



# Seton Home

# Study School

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## *Birthday of Mary*

On September 8<sup>th</sup>, we celebrate the Feast of the Birthday of the Blessed Virgin Mary, the Mother of God. It is likely that Joachim and Anne—the parents of little Mary and saints in their own right—were given the grace of knowing that their newly-born daughter was very, very special. We do not know whether the Holy Spirit gave them specific knowledge of Mary’s identity and mission, both of which He later inspired the Church to clarify in the Church’s teaching that Mary is the Mother of God. Nevertheless, her parents would have known that Mary was especially chosen by God for an extremely important role in fulfilling God’s promise of a Messiah to Israel.

Some third and fourth century Christian writings suggest that Joachim and Anne took little Mary to the Temple of Jerusalem when she was only two years old so that she could be formed there in piety and in the knowledge of the law and the prophets. Such an upbringing would have been unusual for a Jewish girl of Mary’s time, but would match the exceptional role Mary plays in salvation history. Such a formation would be quite appropriate for Mary since the Church tells us that Mary was redeemed in an extraordinary way by being conceived in her mother’s womb free from the stain of original sin. The Temple environment would have fostered growth in all the virtues she already had by her immaculate conception, while at the same time preparing her to be Mother of the Incarnate Son of God.

When Mary and Joseph brought Jesus to be presented in the Temple soon after His birth, they encountered Simeon and Anna. If Mary had spent her years of

formation in the Temple, then we can surmise that she may have known these two holy people. It is possible that Simeon might have been previously in charge of Mary’s formation in the Temple since he was “righteous and devout, waiting for the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit was upon him” (Luke 2:25). The Blessed Virgin Mary’s immediate teacher may have been the prophetess, Anna, who Scripture tells us did not “depart from the temple worshiping with fasting and prayer night and day” (Luke 2:37).

The Church has not defined most of the implications that her immaculate conception has for how Mary lived on earth. It seems that her freedom from sin would at least mean that she learned the things of God readily, quickly, and deeply since she did not have concupiscence, that is, the wayward desires that encourage resistance to spiritual truths. Her acquired knowledge of the things of God most likely was built also upon some special knowledge infused by God in her soul that would have been important to her mission. Also, her freedom from concupiscence would mean she rapidly advanced in virtue and good works.

Mary’s acquired and infused knowledge of divine things and her great holiness means that Mary, while on earth, was a witness to the power of God that was coming in her Son, the Incarnate Lord, to deliver us from sin and ignorance. In addition, her spiritual gifts are a witness to the reality of our true goal in life, heaven, where concupiscence, sin, and suffering have no place.

Mary is a witness to the power of God to free us from sin and to the reality that

the sinful world is *not* what being human is really about. Being human is really about union with God in eternal life. The Blessed Virgin anticipated on earth, and now enjoys in Heaven, the eternal life that is meant for all people who live by faith in Christ.

As home schooling parents, we have many concerns, but we can trust in Mary’s help, and be comforted by the fact that the Blessed Mother Mary loves us as much as her Son loves us. She wants to give us and our children something of the kind of life she had, a life of knowledge and understanding about Jesus and the things of heaven, and a life without sin and rich in virtues. Catholic home schooling involves learning the things of this world, primarily for the purpose of helping us learn more about Jesus and the things of heaven.

Blessed Mother Mary, as we celebrate your birthday, encourage us to grow rapidly in the knowledge of divine things, the way of virtue, and the practice of good works.

Help our children, Mother of Mothers. Bring them closer to you and your holy life and away from sin. Bring them greater understanding of your Son, Jesus Christ, and of their responsibility to be obedient to Him and to what He wants them to do each and every day.

-MKC

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## *Questions We Are Asked*

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

**I am just starting home schooling and I am a little overwhelmed with what needs to be accomplished this year.**

Certainly anytime we start a new project, whether it is a year at college or a new job, the road ahead of us can seem somewhat long and difficult. We know, however, that if we take it one step at a time, we can accomplish the larger project. The same is true of home schooling. Take your time to look over the lessons for the year. See the pattern of how each course moves forward, day by day and week by week, just a step at a time. Help your children to see how each course progresses, one small step each day. Arrange for your child to put a checkmark and the date next to each step in the lesson plan as it is done. It can be a terrific sense of accomplishment for your child as he or she completes each step day by day.

One year we were in the process of moving, and of course this interferes with the home schooling. My boys would do what they could during the week, but they would take Saturdays to finish up any items that were not completed during the week. Doing this, they were able to stay on schedule.

When I attended a Catholic school long ago, we were given daily assignments. Whatever we did not complete that day, we were to finish up at home that evening. In those days, the nuns were quite insistent that every textbook and workbook must be completed. Finishing an important job does give a sense of accomplishment and real self-esteem. So just keep in mind, when you are feeling daunted by the work ahead, that if you just take it one assignment at a time, you and your children can have a great year.

**It seems to me that the computer games and television and CD's and**

**videos are always pulling my children away from their studies. Should I get rid of them?**

When I was home schooling my sons, we did not have all these distractions in the house. We did have a TV but there were only a few channels, we did not pay to have more channels, so those kinds of distractions, or attractions, were not available. There were no videos to watch, there was no internet, and computer games were just starting to be available. Plus, in those days, there was little home schooling in the area and my boys accepted the fact that we stayed in the house until 3 PM, though they sometimes went out with their Dad in the backyard to play baseball or football.

The problem today is not only the computer games, TV's, or CDs, but also the message of the culture which is in the air we breathe. The culture sends a message that freedom means doing whatever you want at every moment. While we are fighting this culture, all of us, including our children, are exposed to these ideas in some way or another. The exposure can be by other children in the neighborhood, or extended family members.

Perhaps there is one excellent solution, but I doubt it. I think each family needs to work it out, but in general, the answer is control and discipline. Parents need to be stronger than ever before in maintaining order and rules for the home and the members of the family. To start off, I would recommend that the computer and television be in the family room where you can control when it is on or off. Needless to say, you should have it off during school hours. Perhaps students who need to use the computer for their studies should not use it until after school hours to keep the temptation from the rest of the family.

Family prayer is essential. The family members need to pray together. This is a spiritual battle, and we need supernatural help to win it.

**I can see as I start the new school year, that I need some suggestions in disciplining my children. What do you suggest?**

For a start, I would suggest that you purchase a few books on discipline by Catholic authors. We are fortunate to have some available now that were not available in years past. Please look on our SEM website ([www.setonbooks.com](http://www.setonbooks.com)) and search for Discipline to see the titles we have on this topic. You may want to order more than one because each has a special perspective and strength.

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*Family Bonding Through Discipline* was written by Father Fox, but it is the result of conversations with Catholic parents who have disciplined their children. Father Fox, after observing the well-behaved children of certain families, asked these parents to explain how they discipline. The book contains practical day-to-day tips and ideas.

*Lifeline: The Religious Upbringing of Your Children* was written by James Stenson who was a high school principal for many years. He noticed that some students were well-disciplined and asked their parents how they discipline. Along with his own Catholic school experience in discipline, he wrote a book which gives parents ideas based on Catholic principles.

*Legacy: A Father's Handbook for Raising Godly Children*, by Steve Wood, is a popular favorite. He emphasizes the teachings of the Church as well as Bible

teachings, specifically for fathers for training their children. The father of eight children, Steve Wood has been a popular speaker on discipline for many years, and has a regular show for fathers on EWTN.

*Discipline That Lasts a Lifetime* is by Dr. Ray Guarendi, the father of twelve children and a child psychologist whose career is helping parents and their families to maintain control and keep a stable family life. This is a 306 page book, but it is more a reference book. Although Dr. Guarendi offers general principles in a humorous way, he is also very practical and deals with specific situations. With this book, you simply look up the current problem, the current situation, or the back-talk line of the moment, and Dr. Guarendi tells you how to handle it right then and there. But find a comfortable chair, because you will want to read the whole book!

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*Fathers benefit from being actively involved. They “discover” their children in a new relationship, that of teacher.*

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**A couple of years ago, I had a student in Grade 12, and now I have a second student who will begin his senior year. We had a problem before trying to finish up in time to get the transcript to the college in time.**

One thing we would recommend is that your student begins the year by focusing on only two courses—the two that are the most demanding in time and effort. For instance, he could take the English 12 course every morning for a few hours, and then take the Government course for a few hours every afternoon. Then he might take only two courses for the next two or

three months, the Religion and the foreign language, for instance.

Another thing to consider is to set a definite deadline for assignments, and for him to stay on schedule no matter what, which is what college professors will demand. After all, work could be done on Saturday mornings to keep up to the pre-set schedule. When your son gets to college, he will find that he will be in the college library on most Saturdays. The work for Seton’s twelfth grade really is much less than a college will expect from a freshman student. If your son can push himself and establish good work and study habits now, then adapting to college will not be nearly as difficult.

Proceeding in this way, the easier courses can be taken last and can be finished up more quickly so you can get the high school transcript to the college earlier. Most colleges assume a student has finished his senior year and has the transcript by the end of June.

By the way, we hear regularly that our Seton graduates often are asked to help other freshman college students, and are even paid pretty well for such tutoring. Something to think about!

**I feel discouraged because I am just starting home schooling, but I really don’t have a “classroom” area. Yet I don’t want to pick up and move books and other materials around every day.**

Having a room dedicated to home schooling is actually very important. It sets the daily tone for schoolwork and no distractions. It needs to be away from the daily to-and-fro of the family activities, especially when those activities cause loss of attention on the part of the students.

Take a fresh look at your home, or have your spouse or a friend help you to take a fresh look at what is possible. Perhaps an attic could become a bedroom for a couple of older children and their former bedroom could be a classroom.

You might put fluorescent lighting in the basement, find a room-sized carpet to put over the cement, build some bookshelves and add some plants or an aquarium. If you have a family room,

perhaps that or the living room could be your classroom. Perhaps you can use the dining room as a classroom and eat in the kitchen. Whatever it takes, you do need a special place for the classroom. Otherwise, home schooling may get lost in the shuffle.

**My husband supports my home schooling, but he does not seem to want to help at all.**

It is not surprising that husbands are thinking about their careers. After all, they need to be successful to support their families. Nevertheless, not only can the children benefit from having their fathers involved to some extent in the home schooling enterprise, but fathers actually benefit as well. They “discover” their children in a new relationship, that of teacher. Once fathers start teaching their children—even on a limited basis, perhaps only one subject, two or three times a week—fathers discover something special about the real meaning of being a father.

Steve Wood has been helping to teach his eight children for many years, and he has written some wonderful ideas for fathers in his book *Christian Fatherhood*, which you can purchase from Seton. This book explains eight steps to being a good Catholic husband and father.

**I know you have counselors available. How often may I call them for advice?**

You may call as often as you wish. Of course, we hope you don’t need to call every day, but our counselors are available every day, Monday through Friday, during the hours of about 8:30 or 9 to about 5:30. In the evenings or on Saturdays, usually someone is available; although, during these times, we may not be able to answer every question.

The most frequent calls are in relation to math or English. We encourage you, if you find yourself calling frequently about math, to purchase the Saxon CD we sell, which provides both audio and visual tutoring lessons for every single chapter in the Saxon math textbooks.

If you call frequently about English, you might consider going on our website to the My Seton section for the extra resources we have posted online.

*Know Thy Enemy:  
The Tactics and Snares of the Devil  
from a speech by Father Paul Scalia*

The tricks and temptations of the devil assail both saint and sinner. Catholics have a refuge in the sacraments and in prayer. Though the gifts of Heaven are a holy bounty of strength, we know that, on a daily basis, we must contend with the effects of original sin. Thus, a wise person seeks some knowledge of the enemy. Father Paul Scalia, in a lecture entitled, "Know Thy Enemy: The Tactics and Snares of the Devil," discusses the varying approaches employed by the devil in his efforts to lead one into sin.

A knowledge of one's enemy is "a very basic principle of warfare. We need to acquaint ourselves with the tactics of the evil one. We should be aware of his tactics. I don't mean to imply that all these evil things come directly from the devil. No, we are very capable of leading ourselves into sin."

A major tactic of the devil is to "blur the things that should be distinct." This is the exact opposite of what God does. Our God is a God of clarity, order, and lucid candor. "Go and read the first several verses of the book of Genesis. All of creation is one long process of distinctions: light from darkness, the firmament and the waters...day and night, beast and man, and then man and woman. All of these things are distinguished by God. That's the process of creation. The devil does the exact opposite. He tries to put together what should not be put together."

Unfortunately, our culture has fallen into this trap of lacking distinctions. "If we survey our culture and look at all these evil things that are cropping up more and more, we can see it is the blurring of things that should be distinct." We see the impact of modernity on the roles of men and women. "In our culture increasingly we have men acting like women and women acting like men—a tremendous confusion and blurring of the roles." Among other things, this has led to the movement for homosexual marriage and homosexual adoption,

since men and women are seen as interchangeable. "It is only because men and women are distinct that they can be complimentary."

In a similar way, the relationship between adults and children has been undermined. There is "a blurring of distinction between adults and children. Increasingly...we just have a whole lot of adults acting like children...and children being treated as adults," as they are "being given all of these adult roles and adult responsibilities."

Even the church has not been immune to the effects of wrongheaded notions in society. "In the Church, it is worth pointing out that there has been a blurring of the distinction between the priesthood and the laity. The laity is running the Mass, and the priest is out being a 'regular Joe.'" But when the priest becomes just a regular person, the priest is, in a sense, leaving behind his vocation. "A priest is made distinct from the lay faithful...so that he can serve them."

In addition to eroding distinction and attempting to unravel the orderliness of God's creation, the devil works to destroy by means of division. "One of the other tactics is the exact opposite: dividing what should be united. It has constantly been the work of the devil to divide things that should be united. Go back again to the book of Genesis. What are the first effects of sin? First, man is divided from God. Then, man is divided from woman. And then, with Cain and Abel, brothers are divided against each other. And then, with the Tower of Babel, nations are divided from one another. And so it has gone throughout history, just constant division of things that should be united."

Evidence of the devil's divisiveness permeates the strata of modern society. "Look at our culture. Husband and wife divided by way of divorce. It's tragic to think that fifty percent of all marriages end in divorce—*fifty percent*—and it's no different for Catholics, unfortunately. That's a devastating statistic." There

are other unfortunate divisions we see about us, such as the "division between the Church and her members," and the "absolute division between Church and state." Father explains, "Now, obviously, there is a distinction between Church and state...but in our culture there is a mentality that says that Church and state must be completely separate."

Countering these lamentable realities, there is a distinctly Catholic point of view: "Let me point out, in this regard, that it is always the Catholic instinct to unite things that should be united. In His own Person, [God] unites the human and the divine. So we see this instinct is inherited by His Church, as we see at Pentecost. On Pentecost Sunday, what happens? The nations are united again. Not in the United Nations ... but in the Church, which is the true union of nations." The unity of the Church and the constancy of Her divinely revealed doctrines are the foundation of Catholic life. "To be Catholic means everything is held together as an organic whole. All of these truths that we hold are united, and we shouldn't divide them from one another. Our culture is designed for just this kind of division, just this kind of compartmentalizing."

Compartmentalizing is, in a sense, at the core of modern life. "Think of the way our geography is, the way things are structured in our towns and communities. You work at one place. You shop at another. You socialize at another. You go to school at another. Everything is kind of distinct and separate. And so we fall into the mindset that these things have nothing to do with each other." Hence, the disjointed nature of modern society is opposed to the unified, hierarchical structure of the Catholic social model.

Indeed, though, there are many remedies for the snares of the devil. Catholics have the guidance and wisdom of Our Lady and the saints. Further, homeschoolers have an additional advantage. "One of the beauties of homeschooling is that you are bringing back a unity...so that faith and socializing and education and all of these things are again integrated." The homeschooling home is a worthy defense against the attacks of Satan and his followers.

## *Manners: The Art of Living Well in The Odyssey*

*By Mitchell Kalpakgian*

The most ancient and most universal form of manners appears in the rituals of hospitality, a custom that distinguishes the civilized in Homer's *Odyssey* who honor this sacred law of the gods. The barbarians, on the other hand, such as the savage Cyclops, disregard this practice, boasting they give not "a jot" or a "whistle" about the laws of the gods. The civilized who offer hospitality to travelers and strangers obey this higher law of the gods because they know that the gods often appear in the disguise of travelers, because they owe a debt of gratitude for the times they were treated with the kindness of generous hosts, and because they know the art of living *well* obliges all human beings to respect the dignity of all persons. In Homer's epics this ritual of hospitality expresses the refinement of manners in many gestures of good will. These social occasions always feature banquets that elevate human conduct to the highest level:

A maid came with water in a beautiful golden ewer and poured it out over a silver basin so that he could wash his hands. Then she drew a wooden table to his side, and the staid housekeeper brought some bread and put it by him with a choice of dainties, helping him liberally to all she could offer.

The host serves his guest in an atmosphere that evokes beauty and elegance—the "beautiful golden ewer" and "the silver basin" reflecting choice dishware made from the best materials and with skilled craftsmanship. The host demonstrates generosity in offering the best foods and preparing the heartiest portions, thinking of honoring the guest in every way possible. When Telemachus is a guest in King Menelaus's home, the host spares nothing in accommodating the needs of the traveler: "Meanwhile a carver dished up for them on platters slices of various meats he had selected from his board, and put gold cups beside them." It is the quintessence of good manners to welcome a visitor, provide

for all his essential needs, and to treat the guest—whoever he is—as if he were a king or queen in disguise.

These great banquets in the *Odyssey* also provide occasions for conversation and storytelling. The feast creates an opportunity for learning, for broadening one's mind by learning of another person's background and history, for acquainting oneself with what Homer calls "the knowledge of men and manners"—the truth that human nature is everywhere the same and that different nations practice different customs. Thus another mark of good manners is the willingness to initiate and cultivate good conversation, to take an interest in the life and experience of the visitor, and to create an opportunity for the guest to tell his story about his adventures. While Odysseus is received as a guest in Phaeacia, the king and his people listen raptly to the thrilling adventures the Greek hero narrates to his hosts about his escapes from the Sirens, Scylla and Charybdis, and the Cyclops. While the civilized relish story and the exchange of knowledge, the barbarian Cyclops cultivate no interest in their visitor's background, show no appreciation for storytelling, and possess no liveliness of mind to enjoy the pleasure of conversation.

After the guest and host have regaled themselves with delicious food and engaging conversation, entertainment in the form of stories, music, dance, and Olympic Games follows as the king invites the performance of the bard: "And let our glorious bard, Demodocus, be summoned. For no other singer has his heavenly gift of delighting our ears whatever theme he chooses for our song." Thus another characteristic of good manners is conviviality, the ability to enjoy people, the arts, sports, and festive occasions. The practice of manners enhances the appreciation for beauty, art, music, poetry, courtesy, and the higher things of life that culture offers. It illuminates the world of difference between living (surviving)

on a mere animal level and living *well* an abundant human life. In the delight of hospitable occasions, good manners heighten the appreciation for play and cultivate a love for the variety of life's most gratifying joys—the "sweetness of life" that Odysseus experiences in his welcome in Phaeacia: "I myself feel there is nothing more delightful than when the festive mood reigns in a whole people's hearts and the banqueters listen to a minstrel from their seats in the hall, while the tables before them are laden with bread and meat, and a steward carries round the wine . . . This, to my way of thinking, is something like perfection." In short, occasions of hospitality are natural places for both hosts and guests to enjoy beauty, friendship, leisure, and knowledge and to realize that man works in order to play and wonder.

Thus good manners require men and women to practice the virtues of the welcoming host and the appreciative guest. The host is required to demonstrate graciousness and think of pleasing the guest in both large and small ways, providing not only bountiful food but also offering special attention to each person. Because the art of good cooking is an act of love and giving, the host offers charity and kindness to his guests in welcoming them and making them feel at home. The good host—like the civilized who welcome travelers in the *Odyssey*—cares for all the essential human needs and provides for the body, mind, heart, and soul. The good guest, on the other hand, is obligated to be sociable, lighthearted, convivial, and pleasant and to do his part in adding cheer and joy to the occasion. He must be willing to change his clothes, his mood, and his outlook to enter into the mirth and spirit of the festivity. When hosts and guests reciprocate in the mutual giving and receiving of laughter, good spirits, and lively conversation, human life is elevated from the humdrum to the poetic, the grace of human conduct beautifies ordinary life, "something like perfection" is experienced, and God is present: "*Hospis venit; Christus venit*" (The guest comes; Christ comes). As St. Paul writes, "Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for thereby some have entertained angels unawares" (Hebrews 13:2).

## Coping with Preschoolers

by Ginny Seuffert

Let me preface this article by saying that I had a baby in 1978, two more in 1980, another in '83, and again in '84, '86, and '88. I started home schooling in 1989, and had two more babies in '91 and '94. Although I lack a college degree, I have a *doctorate* in juggling multiple children. So, I feel completely qualified to write this month's column.

Each year of home schooling presents unique challenges. This can be especially true in big Catholic families when new babies arrive on a regular schedule and Mom has to juggle yet another demand for her time and attention. How can one woman be expected to home school multiple grades while nursing a baby and chasing around after a busy toddler? Moms worry they are bound to neglect someone, and either the children will receive a poor education or the little ones will be starved for attention. Thankfully, experience has shown that you can successfully home school in a multi-age family, and the little kids will be just fine.

Usually the meltdown occurs when the family dynamic changes—Mom is pregnant again; a new baby arrives; or the toddler learns to walk and forgets how to sit still. Mom was coping just fine, but now finds herself stressed to the max. Each of these changes can be managed—I promise. Here are some ideas.

**Help! I'm pregnant again. The only time I have enough energy to lift my head off the pillow is when I'm leaning over the toilet wondering how someone who hasn't eaten in solid food in 12 hours can feel like throwing up!**

The toughest thing about pregnancy is how a woman, who normally has the energy level of a company of infantrymen, can feel so weak and exhausted. The nausea alone can make you want to cry, and your only laugh this week came when your obstetrician told you to take it easy for the next few months. Is he losing his mind? Doesn't he remember delivering the other five children!

The only remedy for the first three months of pregnancy is to survive them:

- Do only the housework that is necessary to prevent the Board of Health from condemning your house. Don't worry about the dirt and mess; it will be waiting for you when you hit week 13.
- Beg your mother, mother-in-law, sisters, cousins, neighbors and mere acquaintances to help you with meals. When they refuse to take your phone calls, dial take-out.
- Home school in your bed! Have the older children take turns minding the toddlers, and let the rest of the children sit right next to your pillow.
- Take short cuts, like oral quizzes, and don't feel guilty. Even if you doze off in the middle of a lesson, the children are still getting more one-on-one than if they were in a classroom with thirty other students.

**I'm expecting my baby in September. How am I going to be able to home school?**

In my experience, it is not all that tough to home school with a newborn. All they do is eat, sleep, and increase the quarterly earnings of companies that manufacture disposable diapers. Most newborn infants will happily nurse right through English and math, and then take a long nap during the next three subjects. When I had a baby, we often would home school right on the bed, with baby napping on one side of mom and the first grader practicing phonics on the other.

As the weeks go by, however, baby will stay awake for longer periods and might fuss more. Try to establish some sort of routine. Nurse baby right after the older children have finished breakfast and let them start a subject they can do with minimal help. Often babies with a full tummy are happy to sit on a chair in the middle of the table and listen to the general conversation. Many infants love to sit in their swings.

My own children and grandchildren enjoyed lying on blankets under a frame with toys and bright colored objects hanging from it. While baby is amusing himself, take a few minutes to check work and review concepts

Younger babies will usually take both a morning and an afternoon nap. For safety's sake, it is a good idea to have a crib for daytime naps. A crib will allow you to let baby nap away from the general hubbub, and not worry that today is the day the little angel will learn to roll over. Naptime is your chance to work on subjects that require more mom-time.

**I haven't had a minute's peace since my toddler learned to walk. I feel like I do nothing but chase after my 2 year-old and I am ignoring my students.**

I told you newborns were easy! No question toddlers have what seems to be an endless source of energy. The key to success with this age group is to get them involved in "big kid" activities.

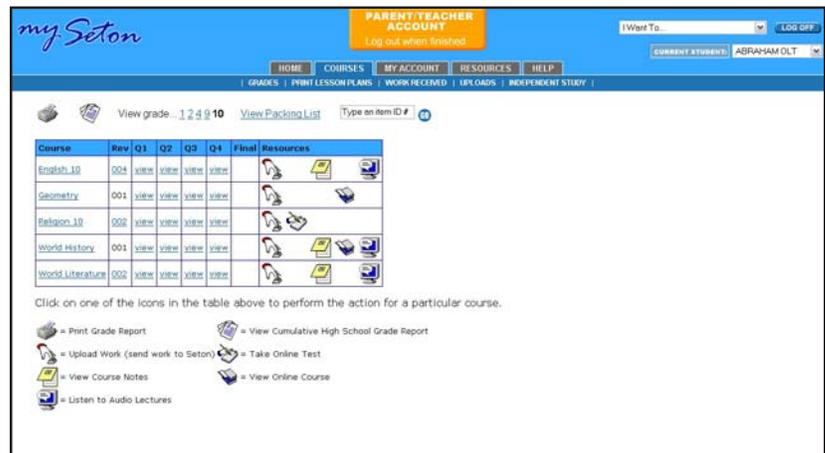
- Even 2 year-olds can do simple chores like putting dirty clothes in the laundry basket and picking up toys. 3 and 4 year-olds can help set the table, entertain younger siblings, wipe counters and put away the silverware. Put a job chart on the fridge, use pictures or stickers to illustrate the tasks, and put the little one "in charge" of certain chores.
- Toddlers want to home school just like their older siblings. Puzzles with knobs are a great first schoolwork assignment. Increase the number and difficulty of puzzles that must be completed for each "lesson."
- Write simple words like "dog," "cat", or "tree" at the top of a large piece of paper and direct the toddler to draw a picture to accompany the word.
- Buy duplos, Lincoln logs, and similar toys. Give the child a school assignment to construct a garage, a truck or anything that will keep him busy for 20 minutes.
- I'm not a fan of television, but audio tapes can keep little ones occupied. My family had quite a collection of "Wee sing" tapes.

- If you absolutely must use the TV, buy or rent educational videos. Sometimes you can coordinate activities. For example, toddlers can watch a video on Noah's ark while playing with a Noah's ark play set.
- These days, kids are becoming computer savvy before they can articulate a full sentence. There are some neat preschool computer programs. Just be careful to limit screen time. Kids need fresh air and exercise.

When all else fails, play "musical children." Let the school age children take turns occupying the younger siblings. Don't feel guilty or that you are "burdening" your children too early. This early responsibility is one of the reasons that people always remark on how well-behaved and self-motivated home schooled children are. The academics are only one part, albeit a big and important part, of why we home school. We need to remember that developing strong virtues, like industriousness, patience, and kindness towards others, is an integral part of our roles as parent-educators. Our children will grow in grace and virtue when they lovingly care for younger siblings. Moms and dads acquire these same virtues as, with the help of God's grace, we cope with children of different ages in our home schools.

## My Seton

Now that a new school year is here, don't forget to use your My Seton page. The page is located at [www.setonhome.org/myseton](http://www.setonhome.org/myseton), or you can go to Seton's main page and click the My Seton link. Your My Seton page is specifically tailored for your family. You can quickly look up grades, see what assignments have been received by Seton, find supplemental materials, and print weekly lesson plans. You can also use the My Seton page to take online tests, or to upload assignments from home. You can also make Plan B payments, or update your address. Online tests are often graded immediately by the computer; but even tests or assignments graded by teachers will receive grades much more quickly than items mailed to Seton. My Seton is quick, efficient and fun. Give it a try!



Sample screen from My Seton

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## Pope John Paul II's Letter to Families

*What is involved in raising children?* In answering this question two fundamental truths should be kept in mind: first, that man is called to live in truth and love; and second, that everyone finds fulfillment through the sincere gift of self. This is true both for the educator and for the one being educated. Education is thus a unique process for which the mutual communion of persons has immense importance. The educator is a person who *"begets" in a spiritual sense*. From this point of view, *raising children can be considered a genuine apostolate*. It is a living means of communication, which not only creates a profound relationship between the educator and the one being educated, but also makes them both sharers in truth and love, that final goal to which everyone is called by God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

Education... is above all else *a reciprocal "offering" on the part of both parents*: together they communicate their own mature humanity to the newborn child, who gives them in turn the newness and freshness of the humanity which it has brought into the world. This is the case even when children are born with mental or physical disabilities. Here, the situation of the children can enhance the very special courage needed to raise them.

With good reason, then, the Church asks during the Rite of Marriage: "Will you accept children lovingly from God, and bring them up according to the law of Christ and His Church?" In the raising of children conjugal love is expressed as authentic parental love. The "communion of persons," expressed as conjugal love at the beginning of the family, is thus completed and

brought to fulfillment in the raising of children. Every individual born and raised in a family constitutes a potential treasure which must be responsibly accepted, so that it will not be diminished or lost, but will rather come to an ever more mature humanity. This too is a *process of exchange* in which the parents-educators are in turn to a certain degree educated themselves. While they are teachers of humanity for their own children, they learn humanity from them. All this clearly brings out the *organic structure of the family*, and reveals the fundamental meaning of the fourth commandment.

If it is true that by giving life parents share in God's creative work, it is also true that by raising their children they *become sharers in His paternal and at the same time maternal way of teaching*. According to Saint Paul, God's fatherhood is the primordial model of all fatherhood and motherhood in the universe (cf. Ephesians 3:14-15), and of human motherhood and fatherhood in particular. We have been completely instructed in God's own way of teaching by the eternal Word of the Father Who, by becoming man, revealed to man the authentic and integral greatness of His humanity, that is, being a child of God. In this way He also revealed the true meaning of human education. Through Christ all education, within the family and outside of it, *becomes part of God's own saving pedagogy*, which is addressed to individuals and families and culminates in the Paschal Mystery of the Lord's Death and Resurrection. The "heart" of our redemption is the starting-point of every process of Christian education, which is likewise an education to full humanity.

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