



Seton Home



Study School

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“Under the Magisterium of the Catholic Church”



April 2005

The Resurrection

The Resurrection of Jesus Christ proved to the world that Jesus is Who He said He is, the Son of God. With such an astounding miracle, everyone of any clear-thinking must admit that when He said, “I and the Father are one,” it is obviously true.

For us homeschooling parents, there is another message of the Resurrection that relates to our family. After His Resurrection, while He spent forty days visiting His friends, Jesus constantly spoke to His apostles about spreading the Good News of His Gospel Message.

It was during this time that Jesus gave the Great Command to His Apostles: “All power is given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go, therefore, teach all nations; baptize them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Teach them to observe all things whatsoever that I have commanded you; and I am with you all days, even to the consummation of the world.” (Matthew 28:18-19)

With the social culture in today’s world gone wild, it is our responsibility as homeschooling parents to take our homeschooling seriously as a missionary effort. Our homeschooling is our missionary work to spread the Gospel, starting in our own family with our own children.

In the Gospel of Mark, Jesus tells the Apostles, “He that believes and is baptized, shall be saved; but he that does not believe, shall be condemned.” We homeschooling parents must dedicate our homeschooling apostolate to teaching our children to believe the teachings of Jesus. The Church teaches that all academic subjects can be filled with Christ’s truths, whether about Him directly or about the saints who have shown us specifically how to live Christ-like lives.

When Our Lord appeared to Peter, He gave Peter the command to preach as well as to lead the Church. Our Lord asked first if Peter loved Him, and Peter answered, “Yes, Lord, You know that I love You.” Jesus then commanded, “Feed My lambs.” In other words, it is not enough to say that we love Our Lord, it isn’t enough to love without being willing to share the Faith with others. We must show our love by giving the Gospel of Jesus to others, by “feeding” others the Word of God. Our little homeschooled “lambs,” our children, need plenty of spiritual feeding, and that is what we need to be about daily in our teaching.

Pope John Paul II wrote in *The Role of the Christian Family in the Modern World* that the educational role of parents is “truly a ministry

of the Church.” “So great and splendid is the educational ministry of Christian parents that St. Thomas Aquinas has no hesitation in comparing it with the ministry of priests.”

With a “vivid and attentive awareness of the mission that they have received with the sacrament of matrimony,” the Pope continued, “Christian parents must place themselves at the service of their children’s education with great serenity and trustfulness, and also with a sense of responsibility before God, who calls them and gives them the mission of building up the Church in their children.”

During these days when we celebrate the Resurrection, let’s remember the place of our homeschooling family in the salvific mission of the Church.

Blessed Mother, Mother of the Church, help us to keep in our minds and in our prayers, the important mission we have before us as we teach our children.

- MKC

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Questions We Are Asked

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

Sometimes my high school son obtains a lower grade on his English papers than I think he deserves. Can he redo the assignment?

Yes, he can generally redo any assignment. The exceptions to this general policy are when a test is True/False, multiple choice question, or something else where the wrong answer makes the right fairly obvious. We do in fact encourage students to redo their paragraphs, book reports, essays, or other written assignments, because we want them to learn to do better work.

Often, the reason that students do not do well on written paragraphs and other similar assignments is because they do not follow the specific directions. The lesson plans have specific ideas we are trying to teach, but it seems some students like to go right to the assignment, skipping the lessons and the directions.

If your student received a low grade, you can't tell just from reading the work that it should have received a higher grade. You also have to look at what was asked for in that assignments. If the paper does not follow the directions or answer the specifics asked for in the assignment, the grader cannot give a good grade.

If you or your child is unclear about what is asked for in a specific assignment, please call or email one of our counselors for more direction.

We have had problems finishing the book reports on time. I don't want to be homeschooling in the summer. Do you have any tips to finish them up more quickly?

If the book reports are a problem during each quarter, why not have your child read the book and take notes all in the first week of the quarter? He can

study the topic sentences, mark the pages which are relevant as he reads, and do an outline. Except for the saints' books, chapter notes are available to read on our website.

After the notes, the outline, the reading of the book, why not have your child do the book report immediately? That way, your child can focus on the assignments for the other subjects during the quarter. You might want to just take week during the quarter and focus on the book report. Once it is done, it will be off your mind, and the other work can be done with less pressure.

Too many students will read the book, then wait weeks and weeks before starting the book report. At the point, they don't even remember what they read, so they almost have to go back and re-read the book to do the book report. Don't let that happen to your child.

Other homeschooling mothers in my community want to involve me in helping them with their homeschooling and with baby sitting for them. They want me to send my children to their homes for homeschooling, for cleaning, or for baby sitting. I am exhausted.

We have been hearing more and more about this problem. Homeschooling parents come up with many wonderful ideas for activities for the local homeschooling children, but sometimes, especially when there are many children in the family, this can keep mother traveling here and there for all the sports, dancing, and other supplemental classes. This not only interferes with the individual student's daily schedule, but it keeps some mothers on a daily roller coaster. Some mothers are being told not to enroll in Seton because the homeschooling program would keep the children from

participating in the local homeschooling activities.

Parents need to decide what is best for their children, but we need to emphasize that children do need an education in reading, writing, and arithmetic, and high school students do need the required subjects to go to college and be an educated, intelligent citizen. This must be the priority, along with the spiritual aspects of life.

One suggestion is for mothers to talk over this whole issue with their husbands who tend to be very realistic and see the big picture. Fathers who deal with the work situation in the community can help mothers and children see which activities are really important, and which may not add anything except exhaustion for all involved.

If you or your child is unclear about what is asked for in a specific assignment, please call or email one of our counselors for more direction.

Remember, you can't do everything, and even trying to do everything will mean that you can't devote as much time to your homeschooling.

The English courses seem to be very demanding. Do you expect my child to do all the assignments?

The English courses are very thorough because we don't know just how much background the students have had, nor how much they need to learn at this particular grade level. We say in the lesson plans that parents need to decide how much is necessary for their child, and what, if anything, can be omitted, or done orally, or can be abbreviated.

Usually, if a student has been enrolled for several grade levels, even though the work progresses considerably, the student can handle the material. After all, the lessons are simply following the pattern set out by the Voyages in English series which was used in the Catholic schools for many years.

Seton is in the process of writing “preliminary” exercises on our website that parents can download as drills for students who need more simple exercises before doing the ones in the published workbooks. Parents can download one or more exercises, as needed. They are numbered according to the exercises in the book. At this time, we have only grades 3 and 6 available. The response has been positive, so we are hopeful that these can be of great help.

Both parents are responsible for the education of their children, and the Bible puts a great deal of emphasis on fathers' responsibility.

At the high school level, the English courses are very thorough, but it is important that parents focus on the composition assignments and the literature. These encourage critical thinking skills, independent study, and inductive thinking and writing skills. You won't find this level of English in any other high school program, and it will help your student in so many ways in college and in later life, that it almost cannot be expressed sufficiently. If your student works at our English courses, and does well, we can almost guarantee a high level of success in college and beyond. Numerous letters from parents attest to this.

If you feel like you are falling behind, or you need some advice about which assignments may be cut down, call or email one of our English counselors.

Do you think I need to spend time with my fourth grade child for each subject? How much can I expect him to do on his own?

It is certainly important to work just about every day with your fourth grade child on the reading and English assignments. However, you need to teach your child to do some work independently in order to develop study skills and a sense of time. For example, most students at this age can do the spelling and vocabulary on their own.

Math is a subject for which you should teach the daily concepts. Once your child understands the concepts, and correctly does a few problems for you, then he can be on his own to finish up the page of problems. Depending on the age of your child, he can even check the answers.

Some of the questions in science and history can be done independently. This is especially important in developing the skill to search for information, to find information for a specific question, and to write the answer in the student's words, if possible. In religion, while the introductory lessons should be discussed, some of the written questions could be answered independently. All these independent written assignments should be quickly checked. Even a certain amount of memory work can be done on his own.

I would like my husband to help me more with the home schooling, but I wonder if it is fair since he is out working all day, five days a week.

Each family must decide just how much a father can help. However, fathers are very effective in teaching their children, especially in teaching at the high school level, and especially in teaching their sons. Sons often learn in the same modes as their father learns, and this can be very helpful to homeschooled students.

Ask your husband if he would like to help out for one subject, or even for only one night a week, or on Saturday. Once

he starts, he may like it. Keep in mind, however, that both parents are responsible for the education of their children, and the Bible puts a great deal of emphasis on fathers' responsibility.

If your husband does not like the idea of teaching, perhaps he can help out in other ways, building bookcases, taking the kids on field trips, or whatever would be helpful for you. You might recommend to your husband to go to the Steve Wood's Family Life Center website at www.familylifecenter.net, which has a nice article called “The Seven Steps to Being a Homeschool Father.”

Must I send paper copies of the tests my child has already taken online?

Any tests taken online should never be sent on paper to Seton. There is definite confusion if a grader grades a test already taken online. In general, it's also better either to do all of a quarter's assignments electronically or all on paper. When some quarterly assignments are taken online or uploaded, and some are mailed or faxed, we don't always know that the student already did some work online, and so we might think that the quarter is incomplete. When everything for a quarter is done online or by paper, there is no confusion.

If you are looking for quicker grading, we suggest you send in all assignments over the internet. We currently have many online tests available from high school down through fourth grade. For any assignment that is not available as an online test, you can upload it to be graded electronically from your My Seton page. For assignments that are completed in a word processor, the file can be uploaded directly to Seton. When assignments have been written down on paper, they will need to be scanned and then uploaded.

Just go to the Seton web site at www.setonhome.org, click on My Seton, Log On, click on courses, then scroll down to the course and then move your cursor to the icon for Send or Upload Work to Seton.

More About High School

by Ginny Seuffert

My last several columns have dealt with the importance of continuing to homeschool past the grammar school years as well as some practical tips for homeschooling through high school. Many Catholic parents report, however, that the greatest test of homeschooling through the high school years is not academics, but being able to successfully guide teens through the social and spiritual challenges that face them in the world at the beginning of the 21st century. Observant Catholic families find themselves in a social environment that seems to accept or even promote casual sex, recreational drug use, defiance of parental authority, astounding immodesty in dress and speech, and bodily mutilation through piercings and tattoos. To uphold Christian standards, most parents see the need to be countercultural, but are unsure how to proceed. The most widely available advice, found in books, magazines, and Internet sites, lacks an understanding of Catholic beliefs and practices. Other Catholic and Christian sources often contradict one another, and too many moms and dads today cannot be guided by their own upbringing.

I believe that strong family prayer and sacramental life, coupled with a healthy dose of parental common sense, will go a long way toward steering our teens in the right direction. Here are some general strategies that have worked with my own high school students and I pass them on for what they are worth.

Don't wait until they are teenagers to instill virtues.

Before the teen years, children are eager to please their parents and they absorb family values and aspirations like little sponges. As soon as they are old enough to understand, expect obedience and respect from them, and treat them courteously in return. Create a cheerful atmosphere at home that is based on Christian charity.

Reinforce that you—their parents—always have their best interests at heart, and so you will accept only their best efforts in school and in their personal relationships. This is the time to inculcate spiritual habits like daily Mass attendance, frequent confession, and an active prayer life.

Trust your teen's intentions if not necessarily their judgment.

I always tell my children that I have taught them the difference between right and wrong, and now I expect them to do good and avoid evil all by themselves, without Mom playing cop. By the end of eighth grade, your children should have a clear understanding of your expectations and of God's. As much as possible, allow them to make their own decisions, within the framework of their Catholic training.

Because they are young, they will sometimes lose sight of their upbringing, and insist that they are old enough to do some incredibly stupid thing. That's when we parents must substitute our mature judgment for their immature notions. "You are usually such a smart kid, but this is not good for you. I know you don't think you are doing anything wrong, but this time I have to put my foot down, and say no. You are just not using good judgment."

Fill their time with positives

So much of our popular culture is, for the want of a better word, vile, so concerned Catholic parents are understandably reluctant to allow their teens to participate in it. These parents often become "masters of may not." "No, you may not see that movie. You may not go to that party. You may not watch TV. You may not date until you are out of high school."

Some of these prohibitions are just good common sense, but remembering that forbidden fruit is awfully tasty, wise parents remember that idle hands are the devil's workshop. Before the teen years, encourage your children to develop hobbies and interests

like gardening, pet care, sewing, needlework, carpentry, instrumental music, or art, things that can be pursued right at home, and will continue to involve your children during the high school years. Many local homeschool support groups sponsor a variety of clubs and classes for teens, but most communities also offer a host of wholesome, worthwhile activities. Your sons and daughters will work off lots of excess energy playing baseball or soccer all day Saturday. In addition to team sports, community theatre productions, youth choirs, dance, and figure skating all require many hours each week for practices, rehearsals, and performances. Many of these activities offer opportunities for more healthy social interaction as well. Filling the hours with schoolwork, housework, outside interests, and family time leaves fewer minutes for less desirable pursuits.

Pick your battles and gain credibility.

Occasionally substituting your good judgment for your child's poor judgment only works if you save your energy for the really important battles. In their eagerness to raise children of character and integrity, some homeschooling parents micromanage every minute aspect of their children's lives. This is exhausting for the parents, fails to make children responsible for their own actions, and sometimes causes young people to view their parents more as control freaks than concerned moms and dads. Save your energy for the really important issues.

Years ago, a family friend was trapped in a terrible marriage with a man who was more than a little unbalanced. I asked my friend's sister why nobody in her large Catholic family, especially her very devoted parents, had recognized his quite obvious flaws and warned this woman away from a doomed marriage. The sister replied, "My parents found something to criticize about everyone we brought home. They looked for faults, even tiny ones, to complain about. When they tried to warn my sister that her future husband was clearly crazy, they had no credibility left."

Open your home and welcome your kids' friends.

If you are worried about what your teens may encounter in the big wide world, one solution is to bring just a bit of the world into your home. A cordial attitude and some tasty snacks will allow you to keep an eye on teen social activities, and give friends from different circumstances exposure to healthy family life.

My experience has shown me that most kids will accept a cheerful reproof in the name of household standards. "Hey guys, watch the language, please. We have little kids running around," generally earns a sheepish apology. Serious or lengthy lectures on purity in speech will just cause the teens to find another place to gather.

To date or not to date during the high school years

Whole books have been written on this subject, and I may make it the subject of a future column, but common sense principles can be applied here too. First, there is a huge difference in maturity between freshman and senior year. It is hardly inappropriate for an 18 year-old senior to walk to the movies with a friend of the opposite sex. Second, it is never a good idea to set an absolute. Making a blanket rule, like absolutely no dating in high school, can cause some kids to become sneaks.

I tell my children to come to me with a plan, which I approve or disapprove. If a mixed group of teens from families I know want to go skating, for example, I see no real problem. The same would hold for bowling, meeting at a sports event, or watching a St. Patrick's Day Parade. Inviting your teen's friends to family picnics or trips to the lake are also safe opportunities for socialization. We are Catholics, not Calvinists! The kids are allowed to have fun.

The key to all of this is prayer and the sacramental life. If your children do not have, at least, the intention of living morally sound lives, no amount of supervision will be sufficient. On the other hand, with God's grace and the intercession of Our Blessed Mother, many homeschooled teens become true examples of Catholic morality for their friends to see.

The Final Stretch

As we begin the final stretch in our homeschooling year, these weeks often seem the most difficult. After a week of Easter vacation and with spring in the air and daylight savings time bringing more sunlight for outside activities, the attempts to keep at it are challenging.

If you have never had a definite schedule, now is the time to get one. Now is the time to tell the kids that until they finish their work, or unless they finish so much by a certain time, they cannot indulge in their outside activities. Work out a specific schedule with each student so each knows what to expect. Let each learn the rewards of achievement, and sometimes the disappointment if one does not fulfill his duties or responsibilities. Ask your husband to help with a schedule, especially with the older children. Dad's expertise in the world of work can be helpful and impressive for the children.

A good way to have a feeling of accomplishment is to set and meet short-term deadlines. For example, you might say "By the end of the week, we will do up to page 200 in the textbook." Or you might set deadlines for when certain assignments to be sent to Seton for grading will be done.

If you feel that you are behind, now is the time to try to condense, shorten, or combine assignments. For example, if your child has a full page of math problems to do, have the child do half the math problems. If they are done correctly, skip the other half of the problems. If your child has a written assignment to do, have them do the assignment orally to you or into a tape recorder so you can listen later.

Remember, the lesson plans are really just advisory. You don't need to do everything in them. You can modify assignments or skip them entirely.

One trick is to do subjects for twice as long every other day. A great deal of time is often wasted just trying to locate books and other materials to start a class. Plus, there is the time to mentally shift gears between subjects. So, it may be advantageous for some students to spend an hour on history one day and an hour on science the next instead of one-half hour each day. Of course, this depends

on the student and how well he can stay on task for extended periods.

For high school students, you might try focusing on one subject at a time until each is done. Take the subject that is farthest along and spend all the time on that until it is done. Then go to the next most completed subject. In this way, a couple of courses may be completed quickly. The student can receive final grades and credits, which can be great motivation for finishing the rest of the subjects.

When you are behind, remember that Seton can help you. We have counselors ready and eager to take your calls or emails. What seems like a big problem to you might be something they deal with on a regular basis. Our counselors also can advise you on which assignments might be skipped or which can be cut down drastically or otherwise modified. The monthly newsletter lists phone numbers for specific counselors, or you can call the main number and ask for the counseling department. You can also email the counselors at counselors@setonhome.org.

Besides our counselors, you can also ask for help from other parents and students. Our message board is read by many parents and students each day. To reach our message board, go to www.setonhome.org and click on Message Board.

Do not neglect the spiritual aspects of life. It is essential to grow in the Faith, for you and your children, to receive the graces from the sacraments. If you have not been attending as frequently due to the cold and snow, now is the time to pull things together by scheduling daily Mass. It will change your life, and help your children be more obedient and responsible. The frequent reception of Holy Communion and Confession is necessary to receive the graces to stay together as a family. We sometimes hear families say that they don't have time to fit daily Mass into their schedule. But we hear other families say that they can't finish their daily schedule unless they go to Mass.

With the proper plan and a little determination, you can finish up the year, and Seton is here to help you.

The Mission of Patrick

Fr. Thomas Euteneur
President of Human Life International

The feast of the great fifth century missionary to Ireland gives us a chance to reflect on our Christian vocation to be missionaries to the world and signs of contradiction. In the space of a short career as a missionary bishop, St. Patrick accomplished something that perhaps had not been seen since Pentecost or rivaled since then except by the extraordinary Guadalupe event a millennium later: namely, the conversion of a whole society!

St. Patrick went to Ireland not to be a politician or social worker but to preach the Gospel of Jesus Christ. As a missionary, he brought a message and a Person to them, and then showed them that this Person had the power to transform their lives. Therein lay his real power; it was not a human power although it was wielded by human hands and preached out of the abundance of a human heart. Patrick was fundamentally a disciple of Christ who believed in the great mandate to “preach the good news to all nations,” and the extraordinary fruits of his preaching have lasted for 1500 years!

Do not romanticize this mission however. It was “not pretty,” as we say in modern terms, and the conversion of a whole nation of people was gained only at great cost. Most people do not know that from the time that St. Patrick set foot on the Emerald Isle, his life was in constant danger. He was a potent sign of contradiction whose Gospel message represented the destruction of every pagan, secular, and demonic principality and power working its evil in that ancient society. Druids, demons, and witch doctors were all after him, and that is not something to take lightly or to romanticize. He destroyed their pagan idols and castigated their immorality. “Daily do I expect either a violent death,” he said, “or to be robbed and reduced to

slavery, or the occurrence of some such calamity.” Such was the price he paid for his message and his commitment to Christ. But the protection that he sought for his mission is fittingly handed down to us on none other than a piece of armor, a breastplate, which begins with the awesome battle cry: *I arise today through a mighty strength, the invocation of the Trinity!*

Patrick, it is said, drove the snakes out of Ireland which is a metaphor for the cleansing power of the Gospel of Jesus Christ when it enters a soul, a culture—indeed, wherever in the whole world it is accepted. One of my classmates in seminary drew a picture of St. Patrick casting out the snakes from Ireland which all then, according to his account, promptly entered the university where we were studying, and each snake had a professor’s name on it! That is a stylistic rendering of something which has a deeper significance: the very Presence of Christ casts out evil—and for that reason every true believer is also a sign of contradiction to his society.

The Christian vocation calls us all to be missionaries of Christ’s presence in our world, but don’t think that St. Patrick was the only one who had to contend with druids, demons and witch doctors. In our day and age, we must face the very ugly fact of 45 million dead babies at the hands of a medical profession into which the demon of abortion entered long ago. We are also witnessing the murder of an innocent handicapped woman in Florida by judicial fiat, another act of total abuse of power and death-mongering in our midst. And society in general is simply saturated by the idea that anything is permissible as long as I have the power to impose it on those who are weaker than I am. I am sad to say that the demons in our

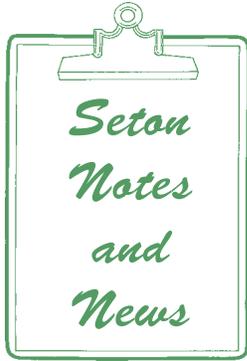
society are growing stronger and rapidly advancing, and it may take an army of men and women with the courage and creativity of St. Patrick to drive the snakes from our land.

You will be a sign of contradiction to this culture if you dare to be a Christian. Do not fear. Be a Christian and be a good one! No one remembers any contemporary of St. Patrick or any grandiose deed that anyone accomplished in 5th century Ireland, do they? But everyone knows St. Patrick; even today’s pagans celebrate his memory in parades, bars, song and sports! No one knows much about the great Roman political system of the first three centuries of our era, but everyone knows about the Roman martyrs whose blood purified that pagan world. No one remembers the intricacies of culture and politics in 1920s Mexico, but history remembers Father Miguel Pro and others who died witnessing against the evil that had afflicted their society. They too were signs of contradiction, and it was their vocation to be Christ to their faithless age.

Let us never forget that holiness is the best gift that we can give to our world. It is our calling and our destiny. Only there are very few who really take that calling seriously. The pursuit of holiness should drive us out of ourselves in charity to live for others and to share the fruits of our contemplation of Christ with a world badly in need of salvation.

We don’t need to go to another country to preach this Gospel. We are missionaries of that holiness to our society even if that means we must endure trials and tribulations for it. Holiness is the sign of contradiction, and we have the greatest examples of it in these magnificent souls called Saint—like Patrick—who perennially show us the way to purify our world.





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.

Harrisburg, PA, April 9. The 11th Annual Catholic Homeschool Conference & Curriculum Fair. Holy Name of Jesus Parish, 6190 Allentown Boulevard, Route 22 West, Harrisburg. Speakers include Dr. Alice von Hildebrand. For information, call 717-866-5425, or email conference@catholichomeschoolpa.org.

Houston, TX, April 8-9. 2005 ARCH Home Schoolers of Houston, TX Book Fair and Speakers Forum. St. Theresa's Catholic School, 6622 Haskell St. (near

Memorial Park), Houston. For information call 281-797-5578 (leave message) or email info@arch-homeschool.org.

Milwaukee, WI, April 15-16. Celebrate the Faith 2005 Catholic Home School Conference and Book Fair, Archbishop Cousins Center, 3501 S. Lake Drive, Milwaukee. Speakers include Fr. Pablo Straub. For more information, contact Julie at 262-968-2438, or go to website www.gmche.com.

Covington, LA, April 16. Roman Catholic Home School Association in Louisiana. St. Peter's Church (St. Mary's Hall), 125 E. 19th Ave., Covington. Speakers include Jim Clark. For more information, call 985-796-1274 or email rchalinfo@rchal.org.

Berlin, NJ, April 16. 6th Annual Catholic Homeschooling Curriculum and Book Fair. Mater Ecclesiae Roman Catholic Church (8 AM Mass - 5 PM), 261 Cross Keys Road, Berlin, NJ. Speakers include Deacon Eugene McGuirk from Seton. For information email info@chaplet.org, or go to website www.chaplet.org.

Dayton, OH, April 23. Our Lady of the Immaculate Conception Parish, 2300 S. Smithville Road, Dayton. (Seton books will be sold at Authentically Catholic

Gifts and Books.) For information call 937-648-9245, or email ablesclan@yahoo.com.

Des Moines, IA, April 30. 5th Annual Catholic Family Home School Conference. Our Lady's Immaculate Heart Church, 510 E. 1st Street, Ankeny, IA. Speakers include Ginny Seuffert. For information call 515-832-6214 or email daniel363@catholicexchange.com or go to website www.Columbus-Academy.org.

Miami, FL, April 30. A.R.C.H.-Angels Conference: "Families in the Heart of the Church". Hyatt/James L. Knight Center, 400 SE Second Avenue, Miami. For more information, email conference@archangelsmiami.com, or call 305-443-6316.

St. Paul/Minneapolis, MN, June 3-4. 7th Annual MN Catholic Home Education Conference and Curriculum Fair, University of St. Thomas, 2115 Summit Ave., St. Paul. For information call 952-941-5646, or email info@mnconference.org.

Herndon, VA, June 10-11. Immaculate Heart of Mary National Home School and Family Conference. For information go to website www.ihmconference.org, call 540-636-1946, or email info@ihmconference.org.

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1350 Progress Dr.

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Executive Editor:
Dr. Mary Kay Clark

Editor:
Kevin Clark

Seton Phone Numbers
(Seton main line: 540-636-9990)

- Admissions, Enrollment, Re-Enrollment: 540-636-2039
- Elementary: Bridget Reagan, 540-636-2342 or Ext. 118; Irene O'Brien, Ext 177
- Grading: Rhonda Way, Ext. 138
- High School Course Approval: Eric Kraske, Ext. 117
- High School English: Sherry Spring, Ext. 124 or 540-636-1755; Christine Collins, Ext. 177
- High School Math and Science: Tom Herlihy, Ext 165 or 540-636-1846; Gene McGuirk, Ext. 162, Don Valaike, Ext. 132
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- Testing (CAT): Clare Jones, Ext. 164

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- SSDept@setonhome.org

Defending Life

Man is called to a fullness of life which far exceeds the dimensions of his earthly existence, because it consists in sharing the very life of God. The loftiness of this supernatural vocation reveals the greatness and the inestimable value of human life even in its temporal phase. Life in time, in fact, is the fundamental condition, the initial stage and an integral part of the entire unified process of human existence. It is a process which, unexpectedly and undeservedly, is enlightened by the promise and renewed by the gift of divine life, which will reach its full realization in eternity (cf. 1 Jn 3:1-2). At the same time, it is precisely this supernatural calling which highlights the relative character of each individual's earthly life. After all, life on earth is not an ultimate but a penultimate reality; even so, it remains a sacred reality entrusted to us, to be preserved with a sense of responsibility and brought to perfection in love and in the gift of ourselves to God and to our brothers and sisters.

The Church knows that this Gospel of life, which she has received from her Lord, has a profound and persuasive echo in the heart of every person, believer and non-believer alike, because it marvellously fulfils all the heart's expectations while infinitely surpassing them. Even in the midst of difficulties and uncertainties, every person sincerely open to truth and goodness can, by the light of reason and

the hidden action of grace, come to recognize in the natural law written in the heart (cf. Rom 2:14-15) the sacred value of human life from its very beginning until its end, and can affirm the right of every human being to have this primary good respected to the highest degree. Upon the recognition of this right, every human community and the political community itself are founded.

In a special way, believers in Christ must defend and promote this right, aware as they are of the wonderful truth recalled by the Second Vatican Council: By his incarnation the Son of God has united himself in some fashion with every human being. This saving event reveals to humanity not only the boundless love of God who so loved the world that he gave his only Son (Jn 3:16), but also the incomparable value of every human person.

The Church, faithfully contemplating the mystery of the Redemption, acknowledges this value with ever new wonder. She feels called to proclaim to the people of all times this Gospel, the source of invincible hope and true joy for every period of history. The Gospel of God's love for man, the Gospel of the dignity of the person and the Gospel of life are a single and indivisible Gospel.

John Paul II, *Evangelium Vitae*

Seton Home Study School

1350 Progress Drive
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