



Seton Home



Study School

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Presentation of the Blessed Mother

On November 21, we celebrate the feast of the Presentation of the Blessed Virgin Mary by her parents, St. Anne and St. Joachim. Her parents took her to the Temple when she was only three years old to be consecrated to God and His service, much as a nun would be consecrated today and would serve God through the work and prayer life of a religious order.

We home schooling parents need to reflect on this event as we certainly want to have our own children dedicated to serving God. As they grow up, we want them to follow God’s laws, but also to be aware of what they should do to serve the needs of others, especially in their own homes.

Like Joachim and Anne, we home schooling parents understand that our children from a very early age (in fact, from birth) need to be taught to live a life of Faith and a life of prayer, away from the chaos, confusion, and corruption of the outside world. By developing a strong spiritual life in our church of the home—our “domestic church” as the Church calls the family home—our children will be able to withstand the secular attacks against their Catholic beliefs and lifestyle when they are older.

The miraculous painting of *Mater Admirabilis*, Mother Most

Admirable, a fresco on a wall in the Trinita dei Monti convent in Rome, depicts the Blessed Virgin Mary attending to her sewing while sitting in the Temple. While her hands are busy about the task at hand, her eyes reflect meditation. In fact, her downward face and downcast eyes replicate the Blessed Virgin’s face in the miraculous painting of Our Lady of Guadalupe. There is no question that Our Lord Jesus and His Holy Mother want us to be about the tasks and duties we have before us, but also to be in a constant state of humility and prayerfulness as we go about those duties.

Recent studies of the miraculous painting of Our Lady of Guadalupe show that in her eyes can be seen a reflection of the bishop and others in the room who stood before the painting on the tilma of Juan Diego. It would seem that, following Our Lady’s lead, our eyes must be on the Church as our guide as we engage in prayers, receive the sacraments, and live the Christian life.

When Mary was living in the Temple, the Archangel Gabriel appeared to her and asked her to be the Mother of God, to be herself a most holy Temple of God. Mary is often referred to in the prayers of the Church as a Temple because she carried the Sacred Baby, the Son of God, in her own body for nine

months before He was born. The Church teaches that we also are “temples” of the Holy Spirit when we are in the state of grace, but we are “temples” in a more intensive way after we receive Jesus in Holy Communion.

Let us pray with the words of the Byzantine Catholic Liturgy for the Feast of the Presentation:

“With great love, let us honor the maiden of God, the Virgin and Mother of God, as she is presented to the Temple of the Lord, for she has been chosen from among all the generations to be the dwelling-place of Christ, the King of us all.

“You mothers, cast away sadness and regret, and follow the one who became the Mother of God and the cause of joy to the whole world, and glorify her. Let us cry out in joy with the angel, our salutation to the Woman Full of Grace who is always interceding for us.”

From the Litany of the Life of Mary, let us pray, “Holy Virgin, presented in childhood in the temple, pray for us.”

-MKC

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Questions We Are Asked

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

My husband is in Iraq, and I am home schooling four children. Can you give me some tips about what I must do, and what I don't need to do?

Of course, having one parent in a war zone is an incredibly stressful experience, way beyond simply the needs of the home schooling. However, it is important for the children to have a daily routine, even during this difficult time. Having other things to think about, and having their days seem as normal as possible, can help them cope.

In a situation where you are not able to do all the work in all the classes, you need to think about what are the most important subjects to teach. At the elementary levels, you first need to teach religion; that is why we are home schooling. Second, you need to teach phonics and reading, as well as math, every day without fail. These are subjects that depend on repetition and more repetition (and more repetition).

While you could skip a few days or lessons in English in the primary grades, beginning in Fourth grade, you need to teach English every day. For spelling and vocabulary, you could take two days for each lesson, and give the weekly test for both on Friday. Some students may need more time in vocabulary, but do your best. With so many students seldom reading for enjoyment, vocabulary is even more important. History and science could be done on the weekends with only reading the chapter and/or working with a relative or perhaps a high school student who could come in and engage your student in a discussion about the chapter.

Consider asking a high school or college student or a retired teacher or a grandparent to come in and help with a subject that may be difficult for one of your children.

High school students need credits on their transcript, so you do need to be sure that all the courses are being done. However, if you need your high school students to help to be "teacher's aides" with the younger children, consider having them take only four courses for now instead of five or six. They can take a course next summer, or catch up when your husband returns.

My son is very meticulous. He is taking a long time to finish his work, but he is earning straight A's in his courses. He seems content, and says he wants to learn everything he can. Should I let him continue to be slow in his work?

If a student is focusing on his studies, is obtaining good grades but is taking a longer time than usual, we don't see why the student cannot continue at the slower pace which is comfortable for him, and which is actually making him happy to learn all the details. This is a student who will likely do very well in college. Though he will need to increase his pace in college, his very thorough attention to his high school courses is a good trait that ought to be encouraged.

We have had some students graduate at an older age, go on to college, make the Dean's List, and graduate with substantial honors and achievements. Many go on to graduate school. Being a little older in college gives the student an edge with an extra year of maturity and study.

It does not seem reasonable to force a student to do his work according to a schedule set by his age or by the local school district. With home schooling, the pace can be set by the student's own abilities and skills and efforts.

My children are busy with their schoolwork, and I have not given them

household chores. My husband says I should because I am getting worn out.

When I taught my seven sons at home, I scheduled household chores between the classes. Frankly, children will do better with their lessons if they have some physical activity on a regular basis. There have been studies in schools showing that students do better in their schoolwork if they have regular exercise during the day.

If a student is focusing on his studies, is obtaining good grades but is taking a longer time than usual, it's okay to let him proceed at his own pace.

When children do not help with the household chores, they tend to become spoiled and unconcerned about cleaning up or straightening up after themselves. They can develop an attitude that everything should be done for them, and they should not be asked to help at all. This is not a healthy way for a Christian—or anyone else—to grow up.

You have a great asset in that your husband wants to help you. Work with him in listing the chores that need to be done around the house, those that are daily, those that are weekly, those that are monthly, etc. Together you can plan who is old enough to do each chore. Usually, the younger children will regard it as a game. If you team up a younger one with an older one, the older one can teach the younger one.

Teaching responsibility is as important as learning academic subjects. After all, we are home schooling primarily because we want to raise children who are living the Catholic life

and practicing the virtues. Keeping the house clean and neat, and caring about the cleanliness and safety for everyone in the family is certainly developing Christian charity.

Every year, my children need to write a book report for four books. Every year, we struggle with getting the reports written. Do you have any suggestions?

One thing I suggest is that you make sure that your children read the books quickly, in only one or two weeks. When children take too long to read their book, they forget some of the incidents or events which are important to remember as they explain the character or the plot.

Before your child starts the book, look over the directions for the book report and tell your child what to look for in the book.

Before your child starts the book, look over the directions for the book report and tell your child what to look for in the book. Have your children keep notes of these things. For example, if the book report asks how a saint acted charitably even in adversity, have your child note that the examples are on pages 24, 45, and 56. Once your child starts the book report, he won't need to search through the book trying to find examples.

Doing the report should not take weeks. The report should be written in no more than one week, and could be written in one day if your child has kept good notes. Even if you need to put off some other assignments in minor subjects, you need to keep to the one-week schedule. This way, the facts of the book and the train of thought can be fresh while your child is writing the report.

Constantly review the book report directions with your child and constantly discuss the details of the book. Talking about the book is important in having your child remember the details. Help your child to make a phrase outline first, listing the examples to prove the points for the topic sentences.

Sometimes students get bogged down in the writing process. It is not unusual for children to struggle with their handwriting. Help your children learn to type on the computer so they can put their ideas down faster and not lose their thoughts. Tell your children not to worry about spelling and punctuation for the first draft; they need to focus on typing the details as they can remember them.

If necessary, you might want to have your child "dictate" his ideas so that you, the parent, can write or type in the outline, the draft, or the report. Be sure to take the time to go back with your child to review and make the necessary adjustments or corrections.

My high school daughter says that her literature test is open book. Why are any tests open book?

There are some tests that are more analytical than objective. In several of our literature tests, we are asking students to compare characters or to analyze character development. This should be based on what the characters say or do or think, or what other characters or the author might describe about the character. The test is not so much meant to memorize facts as to research the facts, think about them, and see which ones apply to support a conclusion.

In English 12, for example, the students read a long poem, *Elegy in a Country Churchyard*. The poet is describing what he believes is the lifestyle that these humble and poor people lived. He describes how they found joy in simple family life activities and simple work in the fields. The poet shows that their hidden lives were just as important or as noble as those who might have lived across the way in a castle nearby. While we want the students to understand the poem, they need to give specific examples to prove

their answers to the questions we ask. We cannot expect students to memorize enough of the details in the poem to answer the questions fully. In college, however, the students will find that they will be expected to remember the details to back up their conclusions.

In literature courses, the reading selections are many and greatly varied. It would be difficult to remember the details from such a quantity of unrelated readings. The same would not be true in the readings in science and history, where the details are related and where the facts should be remembered for a long time. In these courses, students should be able to take the tests without using their textbook.

Why do the high school students need to write 150 words for their answers on the history tests?

One of the reasons we ask for a certain number of words for an answer is because we found that some students would give such brief answers that there is no indication that they know the material or have any understanding of what they are writing. We end up having to send the tests back for a redo. Answering "He was a great general in World War II" about Dwight Eisenhower may be correct but it is so brief that it really cannot qualify as an answer at all.

We do not actually count the words, but we want the student to realize we expect a complete and detailed answer. None of our graders will take off for a student listing the points or examples, rather than writing the answers in paragraph form, even though this would cut down on the number of words in an answer.

By the way, Seton sells a workbook for both the high school American history textbook and the world history textbook, which may serve as a study guide for students. In addition, for each history course, we sell a used secular textbook which has photographs, maps, time lines, charts, and so on which may help a student to remember certain facts. Both the workbooks and the textbooks are available through our SEM department.

Don Quixote: The Restoration of the Golden Age

by Mitchell Kalpakgian

Many think that knights lived only in the Middle Ages and then retired from the world after the invention of gunpowder made suits of armor, jousts, and tournaments obsolete. However, even though men no longer fight with lances and bucklers, knighthood never goes out of fashion. Every age needs noble men who are quixotic, honorable, and gallant—gentlemen who bring the passion for truth, the mystery of romance, and the glory of adventure into the business of daily life and rescue it from drab monotony. To be quixotic is a form of manners that seeks to refine, elevate, and ennoble the entire conduct of human life so that men and women always treat one another as ladies and gentlemen and behave with the dignity worthy of a human being.

After reading his favorite medieval romances about knights of honor who follow noble ideals, who serve orphans and widows, who treat all women with chivalry, and who make generous gifts of themselves for just causes, a fifty-year-old Spanish gentleman by the name of Alonso Quixana resolves to pursue the life of knight-errantry and restore to the ugly Iron Age in which he lives the beauty of the Golden Age.

Inspired by the gracious manners and heroic moral code of his favorite knights in literature, this obscure country gentleman assumes the name of Don Quixote de la Mancha and vows to go in quest of adventures and to “practice all that had been performed by the knights-errant of whom he had read.” The world in Don Quixote’s time desperately needed chivalrous men and courteous knights to counteract the many forms of coarseness, vulgarity, and baseness that mark the Iron Age, a time ruled by selfishness in the forms of avarice and lust. Obsessed with the words Thine and Mine, the Iron Age practices no charity or love of neighbor. Worshipping gold and dominated by avarice, the Iron Age lacks the virtues of service, hospitality, and liberality.

Sophisticated and artful, the Iron Age knows only the language of deceit, hypocrisy, and cunning. Ruled by the flesh, the Iron Age reduces love to lust as modest maidens experience “danger from the unbridled freedom and lustful desires of others.” To be quixotic, then, means resisting the way of the world, the flesh, and the devil and seeking the true, the good, and the beautiful.

Repulsed by the debasement of life from the beauty of gold to the crassness of iron, Don Quixote seeks to elevate the quality of daily life by infusing it with the manners of a gentleman and the ideals of a knight. Instead of acting for the sake of self-interest or money, a knight-errant lives in accordance with the knightly code of bountiful generosity. Instead of using duplicity in all its forms, the knight-errant loves, defends, and suffers for the truth in its purity and simplicity. In Don Quixote’s words, “I should be breaking the rules of chivalry, which forbid me to tell a lie, on pain of being an apostate.” Instead of exploiting women, Don Quixote idealizes woman and serves her with fidelity and self-sacrifice. Every age needs the spirit of knight-errantry and the moral code of the chivalrous gentleman to transform the world from from barbaric to civilized, from ugly to beautiful, and from inhuman to human.

In one of his first adventures, Don Quixote impresses the landlady and a servant at an inn by the beautiful manners of his speech when he says, “I shall keep engraved for all time in my memory the service you have done, and I shall be grateful to you as long as I live” and “I wish, fair and noble lady, I were in a state to repay so great a boon thou hast given me by disclosing thy beauty.” Unaccustomed to such gracious compliments and elegant language, the women “gazed at him wonderingly and thought he must be a far different kind of man than those now in fashion.” Encountering Dorothea, posing as a damsel in distress, Don Quixote with the utmost respect addresses her as a lady and desires to please: “I grant thy request . . .

and therefore, lady, thou canst dispel the melancholy that oppresses thee, for this mighty arm of mine shall restore thee to thy kingdom.” Addressing the women at the inn properly (as “ladies,” not as “wenches”), expressing thanks with sincere gratitude on all occasions, offering compliments generously to acknowledge the dignity of women, and speaking kind words to alleviate the grieving Luscinda (“Let us at least offer you our advice and counsel in your distress, for kind words will be of service to you, no matter how great your sorrow”) Don Quixote treats the lowly common people of ordinary life with the extraordinary quality of chivalry that makes them feel ennobled. To be quixotic is to be gracious and complimentary in word and gesture.

Don Quixote embodies the spirit of the Golden Age by his ideal of service—the opposite of the Iron Age’s obsession with money, possessions, and materialism. When humans value things more than people and love gold more than God or neighbor, the world becomes iron, that is, impersonal, cold, and dehumanized. When Don Quixote discovers the distraught Cardenio in the Sierra Morena Mountains, a brokenhearted lover in despair, the knight-errant befriends the “madman” who throws himself into thorn bushes in his rage: “My wish,” cried Don Quixote, “is to serve, and I conjure you, sir, . . . to tell me who you are and what has brought you to live and die like a brute beast in these solitudes. . . . I will serve you with all the energy which it is my duty to exert, either in overcoming your troubles or, if that cannot be, in helping you lament them.” The cruelty of the Iron Age has reduced the desperate Cardenio to fits of rage and insanity by its vicious practices—the treachery of his friend Don Fernando who secretly courted Cardenio’s fiancée Luscinda and convinced her father to break his daughter’s engagement to Cardenio. In short, Don Fernando pretends to “serve” Cardenio as friend with the ulterior motive of serving himself—the deceitfulness of the Iron Age. On the other hand, Don Quixote’s ideal of service is selfless and disinterested, seeking only the curing of Cardenio’s

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Flexibility in High School

Parents often ask about flexibility in the Seton Home Study School program, especially in regards to high school courses. In high school, we cannot offer as much flexibility as we have in grade school. Why is this?

In high school, students need to earn credits toward graduation. Credits and grades are also important for college admission. Seton Home Study School has a very high reputation for academic excellence. When a college admissions officer sees credits from Seton Home Study School, he or she can be sure that those credits are meaningful. One of the reasons we cannot be as flexible in high school is that the high reputation of our courses and credits needs to be maintained, for the benefit of all our students.

Our high academic standard is a main reason why parents choose Seton. This standard also helps us to maintain our accreditation, which makes it easier for students to transfer credits to other schools. A parent recently wrote from Canada that she decided to transfer her son from Seton into a public school for twelfth grade. The parent was not sure how he would do in his new school since he had been with Seton for ninth through eleventh grade. She wondered if perhaps his home schooling had not sufficiently prepared him. Her son ended up graduating from his new school with the top academic honors in a class of over two hundred students.

We hear from parents and students all the time who say that the high standards maintained by Seton are extremely beneficial to students. When Seton graduates reach college, they routinely make the Dean's List and often tutor other students. The high standards that Seton maintains are partly responsible for this success.

However, this is not to say that Seton does not offer flexibility in high school. We actually do offer a good deal of flexibility in the following areas:

Lesson Plans: Flexibility in the use of lesson plans is encouraged by using them as guidelines to be adjusted according to

the ability of the student. A student may be able to move ahead in one subject, doing two or three days of assignments in one day. Conversely, a student may need to take two or three days to do one day's assignment in a subject which is more difficult.

While the lesson plans are thorough, parents have flexibility in deciding which assignments must be done, and which assignments might be optional. Although there are tests and assignments which must be completed to receive a grade, the daily work is entirely at the discretion of the parents.

Course electives: Seton offers a variety of electives at the high school level: students have a choice of three foreign languages, and several math and science courses. Other courses available are accounting, economics, health, logic, Shakespeare, and Byzantine Catholic Religion courses. Both art and music courses are in progress.

Students may enroll in single courses as well as summer-school courses.

Independent Study: Seton's Independent Study program offers the opportunity for students to earn high school credits for courses taken in their local area. For instance, students taking music or art or physical education lessons may apply for Independent Study credit. Sometimes students take a local class in a foreign language or a science, along with other home schooling students in their area; we are happy to give Independent Study credit for such classes.

There are some limits on the courses which may be taken through Independent Study, both in the subjects taken and in the number taken. More details about Independent Study courses can be found on our website at www.setonhome.org. Click on Curriculum, then click on Independent Study. We answer twelve of the most Frequently Asked Questions, and an Independent Study Request Form can be downloaded.

College Courses: When our students reach sixteen, most community colleges

are happy to enroll our students on a dual-enrollment arrangement. This provides flexibility as students may wish to take a foreign language or a science course in a more formal classroom setting. Some courses, such as Religion, History, and English courses, cannot be taken for Seton credit at a community college. These courses need the Catholic perspective that Seton offers.

Calendar: Seton has no calendar, that is, no dates when tests must be submitted. Parents have great flexibility in teaching their students at the pace that is best for the student. This also means that in high school, students may take only two or three subjects at a time. It is not unusual, especially for working students or meticulous students or students striving for the best possible grades, to devote more in-depth study to a few subjects at a time. Often these students have very good grades as they complete a course in a shorter time.

Book Reports/Analyses: We offer flexibility in the choice of books for book reports, offering two or three titles per quarter. We cannot offer the choice of any title because our graders need to be familiar with the books in order to grade them. We also offer a variety of topics for research reports.

Science and History: We offer flexibility in science. While we encourage parents to utilize our Catholic science textbooks, some parents arrange for their children to be tutored with a group of other home schoolers who are using another textbook. Students must be approved for Independent Study, so that we can ensure that the textbook is at high school level.

For history, because so many history books have a bias against the Catholic Church, or are slanted to promote certain agendas, we approve the use of only Catholic history textbooks.

Testing: Flexibility is available in regards to testing. Tests may be done on paper, or they may be taken online via the Seton web site. Some of the online tests are graded by the computer, such as in Math and Science, while some are graded by a teacher who grades on a computer using the Internet.

Easy Dinnertime

by Ginny Seuffert

Stressed out home schooling moms tell me that it is not the actual home schooling that is sapping their strength. It's not the housework, or yard work, or meal preparation. It's not the endless diapers or the energetic toddlers or even driving to extracurricular activities. Not one of these things causes maternal burnout; rather, it is all of these things put together that some days make mom feel that the burden is just too heavy to carry.

Of course the sad fact is that most of us realize that we are not enjoying these precious years of our children's childhood—years we instinctively know will fly by—as much as we wish. We find ourselves becoming so wrapped up in the hundreds of individual tasks it takes to run a home schooling household and transport our children to their various activities that we fail to relish traditional, simple pleasures of everyday life. This seems to be especially true of mealtimes.

In the United States, family dinner is quickly becoming as extinct as the saber-toothed tiger. Far too many Americans, and sadly too many home schooling families, grab fast food on the way home from activities and eat it in the car or, worse yet, in front of the television. This national trend not only contributes to the obesity epidemic, but also fosters other undesirable behaviors. Study after study has indicated that teens who share the evening meal with their family several times each week are far less likely to engage in immoral or unsafe activities. We need to remember this as we plan which, and how many, after-school activities our children really need. The whole family will benefit if siblings spend more time playing together in the yard and if mom can get out from behind the wheel of her minivan.

Being raised in an Italian-American home, I learned how to whip up a really tasty meal for a couple of dozen people at my mother's knees, but I have observed that many young moms were better prepared for college classes than kitchen duty. Today, newly-married women almost always work until the

babies start coming, and then they find themselves too overwhelmed with infant care to learn how to cook. They try to follow some recipes, but recipes often seem complicated and call for ingredients that mom has never heard of, much less purchased. They come to believe that good cooks belong to some sort of secret society with a very limited membership. Not true! Anyone can learn how to prepare wholesome and delicious meals everyday. Here are some basic principles and menus.

Do not be afraid to substitute ingredients, or leave them out altogether.

My absolute favorite recipe for cornbread/corn muffins calls for buttermilk. Now I ask you, does anyone actually keep a regular stock of buttermilk in the fridge? Planning ahead and stocking up on such a rare ingredient calls for a level of organization that most home schooling moms cannot achieve, so I substitute plain or vanilla yogurt, which I do keep in stock. The cornbread tastes delicious.

Novice cooks frequently do not understand that most recipes will tolerate some tinkering. The result may be slightly different, but so what? Does your recipe call for asiago cheese? Parmesan or Romano will work just as well. Hesitate to make that casserole because you don't have a bay leaf? Make it without the bay leaf, and no one will notice. You can use dried and powdered spices in place of fresh. Are veal cutlets \$14 per pound? Use chicken or turkey breasts, or pork medallions.

Remember pasta is your mealtime partner.

Pasta is cheap, easy to prepare, and generally husbands and kids love it. Follow package instructions (boil water with a pinch of salt, add pasta, cook to desired tenderness and drain) and top with your favorite sauce. Some of the bottled sauces are okay, although the good ones are a tad pricey. Do you want to make authentic Italian

marinara? Finely chop an onion and cook until soft in olive oil, then add some minced garlic (I buy the pre-minced stuff in the bottle.) and allow to cook for just a minute or two more, until the garlic is soft but not brown. Add two or three large cans of tomato puree (or crushed tomatoes, or whole tomatoes pureed in the blender, whatever). Throw in some Italian spices (basil, parsley, rosemary, oregano or anything else you like) and simmer for 30 minutes or so. Taste the sauce. If it is a bit bitter, add sugar to taste. If you really want to jazz it up, add a pound of browned and drained chopped meat, some left over pork chops, or cooked sausage. Serve the whole thing with grated cheese. It's that quick and easy.

When I was a little girl, Catholics never ate meat on Friday so we had our pasta *aglio olio*. Cook a few tablespoons of minced garlic in olive oil until soft, but not brown. Mix this with a tiny bit of the water you cooked the pasta in, and pour over the pasta. You can add some minced parsley (or red pepper flakes) and grated cheese and most people will salt it. If your palate can't take all that garlic, it is perfectly fine, and quite authentic, to serve your pasta simply topped with butter and grated cheese. A popular topping for pasta in Italy is sage butter, which consists of several sage leaves allowed to steep in melted butter.

All of these sauces can be used with boxed pasta or the fancier stuff you find in the frozen section of the grocery such as ravioli, tortellini and gnocchi. Serve any of them with a side salad and a loaf of crusty bread. Voila! You have dinner in no time.

Easy pan roasted dinners.

An easy way to cook root vegetables, such as potatoes, yams, carrots and the like, is to chop them into bite-sized pieces, coat them liberally with oil (olive, canola or corn), sprinkle them with your favorite seasonings, and bake them in a 350° oven until soft (usually 45 minutes to an hour). Sometimes I add a coarsely chopped onion or green pepper, and some meat or other (like

chicken, sausage, or pork chops) to the pan. Usually these will bake a little longer, but an hour and a quarter later you have a healthy and complete meal.

Start dinner in the morning.

If your afternoon schedule will just not allow you any food prep time, get a crock pot. Master a few simple stew recipes. Chop everything early in the morning, put it in the slow cooker on "low" and dinner will be ready to dish out in ten hours.

Get the kids involved.

It has been my experience that even children who routinely resist chores love to help in the kitchen. At the end of the school day, have the children prepare a fruit or veggie platter for an afternoon snack. For some reason, when children peel, chop and arrange vegetables on a plate themselves, they are far more likely to eat them, especially if you have a dressing "dip."

Use a portion of the sliced cucumbers, carrot sticks, or cherry tomatoes to get a head start on a side salad for supper. Chop up some lettuce, wash it and let the kids spin it dry. (Kids love spinning salad, and WalMart sells a perfectly fine spinner for a couple of dollars.) When storing salad in the fridge until suppertime, cover it with paper towels (not plastic wrap) which

will absorb excess moisture and keep it from getting soggy.

This Christmas, give kiddies cookbooks as gifts. They contain simple recipes, with easy to follow instructions, and stress kitchen safety. Any food prep the children do can be noted in your lesson plans as practical life skills.

Plan Ahead.

Some home schooling moms will take a day over the weekend to prepare several meals and ease the weekday evening rush. This is a good idea, but as you can see, not really necessary. On the other hand, you should occasionally make double recipes when you cook, and freeze or refrigerate one half to serve later on a particularly busy night.

This column is not intended to be a recipe column, but hopefully a source of advice and encouragement for home schooling parents. Preparing perfectly palatable meals is well within the reach of just about everyone. Cooking is an activity that should be fun for the family and not a source of stress for Mom. Even more important, mealtime should be a relaxing occasion when ideas and experiences can be shared and family relations strengthened. Some of my fondest childhood memories are of time spent with my extended family around the dining room table. Build those memories for your children too.

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madness. To be quixotic is to be inspired by the highest and purest of moral standards and never to compromise what is right for what is expedient or advantageous.

While the Iron Age in its crudeness reduces love to lust and exploits women, Don Quixote seeks to restore the Golden Age's ideal of chivalrous love and the Christian ideal of purity. Don Quixote recalls the time when "Modest maidens went about ... wherever they pleased, without fear of danger from the unbridled freedom and lustful desires of others But, in this detestable age of ours, no damsel is safe...." Don Quixote exemplifies eternal fidelity to his beloved Lady Dulcinea., rejecting all favors from other women in his loyal devotion to his lady-love because of "the faith I have plighted to the peerless Dulcinea el Toboso, sole mistress of my hidden thoughts." To be quixotic is to honor one's vows as sacred obligations and be true to one's vocation.

To revive the spirit of knight-errantry, then, does not mean wearing a helmet, mounting a horse, and wielding a lance but loving truth, honor, and kindness. To seek a quixotic life does mean being in an imaginary world but following the purest of moral ideals. To restore the golden age does not mean living in the past but preserving the noblest traditions of civilization.

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Pope Paul VI on the Irreplaceable Family

The family, in fact, is at the center of the crisis and the contestation that are shaking modern society, precisely because it is the fundamental institution of society and the guarantee of its stability and human character. Confronted with ideologies that seek to manipulate societies, changing the image of the family and its functions within society, the Church—as you know very well—wishes prior attention to be dedicated to it in all fields because she believes firmly in its mission. If God revealed Himself to us as the Father; if Christ loves the Church as a Bridegroom loves His bride, how can we fail to be certain that the family will exist until the end to offer the world a testimony of love?

Your clear pastoral vision invites you to make a diagnosis of the evils that afflict the family at present: the generation gap, increase in the number of divorces, selfish rejection of life, marital infidelity, irregular unions, etc. But your attention is not fixed just on these phenomena, but goes beyond them to look for their causes and explanations: lack of preparation for family

life, loss of the sense of responsibility and moral sense, caused, in turn, by an inadequate upbringing, the immorality of the environment, and a materialism that ignores the values and joys of the spirit.

Beloved brothers: Charity rejoices at truth. Always believe. Always hope. Endure everything. Your charity towards the family will be manifested in the importance you give it in catechetics, liturgy, pastoral structures and social developments.

We ask the Lord to enlighten you and sustain you in your love for the humble and the weak, for whom the family is sometimes their only riches. And may it be He who makes your task fruitful so that the world may see that you really represent the God of love, the Author of nature and grace, whose law is the only secret of happiness for the whole of mankind.

--General Council of the Pontifical Commission for Latin America, Oct. 20, 1975

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