



Seton Home



Study School

Volume XX, Number 2

◆ Newsletter 20th Anniversary Year ◆

February 2003

Our Lady of Lourdes

On February 11, the Church commemorates the apparitions of the Blessed Mother to St. Bernadette Soubirous in Lourdes, France, on February 11, 1858. On that date, as her sisters were searching for wood for the fire, Bernadette, a frail fourteen-year-old at the time, was lagging behind, unable to keep up with the others. Suddenly, the Blessed Mother, dressed in white with a wide blue sash, holding a long white pearl rosary, appeared in a niche in the side of a rocky cove. She signaled Bernadette to start saying the Rosary, and, as Bernadette said each Hail Mary on her rosary, the Blessed Mother let a bead slide through her own fingers.

The Blessed Mother asked Bernadette, "Will you render me the grace of coming here each day for fifteen days?" In spite of objections from her family and community, Bernadette's parents allowed her to return to the rocky cove, to see the beautiful lady again and again. Each time, Bernadette started by saying the Rosary.

Bernadette quickly learned the consequences of her apparitions. She started suffering from the intense questioning of the police and by neighbors. She was ridiculed by some teachers and some fellow students. They thought she was making up stories in order to gain attention. The Blessed Mother instructed Bernadette to go to the parish priest and to ask that a chapel be built at the place of her appearances. However, the priest did not believe that the Blessed Mother was appearing to Bernadette.

People did begin to believe, however, when miracles began to occur. At one point, the Blessed Mother told

Bernadette to dig in the earth. Where Bernadette dug, a spring appeared, and the water proved miraculous. The first miracle helped a partially-blind man to see. The second miracle was the cure of a young baby about to die who suddenly recovered after being immersed in the new spring water. Since then, thousands of healing miracles have happened with the water from the miraculous spring of Lourdes.

The life of St. Bernadette, especially around the time of the apparitions, inspires us in several ways to persevere in a virtuous and prayerful life and in home schooling. Such schooling, in fact, is an essential way of promoting Christian virtue and prayer in our time.

Bernadette's life reminds us that virtue and prayer are more important than innate talents, social status, success, and even health. Bernadette was not a very good student despite her good will and effort. Bernadette was from a poor family; her father did odd jobs, making only enough money to provide food for the family. The Soubirous' lived in an abandoned jailhouse, with little heat and barred windows. The four daughters shared a room together, and probably clung together in the winter to keep warm. The damp and cold conditions caused Bernadette to be physically sick and frail, though spiritually she was strong. She encouraged the others to say the daily Rosary.

We homeschooling families can become discouraged by the pressures of the world to succeed intellectually, socially, and economically while that same world is completely silent on virtue and

prayer or, more likely, contemptuous of them. It is all too easy to begin to judge homeschooling, not by whether it is encouraging virtue and prayer, but only by whether it gives practical advantages to our children. Of course, as parents, we have the responsibility to God and to society to raise our children to be literate, respectful, and diligent, but we need to realize when our true responsibility is becoming confused with more worldly dreams.

In addition, Bernadette's life reminds us that when we see the beauty of God and His Heaven by faith, then all the difficulties of life will seem unimportant compared to having the pearl of great price: knowing Jesus the Incarnate Son, His Heavenly Father, and the Holy Spirit.

Bernadette noted the extraordinary beauty and light that radiated from Mary, something which the children at Fatima noted as well. It seems it was that beauty and light that kept both Bernadette and the children at Fatima utterly loyal to their experiences despite the increase of suffering the apparitions caused them.

Blessed Mother, allow us to grasp by faith the light and beauty of your Son, so that we may endure the trials and tribulations of this world with serenity, and to understand that true happiness is not in this world, because we have had a taste of the world to come.

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Questions We Are Asked
 by *Dr. Mary Kay Clark*
 Director, *Seton Home Study School*

I am thinking about putting my high school son back in a school. What do you think?

About this time of year, when the homeschooling seems to be going slowly and the cold days seem long and the sunshine short, when teens become unhappy because they are restless and think they are "behind," it is easy for a weary mom to doubt herself.

When the doubts creep in, it is time to go back to first principles, to remember why we embarked on this enterprise in the first place. Our primary purpose as parents, our parental vocation, our salvific mission, is to educate our children in the Faith. As we have shared in the creative power of God by giving life to our children, now we share in the sanctifying power of God by teaching them.

Several years ago, Cardinal Gagnon said that parents in America have been very generous in helping missionaries throughout the world. Americans have always thought about spreading the Catholic Faith to the poor in Africa and Asia. However, at the same time, parents trusted the school to pass on the Faith and did not take on enough responsibility themselves, he said. The Cardinal said that with homeschooling, parents are focusing on evangelizing the very people they are called to evangelize, teaching the Faith to their own children, and on the way, learning it better themselves. The Faith is now becoming not only a topic of discussion among family members, but they are living the Faith as a family.

Homeschooling is not easy. Raising a family is not easy. It is years of work which demand patience and perseverance. It take prayer, lots and lots of prayer. The results, however, are eternal.

It seems like there is a great deal of work in the high school courses. Does my daughter need to do everything in the lesson plan manuals?

No. The lesson plan manual provides a suggested plan for day to day lessons. We believe that a student who does all the lessons will obtain a very good education and do well on the tests. In fact, most if not all of the questions on the science and history tests are contained in the textbook review sections or in the discussion questions in the manual. However, if you believe that your child does not need to do all the review assignments, you may certainly skip some assignments.

It seems that the English courses are the ones that give students the greatest challenge. To help students, both objective and interpretive type questions for the English courses, with the answers, are contained in the lesson plan manual. Students who work through the questions during the weeks preceding the test should do very well on the test.

The English Book Analyses are made easier by the extensive and detailed outline in the manual for most of the essay questions. Students are asked to write an essay on two topics. The manual is specific about what needs to be written. The topics relate to development of character, the conflict and plot, the theme, and the morality of a character. To encourage students, chapter notes for most of the books are available on our web site.

A point of frustration for students can come when they submit work and it is returned as incomplete. Most of the time this happens because students have not followed directions for an assignment. We try to be very detailed about assignments that need to be

submitted, so students should read over directions carefully to make sure that they are doing the correct work for the assignment.

If your student is having difficulties, our counselors can be reached on the phone, on the Message Board on our web site, by email, by fax, or by mail.

We have been happy to send our tests to Seton over the internet to your web site, but there seems to be a lack of comments.

There are two types of comments on the electronically graded items. Some comments are typed inside red boxes. Other comments are attached to highlighted sections of text. These attached comments are in yellow. To read them, you need to double-click on the highlighted text.

The Faith is now becoming not only a topic of discussion among family members, but they are living the Faith as a family.

Some parents have reported that when they try to view a graded paper, only a blank screen is displayed. This seems to be some sort of bug in the Acrobat Reader. If this happens, clicking the "Refresh" button on the browser usually seems to display the file properly.

Most parents find that they like the comments on the internet because they are so easily read. In addition, it is so much quicker for the teacher/graders, that they are able to add more helpful comments than on paper. Many parents like sending in tests and papers over the internet because it is so easy and inexpensive. Sending items online, it is easy to send assignments as they are done rather than waiting for the end of the quarter.

One of my children's papers have been returned, but I have not received the other child's papers. Do you know why?

We have different teacher/graders for different grade levels, and we have unequal numbers of papers in a grade level at a given time. At the high school level, we have different teacher/graders for each subject. So it is not likely that papers for different children, or papers for different high school subjects, would be returned on the same day.

When the children are working, try to keep the distractions at a minimum. Now may be the time to have a child do more work in a separate room apart from the younger children.

You can go to our web site and find out when your papers were received, when the teacher/grader picked them up, when they were returned, and the grades on the report card. Just click on My Seton, then click on Papers Received or Grades. Also, you may click on "I want to..." and the pull-down box will give you options: Enter Home Grades, View Plan B [financial] Account, Change my Address, Print a Quarter Report Form, View a Student's Grades, Take an Online Test, Send Work to Seton to be Graded.

I see that you are not allowing students to redo objective questions on a test. I would like my child to redo a test for a better grade.

We were forced to cut down on redo tests for objective questions because we were receiving too many, especially at the high school level, and we believe students have more than adequate time to study for their tests. Unlike students in a classroom, Seton students have all the tests available all year long so that parents can advise their child what to study. Students can take their time studying for the test, and take their time taking the test.

For the online tests, students have plenty of time to review and to study the material since parents can advise them what is on the test. The test is submitted only when the student believes he has typed in the correct answers.

Also, many of the objective tests really cannot reasonably be redone. For example, if a test has ten true/false questions and the student misses three, it shows no mastery of the material for a student to resubmit the three questions missed with the right answer. Similarly, with multiple choice questions, you can come up with the right answer just through a process of elimination.

Essay questions, book reports, and similar items can be redone once.

My boys are finding it difficult to get back to work after Christmas break. What do you suggest?

The winter season is the best time of year to make progress with the homeschooling. Once spring hits, the boys will want to be outside. So you want to do your best to keep the kids on schedule during the months before May.

Boys and girls need daily activity, of course, so be sure to give them brief chores or other activities between the class times. Studies have shown that children who have physical activity at regular intervals throughout the day do better in their academic work.

When my kids were young, I purchased jump ropes for indoor activities during the winter months. Jump ropes can be found in different sizes and colors. You can find out

about jump rope games and jump rope tricks on the Internet.

If you have a basement or space in a garage or on a porch, let the children play games with balls or other items.

When the children are working, try to keep the distractions at a minimum. Now may be the time to have a child do more work in a separate room rather than working with younger children in the same room.

Stay in daily prayer to the children's guardian angels to help them persevere in their studies.

My pastor says my daughter needs to do community service before she may be confirmed. I don't know where I can find the time to drive her anywhere, and I need my daughter at home to help me with the younger children. What should I tell the pastor?

The Church teaches that sacraments are to be given generously and not withheld because someone did not do community service. In past years, confirmation was given to children at five and six years old when they received their First Holy Communion. If you were to take this to the Vatican, they would end up writing the bishop to tell the pastor to give your daughter Confirmation with no further ado. However, appealing to the Vatican is not a route that many families would want to take.

Your best option is to tell the pastor that you need your daughter at home, and that in a large family, children learn service to each other. Learning to love and serve those closest to you can be more important than community service. It is easy to love "the poor." It is much harder to love the little brother who is always bothering you.

If your pastor decides not to allow your child to be confirmed, you basically have three choices. First, you can try to have your child perform the community service. Second, you can look for a parish that will be more accommodating. Third, you can start a process of writing letters to the bishop and ultimately to Rome.

Educators Because They Are Parents

It is evident to those whose minds are not dominated and blinded by pervasive secular ideology that the specific purpose of marriage is the procreation and education of children. Marriage is for the conception, birth, and education of new human persons made in the image of God. That Marriage is for children sets Marriage as a unique form of human association. A man and a woman become a husband and a wife in one flesh in order to become a father and a mother to their children.

The sober mind recognizes that the necessary connection between Marriage and children is a truth of the Natural Law. It is, in fact, a common or general principle of the Natural Law.

This Truth about Marriage being necessarily connected to children fits the criteria for good law. The criteria for good law, including Natural Law, are first, good law is knowable; second, good law is mandatory—it is not merely advice or ideals; third, good law is reasonable, it makes sense according to the nature of things; fourth, good law is for the common good; and fifth, good law is authoritatively given.

First, the Truth that Marriage is ordained for the procreation and education of children is knowable in that it is known through immediate experience. It is also the common experience of mankind lived through the centuries.

Second, the Truth that Marriage is ordained for the procreation and education of children is mandatory in that it binds us in conscience to undertake Marriage only if we are open to its specific purpose of procreating and educating children. Indeed, a marriage in which the parties are able to have children but

specifically intend completely to prevent the conception of any children is an invalid marriage.

Third, the Truth that Marriage is for the procreation and education of children is reasonable in that it is based on the permanent nature and purposes of the human being.

Fourth, the Truth that Marriage is for the procreation and education of children is for the common good is obvious in that children are necessary for the continuation of the human family.

Fifth, the Truth that Marriage is for the procreation and education of children is authoritative. That Marriage is essentially ordained of the procreation and education of children comes from God the Author of all, the Creator of all, and absolute Authority over all.

While the good-willed person can recognize the Natural Law that Marriage is for the procreation of children, he may have more difficulty in recognizing that Marriage is also for the education of children. His difficulty may come from the entrenched custom and attitude, one hundred and fifty years in the making in this country, that have encouraged parents to give up much of their important and essential duty to educate their own children. The belief or attitude that education is best done away from home in a classroom school for most of the day has been carefully cultivated for the past several generations in this country.

This belief or attitude became an entrenched attitude and custom because the Industrial Revolution seemed to have demanded an educational counterpart to its factory—the classroom school. Modern governments pushed such schools because they were excellent tools for enforcing conformity and

change according to the ideological agenda a government was following.

This entrenched attitude about schools has encouraged parents, almost unconsciously, to view their duty to educate their children as no more than to teach personal hygiene and social courtesies, and then send them off to school.

The belief of most parents in the recent past and today is: The school will socialize them, give them a worldview, and test their talents.

Most Catholic parents today, affected by the prevalent attitudes of the secular society, view catechesis or religious education as mainly the job of the religion class in the Catholic school, or of the religion class at the local parish church. For most Catholic parents, sending their children to a religion class, and for the family to go to Sunday Mass, is the extent of their religious obligation, and the extent of religious instruction for the children.

The majority of governments in the world that have been in charge of schools in the past 150 years have not been governments influenced by Christian or Catholic principles. These governments have been militantly secular, anti-clerical, anti-Catholic, or even militantly atheistic governments.

Even in our own beloved America, where individual liberty has been more respected than in a majority of European countries, the first government schools, or public schools, promoted a state religion with a Protestant character. Beginning in the 1960's, the government schools promoted an officially "neutral" position regarding religion. As we all know, completely ignoring the existence of God has resulted in an anti-Christian government-approved religion of secular humanism in the classrooms and textbooks of America.

To be neutral or indifferent to God is to be against Him. To omit or ignore the living Lord Jesus Christ is to deny Him.

In the nineteenth century, many of the Catholic bishops of the United States became worried about the influence on Catholic children of the government-approved Protestant religion in Catholic schools. At considerable cost and sacrifice, the Catholic bishops set up a separate Catholic school system. Unfortunately, the pervasive effects of the Industrial Revolution, the immigrant status of many Catholics, the English-dominated Protestant government, and a certain shortsightedness when the pope was warning about Americanism, made it impossible for Catholic clergy to see, and foresee, the need for Catholic homeschooling as an option.

Before the 1960's, the Catholic schools tried to both catechize and educate by using Catholic textbooks in all areas of the curriculum, either from Catholic publishers or from Catholic divisions of secular publishers.

Since the late 1960's, however, Catholic schools began using the same secular textbooks as the secular-humanistic government schools. In addition, the Catholic schools have followed more and more state standards for the government schools, such as in the area of sex education. Meanwhile, many parents have been unaware of these changes in the schools because mothers were forced by economic changes to take jobs outside the home, and focus more time on work rather than family.

The catechesis of Catholic schools since the 1960's has both caused and reflected the confusion in the Church for the past 30-plus years. Many religion teachers and textbooks have become more concerned about

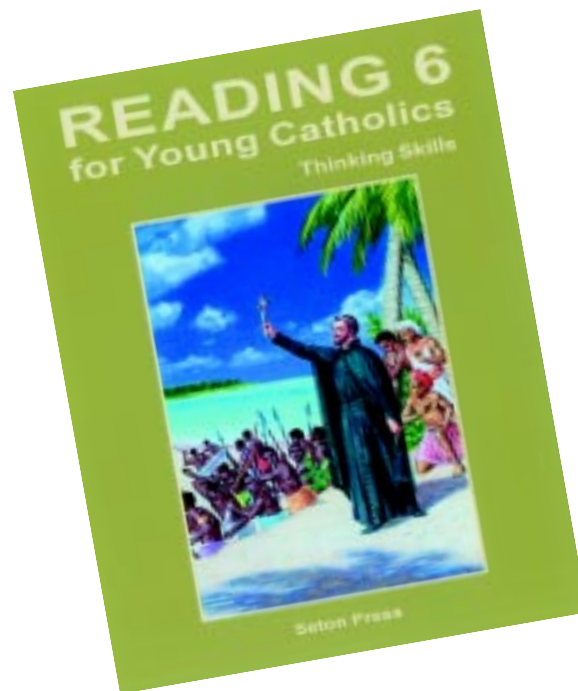
fashionable and dissident theology, psychology, sociology, and abstract social justice than about true doctrine, correct worship, the commandments for everyday life, regular private prayer, and salvation.

A few years ago, Archbishop Buechlein, as head of a "Committee to Oversee the Use of the Catechism," reported to his fellow bishops at their spring meeting that "there seem to be a number of doctrinal deficiencies common to many [catechisms]". Two of those listed were "Deficient teaching on original sin and sin in general; and meager exposition of Christian moral life."

Pope Pius XI's encyclical letter "On Christian Marriage" repeats the constant teaching of the Church: "The blessing of offspring... 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, also the power and the right to educate them."

So Catholic homeschooling must not be concerned merely with math and science. Our Catholic homeschooling must create an atmosphere in which a rich sacramental life flourishes, where our children practice Catholic devotions, attend Mass during the week as much as possible, as well as on Sundays, and go to Confession often. The combination of the sacraments and sacramentals, a strong daily prayer life, and a genuine concern for each other's welfare should be the result of a continuing reflection about the eternal salvation of each member of the family.



This beautiful new 91-page book tells the story of the life of St. Francis Xavier, while covering such concepts as reading comprehension, fact versus opinion, synonyms and antonyms, etc.

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The Liturgical Setting of Icons

by Robert Wiesner

A properly executed church building is a curious thing. A church is built of matter and stands on the earth while at the same time it is an outpost of the Kingdom of God and in a mystical way stands entirely apart from time and matter. The decoration and layout of a church should reflect this marvelous reality. In some mysterious way, worshippers entering their church should be taken outside themselves and be conscious of their presence in some fuller and richer reality.

When one enters an Eastern church, the immediate impression one should have is that of being overwhelmed by the icons. Everywhere, the eye should be met by the holy images. Indeed, some churches with the funds to support the work will have the walls completely covered, as well as the dome; literally, not one usable surface is left bare. "If a pagan asks you to show him your faith, take him into the church and place him before the icons." With these words, St. John of Damascus indicated the importance icons play in the public life of the Eastern Christian.

The church building is the place where Heaven meets earth on a continuing basis. Just as God became man and met His people in the locale of Israel, so the Incarnate God still meets His people in the Divine Liturgy in the locale of the church. The church sanctuary is the very throne room of God; the priest effects the actual physical presence of Jesus Christ the King in the Eucharist upon the altar, the throne. The church is thus a plot of heavenly property on earth, a place set completely apart from earthly concerns.

Late in the 10th century, Vladimir, ruler of the Kievan Rus, sent emissaries to various parts of the world in order to find a unifying faith for his people. As the reports

came in, Vladimir found some problem with each until the ambassadors to Constantinople came to him. Their report on the Divine Liturgy was summed up thus: "We did not know whether we were in Heaven or on earth." No one has yet stated the matter more clearly than that.

Dominating the scene in an Eastern church is always the iconostasis, or icon screen. The iconostasis sets apart the sanctuary from the body of the church, clearly defining the space behind as "the holy of holies." Some would say that the iconostasis serves as some kind of a barrier between the priest and the people or even between God and the people. The real idea, however, is that the iconostasis is an interface between Heaven and earth. In a sense the images on the iconostasis serve as God's ambassadors to us. Through the images we communicate directly with the Heavenly court. Far from being a barrier, the iconostasis serves, as some say, as Windows into Heaven.

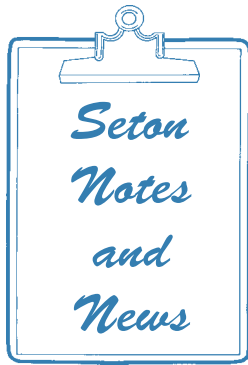
There are four primary icons in the iconostasis, set at eye level. On the left would stand the icon of the general patron of the church. Most Slavic churches would have in this position the icon of St. Nicholas, since he is the general patron of the Slavic people. The icon on the far right would be the patron for the particular parish. Thus, a church named for the Transfiguration of the Lord would have an icon of the feast in that location. Beside each of these icons are the deacon's doors, usually with icons of St. Stephen the Deacon or of angels. The deacons are the servants of the altar on earth, the angels the servants of God Himself in Heaven. These doors are used by the servants of the altar, the altar boys and the deacons.

The center of the iconostasis contains the temporal history of the Incarnation. The Royal Doors (sometimes called the Beautiful Gate) open directly upon the altar. To the left of these doors stands the icon of the Mother of God, along with her divine Son. This tells us that indeed God became man and entered a particular time to effect our salvation; this explains our past history.

The Royal Doors themselves have images of the Annunciation and the four evangelists; above them is the icon of the Mystical Supper, or Last Supper. These doors carry the message of salvation for our present time: through these doors the Gospel book is carried to proclaim the Word of God to the people and it is through these doors that the Eucharist is brought to the faithful. Generally it is only the priest who is allowed to pass through the Royal doors; the deacon may do so only if he is proclaiming the Gospel or carrying the Eucharist. In other words, the deacon may use these doors only if he is directly bringing Christ to the people.

To the right of the Royal doors stands the icon of Christ the Judge. This reminds us of future salvation history. At some point we must stand before Christ and give an account for our lives. This group of images on the lowest level of the iconostasis is called the Veneration Tier. These icons are directly accessible to the people so that they may easily bestow their kisses.

Above this level would stand the Festival Tier. Here would be found the twelve icons of the major feasts of the Eastern Calendar. Often these images are detachable so that for the appropriate feast day they may be taken down and placed on the Tetrapod, (a small table placed before the sanctuary) so that the people are able to venerate the festal icon.



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. For more information, contact Mary Lou Warren at 540-636-9990.

Harrisburg, PA. April 5, 2003. 9th Annual Catholic Homeschool Conference & Curriculum Fair, Holy Name of Jesus Parish. Dr. Mary Kay Clark will be speaking. For more information, contact Ellen at 717-866-5425.

West Allis, WI (Milwaukee area). April 5, 2003. Greater Milwaukee

Catholic Home Educators Curriculum Fair, Saint Mary Help of Christians Church. For more information, call 414-543-2655, or send email to czaplew@dias.net.

Berlin, NJ (Philadelphia area). April 5. Fourth Annual Catholic Homeschooling Curriculum and Book Fair, Mater Ecclesiae Mission Parish. Speakers will include Michael Behe, author of *Darwin's Black Box*.

St. Louis, MO. April 25 & 26. 2003 Catholic Home School Conference, St. John Bosco Catholic Church. For information, contact Kathy at 314-918-0639. Kenneth Clark will be speaking.

St. Paul/Minneapolis, MN. May 30-31, 2003. 5th Annual Minnesota Catholic Home Education Conference and Curriculum Fair, University of St. Thomas. For more information, contact Debbie at 952-941-5646.

Memphis, TN. May 23 & 24. St. Louis Church.

Indianapolis, IN. June 7, 2003. Get the Faith Catholic 2003 Curriculum Fair and Conference, Hamilton County Exhibition Center.

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The next level would be the Deesis Tier. The central icon here would be Christ enthroned. To either side would stand the Mother of God and John the Baptist in an attitude of worship and supplication. Outside of them would be ranged various saints in the same attitude. Surmounting the entire iconostasis would stand the triumphant Cross of Christ.

Russian churches sometimes employed even more tiers dealing with Prophets, Martyrs, Confessors and so forth. There is a record of one church which had no fewer than fifteen levels! Most churches, however, limit the iconostasis to two or three levels.

The iconostasis, along with the myriad of icons throughout the church, serve to remind us that in church we are actually in the presence of the heavenly court. No matter how large the visible congregation might be at the Liturgy, there is always present a vastly larger invisible congregation. In fact, at every Divine Liturgy the entire population of Heaven assists in our act of worship. All the saints are there, visibly through the medium of the icons and invisibly in their glorified state.

The Seton Home Study Newsletter

is published monthly by
Seton Home Study School
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Front Royal, VA 22630
Phone: (540) 636-9990
Fax Machine: (540) 636-1602
Internet: www.setonhome.org
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Subscription price for non-enrolled
families is \$15 per year.

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Rights and Duties of Parents Concerning Education

The task of giving education is rooted in the primary vocation of married couples to participate in God's creative activity: by begetting in love and for love a new person who has within himself or herself the vocation to growth and development, parents by that very fact take on the task of helping that person effectively to live a fully human life.

As the Second Vatican Council recalled, "Since parents have conferred life on their children, they have a most solemn obligation to educate their offspring. Hence, parents must be acknowledged as the first and foremost educators of their children. Their role as educators is so decisive that scarcely anything can compensate for their failure in it. For it devolves on parents to create a family atmosphere so animated with love and reverence for God and others that a well-rounded personal and social development will be fostered among the children. Hence, the family is the first school of those social virtues which every society needs."

The right and duty of parents to give education is essential, since it is connected with the transmission of

human life; it is *original and primary* with regard to the educational role of others, on account of the uniqueness of the loving relationship between parents and children; and it is *irreplaceable and inalienable* and therefore incapable of being entirely delegated to others or usurped by others.

In addition to these characteristics, it cannot be forgotten that the most basic element, so basic that it qualifies the educational role of parents, is *parental love*, which finds fulfillment in the task of education as it completes and perfects its service of life: as well as being a *source*, the parents' love is also the *animating principle* and therefore the *norm* inspiring and guiding all concrete educational activity, enriching it with the values of kindness, constancy, goodness, service, disinterestedness, and self-sacrifice that are the most precious fruit of love.

Pope John Paul II

*The Role of the Christian Family
in the Modern World*

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