beyond the physical process of handwriting is the real work of writing-thinking skills. You can see from the explanations and topic sentences for book reports this year that we are insisting on children coming to conclusions about what they have read, and not simply repeating the story in a summary.

In some grades, we explained about the book report in some later quarters, and that was a mistake. We should have placed it in the first and second quarters. We will make this correction next year. If you have not seen this explanation yet, look through the reading lesson plans and the section on How to Write a Book Report.

While some parents feel it is unnecessary for Seton to provide the topic sentences for two of the book reports, the number of parents calling tells us that most parents will like it. The topic sentences are very clear in the two example books, about just what children are supposed to be thinking about as they read the book. Parents should discuss with the child what he will be writing about in the report. As he reads, the child should be marking the pages which give examples he will be using in his report.

It is important that parents have a discussion with the child before he starts writing the report. The child

needs to clarify in his own mind, in his own words, the chronological events in the book, and the purpose of the book. The parent then can discuss with the child the specific points relating to the topic sentences.

Only after the discussion with the parent before beginning reading, only after the actual reading and marking of the relevant pages, and only after a discussion with the parent after reading the book should the child then begin writing.

It is a rule that we should write what we know about. A child "knows" about the topics he will write about if he has discussed the points he is looking for beforehand, looks for those points as he reads, and then discusses them again after reading the book.

Some people think that children in the fourth grade cannot come to conclusions, or cannot "see" examples of the points we choose for topics. However, we believe that children can develop their reasoning and conclusion skills early if they are encouraged.

Some other discussions can be helpful in this process. Children can be

encouraged to come to conclusions about events in their daily lives. For instance, encourage your children to think about why the baby cries at seven every evening, why Dad is sometimes late for dinner, and so on. Encourage your children to give examples which show why they have come to a particular conclusion.

Each day as you read the life of the saint for the day, discuss the virtues of the saint. Ask the children which virtues this saint had, and then prove it by an example or two giving evidence of that virtue.

A book report should not be a listing of events but a basic conclusion regarding the book with proofs that come from the book itself.

This kind of higher level thinking is very important at the junior and senior high school level. If a child attends a non-Catholic college, this kind of thinking will be necessary to discover the truth. It is also necessary to maintain the truth, and to maintain one's sanity and Catholic values in a world where corrupt and dishonest leaders are welcomed by crowds of fellow citizens.

The Ballad of Father Gilligan

Our Lord taught in parables because sometimes a story can convey an idea better than simply saying the idea. Good fiction can inspire in the reader a love of virtue and a desire for what is right. It teaches the heart as well as the mind.

The following is a poem in our high school World Literature textbook. Based on an old Irish legend, it was written by William Butler Yeats, a poet, dramatist, and essayist who won many honors, including a Nobel Prize in 1923, and an honorary degree from Oxford University.

We believe it is a model of fine literature which teaches Catholic philosophy in real life to our students.

The old priest Peter Gilligan
Was weary night and day;
For half his flock were in their beds,
Or under green sods lay.

Once, while he nodded on a chair,
At the moth-hour of eve,
Another poor man sent for him,
And he began to grieve.

"I have no rest, nor joy, nor peace,
For people die and die;"
And after cried he, "God forgive!
My body spoke, not I."

He knelt, and leaning on the chair,
He prayed and fell asleep;
And the moth-hour went from the fields,
And stars began to peep.

Letter from a Mother

Ladies and Gentlemen:

I just had to write to tell you how pleased I am with the quality of the homeschool curriculum which we received this year. This is my first year homeschooling and I just wish I could tell everyone in the world how wonderful your program has been.

We enrolled our son in a public school last year so he could become better socialized. Since he is an only child and we live on a farm, we felt public education (no Catholic school is in our area) might be the solution. I volunteered my time as a helper in my son's school room. There was absolutely no discipline, no structure and no education during the entire year.

The teacher and I witnessed an act of violence (a student slammed the head of another student against

a concrete floor) for which there was no disciplinary action taken and no report made to the parent of the injured child. I took it upon myself to report the incident to the teacher, parent, principal and superintendent of the school. After two meetings, I was told, nicely enough, to withdraw my son from school and go somewhere else.

We had thought about homeschooling before and after my year in the public school system, the decision was made to enroll our son in Seton. What a Godsend it has become. My son is safe at home, he is learning above our highest expectations and the time we have together has been wonderful. We grow closer each day.

At first, I did find it somewhat difficult to change my daily routine to incorporate his education, but with a little self-discipline, it has

become easier than I originally thought. As for his socialization, I have been able to enroll our son in community activities that have brought him new experiences and new friendships for himself as well as for us. He does attend CCD classes every Sunday, and has found new friends with whom he has a great deal in common. The teachers are amazed at how much further advanced my son is in religion than the other children. He is well on his way to receiving his First Communion.

I also would like to tell you about a neighbor down the road. She, unfortunately, is a fallen-away Catholic. She does homeschool her two children, and just lately asked if she could come by and see the books I use. I showed her all the materials and explained how I proceed through teaching every day. She said she was going to call Seton to find out if she could buy some of the books to help her children learn. She said she feels a Catholic education is the best education of all. That's quite a statement from a Baptist minister's wife!

I hope that all Catholic parents consider homeschooling. The rewards far outweigh any inconvenience on the parents' part.

P.S. I received the first quarter report back for our son, and I was so pleased to receive an Academic Achievement Award for him. All the notes on each of his tests were very encouraging and gave him a great feeling of accomplishment. He could hardly wait for his father to come in from working on the farm to show him his Award and to tell him about his grades. Thanks again.

They slowly into millions grew,
And leaves shook in the wind;
And God covered the world with shade,
And whispered to mankind.

Upon the time of sparrow chirp
When the moths came once more,
The old priest Peter Gilligan
Stood upright on the floor.

"Mavrone, mavrone! The man has died,
While I slept on the chair";
He roused his horse out of its sleep,
And rode with little care.

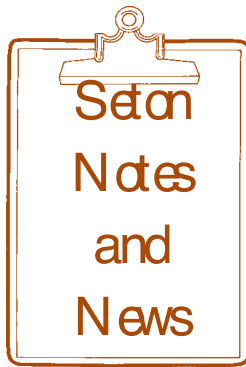
He rode now as he never rode,
By rocky lane and fen;
The sick man's wife opened the door:
"Father! You come again!"

"And is the poor man dead?" he cried.
"He died an hour ago."
The old priest Peter Gilligan
In grief swayed to and fro.

"When you were gone, he returned and died
As merry as a bird."
The old priest Peter Gilligan
He knelt him at that word.

"He Who hath made the night of stars
For souls who tire and bleed,
Sent one of His great angels down
To help me in my need.

"He Who is wrapped in purple robes,
With planets in His care,
Had pity on the least of things,
Asleep upon a chair."



Conferences

Information about Seton conferences is sent by mail to home schooling 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. We schedule conferences in the months of January through early July.

Non-Seton Conferences

Many state and local groups are now sponsoring their own conferences, inviting various Catholic vendors and curriculum providers. Seton is happy to participate at these conferences as a vendor. Dr. Mary Kay Clark is often available to speak at local conferences.

Also, Seton would be happy to help with local conferences 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 homeschooler for many years, is a favorite speaker who offers her home schooling 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.

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!

Program: Mass, followed by 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

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

The Round Table

Seventh Annual Meeting of Catholic Home Schooling Leaders. 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. Participants set the agenda. Families are invited to tour the Alamo. Contact Virginia in San Antonio at 210-646-8694. Or at e-mail: reslush@aol.com.

California Office

Seton has opened a California Office in the Los Angeles area. Student records for California students will be kept on file. Pre-packaged grade level curriculums available for grades K through 8. Curriculum and supplemental materials available for purchase separately. 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: 661-948-8881; E-Mail at setonca@networkone.net; fax: 661-948-7006.

Accounts Over due

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 \$120,000 in overdue accounts receivable. Hal Brock is now working as our Accounts Receivable coordinator. If you have an overdue account, he will be trying to reach you to arrange payment.

The Seton Home Study Newsletter

is published monthly by
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Phone: (540) 636-9990
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Subscription price for non-enrolled families is \$15 per year.

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Declaration on Christian Education

Some people like to say that Catholic homeschoolers are pre-Vatican II, but here is what the Declaration on Christian Education from Vatican II says about the parental role in education:

Since parents have given life to their children, they are bound by a grave obligation to educate their offspring, and so must be regarded as their primary and principal educators. Their role in education is of such importance that where it is missing, its place can scarcely be supplied. For it is the parents' task to create the kind of family atmosphere, inspired by love, and by devotion toward God and men, that is favorable to the complete personal and social education of their children.

The family is therefore, the principal school of the social virtues which are necessary to every society. It is therefore above all in the Christian family, inspired by the grace and the responsibility of the sacrament of matrimony that children should be taught to know and worship God, and to love their neighbor.... In the family, they will have their first experience of a well-balanced human society.... Parents should appreciate how important a role the truly Christian family plays in the life and progress of the whole people of God.

Seton Home Study School

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