



Seton Home



Study School

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The Epiphany

The Epiphany, celebrated on January 6th, is a celebration of the manifestation of Jesus as God made Man at the time of His Baptism. At the Jordan River came the first public proclamation, by God the Father Himself, that Jesus is Divine, and that He is the Son of God in Whom the Father is “well-pleased.”

Dear Jesus, as we meditate on the words of God the Father and the appearance of God the Holy Spirit, help us homeschooling parents to teach our children, even from the youngest ages, about Your great love for us. Help us to “reveal” to our children the love that You have for each one of us, such love that, even though You were perfectly happy in eternal bliss, You were willing to reduce Yourself to become human, in order to save us from the fires of Hell and open the gates of Heaven for us.

The Epiphany celebrates the event of the Baptism of Jesus in the Jordan River. Jesus gave us the model for the sacrament of Baptism, the first and foremost Sacrament because without it the other sacraments cannot be received. Baptism is the sacrament whereby a person makes a commitment, either personally or through a godparent, to live a life as a follower of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

Dear Jesus, as we retell the story of Your Baptism to our children, help us to renew, with our children, our Baptismal vows. Help us to renew our commitment to live as good Christians. Help each person in our family to realize that part of that commitment includes a commitment to homeschooling, whereby each one of us takes the responsibility to learn more about

living the Catholic sacramental life and to practice it faithfully.

At the Baptism of Jesus, all three Persons of the Blessed Trinity were present, making a public revelation for the first time not only of God the Father and of God the Son, but also of God the Holy Spirit. “This is My Beloved Son in Whom I am well pleased.” The words of God the Father were heard by St. John the Baptist and perhaps by others who were present.

Dear Jesus, help us homeschooling parents to persevere in our fight against the secular culture and the modern idea that all “religions” should be equally acceptable. In these confusing times when everything is accepted and tolerated, good or bad, true or untrue, remind us again and again to keep our thinking clear, to see that only one religion can be Good and True, and that is the religion taught by the Church established by Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the “Beloved Son” of the Eternal Father in Heaven.

In the Eastern Catholic churches, the celebration of the feast of the Epiphany includes the Blessing of Water. The priest blesses water, and the people come with their jars and carry some of the blessed water home for physical and spiritual cleansing or healing. The water is taken home for the “sanctification” of Catholic homes. This was a tradition, and teaching, of the saints of the early Church.

St. Gregory the Wonderworker, who died in the year 270, gave a homily on Christ’s Baptism. He taught that “The Lord, Who [came into] the Jordan River, through its streams transmitted

sanctification to all streams (of water).” Thus Jesus gave all the waters of the world the power of making us holy through the sacraments, as St. Gregory said, a “sign of heavenly streams” of divine grace.

St. Basil, who died in 379, in a homily on the Holy Spirit, said that through the prayers and blessings of the priest, water receives a “quickening power of the Holy Spirit.” St. Ambrose taught that the Holy Spirit “consecrated the waters through the prayer of the minister.” St. John Chrysostom, in 377, proclaimed in his homily on the Baptism of Christ: “This is the day on which Christ was baptized and through His Baptism sanctified the element of water. Wherefore, at midnight on this feast, all (faithful) draw of the (holy) water and store it in their homes, because on this day, the water is consecrated.”

Jesus, thank You for the gift of healing water, given to all future generations at the moment of Your Baptism. You blessed the waters of the world in a special way for each one of us so that when we were baptized, the water which You sanctified long ago was poured over our foreheads to cleanse us of Original Sin.

Jesus, as we teach our children and daily use the water You have so generously given us for physical and spiritual healing, bless us, enlighten us, help us to give You glory and praise.

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Questions We Are Asked

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

My son is in sixth grade. We seem to have the most trouble with the book reports. What ideas do you have?

Your elementary level student has a book report to do each quarter. You should have your child start reading the book in the first week of the quarter. He should read it over a period of three or four weeks, or less. If he reads it over a longer period of time, the plot and characterization begin to fade in his memory.

Before your son begins to read the book, discuss with him the topics or topic sentences which Seton expects him to write about. Go on the Seton web site, and read together the chapter notes which we have prepared for students. This will help him to put together the details and he can see the big picture at the same time. Hopefully, the notes will motivate him to read the book, and have a better sense of where the story is headed.

As he reads, your son could keep a pen or highlighter so he can mark the sentences or pages which relate to the topics in the report he will be writing. Alternatively, he could jot down a page number and short comment in a notebook. What he is usually required to do is look for examples or proofs of certain statements.

The purpose of these book reports is not only to read good literature and good Catholic stories, but also to think inductively rather than deductively. Thinking inductively, finding ideas, analyzing them, putting them together to see if they result in a certain conclusion, demands a higher level of thinking. It certainly does not come as easily as learning a body of facts.

Once the student is finished reading the book, the biggest obstacle to doing book reports seems to be starting them.

A blank computer screen or blank page seems to paralyze some students. It might be helpful for you to sit down with your child at the computer and ask him questions and have him type in the answers. Once the ideas are typed in, it will be easy later to reformat and polish the book report.

My daughter needs to write a paragraph about the theme of a book for a 9th grade class. She is struggling to understand how to find the theme.

Briefly, the theme is the main idea that the author is trying to convey to the reader. The theme is a general statement about life or human nature. Yet it should not be so general that it can apply to any book. It should be broader than the specific story, yet not apply to all stories.

Think about what the author means to say, what message about life in general he wants to convey to the reader. Is there something he wants to say about life, about how to be happy, about how to face certain kinds of struggles? There should be a repetition of situations showing the theme. The theme relates to the "lesson to be learned" or to the moral of the story.

For example, what is the theme of the story of Robin Hood? The theme cannot be "Everyone has the right to take what is rightfully his." This is too general and can apply to anything. The theme needs to be more specific to this story, yet have a moral which would apply to anyone in the same situation. The theme the author has in mind is this: "When government abuses its authority and causes citizens to live in poverty, citizens have a right to take back what in justice belongs to them." As you can see, this theme does not apply to all people and situations. It applies to a specific situation, not only the specifics of this book, but also generally to other

people (or characters) who have the problem of government abuse.

My daughter sent in a book report but you said that you were not able to grade it. Why is that?

We have problems when the book report is not the assigned book. It is impossible for graders to have read every book that a parent may choose for a book report, and it is not fair to the student for someone to grade a book report on a book the grader has not read.

Secondly, often the books are not appropriate for the assignment. If the assignment relates to a character analysis, and the book is totally an adventure plot, the student could not write a character analysis.

As he reads, your son could keep a pen or highlighter so he can mark the sentences or pages which relate to the topics in the report he will be writing.

Thirdly, the books on the library shelves often reflect the secular culture and have little redeeming value. The books children and teens are reading today deal with unpleasant situations which never mention God or religion, or even parents, as an important part of a solution. We believe that homeschooling families on the Seton program want a higher standard.

I am definitely behind schedule. I have only just started the second quarter. Do you have any suggestions about how I may catch up?

Try to relax and understand that one of the benefits of homeschooling is to help your children learn at the pace that is best for them. We don't keep a calendar, so if your child needs more time, please

take the time that is needed. There are probably some subjects for which he is on “schedule” or ahead of “schedule.”

To make yourself and your student feel better, why not send in the work that is done, even if it is not everything due for a quarter? What is discouraging to students is that time goes by and nothing has been sent to Seton, even though some work and some courses are actually finished. Don't wait until every quarter paper or assignment is finished to send work in.

Remember, you can always upload work to Seton and have it graded electronically. Plus, there are many online tests available in high school and grade school.

Remember, you can always upload work to Seton and have it graded electronically. Plus, there are many online tests available in high school and grade school. Simply go to My Seton, Log On with your family number (which is in the upper right-hand corner of the packing slip on the outside of the box you received from Seton). Choose the student you want (if you have more than one enrolled), then click on the Menu Item “Courses”. Scroll down to the subject and move your cursor to the proper icon to send assignments.

I am really having problems with understanding relative pronouns in the seventh grade English course.

One of the things we realize is that many parents did not have English grammar classes when they were in school. Many schools do not teach

grammar even now. So our academic counselors would be surprised if we did NOT receive phone calls asking how to teach certain concepts in English. In fact, the majority of the questions we receive are English questions.

I am sure that you know what a relative pronoun is, but that the difficulty relates to the way the relative pronoun is used in the sentence, or the case of the relative pronoun. One tip is to diagram all the sentences. That solidifies for you exactly the role of the relative pronoun in the sentence.

A search on the internet finds hundreds of sites under “diagramming relative pronouns.” Ask your seventh grader to study these, and you might want to study them also. They can be lots of fun, like figuring out a puzzle. After all, these are just exercises in logical thinking.

I noticed a friend of mine has the Composition 8 sheets. Will you be publishing a book?

As a matter of fact, we should have a Composition 8 text/workbook available by February or March. We have been working on revisions since we have had it in loose-leaf form for the past three years. It is not substantially different from the edition sent this year, but the book will be more user-friendly.

We are also working on the seventh-grade Catholic World Culture, to make it a text/workbook, with more specific questions for each chapter. Some parents have felt the chapter review list is too open-ended, and some feel students are not easily able to understand what is most significant. The revised book will be available for students for next year.

By the way, we very much welcome input from students and parents about what they like or do not like about books or courses. We are always trying to improve the courses and books. If you have comments, you can email them to curriculum.comments@setonhome.org.

I have been thinking that my ten-year-old daughter should be making friends with other homeschooling families. Do you think that a Catholic support group would be beneficial both spiritually and socially?

We hear pros and cons for the support groups, but one thing is sure, that the group must be Catholic. Father John Hardon spoke frequently at Catholic homeschooling conferences and continually emphasized the importance of attending support group meetings with parents who have the same values. Otherwise, it is too confusing for your child. Even a Catholic support group might have values that are somewhat different from your values.

Homeschooling support groups are very helpful for parents not to feel alone or discouraged. The other support group members have probably gone through similar problems to the ones you have and can help you solve the problems. Children also like to feel that they are not alone or strange for homeschooling. Support groups usually offer a variety of activities for both parents and children, but you do need to be careful not to take on too much. You don't have to be part of every activity, and you don't want your homeschooling support group actually to take time away from your homeschooling.

The bottom line is that Catholic support groups can be helpful, and are helpful for most Catholic homeschooling families. On the other hand, if a particular group is not helpful for you and your children, consider doing support-group type activities with another family or two who might be more in line with what you need and want for you and your daughter.

Did I hear correctly there has been a change in the audio lectures?

Yes. We conducted a survey regarding the audio lectures for some of our high school courses. Most students and parents did not like the fact that only the last three lectures were available at a time, so we have now arranged for all lectures up to the current week to remain available. This means that students who may have missed out on lectures from the first week to the present week, may now access whichever week or weeks they want.

If at all possible, we do encourage you to use the online audio lectures. These lectures are by experienced teachers in their respective fields. We feel that they really add to the overall value of the course.

Motivation

Motivation is always a major concern for homeschooling families. We receive calls each day from parents concerned about motivating their children to study. Although this is a problem with some girls, most of the children who need the motivation are boys, which is one reason fathers need to be involved in homeschooling.

If we study the Bible, we can see that fathers are given the responsibility to raise their sons, to discipline them and to train them in their skills. This is the plan of God because fathers should be role models and teachers. Fathers are *naturally* the best teachers of their sons, who have the same genes, usually the same tendencies or interests, and usually the same strengths and weaknesses.

In our society, many fathers must leave the home early in the morning and do not return until evening. They are busy and tired and often do not devote enough time to their sons. So it is usually up to homeschooling mothers to teach their sons. However, the boys do not learn as easily from mother, especially as the boys approach the teen years and develop more masculine traits, emotionally and intellectually.

Mothers need to encourage their husbands to take greater responsibility regarding the training of the boys. God gave children two parents for a reason. Training needs to be done by both parents. If there is anything that has been proven in our secular society today, it is that fathers have an essential role in the development of children.

Father can be Involved

Fathers can be involved in a variety of ways. Those who come home early in the afternoon, or work at home, can be very involved, playing with their children, training them and supervising them in chores, overseeing their schoolwork, even teaching a class or two.

Other fathers have little time during the day to spend with the children. Nevertheless, most fathers are home by six o'clock, which gives them a few hours before bedtime. Certainly an hour

or two could be spent being involved with the children at dinner and after dinner.

Dad could ask questions during the dinner hour about what happened during the day, especially regarding homeschool assignments. Dinner conversation in the family can actually be enlivened by discussion of topics such as a Civil War battle, a particularly tricky sentence to diagram, perspectives on understanding the way a vocabulary word is used in a sentence, a book report on *Robinson Crusoe*, and so on.

Fathers who are very busy during the week should consider working with their children on the weekends. Taking time on Saturday morning to go over the science curriculum, or to check out what was learned in religion during the week can motivate children to be ready to explain these to Dad on Saturday.

Although all children are more motivated when Father shows an active interest in the materials being studied every day, boys especially need that kind of motivation from their role models, their fathers.

Work with Father

If possible, children should go to work with Father once in a while. Fathers, especially those who have their own businesses, can teach their children the importance of diligence, perseverance, accuracy, punctuality, reliability, and honesty. Children need to see Father's dependence on God for success in his work.

Fathers can and should relate the child's homeschooling to his work. "Johnny, I don't think you understand that math concept. Here, let me show you how I do it at my work." Father should consider training the children to help in some way in his business, or to accompany him on his business trips.

One truck-driving father takes his son along frequently. Another father has a home and commercial service business. The older children work with Dad; the younger ones work on the books at home. Some fathers work with their children seasonally due to their jobs. Farming fathers work with the children on their studies during the winter, military fathers

work with their children when they are home on leave, teaching fathers work with their children during the summer.

A Daydreamer

Sometimes parents call and ask about a child of 6 to 10 years old who daydreams. Many times mothers say the child seems bright but shows little interest in working, and when he does work, he does not seem to retain the information.

A daydreamer could indicate several things. First, the child may have little self-discipline, and you need to do your best to pull him back to reality. A clock on his desk with a timer or an alarm set to go off every 15 minutes might help to make him realize time is slipping away. This is the kind of thing which mother needs to discern, when to keep pushing and when to pull back so as not to cause the child or herself to become too stressed.

Second, it is possible the work is too easy, and the child is bored. Offer to "test him out" of the courses. For instance, if he seems to daydream during math class, offer to test him out on the end-of-chapter test. If he can pass the test without doing the work in the chapter, he does not need to do the problems in the chapter. He may take the time to do a quick review of the chapter, or he may go back and review the chapter if he flunks the chapter test the first time.

Third, realize that some children of this age are simply not ready for sustained attention. You might cut back on the work by giving him only core subjects, and even these may be broken up over the day. You might give him some subjects with a sibling to keep his attention, even if the subject may be lower than his level. Review never hurts.

High School

A huge factor decreasing the motivation of high school students for their studies is the social pressure to drive cars and work part-time. In most cases, this is detrimental to education. When young people start driving and working out of the home, they tend to become independent of the authority of the home, and of the discipline of the educational process. With the car keys and money in hand, suddenly Shakespeare seems unimportant.

Work experience is good for high school students, but it needs to be limited; it should be more character-building than money-making. Work for teens, if possible, should be in connection with the family, either with Father or a family-related business. Obviously, if the family is in need and a young person must help to support the family, a job may be necessary. Even if a student must work, he should be concentrating on what has greater long-term importance: a quality Catholic high school education.

One idea that helps with motivating high school students who seem to slow down, or be overwhelmed with the work ahead, is to focus on achievement and results rather than with the day-to-day work. In the homeschooling situation, while the lesson plans are recommended, what is important is that the student learn the material in the best way for him.

For instance, in the ninth grade Grammar course, what we are concerned about is that the student can pass the final cumulative test. He may already know the material on nouns and pronouns, but may be weak in verbs. So once he has skimmed the nouns and pronouns, he can move to the sections in which he is weak. He can take the final test whenever he feels he is ready. He is not required to do the day-to-day work as long as he knows the material and can pass the test.

Another idea for high school students who seem to get bogged down and feel frustrated because they are behind is to do one or two subjects at a time. These students need to feel successful quickly. So if a student studies algebra all morning and takes a test or two, and then does history all afternoon, he can finish up two subjects in possibly six or seven weeks, and have two credits. At this pace, he can have a quarterly grade every week or every two weeks. This frequent feedback on grades is necessary for some students to keep motivated.

Parental Time

Sometimes parents ask how much time they should spend with a high school student to keep him motivated. Should the student be doing most of the work alone? As usual, much of this

depends on the abilities and needs of the student. In general, more objective subjects could be done without much time by parents, while more subjective subjects need more parental input.

For instance, most students can do the sciences on their own, but need help in English and in history when questions require more interpretation of a character's actions or the significance of historical events.

The college-bound student may be motivated by the book *How to Prepare for the Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT)*. This can be purchased from Seton or from any bookstore. This workbook gives the student the opportunity to see what was included on past SAT tests. Studying vocabulary and practicing the comprehension and mathematics tests make students aware of their strengths and weaknesses, and encourages them to work on their daily assignments as they think about the future college courses.

Spiritual Help

When it comes to motivating children, parents need to emphasize the spiritual aspects of homeschooling. Dad should occasionally remind the children that each member of the family has duties from God for the good of the family as a whole and as individuals. Father and mother have their specific duties. Each child's duty is to work on his studies and to help with chores.

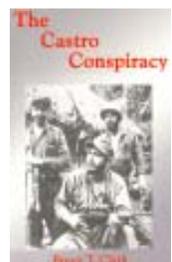
Children are easier to motivate and to encourage to work on their studies if they have the spiritual graces to respond to you. They need to attend Mass frequently—daily if it can be managed. Children should be reviewing their consciences at the end of each day and going to Confession often.

Homeschooling mothers and fathers need to pray for their children and need to pray for their own ability to motivate their children. Parents need to realize their *duty* to motivate their children so the children can eventually be self-disciplined. The most difficult part for parents in the job of motivation is being persistent. "Tough love" really means doing what love demands even when the one you love does not respond in a loving way. Though your child may not be responsive now, though they may resist your motivating techniques today, with the graces you and the children will earn, you can be reassured that sometime in the future, they will thank you for your persistence.

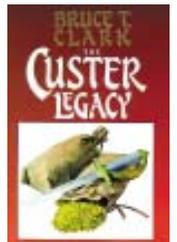
The Book of Proverbs offers numerous ideas for raising children, and for motivating children to follow the will of God. "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. Fools despise wisdom and instruction. My son, hear the instruction of thy father, and forsake not the law of thy mother."



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These 3 novels are suitable for mature students and adults.

\$20 each or all three for \$49 from Seton Educational Media

Mid-Winter Blues

by Ginny Seuffert

So you do some research and you begin homeschooling. The decision is made – right? Well, maybe not! It seems like every year, some parents go through the whole agonizing decision-making process all over again. This time of year seems especially discouraging. In most parts of the United States and Canada, the days are dark and it's cold and wet outside. Being cooped up leaves the children with too much pent-up energy, and they seem to be bickering all the time. You should be finishing up the second quarter, but Christmas preparations put you behind. You begin to wonder if you were just not cut out for homeschooling. What's happening?

Well, for one thing, when the homeschool bomb exploded, it left a mess all over your house. You measure your laundry by how many mountains you can see. Your beds never seem to get made, and even the kids are starting to complain about Coco Crispiers for dinner.

You had read so many books about homeschooling families where the children are eagerly learning Latin and Greek, belong to Catholic kids clubs, and are busily scrubbing the house, while they discern a possible vocation to the priesthood or religious life. In your house, the children whine about schoolwork, seem to squabble all day long, and wouldn't pick a toy up from the floor if it bit them in the ankle as they walked by. Your children complain about the school work, and you need a whip and a chair to get them started each day.

To boot, you are getting zero support from your extended family. They thought you were nuts to homeschool in the first place, and you just know that they are talking about you behind your back.

What can be done?

First, remember why you started to homeschool in the first place.

Chances are the situations you were unhappy with in the local school at that time haven't really changed; everything is "still". There is still a family life (euphemism for sex education) course. It still snows in winter and you still have to drive the kids twenty minutes each way, four times a day. Your family finances are still stretched to the limit. Tuition for all your children is still so high that your husband would need to work weekends to pay for it. You still have no reason to believe that you will be any happier with your children in school this time. And the education they are receiving at home, which may not be everything you wish it could be, is still probably far superior to the school they were in. Write down all these reasons and put them up on your refrigerator or bedroom door to remind yourself frequently why you chose Catholic homeschooling.

Second, keep in mind that children need continuity. Where I live, many Catholic parents have been dissatisfied with the parish schools for *decades*. So after one year Junior is pulled out of the parish school and sent to the public school. There, the other children are swinging on the light fixtures, while Junior escorts the sick children to the school nurse and takes the notes to the principal's office. In third grade his parents decide, "How about a Christian school?" After all Christians believe in the Bible. When the teacher tells Junior that his whole family is going to hell unless they get "saved", they give in and homeschool in the fourth grade. Except Mom's mother-in-law banned her from the annual family picnic, so the next year Junior's parents try to appease everyone by enrolling him in the new parent-operated Catholic school. Is this continuity? And some say homeschooling is bad for socialization!

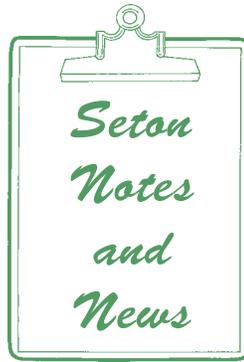
So here's the answer! Once you have made the decision to homeschool, stick to it. Homeschooling is a little bit like having a new baby. There is never really a time when you have enough time, enough money, or your house is perfectly clean. We all know if we wait until we lose that last ten pounds before we get pregnant again, the human race will die out in a generation!

There will never be time when you have a sparkling house, and spare time to homeschool. Make the decision to homeschool and stick to it. *Just do it! Just homeschool your children and keep at it!* When difficulties come up - and they will - look for solutions for those problems so you can *continue to homeschool*. If you need help, there is help available. In most areas you can find a local support group or at least another family homeschooling. There are also many homeschooling message boards available where people from around the world can give you help and encouragement. (One active message board is located at <http://p201.ezboard.com/foetlaborohomeschooldiscussion>.) And Seton provides counselors who are available to answer your questions or to help you with ideas to motivate your children.

This column will keep on encouraging homeschooling Moms and Dads to treat home education with the same serious attitude that we bring to our professional work. If you are not accomplishing what you need to each day, change your schedule, reorganize your priorities, or delegate some of the work. If your children are slow getting started in the morning, wake them up thirty minutes earlier. If your house looks like a war zone, schedule a thirty-minute cleaning break for Mom and students after lunch each day. If you make the work strenuous enough, that might burn up some of the kids' excess energy, too! Set

a fairly short-term goal, like finishing second quarter, and plan a reward for teacher and students. Looking forward to a day off, perhaps at a favorite museum or visiting good friends, might be an incentive to work harder.

Finally, keep the bigger picture in mind. Homeschooling is not just about our own families. Homeschooling produces Catholic men and women of courage and integrity who will reform our communities, our nation, and our Church. When we look at the United States, we really do not need more financial prosperity – we are the richest nation in the history of the world. Our greatest need is not an end to pornography, or even an end to abortion, as desirable as those goals are. Our primary need is holy men and women. *We need more saints, saints who will turn our nation to Christ, and these saints will end the evils that surrounds us daily.* Catholic homeschooling families have been given a unique opportunity to produce saints for this world, and for eternity. Do not let this chance go by! When you get exhausted or discouraged, don't give up. Keep homeschooling. Homeschooling is worthy of your efforts.



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

Memphis, TN, March 18/19, 2005. 6th Annual Catholic Homeschool & Curriculum Fair: Back to Basics. St. Louis Church, 203 S. White Station Road, Memphis, TN. Speakers include Dr. Ray Guarendi. For more information, contact Ana at 901-861-6089, or email thebonds@highstream.net.

St. Louis, MO, March 19, 2005. 2005 St. Louis Catholic Home School

Conference. Cardinal Rigali Center, 20 Archbishop May Dr., St. Louis. For more information contact Carmen at 636-447-1072 or by email at carmen@stlouiscatholichomeschool.com.

Harrisburg, PA, April 9, 2005. The 11th Annual Catholic Homeschool Conference & Curriculum Fair. Holy Name of Jesus Parish, Route 22 West (6150 Allentown Boulevard), Harrisburg. Speakers include Fr. Robert Levis and Mr. Eric Genuis. For more information, contact Ellen at 717-866-5425, or by email at conference@catholichomeschoolpa.org.

Houston, TX, April 9, 2005. 2005 ARCH Home Schoolers of Houston, TX Book Fair and Speakers Forum. St. Theresa's Catholic School, 6622 Haskell St. (near Memorial Park), Houston, TX. For information call 281-797-5578 (leave message) or email info@arch-homeschool.org.

West Allis, WI (Milwaukee area), April 15-16, 2005. Celebrate the Faith Catholic Home School Conference and Book Fair, Archbishop Cousins Center, 3501 S Lake Drive, Milwaukee, WI. Speakers include Fr. Pablo Straub. For more information, contact Beth at 414-762-6263, or email rpyank@juno.com.

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Apostolic Letter – Mane Nobiscum Domine

1. “Stay with us, Lord, for it is almost evening” (cf. Lk 24:29). This was the insistent invitation that the two disciples journeying to Emmaus on the evening of the day of the resurrection addressed to the Wayfarer who had accompanied them on their journey. Weighed down with sadness, they never imagined that this stranger was none other than their Master, risen from the dead. Yet they felt their hearts burning within them (cf. v. 32) as he spoke to them and “explained” the Scriptures. The light of the Word unlocked the hardness of their hearts and “opened their eyes” (cf. v. 31). Amid the shadows of the passing day and the darkness that clouded their spirit, the Wayfarer brought a ray of light which rekindled their hope and led their hearts to yearn for the fullness of light. “Stay with us”, they pleaded. And he agreed. Soon afterwards, Jesus' face would disappear, yet the Master would “stay” with them, hidden in the “breaking of the bread” which had opened their eyes to recognize him.

2. The image of the disciples on the way to Emmaus can serve as a fitting guide for a Year when the Church will be particularly engaged in living out the mystery of the Holy Eucharist. Amid our questions and difficulties, and even our bitter disappointments, the divine Wayfarer continues to walk at our side, opening to us the Scriptures and leading us to a deeper understanding of the mysteries of God. When we meet him fully, we will pass from the light of the Word to the light streaming from the “Bread of life”,

the supreme fulfilment of his promise to “be with us always, to the end of the age” (cf. Mt 28:20).

3. The “breaking of bread”—as the Eucharist was called in earliest times—has always been at the centre of the Church’s life. Through it Christ makes present within time the mystery of his death and resurrection. In it he is received in person as the “living bread come down from heaven” (Jn 6:51), and with him we receive the pledge of eternal life and a foretaste of the eternal banquet of the heavenly Jerusalem. Following the teaching of the Fathers, the Ecumenical Councils and my own Predecessors, I have frequently urged the Church to reflect upon the Eucharist, most recently in the Encyclical *Ecclesia de Eucharistia*. Here I do not intend to repeat this teaching, which I trust will be more deeply studied and understood. At the same time I thought it helpful for this purpose to dedicate an entire Year to this wonderful sacrament.

4. As is known, the Year of the Eucharist will be celebrated from October 2004 to October 2005. ... I would like the young people to gather around the Eucharist as the vital source which nourishes their faith and enthusiasm. A Eucharistic initiative of this kind had been on my mind for some time: it is a natural development of the pastoral impulse which I wanted to give to the Church, particularly during the years of preparation for the Jubilee and in the years that followed it.

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