

Seton Home == == Study School

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"Under the Magisterium of the Catholic Church"

♦

February 2006

The Presentation

The Feast of the Presentation of the Lord on February 2 is one of the great feasts of the Church. On this feast day, we reflect on the occasion when Mary and Joseph present the Baby Jesus to God in the Temple in Jerusalem forty days after His birth. They take with them two turtle doves as a gift to the Temple priest.

In the Temple, Jesus, Mary, and Joseph are met by two elders: Simeon, a devout and righteous man who was inspired to come to the Temple that day, and Anna, a prophetess who prayed and fasted night and day in the Temple. Simeon and Anna represent the end of the era of the law and the prophets because that era was now being fulfilled by the appearance of the hope of Israel, the Messiah.

The presentation of a first-baby to the Temple by the parents was a Jewish law by which the parents were to show the Jewish community that they intended for their child to be raised in the law and prophets of Israel. It was a public statement, a public presentation that the parents recognized the authority and the teachings of the God of Israel in their own lives and intended to teach their child likewise.

We home schooling parents and our children should also acknowledge that we recognize the rightful authority of the Catholic Church and the truth of her teachings by not only receiving the sacraments but also by public prayer and processions, such as the Corpus Christi procession, the May Crowning of Mary, and the Candlemas Procession on the Feast of the Presentation.

Mary, the ever-pure, ever-immaculate Virgin Mother, only forty days after giving birth to the Son of God, did not need to expend her energy taking her Son to the Temple. Yet, she made the effort of carrying her Baby a long distance. In the greatest humility, in great adoration of Her Son, and in thanksgiving for her great blessing, she traveled the dusty roads to enter the great Temple of Jerusalem in obedience to the Jewish law.

We home schooling parents, especially mothers, need to see this beautiful, young Mother of God, holding in her arms the Savior of the World, continuing to make personal sacrifices in a quiet way in order to bring her Son to the Church community. We need to help our children be part of our parish community. Home schooling families are especially called at this time to show forth a faith that counters idolatry and unbelief, a hope that counters presumption and despair, and charity that counters alienation and indifference.

The holyman Simeon had been promised by God that he would not die without seeing the coming Messiah. As soon as Simeon saw the Baby Jesus, Mary put Him into his arms. He then said, "My eyes have seen thy salvation which thou hast prepared before the face of all people: a light to the revelation of the Gentiles, and the glory of thy people Israel."

How many times in the Gospel do we read about Jesus being called the Light of the World? When Pope John Paul II came to St. Louis and spoke to the young people of America, he told them that they, too, are each called to be a light to the world by living lives that show forth Christ to those around them. The Pope asked the young people three times, "Are you ready to be the light of the world?"

We home schooling parents must ask ourselves and our children if we, too, are ready to recommit ourselves to what we are called to be--followers of Jesus Christ, the Light of the World. Are we preparing our children to be a "light" that reveals the truths of Jesus Christ to those who see and hear only the secular messages being promoted in the public square?

Simeon also predicted that Mary's heart would be pierced with a sword. She would suffer due to the "sign of contradiction." The crucifixion of Jesus appeared to be a punishment of a criminal, but in reality it was the sign of the Son of God giving up His life so that sinners would repent and enjoy eternal life.

We home schooling parents need to teach our children to carry their daily crosses as ways of union with Jesus and participation in His repair of the offense of our own sins and the sins of others. Our own "sign of contradiction" as parents is bearing the daily burdens of doing our best to teach our children, keeping our homes as pleasant as possible while living the Catholic spiritual life, and accepting misunderstanding and even persecution from relatives, neighbors, and clergy.

Blessed Virgin Mother of God, help us teach our children so that all of us can learn to be Christ-like lights in the world around us.

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

The weather outside is dreary, and we seem a little dreary, too. Any suggestions to promote home schooling enthusiasm?

The first thing you need to remember is that the dreary months outside provide the prime time for home schooling. The cold, the rain, the snow, or whatever the weather may bring, means that—for most people—the outdoors is not as tempting as the upcoming spring months. If ever you want to accomplish anything, now is the time.

Look over the year's curriculum with your children and see where you want to be and where exactly you are. Encourage the children to "catch up" if need be with treats like baking apple cake when the school day is finished. Provide hot cider for an afternoon treat. If you have a fireplace, even a "fake" fireplace, warm up a cozy "schoolroom"; kids love working on the floor in front of a fire.

Sometimes a simple thing like rearranging the furniture or encouraging two of the children to work together on a project—just simple little rearrangements—can "enliven" the school experience.

Most of all, be enthusiastic and adventuresome yourself about the home schooling, and the children will want to be so, too.

How can I find other home schoolers in my area?

With the high number of home schooling families throughout the United States and Canada, it is usually fairly easy to find other Catholic home schooling families in your area. The first place to start is your local parish. You might ask your priest or other parishioners if there are other home

schooling families in your parish. Also, you can attend daily Mass and meet other home schooling families; in fact, home schoolers are generally the altar servers at the daily Masses. If you attend any parish functions, such as a First Communion breakfast, you are bound to find some home schooling families. Home schooling moms are often the religious education teachers on Sunday mornings. If all else fails, just look for large families. Large families will likely either be home schoolers or know of home schoolers.

If there is a state or local Catholic home schooling support group, see if they have a chapter in your area. A local coordinator may be able to put you in touch with other families, or at least keep your name in case someone else from your area calls with the same request.

You can try online resources to find other families. There are several home schooling message boards online, including one on Seton's website. You can leave messages on these message boards asking to be contacted by a family in your area.

Once you meet some home schooling families, you can find out about any support groups in your area. The tricky part about being in a support group is being careful not to be so involved in outside activities that you fall behind in the home schooling academics.

Would you recommend the Dive CD's for the Saxon 54, 65, 76, or 87?

I would certainly recommend the Dive CD's for any student who is having trouble with those math courses. Most students using the 54 or 65 can probably do well enough without the CD's, but sometimes students simply are not "getting" the concepts in some areas,

and moms have trouble if their student does not understand the concept as explained by mom. In this case, we encourage dads to get involved, because they often explain a concept a little differently, and your child may grasp the concept more easily.

With the 76, 87, or Algebra ½, there are definitely some pre-high school concepts being introduced, and while most mothers can explain the concepts, it is not so much a matter of explaining as a matter of finding the time to study it first and then explain it. For an investment of \$50, many mothers find it a relief to have the time-saving help. And of course, the disk is available for the other children as they reach that grade.

If all else fails, just look for large families. Large families will likely either be home schoolers or know of home schoolers.

The CD is put into the computer, and for each lesson, there is a visual and an audio tutoring lesson. It can be ordered through the Seton SEM department, by phone at 540-636-9996, by fax at 540-636-1602, or over the internet at www.setonbooks.com. If you think you need help, this is the time to order it. Don't wait until June.

I'm beginning to realize that some of the books are on too high a level for my daughter. Is it too late to order lower level books?

One of the nice features of home schooling is that you can adapt the curriculum to meet the needs of your child. It is never too late. If your daughter missed concepts at a lower level, it will help her to go back and learn them. It is really unfair to your daughter to keep pushing and prodding her to do work that is not at her level. This is the kind of problem

that is happening in the schools, and causes such frustration and depression among children.

You don't need to order all the books at a lower level, only the ones for the subjects in which you believe she needs more fundamental concepts. It is important that your daughter realize that your goal is to help her to learn, not to just push her through the material in a certain grade level. If she seems reluctant to go back to a lower level because she is somehow embarrassed, explain that the purpose is simply for review, not for any sort of punishment. You can also offer to help her over the summer in that subject so she can "catch up" if she wants, by the start of the next school year.

Each of us has a different cross to carry. We need to focus on our own and do the best we can with the one we have.

My son in sixth grade was taking the test online, but as he was doing it, I realized he really had not studied enough. Do you think it is fair to have him stop taking the test, review some more, and then come back later and take the test?

We have been receiving this question more and more often. Our goal is to have our children learn the material, not just go through a process. In the school, the teacher cannot individualize the curriculum, but home schooling is all about individualizing. So we do recommend that if you see your child is not ready to take a particular test, simply stop, close out of it, and help your child to review some more before retaking the test.

Some parents feel their child should not be given a chance to retake a test. That is the parent's decision. If a child has wasted time, been disobedient, or whatever reason, and the parent thinks the child needs the experience of being faced with the reality of not doing well on a test as a result of his own purposeful laziness, that must be the parent's decision.

How can I make history more interesting for my 5th grader?

This question always amazes me because history is innately so interesting. It is the story of people, of men and women who caused significant things to happen in their society. Sometimes history textbooks need to focus more on events than particular people, but the significant people are almost always mentioned. Try to find more information about the historical people in books written for children. When I was home schooling, I would look at the next chapter my children would be studying and find books at the library to offer "enrichment" or more interesting information about the people. We would also look in the encyclopedia to find out more about the people. Once your child comes to "know" more about where the person was born, his adventures in his youth, his family, his schooling, his adventures, history becomes a story of people he has come to know.

You don't need to limit yourself to non-fiction biographies. Oftentimes historical novels can serve to make history come alive. There are historical novels written about almost any time frame in history, from Roman times through the Middle Ages, up through the American Revolution and Civil Wars.

It is also fun to take your children on field trips to historical museums, or places of historical interest, such as the home of someone important in history. All of us live in a place where something important happened in American history. We have a Confederate Museum here in Front Royal, Virginia. Our town is called Front Royal because in military drills during colonial days, the soldiers were told to "Front the Royal Oak." In the Front Royal area, we have re-enactments of battles, and many kids get involved. Almost every town has

historical markers and museums and stories and legends of what happened there. Once your children learn about the people significant in history in your town, visit the graveyards and find out where people are buried. Look in the phone book and see how many descendents are still alive.

Look up your own family's history, and discover the backgrounds of your ancestors. Those stories will take your family on a wonderful historical voyage! History is not words on a piece of paper. History is the story of your own family and families in your community who made our society what it is today.

I see a number of families attending daily Mass, but I just can't seem to make it. What do you suggest?

It is important for families not to judge other families, and for parents not to feel guilty because they cannot or choose not to do what other families are doing. One thing about families is that each family is unique. No two families are alike. No one outside the family knows just what the situations are within that family. Husbands have different hours, some have two jobs, some work locally, some work an hour away. Some families have a second car, some have a second car but cannot afford the gas, or cannot afford to fix the transmission on the van. Life is not a competition with other people. Life is about striving for holiness within our own situations and limitations. If you have a situation that is preventing you from going to daily Mass, pray that the situation will change.

I recommend that you watch EWTN, if you can, with your children. Pray along with the people, listen to the Gospel and the homily, and receive a spiritual Communion. Talk with your children about the Gospel, even if only for five minutes, after the Mass. Talk about the saint for the day.

God gives each of us the graces to accomplish many and great things. But they are almost always in different ways. Each of us has a different cross to carry. We need to focus on our own and do the best we can with the one we have.

Holy Eucharist: Sacrifice and Sacrament Adapted from a talk by Fr. John A. Hardon

Devotion to Christ's Real Presence in the Holy Eucharist is basic and fundamental to the Catholic Faith. How could so fundamental a doctrine become obscured and denied? Some might say that a waning of devotion and belief in the Holy Eucharist is a symptom of deeper problems. Father John A. Hardon, however, believed that the denial or apathy regarding the doctrine of the Holy Eucharist lies at the heart of the modern crisis in the Church. In his lecture, "The Holy Eucharist as Sacrifice-Sacrament," the late Father Hardon explained the dogmatic foundation of the doctrine on the Holy Eucharist, with specific regard to the holy sacrifice of the Mass, and expounded the seminal role of the Holy Eucharist in communicating grace to the faithful.

The first task is to understand the dogmas regarding the Eucharist as defined by the Catholic Church. To understand these dogmas is to understand "that the sacrifice of the Mass is a sacrament, and, indeed, the principal channel of grace that we have in this world." Many of the Church's teachings on the Eucharist were formulated by the Council of Trent (1545-1563), which is perhaps the greatest of the Church's twenty-one ecumenical councils.

Each of the following three Tridentine dogmas concludes with the traditional, characteristic, ecclesiastical censure, the word anathema. The term anathema is a Greek word that means "accursed" or "set aside." An idea that has been anathematized is an idea that a faithful Catholic may not hold as true. The three dogmas clearly convey the immutable foundations of the holy sacrifice of the Mass. A dogmatic definition, by its very nature and purpose, is meant to clarify and solidify a teaching of the Catholic Faith. Dogmatic definitions are final pronouncements.

The first of Trent's dogmatic definitions is: "If anyone says that in the Mass a true and proper sacrifice is not offered to God or that the sacrificial

offering consists merely in the fact that Christ is given to us to eat, let him be anathema." The second definition is: "If anyone says that by the words, 'Do this in commemoration of me,' Christ did not make the Apostles priests, or that He did not command that they, and the priests who follow them, should offer Christ's body and blood once more, let him be anathema." The third definition is "If anyone says that the sacrifice of the Mass is merely an offering of prayers and thanksgiving or that it is a simple memorial...let him be anathema."

What are we being told by these authoritative definitions? "We are being told that Christ ordained the apostles priests, enabling them to offer Mass, and that every priest in the world derives his priestly power of offering Mass back, back over the centuries to Holy Thursday night at the Last Supper." Regarding the crisis in the modern Church, "Unfortunately, these defined statements of infallible doctrine are not being circulated or published or taught in nominally Catholic circles today ... And if you look at the weekly parish bulletins, in one diocese after another, you will notice that very few refer to the Eucharist [in respect to] 'the Mass'...but to be a Catholic means to believe that Christ instituted the sacrifice of the Mass."

"So what is the Council of Trent solemnly teaching us? ... We are being told that the sacrifice of the Mass is a *true* sacrifice in which Jesus really, truly offers Himself to His Heavenly Father no less than He did on the cross.... We are affirming—with the infallible Church—that the Mass is a true sacrifice. Why? Because the same Jesus, really present on the altar through the words of the priest's consecration, is in the Mass... Christ offers Himself no less now than He offered Himself at the Last Supper."

In addition to having an orthodox perspective of the Holy sacrifice of the Mass, one must have a proper understanding of holy orders. "Christ ordained His apostles priests when he told them, 'Do this in remembrance of

me." At the Last Supper, Our Lord "did more than merely change bread and wine into His own living, human Self." There were three sublime, incomprehensible gifts given by Our Lord at the Last Supper: Our Lord "began the Mass" by saying the first Mass; He instituted the ordained priesthood by commanding, "Do this in remembrance of me"; and He gave us His body, blood, soul, and divinity in the Holy Eucharist.

Our Lord redeemed man through His sacrifice on the cross, giving mankind the opportunity to attain Heaven. How, though, may a Catholic remain in the state of grace and attain salvation? The answer is the grace received through the Mass. "We say the Mass is a sacrament-sacrifice.... By definition, every sacrament confers the graces which it signifies. What is signified in every Mass? It is Christ's readiness to die—to die over and over again."

In the Mass, though Our Lord cannot die again, He offers Himself to His Father, and He confers innumerable graces upon the Catholic faithful. Through the Holy Eucharist, Our Lord "confers the grace we need, and dear Lord how desperately we need this grace, to live lives of constant readiness to do God's will." The journey toward salvation is a constant quest to do God's will: "We die bodily only once, but we are to die frequently every time that God's will places a demand on our will. We are to die to ourselves, die by sacrificing our wills to the will of God."

"What is the grace we receive from the sacrifice of the Mass? It is the grace to imitate Christ, not only in the practice of His virtues, but also, and with emphasis, that we might imitate Christ in His *death*."

The Holy Mass, in its extraordinary status as sacrifice-sacrament, is both aweinspiring and inviting. What would our lives be like without Our Lady's gracious acceptance of God's will, Our Lord's sacrifice on the cross, or Our Lord's Holy Catholic Church? Likewise, how would Catholics fare without the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass and the Holy Eucharist? But graciously the Lord, knowing our constant need, has provided His constant care by continually offering Himself to His Father on our behalf.



If you haven't used the Seton Educational Media website in a while, why not give it a try? We recently redesigned the website to make it easier to find what you want and to allow more browsing (so you can find things you didn't know you wanted!).

We've added such features as:

- Recently viewed list
- Related items list
- Tabbed sections for our most popular items
- Improved shopping cart

Whether you want to find books by Pope Benedict XVI, or need supplementary math workbooks, Seton Educational Media has it. You can reach the Seton Educational Media either from Seton's main page, or directly at:

www.SetonBooks.com

The High School Years by Ginny Seuffert

This is the last in a series of articles that have addressed just how much flexibility we can exercise during the various stages of our children's education. Bending the program to fit the needs of a particular child is especially important during the final school years as students look to complete Seton's challenging high school curriculum. The lesson plans offer many ideas and suggestions for modifying daily work to suit an individual student, and parents who hit a roadblock should not hesitate to call a Seton counselor. Parents can sometimes locate other helpful resources in the family's own community. Paying attention to the lesson plans, an occasional call to a counselor, taking advantage of Seton's online goodies and some imaginative planning from Mom and Dad will keep the high school student on track. Here are some ideas:

Review what Seton offers before frustration sets in

Always review the lesson plans and Seton's website to see what resources are available before the student begins a particular course. Some courses offer online lectures, for example. Some have message boards where enrolled students can discuss various ideas. Teachers and counselors are only a phone call away if parents and Junior are stumped.

Seton's SEM catalog of books and educational goods sells products that might mesh nicely with a particular course. One catalog offering that is wildly popular with parents and pupils alike is the DIVE into Math CD series. Especially after Algebra, parents appreciate the CDs for teaching tough advanced concepts. See the Seton website for more information.

Find some help close by

Parents who are really panicking at the thought of teaching trigonometry or physics often try to find some help outside their homes. The first place to look is in your extended family or local home school support group. Does anyone have a background in math, science, foreign language, or other advanced study?

Perhaps someone would be willing to teach a small group of home schooled high schoolers one or two classes a week. One word of warning is in order. One or two classes a week outside the home to complete a course like chemistry or Latin I is worth the time and trouble. On the other hand, taking an hour each week, plus travel and prep time for a course on Pope John Paul II's thoughts on phenomenology (or other esoteric subjects, no matter how worthy the topic) might be diverting too much time from required course work. We all must learn to prioritize carefully, and high school is not too early to start.

Look in your community

If no one in your immediate circle can help, try to find a tutor from the local high school or community college. Sometimes, this can prove a bit pricey, so consider finding a few other families with older children to share the tutoring fees. When you hire a teacher, do not forget that he or she works for you. Show the tutor your text and lesson plans and be specific about your expectations concerning content.

One of the advantages of America's immigrant population is a big pool of potential foreign language tutors. If you are not personally acquainted with a responsible adult who speaks Spanish, for example, call a Catholic Church that offers a Spanish Mass on Sunday. Explain to parish staff they you are searching for a Spanish tutor and ask them if they can recommend someone. Remember, a potential tutor does not necessarily need a background in education; Seton provides texts, tests and lesson plans. All that is needed is fluency.

Some parents cannot locate a tutor, and do not want chemicals in the house, or frogs dissected on the kitchen table. They may wish to register the child in the local community college. This is certainly a possibility, but please call a Seton counselor before you actually enroll to make sure that the course will be accepted for high school credit.

Be flexible about where to study

Speaking of community colleges, moms (especially those with large families) often tell me that their high school students are distracted by younger siblings, and spend too much potential class time pitching in with housework and baby care. Community college libraries offer one flexible solution to that problem. If students are enrolled in even one course, they may use the library resources, books, computers, and research assistants to complete their assignments. If your student is not enrolled, check with the college library anyway, as many will offer access to any student.

If the community college option does not work for you, try the public library in your community. Most of them are not very crowded during regular school hours and trained librarians are often happy to offer assistance to eager students. Virtually every library in the United States has computers for patrons to use.

How about a job outside the home?

Home schooled teenagers are typically mature, responsible beyond their years, and are frequently offered employment opportunities. There are pros and cons that each family should consider. On the pro side, employment outside the home teaches valuable real world lessons in punctuality, prioritizing, and appropriate workplace dress and behavior, in addition to actual job skills. Because large Catholic families are universally strapped for cash, paid work allows the teen to save for college and purchase some clothes that didn't come in a box from relatives.

On the other hand, because home schoolers are commonly dependable and conscientious, employers have been known to offer them more and more hours, not leaving enough time for family and school. Also, in many communities the only jobs available for high school students will attract teens and adults from a wide variety of backgrounds. Your teens may be exposed to the same influences you tried to avoid by not sending them to public high school in the first place! Each family will make its own decision about work outside the home; hopefully remembering that a student's

first job at this time in life is a kind of school itself.

How many outside activities are too many?

Many home-educated students become involved in activities such as sports, dance, instrumental music, and art, during the grammar school years and continue to progress in high school. Many of these activities are wholesome and healthy, and often involve students with other teens who, although not necessarily home schooled, are focused and ambitious about their futures. Often extra-curriculars will later provide a source of future earnings. My own children have earned extra income teaching ice-skating, dance, and physical fitness.

On the other hand, the more advanced a student becomes in these endeavors, the more time they consume each week, and by high school, they are often time-gluttons! When you decide how much extra-curricular involvement is good for your child, again remember that a student's first job at this time in life is school.

A final word about the Seton program

Seton's high school program—the texts, lesson plans, online services, teacher services, all of it—has been designed to help parents provide their high school student with the best Catholic education possible. The program must also

accommodate students from a wide variety of educational, geographic and family backgrounds. A student who has been enrolled in Seton's program since kindergarten, for example, will probably not need the freshman grammar/composition course nearly as much as a child transferring in from a public junior high. A teen who speaks Spanish at home may be able to "test out" of Spanish I. Students can receive high school credit for independent study in many extracurricular subject areas. Call a Seton high school counselor for information about any of these options.

The Quarter Report Forms for each high school course plainly lay out which assignments must be sent to Seton in order to receive high school credit, and which assignments may be graded at home. That is not to say that the other coursework is not valuable—it is. But not every student needs to do every assignment in the lesson plans. If your child has a strong background in a particular area of study, feel free to gloss over, or even skip, daily work in that area. At the same time, if your child lacks a particular skill, spend even more time on it than the lesson plans call for.

Pray to St. Elizabeth Anne Seton, your child's patron, and his or her guardian angel for their intercession during the high school years, and never forget that Seton staff members are anxious to help you in this work.

Upcoming Conferences

February 18, Austin, TX. 2nd Annual Austin Catholic Home Educators Conference. St. Thomas More Catholic Church Parish Activity Center, 8:30AM to 5:00 PM. 10205 RR 620 North Austin, TX. 78726. For info: contact Jennifer at 512-331-2189, or info@achec.org; www.achec.org

March 11, Miami, FL. Southern Florida Pro-Life, Home School and Family Conference 2006. St Raymond Catholic Church, Parish Hall. Mass at 8AM, Conference from 9:00 AM to 4:00 PM. 3475 SW 17th St., Miami, FL. 33145. Preregistration online at www.setonhome.org/ miami. Phone registration at 540-636-9990 ext. 116. For local contact Laura laurabag@bellsouth.net or 305-278-0565. Speakers include Fr. Frank Papa, Mrs. Virginia Seuffert, and Mrs. Magally Llaguno.

March 18, Kansas City, KS. 2006 Kansas City Catholic Homeschool Conference St. Paul's Catholic Parish & School. Registration at 7:30 AM, Mass at 8:00 AM. Conference closes at 4:30 PM. 900 South Honeysuckle Drive, Olathe, KS. 66061. For info contact Cynthia at 913-652-0831, or cmaddock@everestkc.net. Speakers include Mrs. Virginia Scuffert

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On Eternal Life

When God touches his soul man learns to see aright. Even if he had all possible possessions in heaven and earth, what would that be? The happiness of mere success, of mere power, of mere wealth, is always an illusory happiness; a glance at the world of today, looking into the tragedies of those powerful and successful people who have sold their souls for wealth, will show us how true this is. For those great fits of despair, against which all refinements of desire and of its gratification are deployed in vain, do not occur among the poor and weak but among those people who seem unacquainted with the troubles of life. Everything in heaven and on earth would be empty were it not for God, who has made himself our portion forever. "This is eternal life, that they know you the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent", says the Lord in the Gospel of John (17:3). This is exactly the discovery expressed in Psalm 73. The supplicant sees God and discovers that he needs nothing more, that in his contact with God everything has been granted him, true life. "Nothing in heaven or on earth gives me joy without you, even though my flesh should fail—my happiness is to be in your presence." Wherever such an encounter takes place, there is eternal life. The dividing line between temporal life and eternal life runs right through the midst of our temporal life. ... The same experience is expressed in various ways in the letters of Paul, as for instance when Paul the prisoner, in chains, writes to the Philippians: "To me to live is Christ, and to die is gain." He would prefer to be released from the flesh and to be with Christ, but he recognizes that it is more important for him to remain for his congregations (Phil. 1:21-24). "If we live, we live to the Lord, and if we die, we die to the Lord; so then, whether we live or whether we die, we are the Lord's" (Rom. 14:8)

Thus we see that eternal life is that mode of living, in the midst of our present earthly life, which is untouched by death because it reaches out beyond death. Eternal life in the midst of time, that is the first challenge of the article of belief that was our starting point. If we live in this way, then the hope of eternal fellowship with God will become the expectation that characterizes our existence, because some conception of its reality develops for us, and the beauty of it transforms us from within. Thus it becomes apparent that there is in this face-to-face encounter with God nothing selfish, no withdrawal into a merely private realm, but that very liberation from the self which alone makes any sense of eternity. An endless succession of moments would be unbearable; when our existence is gathered up into the single gaze of the love of God, this not only transforms endlessness into eternity, into God's today; at the same time it means fellowship with all those who have been accepted by the same love. ...Because we all share in God's love, we belong to each other. Where God is all in all, we are all in everyone and all in ourselves, are in one Body, in the Body of Christ, in which the joy of one member is the joy of all the other members, as the suffering of one member was the suffering of all members.

Pope Benedict XVI, from the book *God is Near Us*

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