



Seton Home



Study School

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Our Lady of Guadalupe

"Am I not here who am your mother?"

These were the words the Blessed Virgin Mother used when she appeared to Juan Diego at Guadalupe, near present-day Mexico City, in December of 1531. These words are truly comforting and consoling and applicable for us home schooling parents. Blessed Mary was encouraging Juan Diego, and us, to have trust in her. Whatever she asked Juan to do, it was not for him to think about the difficulties. She would be with him, protecting him, and encouraging him as his heavenly mother while he fulfilled her request.

Though Juan believed the beautiful Virgin Mary, he was reluctant to give her message to the bishop. He asked her to find someone else to do it. He told her that he was not important enough or qualified to carry out this responsibility. At her insistence, frightened and nervous, he went to the bishop's office, three times, and after being treated as a common Aztec Indian, he was ushered into the presence of the Spanish bishop.

When Juan reported what he had seen and what the beautiful Virgin Mary had told him, the bishop could not believe the simple-minded Aztec peasant. Nevertheless, the bishop told Juan Diego to bring him a sign from the Lady so he could believe the story Juan told.

Juan returned home, only to find his uncle very sick. The next day, Juan felt the need to take care of his uncle rather than obeying the beautiful lady and returning to see the bishop. Juan took a different route to town so that he would not pass the same place where the Blessed Virgin appeared to him the day before.

However, the Blessed Virgin intercepted Juan. She called to him and asked where he was going. He said he needed to find a doctor for his sick uncle. The Blessed Mother immediately asked him, "Am I not your mother?" She reassured him that he could trust her as his mother, that she would take care of his needs. She said, "Your uncle is cured. Now go to the bishop, and present my request to him."

Then Juan told the Lady that the bishop wanted a sign from her to prove that his story about her appearance was true. The Blessed Mother told Juan to hold out his tilma, his loosely-woven cape. Though it was the middle of December, the Blessed Lady picked some roses, miraculously growing on the hillside, and arranged them with her own hands in Juan's tilma.

When Juan once again entered the bishop's residence and was escorted to the bishop, he opened his tilma to let fall a bouquet of fragrant roses, and to reveal on the tilma a miraculously imprinted photo of Our Lady as she appeared to Juan which, after almost 500 years, remains in glorious color and perfection for the adoration of the faithful.

For us home schooling parents, the words of the Blessed Virgin Mary of Guadalupe are especially consoling. Though Mary spoke them long ago, they mean as much to us today. The following is the first message to Juan Diego.

"I wish and intensely desire that in this place my sanctuary be erected. Here I will demonstrate, I will exhibit, I will give all my love, my compassion, my help, and my protection to the people. I am your merciful

mother, the merciful mother of all of you who live united in this land, and of all mankind, of all those who love me. Here I will hear their weeping, their sorrow, and will remedy and alleviate all their multiple sufferings, necessities, and misfortunes."

The following is the message of the Blessed Virgin Mary in her final apparition to Juan Diego:

"Hear and let it penetrate into your heart, my dear little son. Let nothing discourage you, nothing depress you. Let nothing alter your heart, or your countenance. *Am I not here who am your mother?* Are you not under my shadow and protection? Am I not your fountain of life? Are you not in the folds of my mantle, in the crossing of my arms? Is there anything else you need? Do not fear any illness or vexation, anxiety or pain."

Blessed Mother, Our Lady of Guadalupe, keep us in your protection, in the folds of your mantle. Help us not to have anxiety about our home schooling responsibilities, and help our children not to be discouraged. Holy Mary of Guadalupe, pray for us.

(Seton's SEM department offers several items about Juan Diego and Our Lady of Guadalupe. These books and videos will be specially sale-priced until the end of the year.)

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Questions We Are Asked

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

My young daughter kept saying that she wanted to go back to a regular school so we agreed. However, after only a few weeks, we saw our daughter changing, finding friends we do not approve of because of their language and dress and social habits.

This is a story we hear pretty frequently. Children are children. They do not know what they are asking when they ask to return to a school. They see only the outside of the situation, and do not know what dangers loom for their souls. Parents have a responsibility not to allow poisonous foods or dangerous toys for their children. Parents need to protect their children's souls with even more care.

Before putting your children into a school, you need to investigate the school thoroughly. You need to talk to the teachers and principal to get an idea both of the overall philosophy of the school as well as the teaching methodologies employed. If possible, you might want to sit in on a class or two and observe. Does the teacher maintain good discipline? Do the students seem to be learning? Do the students seem to be people who would make good friends for your child? If you cannot satisfy yourself that the school would be a wholesome environment for your child, then no amount of complaining by your child should force you into putting her into that school.

However, even after your due diligence about a school, you may find that you made a mistake. In that case, you need to look closely at the problem and decide if it can be fixed. You should speak to your child's teacher and the school principal about your concerns.

If the problems are serious, and they cannot or will not be addressed by the school administration, then you may need to make a quick change. Especially if

you feel that the school is a serious occasion of sin for your child, you must make a change immediately. Some parents figure they can wait until the following school year begins, but often lasting harm can be done to a child over the course of one year.

Is it better for student to take online rather than paper tests?

We do recommend that students take the online tests because our graders can grade the papers more quickly. The tests arrive immediately into our computer system, and can be sent back without going through the mail. The graders can grade the papers faster because they don't need to hand write any comments; comments can be typed in much more quickly. This makes it easier for graders to make more extensive comments on papers.

Also, when papers are graded online, either by the graders or by the computer, the grades are immediately transferred to the computer report card, so students and parents can see the grades right away.

Remember, the questions on a paper copy of the test will not necessarily match the online test. There are several reasons for this, the main one being that we can revise and improve the online tests more quickly as the need arises. Secondly, sometimes, as in the math tests, multiple choice questions are more appropriate for the online tests.

Sometimes students do the paper test, and then go to the electronic test and try to transfer their answers. Because the online tests are not always the same, this is not a good idea. If a student does a test on paper, it is better to scan and upload the test rather than transfer the answers.

For more information about online tests, or using Seton's online services in general, you can look in your *Parent*

Home School Handbook, or look for online help on your My Seton page.

Our parish religious education director is saying our children need to attend the parish classes in order to receive the sacraments. We feel these classes are geared toward public school students and we don't want our children to attend.

The most important thing you should do is get a copy of *Responsibilities and Rights of Parents in Religious Education*. It is available from our SEM department for only \$2, so you might want a copy for yourself, for your pastor and for your religious education director.

Emphasize that you want to work with the pastor, and that you want your family to be active members of the parish.

Chapters are on *Parents and Catechesis*, *The New Articulation of Parents as Primary Educators*, *Rights of Parents Rooted in the Sacrament of Matrimony*, *Parents as Primary Educators*, and *Why Parents Must be Principal Educators*. This pamphlet was written specifically for home schooling parents to be able to understand their right and duties by reading the teachings of the Church based on Church documents.

A second pamphlet we sell is titled "Home Schooling and the new Code of Canon Law." This is by a canon lawyer, Dr. Edward Peters, who was recently interviewed on EWTN about his new book *Excommunication and the Catholic Church*. In his pamphlet on home schooling, he points out that the religious education programs are not required by the Church. In fact, what is required is that parents prepare their children to receive the sacraments. Dr. Peter's pamphlet is available for \$3 from Seton.

If you have not yet done so, you should speak to your pastor about the policy of the DRE. It may be that the pastor does know not anything about it. You should have the pamphlets above ready to show to the pastor, on the assumption that the pastor does want to follow the teachings of the church. Remember, when you speak to the pastor, be as non-confrontational as possible. Emphasize that you want to work with the pastor, and that you want your family to be active members of the parish.

Pray for your pastor and for your DRE to realize the truth of the teachings of the Church.

Fathers are especially good at instilling discipline in high school students, and emphasizing the importance of keeping a schedule and doing assignments on time.

My oldest is starting 9th grade this year, but I am beginning to think about preparing him for college. What should I be thinking about doing at this early stage?

At Seton, we hope that all our students will have the option to attend college, so our regular schedule of classes is geared to that possibility. We have students take a number of English and Literature courses to help them develop reading, thinking, and writing skills, which is basic for being successful in college. Whether a student wants to be a writer or a lawyer or a scientist or a mathematician or a foreign language interpreter, the combination of reading-thinking-writing skills prepares students for any and all fields for study in college.

To help your student achieve the best possible scores on college admission tests,

consider purchasing a study program to prepare for the SAT or ACT tests. Be sure to buy the latest versions. My high schoolers took daily half-hour classes in SAT preparation, using these materials, mainly in 10th and 11th grades.

Most cities have SAT and ACT preparation classes available for high school students. These are fairly expensive, but they keep students disciplined and on-schedule. Considering the expense of college, scholarships are highly desired; students taking preparatory courses, in one form or another, may be more likely to earn scholarships. In fact, most private Catholic colleges will not even accept students under a certain score. These scores are more objective for college admissions officers than teacher-given grades, since all entering students take the same tests.

Another way to prepare is to start looking at colleges. We have several listed on our web site. Look at their websites and send for information. Consider visiting these colleges in the next two or three years. Some colleges like prospective students to visit and attend classes for a week.

If your student chooses a particular college, make sure that he or she has all required credits for admission. If you need help, our high school counselor, Bob Wiesner, can assist you.

I am a new family and I think I will be asking a lot of questions. I would rather not phone so much. Are counselors available by email?

There are several ways to reach our academic counselors. They are available by phone, five days a week, Eastern Standard Time, from about 8:30 am to about 6 pm. If you go on our web site, click on About, and then click on Staff, you can see our counselors, their names, and what kinds of questions they answer. If you click on the name, it will automatically send you to the proper email address so you can write your question.

We also have a Message Board, on which you can have questions answered by students and parents, as well as by our counselors. If you find your question already answered on the Message Board, you won't need to

make a phone call or send an email. We have 13 Message Boards, divided mainly by subject, such as English, History, and Math.

The Message Board is accessed from our Home Page. Anyone can read the messages on it, but to post a message, you will need to register with your Family Number.

I have a boy just starting ninth grade, but I am so busy with the younger children. Can I just let him do the work on his own?

You need to be careful because even high school students, especially those just starting high school, do need help. Sometimes the help needed is not so much in the understanding of the lessons, but more in the learning of self-discipline, of staying on schedule, of making sure time is used wisely and efficiently.

Many high schoolers are going through emotional struggles about where they are going in life, what the future holds, and how what they do now is really going to make a difference in the future. They struggle with wanting to do what they want, playing a video game (or even playing the piano) versus doing a math assignment.

Consider having your husband be in charge of the education of your son. Fathers are especially good at instilling discipline in high school students, and emphasizing the importance of keeping a schedule and doing assignments on time. Most fathers have jobs that require schedules and work done on time, so they are likely to insist that the high schoolers do the same and learn the "real world."

Fathers do not necessarily need to teach each class, but they need to monitor, to supervise, to evaluate, to frequently check if assignments have been done. Though their overall supervision is important, there are likely to be times when fathers need to help out with particular assignments.

High school students are faced with the difficult problem of no longer being a child, and becoming an adult. When you pray for all your children, say an extra prayer for your high schoolers. It is more difficult than ever to be a teenager in this secular culture.

The Good News

by Kevin Clark

The word *gospel* is a translation into Old English of the Greek words meaning “good news.” It seems, however, that our modern society treats the Gospels more like the bad news. The bad news is that you can’t do whatever you have a mind to do. Among other things, you can’t lie, cheat, steal, covet, murder, or commit adultery. The bad news is that God is always watching you, like a surveillance camera that follows you from place to place and never lets you out of its sight. The bad news is that your life is not entirely your own, and you have been purchased at a great price.

Modern society does not want to hear the bad news. It would rather hear the good news. Recently, there has been much commentary on the fact that books defending atheism have become bestsellers. These books attempt to show that belief in the spiritual is merely a delusion for the weak-minded. These books are meant to be the new good news. “Don’t worry,” they tell us, “the surveillance cameras you were worried about never really existed.”

We have to wonder, though. If modern society sees the Gospels as bad news, why were they seen as good news in previous times? Did not people in the past want to do as they pleased without worrying about God’s wrath? Perhaps we need to look at those earlier times, and understand the world into which the Gospels fell like a bolt of lightning on a clear and moonless night.

If we look through the stories about the gods in Greek and Roman myth, what kind of gods do we find? Largely, the gods are portrayed as rather self-centered and unpleasant people. The gods are generally interested in their own comforts and intrigues. Occasionally, they will

do good deeds for human beings. However, there is no sense in which the gods love humans. There is no sense in which the gods would lay down their own lives for humans.

When we look at the pyramids in Egypt, we see an amazing feat of ancient engineering. These huge and impressive structures were built as memorials to the Pharaohs of Egypt. We may look at them differently, however, when we think that they were built with the labor of slaves. It was for the Pharaohs to live in palaces of gold and dream of a beautiful afterlife. The role of the common people was merely to live or die at the whim of their rulers.

In 1956, C. S. Lewis wrote a book called *Till We Have Faces*, which is a retelling of the story of Cupid and Psyche. In the book, one of the characters says, “How can the gods meet us face to face until we have faces.” In ancient ideas about the relationship of god and man, human beings did not have faces, meaning that they simply did not matter. People were unimportant, interchangeable, worth nothing. They were not individuals with faces and personalities, known and beloved by God.

The good news of the Gospels is that we have faces and names. Each of us is called by name by God to be his beloved. In the stories of the past, people went to the gods and knocked upon the doors of their temples, hoping to receive some favor. Now, the love of God has turned the tables around and made God Himself the one who seeks. Jesus knocks on the door of our hearts and asks only to be let in, only to allow Him to give us the eternal life that he wishes to share with us. Whereas supplicants in the past asked hard-hearted gods for some small favor, now Jesus begs us to let Him give us everything we could ever want.

And what does modern society set against this? If we accept the arguments of the atheists that the material world is all there is, then we must believe that we have no souls, and that we are just a collection of neurons firing in patterns. Any understanding we have of ourselves, such as that we have free will and true knowledge and a real ability to reason, is merely an illusion. But it is our intellect and will that make us what we are. If those are illusions, then we ourselves are illusions. The atheists tell us, “Not only is there no God, there is also no you.” There is a certain kind of freedom that comes from this, but it is only the freedom of those who have lost all hope.

The ancient world told the lowly of the earth that they did not matter. It was only for the great ones who ruled over them to strive to be like gods, or even to be remembered after death. The modern world is just as bad, telling people that they are less than nothing, and that no one can strive toward God. The ancient world could not lift itself to God, so it waited for God to lift the world to Himself. The modern world rejects what God has accomplished, and seeks to cast itself down from God, and then pretends that this fall from grace is a victory for humanity.

And so, we can see that what was good news in ancient times is still good news today. What society considers good news is in fact merely the promise of nothingness. But the good news of the Gospels offers us “every good and perfect gift.” (James 1:17)

Home schooling parents have taken upon themselves the spiritual teaching of their children in order to pass to the next generation the true Good News. The Good God, who makes Himself a supplicant of the love of mankind, will surely not refuse our prayers and entreaties for help.

Dr. Clark Interviewed on EWTN

Dr. Mary Kay Clark recently traveled to Alabama and the studios of the Eternal Word Television Network to be the guest of the television program EWTN Live! Hosted by EWTN stalwart Fr. Mitch Pacwa, this program regularly features different topics of interest to Catholics.

Before introducing Dr. Clark, Fr. Pacwa noted that the program was being televised on the feast day of the Queenship of Mary. After being introduced, Dr. Clark pointed out that the feast of the Queenship of Mary is a very important feast for home schooling mothers, as they take on the responsibilities of teaching their children at home.

The evening started off with Fr. Pacwa asking Dr. Clark why it is that parents choose home schooling. Dr. Clark brought up many reasons why individual families make that choice, but said that ultimately, it comes down to a desire to protect their children from the secular culture. Catholic families see all the un-Christian elements that exist throughout the society, and decide that their families will live in a different and better way.

Dr. Clark and Fr. Pacwa then discussed the state of education in the United States and how it has changed over the years. Much attention was given to the fact that Catholic home schooling produces people who are able to read, and write, and speak intelligently. Because home schooled students receive a good education, they will be the leaders of the future.

In addition to discussing the effect of homeschooling on American society, Dr. Clark went into the way home schooling changes the family dynamic. Homeschooling allows older children to interact with the younger children, and helps teenagers develop a habit of responsibility. Catholic home schooling also brings the parents and the children together as they learn together. In particular, when the father helps with the home schooling, he can come to know and appreciate his children in a very special way.

Catholic textbooks formed the next topic of discussion. Dr. Clark made the observation that all the large textbook publishers once had Catholic book divisions. Then, state money became available for schools to purchase textbooks, as long as the books were not overtly religious. Schools took the money, and publishers stopped providing Catholic books. However, Seton is now publishing several series of authentically Catholic text/workbooks, including spelling, reading, history, phonics, handwriting, mathematics, and art.

One of the most important topics to arise was whether or not parents are really able to teach their children. First of all, Dr. Clark pointed out that the sacrament of marriage gives special graces to parents to help with raising their children. Not only this, but the love of the parents for their children allows the parents to devote themselves to their children's education. Even if parents do not know the subject matter when they start teaching, the parents can learn the material along with their children. If and when parents need extra help to teach or to grade, Seton has a staff of educational counselors available to assist them.

The evening ended with a round of questions from television viewers and the studio audience. The first question was about socialization. Dr. Clark mentioned that there are home schooling support groups all around the country. These support groups give students the ability to interact with other children, and give families a chance for community with other home

schooling families. When there are no support groups nearby, that's an opportunity for a family to start their own area support group.

The next questioner asked how home schoolers perform on standardized tests. Dr. Clark was able to report that home schoolers score on average 35% above public school averages. Dr. Clark also mentioned that Seton Home Study School itself has had several students who achieved perfect scores on the SAT.

The next question came from a member of the audience who had been home schooled with the Seton program from the primary grades. This woman said that she herself now works with children in a home school apostolate using Seton materials, and she asked whether home schooling should be viewed as an important educational method on its own, or if it is just a reaction to problems in the schools. Dr. Clark's response was that home schooling changes the orientation of the family, so that the focus of the family is no longer so exclusively outward-looking. As siblings spend more time together, and actually learn together, they become friends in a way that is not often seen otherwise. Dr. Clark said that many home schooling families would not give up home schooling, even if other educational options became available.

Finally, based upon comments from a caller, Fr. Pacwa asked how single parents might be able to home school their children. Dr. Clark mentioned that she knows of a number of single parents using the Seton program. These parents try to adjust their schedules to accommodate home schooling. They seek help from other home schoolers or from relatives, such as grandparents, and of course, they enlist the aid of the staff members at Seton.

As a final note, Dr. Clark also had the occasion to be interviewed on the program *BookNotes*, regarding her book *Catholic Home Schooling* while she was at EWTN. DVD's of Dr. Clark's interview on EWTN Live! are available through Seton Educational Media for \$15.



Begin Again

by Ginny Seuffert

I have to admit that this was a frustrating year in our homeschool. As I write this column in the first week of September, my two youngest are just now finishing work for the 2006-2007 school year. With such a late start, we intend to jump right into the next school year immediately. We would all have benefited from a month or two of down time, so I am reassessing to see how we can stay on track this coming year. Hopefully, some of these ideas may help you too.

I can give you lots of excuses for our tardy finish. Actually, we were right on schedule until just after Christmas. Immediately following New Year's Day, my husband had a financial reversal at work, so we decided to ready our big house to sell. After living here for nineteen years, that was a ton of work! Then, after fixing up our home, we showed it for three months, which necessitates a level of spic and span that no normal household would ever voluntarily maintain. While I was still scrubbing my toilets with a toothbrush as part of my daily routine, I began jetting off to Catholic home schooling conferences on weekends. Towards the end of the conference season, we pulled the house off the market, and my son, his wife and their baby moved in. They had another baby a month later. Did I mention going to Europe for ten days to watch my high school daughter dance, or that I work for Seton part-time? How about helping my husband open a new business? Looking back, I suppose it is a miracle we are finishing the schoolwork at all.

Of course, not all of our delays were unavoidable. One of my daughters is pretty diligent but a bit unorganized, and the other one has been known to dawdle on her schoolwork. I was stressed and distracted, and probably should have kept a better eye on things all around. I think it is telling that our high school French course, which Yours Truly teaches to my daughter and another home schooled student in the neighborhood, wrapped up in the beginning of June—right on time. What went right, you may ask? It's simple! That class was scheduled three times a week for about forty-five minutes, and although we occasionally cancelled, we generally stuck to the schedule. As basic as it sounds, the key to finishing on time is to plan your classes and then stick to your plan.

Even the best plans get tougher to follow when a new baby arrives, or the family moves, or some time-demanding event strikes. Nevertheless, my French II class proves that if the schoolwork is a priority, a year's work can still be finished in a timely fashion despite a huge mountain of setbacks. I have had a whole summer to think about changes we should make this coming year. If you think these ideas might help you, it is not too late to implement them in your own home schooling.

- In the past, each student had a lesson plan but could complete the work in whatever order was convenient. That clearly did not work for us last year. My dawdler now has a daily class schedule that covers the hours from 8 AM until 3 PM, with an hour off for lunch.

My other student has more flexibility, but even she has a tighter schedule than last year.

- Based on the lesson plans and my own experience, I have allotted a specific length of time for each subject, as well as piano, dance lessons and practice. When the time is up, work in that subject is over. Unfinished work must be completed if time is left after another subject, or after school, or over the weekend. I am hoping this will help to overcome the dawdling.
- For both girls, schoolwork must begin at 8:00 am, not a nanosecond later.
- Completed Assignments that need to go to Seton must be uploaded right away, or printed and attached to the cover sheet. We spent too much time this year looking for tests and reports that had been finished weeks ago, but never properly filed or sent to Seton.
- At the end of the school day, all books and supplies must be returned to one and only one predetermined spot. Looking for books, or a compass, or any supplies is just not a good use of valuable class time.
- Any work not completed during the regular workweek is going to be scheduled for Sunday afternoon.

Dr. Clark often suggests that parents write down their motivation for home schooling in the first place and their goals for each year. This is a good practice, and from time to time, parents and students should review both lists as a sort of home school family examination of conscience. We might consider our goals and motivations with regard to the

spiritual life of the family, academics, and family life in general. Sometimes looking at the “big picture,” we find that our home schooling is accomplishing more than we believe as we struggle through the day. It also helps us to look at our shortcomings and design a plan of action.

As home schooling can be a real sacrifice on the part of the parents, most want to see real academic results. Following the lesson plans, and finishing the texts and assignments, are all ways to bolster your children’s academic performance, but there are other tricks, as well. Try to work a weekly trip to the public library into your schedule, and encourage a reading hour right before bedtime. To stimulate academic curiosity, steer family conversation away from sports and celebrities and instead discuss politics, or religion or history. My children enjoyed memorizing famous quotes and would sometimes recite them with great drama. Ratchet the intellectual tone of your household up a notch or two, and

you will see an overall improvement in schoolwork.

While you’re at it, consider the general atmosphere in your home. While a certain amount of whining and bickering can be anticipated, this type of behavior should not be the norm in a Christian household. The homes of Catholics should be filled with kindness, courtesy, self-sacrifice, and cheerfulness. We all fall short, but a joyful household is a goal towards which we must continue to work. When attitudes change, family atmosphere improves, and schoolwork, and even household chores, become less of a burden and more of a shared adventure.

A favorite saint of mine, St. Josemaria, used to tell his followers after they fell short, “Begin again.” When they committed the same sin over and over again, as so many of us do, he advised, “Begin, again.” What great advice! It is never too late for each one of us to become more devoted parents, or more diligent students, or more fervent followers of Jesus Christ. Begin again!

Email

If you change your email address, it is very important that you give Seton your new email address. Many communications from Seton are sent by email. These include day to day items, such as notifications about grades posted, as well as special events, such as home schooling conferences in your area. Also, if you ever lose or forget your password for My Seton, we can automatically send you login help if we have your email address.

Updating your email address, as well as your mailing address, is easy to do. Simply go to your My Seton page, then click on “My Account” and then “Contact Info”. Enter your new information, and click “Submit Changes”. In a day or so, you will receive an email back from Seton saying that your contact information has been updated.



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Address of Benedict XVI in Vienna, Austria

“Sine dominico non possumus!” Without the Lord and without the day that belongs to him, life does not flourish. Sunday has been transformed in our Western societies into the week-end, into leisure time. Leisure time is something good and necessary, especially amid the mad rush of the modern world; each of us knows this. Yet if leisure time lacks an inner focus, an overall sense of direction, then ultimately it becomes wasted time that neither strengthens nor builds us up. Leisure time requires a focus – the encounter with him who is our origin and goal. My great predecessor in the see of Munich and Freising, Cardinal Faulhaber, once put it like this: Give the soul its Sunday, give Sunday its soul.

Because Sunday is ultimately about encountering the risen Christ in word and sacrament, its span extends through the whole of reality. The early Christians celebrated the first day of the week as the Lord’s day, because it was the day of the resurrection. Yet very soon, the Church also came to realize that the first day of the week is the day of the dawning of creation, the day on which God said: “Let there be light” (Gen 1:3). Therefore Sunday is also the Church’s weekly feast of creation – the feast of thanksgiving and joy over God’s creation. At a time when creation seems to be endangered in so many ways through human activity, we should consciously advert to this dimension of Sunday too. Then, for the early Church, the first

day increasingly assimilated the traditional meaning of the seventh day, the Sabbath. We participate in God’s rest, which embraces all of humanity. Thus we sense on this day something of the freedom and equality of all God’s creatures.

In this Sunday’s Opening Prayer we call to mind firstly that through his Son God has redeemed us and made us his beloved children. Then we ask him to look down with loving-kindness upon all who believe in Christ and to give us true freedom and eternal life. We ask God to look down with loving-kindness. We ourselves need this look of loving-kindness not only on Sunday but beyond, reaching into our everyday lives. As we ask, we know that this loving gaze has already been granted to us. What is more, we know that God has adopted us as his children, he has truly welcomed us into communion with himself. To be someone’s child means, as the early Church knew, to be a free person, not a slave but a member of the family. And it means being an heir. If we belong to God, who is the power above all powers, then we are fearless and free. And then we are heirs. The inheritance he has bequeathed to us is himself, his love. Yes, Lord, may this inheritance enter deep within our souls so that we come to know the joy of being redeemed. Amen.

*Benedict XVI, St. Stephen’s Cathedral, Vienna
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