



Seton Home Study School

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The Presentation of Mary

On November 21st, we celebrate that beautiful event when good Saint Anne presented her daughter, the Blessed Virgin Mary, to God in the Temple in Jerusalem, knowing, if only in a shadowy way, that her daughter was to fulfill a special role in God’s plan for the coming of the Messiah.

Mary was presented so that she could live near the Temple and be educated there in the Law of God. This education took place apart from other children. Her extraordinary role was also highlighted by the fact that she would be formally taught God’s law, something which was usually reserved only for boys. Mary’s life centered on the Temple—a life of study, devotion and prayer to God. This prepared her for all the amazing things that happened to her as the Mother of Jesus and for all the amazing things she did and still does do as the Mother of the Church.

In a way, we homeschooling parents “presented” our children in a special way to God when we decided to teach our children their Catholic Faith at home. We made the decision that we and our children will not be taught and formed by the secular world, but by a sacred atmosphere set apart for prayer and for religious instruction, as well as for art, music, and academic subjects.

When we decided to home school our children, we were deciding to make our homes “spiritual temples” for our children to learn the new law of grace. On this feast day, we should

unite ourselves and our family with St. Anne and the Blessed Mother and renew our commitment to keep our homes spiritual temples where our children can live and be devoted to the Catholic Faith in peace.

We must always work to ensure that our homes remain spiritual temples. We must make sure our homes remain places of daily prayer and places decorated with statues, pictures and sacramentals to help ourselves and our children be holy in thought and action.

In several Church documents, the vocation of marriage is referred to as a “salvific mission.” These documents encourage parents to be the primary and principal educators in forming their children in God’s plan for salvation. Thus, we are justified in making our homes “spiritual temples” and “churches of the home.”

The prayers for the feast day compare Mary, who carried the Christ Child in her womb, to the Temple of God. We are all taught in our catechisms that we become Temples of the Holy Spirit when we are baptized. Our children need to be taught that as Temples of the Holy Spirit, we must offer ourselves to God as Mary offered herself, both body and soul, to Him. We want to keep our bodies and souls as clean as they were on the day of Baptism. That is why we want to stay away from the culture of death and strengthen our souls in our own homes, in our own “domestic church.”

Father Fessio of Ignatius Press refers to home schooling homes as little monasteries, places where the soul is filled with learning about God and thus comes to love and serve God. Yet, he points out, that once the children receive this holy strength, they are to go out, like the monks, and spread the Gospel to the surrounding neighborhood.

So as we reflect on this great feast of the Presentation of the Blessed Mother in the Temple, let us renew our commitment not only to presenting our children to God through our home schooling but also to sending them out into the world as apostles.

“Let us celebrate this day, O assembly of the faithful, as a spiritual feast. With great love, let us honor the maiden of God, the Virgin and Mother of God, as she is presented to the Temple of the Lord; for she has been chosen from among all the generations to be the dwelling-place of Christ the King of us all. Behold! You mothers cast away sadness and regret, and follow the one who became the Mother of God and the Cause of Joy to the whole world, and glorify her. Let us all cry out in joy with the angel our salutation to the Woman full of Grace, who is always interceding for our souls.” (Vesper Prayers)

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Questions We Are Asked

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

I am finding it more and more difficult to find good books for my children which promote Christian values. Many classics seem to be out of print or they have been revised to reflect the current politically-correct agenda. What do you recommend?

I recommend that you be very careful in your selection of books, and that you read everything before you give it to your child. Non-fiction is the safest. Biographies, history, and science books are interesting for your children, and usually the safest.

Because of the lack of good books in the libraries, there does seem to be a revival among a few publishers to reprint the classics in paperback books for parents to buy for children. The "Puffin Series" seems to be the best we have seen. You can find these on Amazon.com and buy them on the Internet. This is the safest way to buy since so many bookstores are dangerous for your children to even enter.

There are a few books available to help parents select books, such as William Bennett's book: *The Book of Virtues: A Treasury of Great Moral Stories*. The Neumann Press has published an excellent book by Dr. Mitchell Kalpakgian, currently teaching at Magdalen College. His book is titled *The Mysteries of Life in Children's Literature*.

An excellent book you might like is *Books That Build Character*. The sub-title for this book is "A Guide to Teaching Your Child Moral Values Through Stories." The authors are William Kilpatrick and Gregory & Suzanne M. Wolfe. William Kilpatrick is author of *Why Johnny Can't Tell Right*

From Wrong." The Wolfes are former Christendom College professors.

The authors list books they have read that they believe have good moral values and are safe for children to read. It makes a handy reference book for parents looking for quality reading as well as uplifting stories.

Before the authors begin their book list and evaluations, there are five chapters on their philosophy about teaching virtues to children through books. In the chapter on "Selecting and Sharing Good Books: Some Guidelines," the authors give some "practical suggestions for sharing books with children." The following are some excerpts from pp. 58 to 60.

"Try to set aside some time each day for storytelling.

"Recommended reading levels are only a rough guide. Parents need to develop a feel for what will work with their own children.

"Keep in mind that children can understand and enjoy listening to stories that are above their actual reading level.

"For very small children, the main thing is to hear stories that are rhythmic and repetitive. It's the sound of the language that counts most at this stage.

"When reading aloud, choose stories that you, yourself, like. Reading should be enjoyable for everyone involved.

"Practice when possible. Good stories deserve a good reading. Read the story yourself before reading it to your children. That way you'll have a better idea of its plot and rhythm and bumpy spots.

"Be expressive. Learn when to slow down, when to speed up, when to pause. Create suspense by lowering your voice, create a dramatic effect by raising it. You might try changing your voice to fit each character. Don't be concerned that you lack the vocalization skills of a professional actor; children constitute a forgiving and enthusiastic audience.

"It is important to set the right mood when reading aloud. Allow time for your children to settle down. If you're reading from a picture book, you might spend some time talking about the book's cover. Ask your children what they think the story will be about. If it's a chapter in a novel, you might want to follow Jim Trelease's advice and ask, 'Let's see - where did we leave off yesterday?' or 'What's happened so far?'"

For very small children, the main thing is to hear stories that are rhythmic and repetitive. It's the sound of the language that counts most at this stage.

"Read-aloud time should be balanced with silent reading time. Even pre-readers should have time alone with picture books. Try instituting a practice of silent reading time for the whole family. Instead of gathering around the television at night, make the bookcase the focus of attention.

"Middle to older readers can continue to participate in read-alouds and should even be encouraged on occasion to take on the role of reader to their younger siblings, but most of their reading will be done

independently. ...develop the habit of regular trips to the library ...make a gift of a book about a subject that you know is of special interest to a child. ...If your older child sees that you are absorbed and entertained by a particular novel, it's a good bet that he or she will want to find out more about it."

Can you give us a book list for the early grades?

Next year, we are going to include in our primary grade level lesson plans some selected titles that we have reviewed ourselves and that have been around as popular titles for a long time. We have hesitated in the past because there are so many titles for the young children that we felt we could not do an adequate job. However, at this point, so much on the library and bookstore shelves is downright trash, we feel an obligation to offer something.

Although God has created millions of people, no two have ever been exactly the same. Each one of us receives unique talents and abilities. They are God's special gifts to us.

Besides being in our lesson plans, we will start putting more book titles on our web site. Right now on our web site, we have chapter by chapter comments and questions on our 7th and 8th grade book-report books. We will continue this down to the earliest grades. In addition, we will continue to find new titles for our book reports, and keep older comments on the web.

The Catholic publishers all have good books for young readers, such as saints' stories and Bible stories.

For the "classics," here are some titles we recommend for beginning readers to about grade three. (However, these are stories everyone likes to read at any age.) Look for the Hans Christian Anderson stories; the Brothers Grimm stories; the Beatrix Potter stories; *Aesop's Fables*; *The Little Prince*; *Pinocchio*; *Johnny Appleseed*; *Winnie the Pooh*; the *Curious George* stories; the *Madeline* stories; *Paddington Bear* books; original *Thomas the Tank Engine* books; the original *Raggedy Ann* and *Raggedy Andy* books. Two new books out: *For the Children: Words of Love and Inspiration from His Holiness Pope John Paul II*, Scholastic Press; and *Stories Told by Mother Teresa*, Element Children's Books.

My high school student does not seem interested in history. Have you any suggestions?

I asked our historian and author of historical novels to answer this question. It follows below:

C.S. Forrester is credited with the observation that, "Lucky people are the ones who know how much to leave to chance." I have believed that since I was six years old. It was one-half of the first truism my grandfather instilled in me. The second half was the fact that although God has created millions of people, no two have ever been exactly the same. Each one of us receives unique talents and abilities. They are God's special gifts to us. Our uniqueness is a very personal and special legacy.

My grandfather, a well-read Scottish sailor, noted for a legendary memory, implanted a conviction that the only way we can repay God for His gifts is by using them to the utmost of our capacity. Grandfather believed that "anyone who does not always do his best is 'spitting in God's eye.' On Judgment Day those squanderers will be called to account. Each time you shirk, and just slide by, one more black mark goes on your

permanent record, and there are no excuses for such conduct."

World War II began on my sixth birthday, and my parents entered the defense industry, so my grandfather became my mentor. He was a stringent taskmaster. Our days together were spent long before the expression "tough love" joined the American lexicon; but he certainly practiced it. Each day I learned to spell and use ten new words. Each week I learned, and could rationally discuss, five new historical events.

Mornings were spent learning. Afternoons meant piano practice and sports. Evenings were devoted to card playing and chess. Every time I won one of those games, the love shining in his eyes filled me with pride. For the next ten years, each day brought forth a new challenge, and I became a knowledge "junkie."

My grandfather died in 1952 with a final admonition to "Spend the final days of your life remembering what was, not wondering what might have been. In league with the Lord, you can accomplish anything!"

Of course, that's true. But only if we challenge ourselves. Only if we are committed to excellence. Only if we pray as though everything depends on God, and work as though everything depends on us. Therein lies my Grandfather's real wisdom.

Seton provides a wonderful opportunity for all of us to be all that we can be. Our only limits are the ones we place on ourselves. In this modern world, only about ten percent of people ever do their best. Consequently, ninety percent of the world's achievements are accomplished by ten percent of the world's citizens. They are the people who expend their energies on success—people who never settle for failure. They belong to a unique and exclusive club. If you decide to join them, be aware that the price of membership is a continual and maximum effort. The lofty perch of success is a difficult climb; but the joys of accomplishment are many, and the view from the top of the mountain is spectacular.

Rights and Responsibilities of Parents in Education

by Fr. John Hardon

Editor's Note: These are excerpts from a speech given by Father John Hardon at the Michigan Catholic Home Educators conference, July 1997.

I have been encouraging home schooling under the strong advice of the Holy See.

I want to speak to you on the rights and responsibilities of parents in religious education. A right is a moral claim a person has, to either have something or do something; others have a duty to respect that right. A responsibility is a moral obligation that follows from position or office.

Parents have the right to give their offspring a share in their own life of the spirit, corresponding to the share they have given them in their physical, natural life.

I cannot exaggerate the equality of these rights. As parents have the right to conceive and give birth to their children, so parents have the corresponding right to give and sustain the spiritual life of their offspring, without which the children would not reach heaven.

This correlation between the rights of parents to bring their children into this world, and the corresponding right to bring their children into the next world of a heavenly vision of God, is not coincidental. The one right follows on the other. As the parents of human persons, a married couple has the corresponding right to procreate their children in the life of the spirit.

These rights do not derive from the federal, state, or local civil government. The Supreme Court

recognized this in 1925 when it proclaimed: "The fundamental theory of liberty on which all governments in this country are based excludes any power of the state to standardize its children by forcing them to accept instruction from public teachers only. ... The child is not the mere creature of the state. Those who nurture the child and direct his destiny have the right, coupled with a high duty, to recognize and prepare that child for its own additional obligations.

Parents' rights to give their children a religious education of their choice do not come from any other authority on earth, whether state authority or ecclesiastical authority.

Parents should be ready to lay down their lives for their parental right to give their children an authentic, unqualifiedly Catholic education.

From whom do these rights of the parents derive to give their children a sound, authentic Catholic religious upbringing? These rights derive from God because it was God Who created the human spirit, and infused that soul into the body prepared for infusion by the mother and father.

Not only did God create the soul without which there would not be a human liberty for parents is to choose the religious formation of their children according to what they are convinced is the will of God.

Since God has given parents the privilege of bringing children into the world, both physically and spiritually, He also places on them the obligation to nurture both lives according to His Divine Will. The parents have the duty to see that the

child who is brought physically into the world is nourished in the knowledge and love of God. This is a graver responsibility than to bring children into the world.

There are two kinds of abortion going on in the world today: murder of innocent unborn children, depriving them of their physical lives as human beings. There is another abortion: depriving children of the right to preserve and sustain the life of their souls.

What good is it for a child to be born into this world and when it dies, that soul is dead in mortal sin? That second death is everlasting.

It is the duty of parents to provide the sustenance of the spiritual life of their offspring because none of us can bring ourselves into either physical or spiritual existence by ourselves. Without being nourished in body, that child will die. No less does a soul have to be nourished, and nourished by the same parents who provided that child with the natural life. Children must be fed and nurtured with a food for the mind which we call Faith, and nourished in the will with a love of God.

Parents must cooperate. It is father and mother who must cooperate in the religious upbringing of their children. In a country in which fatherhood is viewed as being diminished, even degraded, let's make sure we know that it is mother and father who are co-responsible for this personal religious upbringing of their children.

Father and mother, share your affection for one another. You do not cooperate with someone you do not love. You home schooling parents, you wives and husbands, you fathers and mothers: love your spouses. This cooperation brings

mutual understanding of the respective roles in the religious upbringing of your children.

Mother and father are to share with one another on how best each can contribute to this religious upbringing of their children. The three ways that parents nurture their children in things of the spirit is by what you are, by what you do, and by what you say.

The most basic means at the parents' disposal for training their children, not just for this world but for the world that will never end, is your own spiritual lives, by what you are. You parents are the principle, the main, the most fundamental channels of grace to your children.

It is God Who gives the grace, but God always communicates His grace through other human beings. There is no substitute for the power that you parents have to be channels, conduits, communicators of grace to your children. If you are humble, you will give the grace of humility to your children. If you are believing Catholics, you will give the grace of love and charity to your offspring, and in the exact measure that you parents possess that love and charity yourselves. And no one cheats!

Parents are the agents for communicating grace to their children by what they do. What a difference between being called a Catholic, or claiming to be a Catholic, and living like one! All of us have the tendency to divide our lives into two compartments: We are, in greater or less measure, Jekylls and Hydes. Oh, how you parents must watch every step you take, every movement you make! You are going to be the channels of grace to your children.

Parents are also channels of grace to their children by what they say. I cannot exaggerate the importance of what you say to your children. And how crucial it is to safeguard your children from listening, hearing, or reading, or watching what other people either say or do in your children's presence. Words and what we either see or read have a powerful influence on our lives. This is one reason why home schooling by parents who are professed Catholics is so crucially important. That is the one reason why you do not want to expose your children to persons or agencies that will misdirect your children.

Child psychologists agree that children begin to ask intelligent "why's" long before they have reached the age of reason. Children are hungry for knowledge. Over the years, parents have availed themselves of Catholic schools. However, these institutions of professed Catholic education must be unqualifiedly Catholic.

The parents may, and if possible, should, avail themselves of these various agencies for assisting parents in giving their children a Catholic education. Let's not forget: they are **aids** to the parents. Parents retain the basic and fundamental duty to choose among these agencies whether and to what extent they satisfy the parents' realization of their obligation to give a sound Catholic training to their offspring.

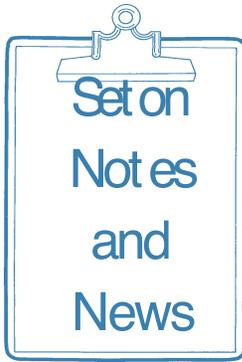
Everything depends on one word: Catholic. Catholic home education. There is a passage in Pope John Paul II's historic document *Catechesis in our Time*. "In places where widespread unbelief or invasive secularism

makes real religious growth practically impossible, then the Church of the home remains the one place where children and young people can receive authentic religious instruction. Thus there cannot be too great an effort on the part of Christian parents to prepare for this ministry of being their own children's catechists and carry it out with tireless zeal."

Home school Catholic education is defended and encouraged by the Vicar of Christ. He is saying that in secularized countries like our own, home schooling may be a necessity.

Why should Catholic parents home educate their children? Why not send them to Catholic schools? First, most of our once-flourishing Catholic schools in America have closed because thousands of consecrated women religious have abandoned these institutions. Second, because the religious instruction, even in catechetical programs in Catholic parishes is sadly deficient. This is confirmed by the frightening report given by the chairman of the Bishops' Commission on Catechetics. He recites a litany of doctrinal errors and defects in the religion textbooks used to teach children in parishes in our country.

Needless to say, more than ever in American history, Catholic parents must insist on the rights and responsibilities in the religious education of their children. These children are born into this world, but they are not born for this world. They are destined to be reunited with you, their parents, as families in heavenly eternity.



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. If your support group is interested in having a conference, please call Mary Lou Warren at Seton.

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 these conferences. We also suggest as a speaker Ginny Seuffert, mother of twelve children and home schooling mother of many years. She is a favorite speaker who offers her home schooling tips with fun and

humor. We also recommend Father James McLucas, who speaks about the role of the father in the Catholic family.

Accounts Overdue

Seton has been compelled to charge late fees to those overdue with their monthly payments. This apostolate relies on timely payments by parents in order to meet our own financial obligations to our employees and creditors. Please make payments on time. Thank you.

California Office

Available in Los Angeles California office are textbooks and pre-packed curriculums for grades K through 8. Mr. and Mrs. Richard Ellis are in charge of the office there. Contact them at Seton-California, 44751 Date St., Suite 8, Lancaster, CA 93534; phone: 661-948-8881; e-mail: setonca@io17.com; fax: 661-948-7006.

Donations

Thank you to all those who have made generous donations to Seton. Seton is doing vital work for the Church.

If you are able to make a donation to Seton, you can be sure that your money is being spent wisely on producing good Catholic textbooks for high quality Catholic education. Our new full-color religious art book, *Art Through Faith*, is sent to donors of \$100 or more. God bless you.

Letter from Seton Student

My name is Jennifer and I am a high school senior with Seton. No doubt you will remember the phone conversation we had about patriotism. I would like to thank you again for taking the time to teach me about this important quality.

Before I spoke with you, I did not understand what it meant to love one's country. Now I see that patriotism is neither a romantic blindness to our faults nor a despairing

skepticism about our future. Instead, the patriotic American recognizes America's strengths and failings, yet always strives to make her better. As you told me, "America is a star – she is dull now but she is still a star; we must make her shine again!" This has given me hope and courage, as well as a great sense of personal responsibility for American's future.

With the help and protection of Our Lady, patroness of the United States, we can actually make our nation a place where virtue and respect for life thrive! Thank you, Mr. Clark. By sharing your personal example of love for America, you have helped to make me realize that it is indeed a blessing to be an American.

On-Line Testing Status

The Earth Science course is available for online testing. As we go to press, the Spanish I, the French I, the grammar 9, and the physical science are just about ready to go online. In preparation are geography, biology, and Latin I. In beginning stages are Spanish II, French II, and Latin II; these should be ready by Thanksgiving. Please keep this project in your prayers.

We are accepting high school tests by e-mail also, such as history, religion, and English. We encourage students to send just the answers rather than write out all the questions. Just be sure to number them correctly. They may be sent to grading@setonhome.org. Our intention is to correct them electronically and e-mail them back to the student.

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...the faithful can open up for themselves a treasury of sacramental grace from which they draw supernatural power for the fulfilling of their rights and duties faithfully, holily, perseveringly, even unto death. Hence this sacrament [of Holy Matrimony] not only increases sanctifying grace ... but also adds particular gifts, dispositions, seeds of grace, by elevating and perfecting the natural powers.

By these gifts the parties are assisted not only in understanding, but in knowing intimately, in adhering to firmly, in willing effectively, and in successfully putting into practice, those things which pertain to the marriage state, its aims and duties, giving them a right to the actual assistance of grace, whensoever they need it for fulfilling the duties of their state.

Nevertheless, since it is a law of Divine Providence in the supernatural order that men do not reap the full fruit of the sacraments ... unless they cooperate with grace, the grace of Matrimony will remain for the most

part an unused talent, hidden in the field, unless the parties exercise these supernatural powers, and cultivate and develop the seeds of grace they have received.

If however, doing all that lies within their power, they cooperate diligently, they will be able with ease to bear the burdens of their state and to fulfill their duties. By such a sacrament, they will be strengthened, sanctified, and, in a manner, consecrated.

The blessing of offspring, however, is not completed by the mere begetting of them, but something else must be added, namely the proper education of the offspring. For the wise God would have failed to make sufficient provision for children that had been born ... if He had not given to those to whom He had entrusted the power and right to beget them, the power also and the right to educate them.

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Encyclical On Christian Marriage

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