



Seton Home



Study School

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Baptism of Our Lord

On January 13, we celebrate one of the greatest events in the life of Jesus, His Baptism. Coming so soon after Christmas, it is easy to forget the importance of the institution of this essential Sacrament and its meaning to us and to our children. Baptism is the entranceway to the Christian life, and must be received before we can receive any of the other sacraments.

The Baptism of Jesus reminds us about the Trinity and the sacrifice that Jesus would make as the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity. As Jesus approached John to be baptized, John proclaimed “Behold the Lamb of God, behold Him Who takes away the sins of the world.” John was declaring that the time of sacrificing lambs in the Temple was ended, because Jesus is the Lamb whose sacrificial death on the Cross takes away all the sins of the world.

As John baptized Jesus, he saw the Holy Spirit, the Third Person of the Blessed Trinity, in the form of a dove. “I saw the Spirit coming down as a dove from heaven, and He [the dove] remained upon Him.” The Holy Spirit remained upon the head of Jesus. St. Matthew in Chapter 3, verse 16, writes: “And Jesus being baptized came out of the water; and lo, the heavens were opened to Him, and he [John] saw the Spirit of God descending as a dove, and coming upon Him.”

During the Baptism of Jesus, John heard the words of God the Father, the First Person of the Blessed Trinity. St. Matthew writes in Chapter 3, verse 17:

“And behold, a voice from heaven, saying, ‘This is my beloved Son in Whom I am well pleased.’”

This feast day is often called the Epiphany, meaning the manifestation of God, the entire Blessed Trinity, to the world. The message is not only that Jesus is the Son of God, but also that we must follow Jesus by being baptized and receiving the Trinity into our souls. We become Temples of God at our Baptism.

The Church teaches also that the waters of the world were made holy by Jesus at His Baptism. Thus the sanctified water of the earth is used when we receive the Sacrament of Baptism, and the sanctified water is also the life-giving ingredient for our physical life as well.

As home schooling parents, we should frequently remind our children about the Baptism of Jesus, the meaning of the Blessed Trinity, and the meaning of the Sacrament of Baptism. The Baptism of Jesus, and our own Baptism, is not simply a past event, it is an ongoing state of our spiritual lives. We are Temples of God throughout our lives because of our Baptism, and must avoid sin as well as the occasions of sin. We are walking and breathing Temples of the Blessed Trinity.

As we teach our children the Faith each day, in religion class and through the other subjects as well, let us remind our children Whom we are carrying within us, and how important it is to learn more about Him through our studies.

Sometimes as we struggle through the day, with the diversions and frustrations that inevitably come, we need to remember what we are about, that carrying Christ within us, we must teach our children to live the Faith as Christ-bearers themselves. Jesus made us holy at Baptism, and he expects us and our children to remain holy as we grow in Faith and in Love through our Catholic home schooling lessons and through living the Catholic family life.

Let us say a daily prayer with our children to remain faithful to our Baptismal promises to bring our children up in the practice of the Faith: Remember, O most gracious Virgin Mary, that never was it known that anyone who fled thy protection, implored thy help, or sought thy intercession was left unaided. Inspired with this confidence, I fly unto thee, O Virgin of virgins my Mother, to thee I come, before thee I stand, sinful and sorrowful. O Mother of the Word Incarnate, despise not my petitions, but in thy mercy, hear and answer me. Amen.

- MKC

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Questions We Are Asked

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

If I cannot complete every subject every day, what subjects should I teach every day?

For the elementary levels, every day you should teach, or give assignments for, the essential subjects of religion, math, English, reading, and phonics. Your child should work on these in the morning if at all possible. Vocabulary and spelling can be done after the basic subjects. You can take shortcuts so you can finish the lessons in a week. History and science can be done on the weekend if you run short of time during the week.

At the high school level, each course needs to be done for the required high school credits. However, the schedule may be adjusted so that only three subjects are taken the first semester, with the class time being doubled, and three subjects taken the second semester. Doubled-up class time usually results in more intense but shorter learning time, since there is less time spent in finding books and starting assignments. Students who have trouble focusing or remembering over a long period do well with a shorter schedule.

I have a friend who is thinking about home schooling, but is nervous to be "on her own." What should I tell her?

Seton has many helps for parents teaching their children. For example, Seton has academic counselors who are available to offer general home schooling tips and specific course-related information. We have counselors specifically devoted to math, science, foreign languages, English, etc.

Our web site is also a great help for parents. Have your friend click on Curriculum, and then on the grade levels for her children. She will find the list of textbooks as well as lesson plans for each grade level. If she clicks on the titles of the books, the book cover will

appear; once she clicks on the book cover, the *Table of Contents* and sample pages will pop up. She should be impressed with the Catholic content of our Seton text-workbooks.

If she has high school students, she might want to click on the *High School Catalog* to read answers to frequently asked questions as well as information on transferring to Seton.

If your friend has a child who has special learning needs, tell her to click on Special Services to learn about our certified special needs counselors who work to prepare individualized educational programs (IEPs) for special needs children.

Your friend might like to read some back issues of our newsletter, which are available for free on our website. She might also like to read my *Catholic Home Schooling* book.

Keep in mind that many mothers are not happy with the situation in the schools their children are attending. Many schools have a serious agenda of pulling kids away from family and Catholic values. The biggest concern that parents have today is not the Iraq War or illegal immigration. It is the education of their children.

Many more mothers would choose home schooling if they thought they could really do it. We need to pray and do whatever we can to help our friends to understand that they can be successful and happy with Catholic home schooling.

As a single mother, I am really struggling with working and home schooling my daughter. Do you have any tips for me?

You already realize that you cannot do all the things you wish you could do. Having the responsibility of supporting your family as well as taking

care of the house and home schooling, you have difficulties with not enough time in the day.

If possible, try to make time to attend Mass with your daughter every day. To be successful in any of our endeavors, we need daily spiritual help from Jesus and His mother. Jesus wants you to be the best mother you can be, and will help you with the graces you need.

The next thing to do is to list all the things you are doing and take a good look at what is first in importance: raising your daughter in the Faith.

If you can, try to work later hours in the day so that you can teach your daughter in the morning, when she will have more energy for learning.

You need to work to support your family; but, this does not necessarily mean working from 9 to 5 every day. If you can, try to work later hours in the day so that you can teach your daughter in the morning, when she will have more energy for learning. Many companies like workers who can come in for the afternoon and/or evening shift. Some companies even let workers stay at home and telecommute. It does not hurt to ask about your company's policy for flexible scheduling.

In addition, enlist the aid of a relative, someone in your family who cares about your daughter, such as your mother or father, your sister, or an aunt. This relative may be willing to help your daughter with her home schooling while you work in the afternoon or evening.

You have to look at other activities and commitments and decide whether you really need them. If it interferes with your Mass, with your home schooling or time with your daughter, or with your work, you simply need to

live without it. Believe it or not, when life becomes simpler, you feel better and not oppressed by things which seem to attack you every day. Any older mother can tell you that you have only a few years to raise your daughter, and they go by amazingly quickly. Don't miss out on what is important.

My daughter had poor grades in algebra for the first two quarters, but we used the Dive CD and hired a college student to tutor her once a week, which really helped her. Can we delete the first two quarter grades?

You did the right thing by not waiting until the end of the year, but by finding help for her so that she can succeed.

We cannot delete the grades but she can redo the tests for those two quarters, and we can give her new grades. For high school tests, the new grade will be the average of the original and redo grade. For example, if a student received a 70% on the original assignment and a 94% on the redo, the final grade for that assignment will be an 82%. If the average of the two grades is still failing (under 70%) but the redo grade was a passing grade, then the assignment grade will be raised to 70%.

You did the right thing by not waiting until the end of the year, but by finding help for her so that she can succeed. We hear of students who do not do well because they did not understand the basics of the subject, especially in the areas of math and English. Once they go back, practically to the beginning concepts, and review, they can be successful.

My daughter does not seem to understand the books she has been

assigned in English 11. What should I do?

We would recommend that you either read the book with your daughter or discuss the book with your daughter as she reads the chapter assignments. You certainly should encourage her to read the lesson plan questions or the *Chapter Notes* (available on your *My Seton* page) before she reads the chapter so she knows what she should be looking for. You may need to help her recognize a quote or an event in the book that would be relevant to answer the essay questions.

If you do not feel competent to help your daughter, you might want to look for a tutor. If you have a home schooling support group in your parish, you might try to find an older student who tutors. If there is a college nearby, you might put up an ad at the college asking for the services of an English major.

Why have you made some changes in the World Literature and American Literature courses this year from last year?

One of the things we realize is that parents often have not read these selections, so we have added to the lesson plans more details and the meaning of some uncommon phrases. In addition, we have added short quizzes for the purpose of frequent review.

The Catholic literature books do offer what are considered classical selections. They contain the kind of short stories and poetry that everyone should read. In past generations, these were the selections that all students learned. It would be difficult today to find Catholic or non-Catholic high school literature textbooks with such top-quality selections.

Why does my son need to take Grammar and Composition 9? I don't see how it can be of any usefulness in his future.

Grammar and Composition are essential for developing logical thinking skills. That is the main reason we insist on these courses all through the years of schooling. Grammar helps students see the relationship between

ideas, not just between words and phrases. Composition helps students to gather their thoughts together and write them down in a logical, thoughtful presentation. In any future career, being able to express oneself logically will be a great asset. The current secular society, based on radio, television, and the Internet, shows serious deterioration of logical thought, not to mention common sense. In the generation to come, the leaders will be those who can think, speak, and write with clarity, precision, logic, good judgment, and truth.

My son noticed the online version of the questions for the English 12 tests are different from his paper copy. Which should he do?

Your son may answer the questions from either the paper assignment or the online version. Next year, the paper edition will contain the same questions as the online edition.

Normally, test questions don't change very frequently, and not during the regular months of the school year. However, the Internet allows us to post improvements to courses as they are completed.

We have been going through the tests for English 12, and retyped them from the textbook, and put them under Resources for the English 12 online. In the process of retyping them, we have tried to make them more precise and specific. For instance, in the two essay questions on *Paradise Lost*, we specified that the first answer should be an analysis of the fallen angels' response after being sent to Hell, and the second answer should be their continuing response as they accept their place in Hell.

The revised version also breaks down the questions into specific parts which are given point values per part; sometimes students overlook parts of the question as they appear in the textbook. The revised poetry questions, especially for *Elegy in a Country Courtyard*, refer to specific lines which should be interpreted since students were finding it difficult to find the exact reference in the long poem.

Sacramental Family Life

by *Mary Kay Clark*

Director, Seton Home Study School

Many Catholic families live their Faith only one hour a week by attending Sunday Mass. The rest of the week, the cares of the world impinge on the family, and the Faith is practically forgotten.

This is not at all the way God has called us to live. We are to live with God as a constant part of our lives, especially by including Him in our family life. Not just Sunday, but every day, should be a day of worship.

To be an authentic Catholic family, we must live the sacramental life. The sacramental life means not only the regular reception of the sacraments of Penance and the Holy Eucharist, but also the daily practice of using sacramentals, to help us to live the life of prayer and to celebrate the feasts of the liturgical year. Just as the Church dispenses the sacraments as a direct means of sanctifying grace for its members, so the Church of the Home receives graces indirectly through the use of sacramentals approved by the Church.

Receiving the Sacraments

Next to the Holy Eucharist, the Sacrament of Reconciliation is our biggest help in living the Catholic lifestyle. If we are really aiming to be the best possible Catholic family, it is important that we go to Confession each month. Receiving the Sacrament of Penance frequently will make us concentrate on strengthening our virtues and ultimately improve our Catholic family life.

Daily reception of Jesus in the sacrament of the Holy Eucharist is very important for the home schooling family. The daily graces help us deal with the aggravations and frustrations of every family. Those fortunate enough to be able to attend Mass every day need to pray for other home schooling families at Mass.

Attending Mass daily, and receiving the sacrament of the Holy Eucharist did

not seem absolutely vital in times past. American society was not widely pagan in the forties, fifties, and sixties. In some ways, this seems the worst of times. With a society drowning in its amorality, and our command by Jesus not only to live in the society but even be a light and leaven in the society, we and our children simply cannot survive without the daily help of Jesus Christ Himself present within us.

For us parents, raising our children to love all the sacraments, the sacramental life involves taking the children to observe the reception of the other sacraments, especially Baptism and Confirmation, and explaining them. When possible, we should take the children to see a wedding, teaching them the deeper meanings of the sacrament of Matrimony according to their age level.

Children need to witness the Sacrament of the Sick if we have anyone in the family dying. Attending a funeral helps to emphasize the shortness of this world, and the eternity of the next. Though they may not be able to attend an ordination (the sacrament of Holy Orders), sometimes photographs appear in the local paper or they may be seen on the Catholic television network, EWTN.

Sacramentals

While the Sacramental Life means frequent reception of Penance and Holy Eucharist, it also means the daily use of sacramentals. Sacramentals are a part of our Catholic cultural heritage. They can supplement the daily reception of the Holy Eucharist, and, in some cases, may be the only way to maintain the sacramental life for some families during the week between Sunday Masses.

The Baltimore Catechism concentrates on the doctrines and morals of the Church, but does include a brief chapter on Sacramentals. "Sacramentals are holy things or actions of which the Church makes use to obtain for us from God, through her intercession, spiritual and temporal favors."

Sacramentals are signs reminding us of God, of the saints, and of Catholic truths. While sacraments were instituted by Jesus Christ as a direct means of obtaining sanctifying and sacramental graces, sacramentals were instituted by the Church to obtain graces for us indirectly. The chief benefits, often forgotten, from the sacramentals are actual graces; the forgiveness of venial sins; the remission of temporal punishment; health of body and material blessings; and protection from evil spirits.

But sacramentals are more than means of grace. They embody and make alive Catholic traditions which have existed for centuries. The rosary, the scapular, the Advent Wreath, Miraculous Medal — these are not merely objects, but truly represent the Catholic way of life.

The catechism explains that the chief sacramentals are blessings by priests and bishops, exorcisms, and blessed objects of devotion. The most popular blessed objects of devotion are holy water, candles, ashes, palms, crucifixes, medals, rosaries, scapulars, images or statues of Our Lord, the Blessed mother, and the saints.

Our homes themselves should reflect our spiritual beliefs. When Moses spoke to the Jewish people about practicing the Ten Commandments, Moses said that God wanted signs of their beliefs on the doorposts, on the doors, on the entrances to the house. They were to wear signs on their foreheads and on their wrists. These physical signs are not only a witness to beliefs in His truths, they also serve as a moment-to-moment reminder of Him and that He belongs in our moment-to-moment activities and thoughts. In church, statues and pictures remind us that we are on holy ground. The Catholic family home, the "domestic church," is also consecrated ground. Statues, pictures, holy cards, and May altars all remind us of the sanctity of the home.

Living the Faith

The sacramentals with appropriate prayers are best used in conjunction with the liturgical year. The liturgical year, starting with Advent, takes us through the history of mankind awaiting Jesus our Redeemer, and then through the life of Jesus Christ. This is a wonderful way

for us to grow spiritually, but best of all, a joyful way to teach our children how to live and practice the authentic Catholic family life.

To be more specific, certain traditional Catholic practices can be started (or maintained) to help us better understand and love our Catholic beliefs. During Advent, the making of the Advent wreath is a very special event. It can be made one year, and simply added to or refreshed in the following years. I have found in my family that making these traditional items as a family, and then bringing them out the following years brings back memories, and seems to be something that is just “ours” for our family.

Celebrating Christmas

You can usually find the directions for making an Advent Wreath at the library, and we have directions in some of our lesson plans in the Art lessons. You can start out with something simple, but, as the years go by, add more purple ribbons, and bunches of wheat and grapes, real or otherwise.

The nightly lighting of the candles and saying the Advent prayers really makes our home seem more like the domestic church. If you miss Mass any of the days, be sure to include the appropriate Mass prayers. In addition, Daughters of St. Paul sells Advent calendars which include daily Bible readings. These little calendars have doors to be opened each day of Advent—especially exciting as little eyes look expectantly for each day’s surprise.

Shortly after Advent starts is the feast of St. Nicholas on December 6. In the Byzantine Rite, this feast is celebrated with a party for the children at the parish hall, with St. Nicholas giving out gifts to the children. In our domestic church, it needs to be a special occasion, emphasizing the joy of giving of which St. Nicholas is such a good example. It can be a time for each member of the family to exchange a very small gift with one other member of the family chosen beforehand in a drawing. After the gifts are given, St. Nicholas cookies (of your own or the children’s creative designs) can be eaten for dessert.

Similar creative activities can be done for the feast of the Immaculate

Conception, and the feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe. These feasts should be preceded by a novena, as well as by Litanies of the Blessed Virgin Mary.

A novena, which is a set group of prayers said for nine days, often preceding a great feast, should be started on December 16th. At the start of the nine days, you can put up a Jesse Tree, in our secular society often called a Christmas Tree. On this tree, for nine days, the children can make items, out of anything at all, to represent symbolically, the various Old Testament characters or events preceding the birth of Jesus.

Other days which can be celebrated with religious activities are the Twelve Days after Christmas, the feasts of St. Stephen, of the Holy Family, of Good King Wenceslaus, of St. John the Evangelist, of the Holy Innocents, and of St. Elizabeth Ann Seton. While there are some specific things which can be done in relation to each event, they all need to be celebrated with the reading of the Biblical event or of the biography of the saint. Scenes can be acted out by the family, or children can write a play, or put on a puppet show. Asking a religious sister over for dinner, or a priest to come for a special blessing adds to the reverence of the celebration. Don’t hesitate to include the rosary and the use of holy water. Singing songs, or watching a video of the saint’s life, can make the occasion special. If you have a local Catholic TV station or EWTN, there is usually something scheduled relevant to the feastday.

Lenten Devotions

Lent in the Liturgical Year is a time when families should look into the Catholic customs of their heritage. The Catholic cultural traditions, especially in the types of Paschal foods, can become a special treat and religious experience for the family, which can be handed down to the next generation, and to the next.

Fasting has become unpopular, but the message needs to be taught to our children. While Mother and Father may restrict their diet considerably, children should be encouraged to “fast” from desserts or sweets. References to the fasts in the Bible could be explained

several times at dinner during Lent.

In the past, all the statues in the churches were covered with purple cloths. This was a sign of Penance. It was a time when feasting and enjoying beautiful things were put aside. In some families, this tradition is kept alive, not by totally covering the statues in the domestic church, but by placing purple ribbons at the foot of each statue or holy picture.

Lent is an appropriate time to discuss the Stations, the meaning of each Station, and the making of the Stations. What a pity to see the Stations in churches, but never anyone making the Stations! While Stations can be made all year long, make it a Lenten custom for your family to say the Stations at least every Friday, but even every day if possible. Special Plenary Indulgences are given to anyone saying the Stations the same day on which the Holy Eucharist is received. This is a wonderful way to obtain freedom for the souls in Purgatory. Some Catholic families make it a practice to visit a Marian Shrine on First Fridays, and make the Stations there.

To make the Stations more interesting, you can use several different meditations. If you are in a hurry to get home in the morning for the home schooling, simply walk around to each station and say, “We adore Thee O Christ, and we bless Thee, because by Thy holy cross Thou hast redeemed the world.” The Plenary Indulgence is only granted if actual walking around to each station is involved. However, some priests can give a special papal blessing to a rosary, on which the Stations can be said and the Plenary Indulgence is thus obtained. Teach your children the song to be sung with the Stations: “At the cross her station keeping, stood the mother Mary weeping, close to Jesus to the last.” And all the following verses.

Holy Week

Living Holy Week for a Catholic can and should be a serious, deeply religious experience. The week needs to be filled with prayer—formal prayer and private prayer. Mass should be attended each day, as well as all the church programs

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Is It Cheating?

by Ginny Seuffert

When my children were in a parish school almost 20 years ago, I worked hard at being a responsible parent. I faithfully attended open houses and parent/teacher conferences so I could learn what the teachers expected of the students in their classes. I religiously checked assignment pads on a daily basis to make sure that homework was finished, and I signed the pages to let teachers know I was on top of things. I reviewed every completed page of homework to make sure all were neat, complete and correct. Sometimes, I would insist that a child redo a page if it was not completed to my satisfaction. If one of my children seemed unsure of a particular concept, I would reteach it or review it. We would discuss compositions and I would help the children build a vocabulary and make an outline. If I was unhappy with a particular finished product, I would write a note on the top of the page like, "I have spoken to Alicia about her messy penmanship and she assures me she will be neater in the future." When assignments were completed to my standards I signed the top of the page. Needless to say, the teachers loved me. I went through this routine five nights a week for 14 years. I was a home schooler for years before I knew such a thing existed; the biggest difference now is I home school in the morning, instead of at night.

All of this may explain why I do not share the scruples that many of our Seton Moms seem to have about what is considered cheating. These are all nice religious ladies who want to do the right thing, and worry about the distinction between providing teaching help versus actually providing answers. Truth be told, the line is not always as clear as it could be, and frankly, the difference between helping and cheating might differ from child to child. This seems to be especially true about written compositions. Nevertheless, I think with a bit of thought, some direction from the lesson plans, and a right attitude, we can decide when helping a child ceases and doing his work for him begins.

Let's take the example of a third grader writing a paragraph that needs to be sent to Seton for grading. The topic is the family pet. Mom has not had the time to do all the composition practice in the lesson plans and has been less than pleased with Junior's previous efforts. She decides more help is needed and sits down with him at the computer. At Mom's prompting, Junior shares his thoughts about the family's dog and Mom types out some words and phrases for him to use later and to ease the spelling anxiety from which so many young boys suffer. She explains again that the first sentence has to introduce the main idea of the paragraph and make people want to read more. She wants at least four additional detail sentences using the phrases that she has already typed out, and a final sentence that gives Junior's personal opinion about the dog. She reminds him to indent the first line, to start every sentence with a capital letter, and end each one with proper punctuation. *Sofar, nothing Mom has done would constitute cheating.*

The distinction becomes less clear when Junior shows Mom the finished product. It's absolutely awful, and she is not quite sure what to do. It seems to be the honest thing to send in the composition and let Junior take his knocks from the Seton grader. If Mom gives him any more direction—and he seems to need an awful lot of direction—isn't that cheating?

Absolutely not!

It's only cheating if Mom rewrites the paragraph herself and passes it off as Junior's work. It is perfectly acceptable, even desirable, for Mom to sit down with him and once again go over each part of the assignment. They have to work on the introduction, the body and the conclusion so that each part expresses the thoughts they are intended to express. This is not cheating; rather, it is a teaching opportunity. Here are a few ideas that might help you teach composition.

- A good practice is to have him read his effort to Mom, one sentence at a

time. Often, when the sentences are read aloud, it becomes clear that they make no sense whatsoever.

- If he seems overwhelmed, have him express a thought orally and Mom can type it. Some children speak quite well, but take more time to make the connection that written words are nothing more than thoughts recorded on paper.

- From the earliest grades, your children's compositions will be better if they use the word processing program on a computer. Purchase a simple game-type program to teach keyboarding.

- Some students just need to record bare bones thoughts on paper and then go back to revise and polish. For example, a first draft opening sentence might be, "We have a pet dog." Mom says, "Who does?" "What breed of dog?" "What is the dog's name?" Now the opening sentence might read, "My big Catholic family has a playful chocolate Labrador retriever named Fetch."

- Now ask the child to expand on some of the ideas in the topic sentence. By all means, ask leading questions like, "Why do you say Fetch is playful? What games does he play?" These may lead to a middle sentence like, "Fetch never gets tired of playing catch with a Frisbee in our backyard."

- Help the student write a last sentence that sums up, presents an opinion or gives a final thought. Ask him to give his work a title.

When I was in school, the final step would be to rewrite the paragraph, on lined paper with straight margins, in our best penmanship. Good students took pride in presenting a finished product to Sister, and hoped to see our work displayed on the classroom bulletin board. Obviously things have changed, but we can instill a sense of pride in our children for their work.

- Make sure the children type "J.M.J." in the center top and have a clear heading, with name, Seton student ID number, subject, quarter, and grade at the top of the document.

- Have the children pick a clear, easy-to-read font. Times New

Roman, Arial, or Courier are good choices. (Give our graders a break and *do not* allow your child to choose a flowery script font.)

- Teach how to double-space compositions.
- See if you have a digital picture of Fetch, or find a picture of a chocolate Lab on-line, and insert it above the title.

Now the paragraph is done.

Some of you may be thinking that this sounds like an awful lot of work for just one short assignment – and it is! On the other hand, this is just the kind of one-on-one learning that is a major benefit of home schooling. “Walking” a child through an assignment shows him, in a very concrete manner, all the steps he needs to take next time. He will be able to use the skills he has learned and apply them to the more complex assignments in the years to come. It is a great investment of your time.

Tip of the Month:

If your children dawdle and always seem to get a late start in the morning, there is a simple solution. “Set up” their workspace the night before. Make sure they have some assignments that can be worked on independently, in case you are busy, and a pen or a pencil with a point. Set an alarm, if you need to, but make sure the children start at the same time every day.

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for the week. Teach your children the Lenten songs, such as the traditional “O Sacred Head Surrounded.” For older children and parents, a meditation book should be chosen to read and help think about Jesus.

The meaning of palms should be explained and then they should be put around the house on Palm Sunday. Some children like to make crosses out of the palms. On Holy Thursday, parents should explain the meaning of the services before the children attend so they can understand how the services relate to the other Holy Week events.

For Good Friday, try to go to a church which has the service in the afternoon. Children are too tired to appreciate the service late in the evening. Since Jesus hung on the cross in the afternoon, an afternoon service seems more appropriate for the children.

From noon till three on Good Friday, many families keep silence. With young children, this may not be possible, but certainly some attempt is possible. Children should be encouraged to meditate or to say private prayers. Watching a video of the Sorrowful Mysteries of the rosary while saying the rosary, or watching a video of the Stations would be appropriate while saying the Stations.

Church services often start around 3:00. Try to spend some time in church

beforehand to go to confession if possible, or go to confession later in the afternoon.

Because these services tend to be long and involved, it is important to have a discussion with the children beforehand to explain what will be happening. Be sure the children have their own prayerbooks to follow along.

If the children decorate Easter Eggs, teach your children various Catholic symbols, such as the Chi-Rho symbol for Christ. These Catholic symbols can be taught to very young children, and give the proper meaning to Easter. In the Byzantine Rite, churches have classes to teach adults and children how to decorate eggs with religious symbols and themes.

Make sure the excitement of the Resurrection is conveyed in your home. You might have a video of the first Easter Sunday. Tell the story of the excitement as Peter and John ran to the Upper Room. The message of the Resurrection is the center of our Faith. As His apostles today, we want to spread the message. Write the message “He is Risen” on different colored sheets of construction paper, and tape them all over the doors of the domestic church. Greet each other with “He is Risen!” Teach your children some of the Resurrection songs, or listen to audio tapes or disks.

In all these ways, make your family life mirror the life of the church. In that way, it will indeed become the domestic church.

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Message for World Day of Peace 2008

2. The natural family, as an intimate communion of life and love, based on marriage between a man and a woman(2), constitutes “the primary place of ‘humanization’ for the person and society”(3), and a “cradle of life and love”(4). The family is therefore rightly defined as the first natural society, “a divine institution that stands at the foundation of life of the human person as the prototype of every social order”(5).

3. Indeed, in a healthy family life we experience some of the fundamental elements of peace: justice and love between brothers and sisters, the role of authority expressed by parents, loving concern for the members who are weaker because of youth, sickness or old age, mutual help in the necessities of life, readiness to accept others and, if necessary, to forgive them. For this reason, the family is the first and indispensable teacher of peace. It is no wonder, therefore, that violence, if perpetrated in the family, is seen as particularly intolerable. Consequently, when it is said that the family is “the primary living cell of society”(6), something essential is being stated. The family is the foundation of society for this reason too: because it enables its members in decisive ways to experience peace. It follows that the human community cannot do without the service provided by the family. Where can young people gradually learn to savour the genuine “taste” of peace better than in the original “nest” which nature prepares for them?

4. The family, since it has the duty of educating its members, is the subject of specific rights. *The Universal Declaration of Human Rights*, which represents a landmark of juridic civilization

of truly universal value, states that “the family is the natural and fundamental group unit of society and is entitled to protection by society and the State”(7). For its part, the Holy See sought to acknowledge a special juridic dignity proper to the family by publishing the *Charter of the Rights of the Family*. In its Preamble we read: “the rights of the person, even if they are expressed as rights of the individual, have a fundamental social dimension which finds an innate and vital expression in the family”(8). The rights set forth in the *Charter* are an expression and explication of the natural law written on the heart of the human being and made known to him by reason. The denial or even the restriction of the rights of the family, by obscuring the truth about man, threatens the very foundations of peace.

5. Consequently, whoever, even unknowingly, circumvents the institution of the family undermines peace in the entire community, national and international, since he weakens what is in effect the primary agency of peace. This point merits special reflection: everything that serves to weaken the family based on the marriage of a man and a woman, everything that directly or indirectly stands in the way of its openness to the responsible acceptance of a new life, everything that obstructs its right to be primarily responsible for the education of its children, constitutes an objective obstacle on the road to peace. The family needs to have a home, employment and a just recognition of the domestic activity of parents, the possibility of schooling for children, and basic health care for all.

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