



Seton Home Study School

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◆ *“Under the Magisterium of the Catholic Church”* ◆

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Most Holy Rosary

Have you ever noticed that when something interferes with praying our daily Rosary, the day just doesn't seem right?

The daily graces that come through the Rosary affect our whole day. If we prayerfully enter every day into the mysteries of the earthly and heavenly lives of Jesus and Mary through the Rosary, these mysteries help us each day to remain in the state of grace, to grow in grace in our earthly lives, and to move closer to the heavenly life.

Praying the Rosary every day makes us more aware of the needs of others. At the end of every “Hail Mary,” we pray for others as well as for ourselves both in regard to earthly life (“pray for us sinners now”) and to heavenly life (“...and at the hour of death”).

We cannot help everyone who has problems. Some people are too distant from us or beyond our means to help. We don't know all the problems people have, even people in our own family and in our neighborhood. We cannot help people suffering in other parts of the world. What we can do to change our culture is very limited. We often cannot help those suffering from illness or despair or financial difficulties even in our own community.

Nonetheless, we do help all the suffering people, known and unknown, by praying for “us sinners” every day

and many times over. Our daily Rosary sends all these suffering people the spiritual graces to live according to the mysterious providence God has designed for each person. These graces help suffering people to accept with patience the crosses God allows, and help them to understand the graces, peace, and even eternal blessings that can come from suffering.

Did you notice the words of Mary at Fatima about the crippled boy? “Some I will cure and others not. As to the crippled boy, I will not cure him or take him out of his poverty, but he must say the Rosary every day with his family.” The Blessed Mother not only promotes the saying of the daily Rosary, but commands as the Mother of God, with the word “must” to say the Rosary every day with the family.

Let us realize that the Family Rosary is essential for us as well as for the needs of our whole family. More than ever, in this anti-family secular society, we need to remember Father Peyton's words, “The family that prays together stays together.” His years of television shows promoted the Family Rosary and explained the miracles that happened in some families because of the Family Rosary.

October, the month of the Holy Rosary, is a perfect time to renew our commitment to say our daily Rosary,

particularly with our children. In one of her apparitions at Fatima, the Blessed Mother said, “Let the people continue to say the Rosary every day to obtain the end of war.” In these days when our country is at war, we and our children must not forget our soldiers and those many millions of people suffering in war-torn nations.

In her last apparition at Fatima on October 13, 1917, the Blessed Mother told Lucia, “I want to tell you that they must build a chapel here in my honor; that I am the Lady of the Rosary, that they must continue to say the Rosary every day. ...They must mend their lives, ask forgiveness for their sins. Offend not Our Lord any more for He is already much offended.”

Our Lady of the Rosary, help our family to remain dedicated to you by saying the Family Rosary every day. Use the graces from our Family Rosary to help all of us to practice the Catholic Faith according to your Divine Son's wishes. Our Lady of the Rosary, pray for us.

- MKC

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

I am home schooling five children. Do you have any suggestions for teaching some of them the same subjects together?

Consider combining students who could take the same courses in the same grade level. Children in adjacent grades may be able to be combined in one grade level for some subjects. For instance, in subjects like art, music, and physical education, teach the same course to two or three children. In subjects such as history or science, decide if the younger child can move up a grade level to learn with an older sibling, or if an older child would benefit by moving down a grade level with a younger child.

Consider also teaching the same subject at different levels at the same time. I found that if all my boys were doing their math assignments at the same time, it was easy to move from child to child to point out similar concepts. It is also easier to have an older child explain a math concept to a younger child while they are both working on their math at the same time.

Sometimes, when an older student has not been doing well, consider having him repeat the grade level with an upcoming sibling. The older student can help the younger student and the older student often becomes more proficient as he reviews and becomes confident in learning the familiar concepts. Of course, you also must be careful not to foster resentments.

Consider asking the older student to help as a teacher's aide, even consider paying him a small amount. This gives your older student a stronger foundation in a subject area, such as math, English, religion, or reading, subjects which often can benefit a student by being repeated.

My husband does not really support me in my home schooling. Should I just accept the fact that he will never help, or is there something I can or should do?

It can be very difficult for moms who are teaching their children if Dad is never involved. While the daily issue might be that it would be helpful if Dad would listen to someone read or help with the math class, the big issue is that the children realize that Dad does not want to be involved, usually because he does not see the value of the home schooling enterprise. This does affect the children, either in their willingness or unwillingness to do their assignments, or in their disappointment that Dad does not seem interested.

There are some things, though, that you might consider asking your husband to do which do not relate to the home schooling. You might ask him to take a child to his basketball practice, or take a child to the dentist, do some shopping or pick up a prescription, or take the car to the shop.

Others things he might do are to make or purchase a couple of bookcases, help cook a meal, clean out the garage for a play area, fix up the yard for the children, repair the children's bicycles, put in shelves in the closet. These things can help tangentially with the home schooling.

It is important that you constantly pray for your husband, and be sure the children are involved in praying for him, especially in regard to his job. Remind your children that Dad is working so that the family can have a home and clothes and heat. Try not to allow yourself to feel resentment toward your husband, as your children will quickly pick up on this.

I am a new home schooling mom. What does flexibility mean?

A key to success in home schooling is being flexible. New home schooling parents tend to be very strict with the schedule and the lessons. Actually, it is not a bad idea to start out this way, because you cannot be flexible if you have not even tried to keep to a schedule. Eventually, you will come to realize that some students need more time on math, and other students need more time on reading or English. Some students whiz through spelling, but are not as quick in vocabulary, so they need more time in one subject and less time in another.

In a classroom situation, the teacher must teach the assigned minutes each day

This does affect the children, either in their willingness or unwillingness to do their assignments, or in their disappointment that Dad does not seem interested.

on each subject. In home schooling, even though Seton has a schedule, it can be adjusted to the ability of the individual child, subject by subject.

Another area where you can be flexible is in the minor subjects. Unlike math and English, for instance, some subjects can be taken out of the regular order, such as history and science. You might find it easier to teach two students, usually only a year apart, the same history or the same science. Seton can certainly help you make that adjustment.

You should be ready to be flexible if a student is doing poorly in a subject by switching to a lower grade level. There is no point in your child being unhappy because he simply cannot learn a particular subject; his brain just may not be ready for some math or English concepts, or it is possible that he simply did not learn basic concepts in the past years. Some children are not ready to read until they are seven, or even eight.

There are many unhappy students in schools because the teacher does not have the ability in a group situation to make adjustments for a struggling student.

On the other hand, you might have a student who is bored because he already knows the subject thoroughly. Students often cannot tell you why they are unhappy. Be flexible by not making this student do all the problems on the page. If he does half of them and gets them all correct, then move him along at his own pace. If you tell this student that you will advance him to the next grade level if he does well and progresses, you may find he will be ready for the next grade level in that subject by January because he has been motivated to achieve.

Reading the message of Fatima and the importance of praying for the conversion of sinners isn't likely to happen anywhere except within the homes of Catholic families.

Don't hesitate to call Seton and speak with a counselor about any situations which you think you might need to change. Perhaps we can make some suggestions which can help. Most of all, relax and realize that everything will work out, but it will take time and effort. What home schooling is all about is character development and living the virtuous life. While at first it may be tough, as you are able to understand your children's learning abilities and skills and needs, you will learn to make changes to help your children learn better. These are graces which the Blessed Mother and Our Lord Himself will give you from the supernatural treasury of graces available to all of us.

I have an aunt who teaches in a school, and she is against memorization. She thinks children just need to understand concepts, and won't need to memorize if they understand. What do you think?

The best answer is from the recently deceased American theologian and writer, Father John Hardon. Father Hardon supported Catholic home schooling and frequently spoke at Catholic home schooling conferences.

Father spoke about memorization as an important key to teaching the Faith. He said one cannot live the Faith unless he knows it well. Important facts do not stay with a child nor can he apply his knowledge in other subjects, if he does not memorize. Spelling words, vocabulary definitions, multiplication tables, and so on, all need to be memorized. While modern educators emphasize understanding concepts, memorizing is just as important.

Father Hardon said that memorizing is "indispensable." "Without memorization, there is no education. ...There is no learning of the Catholic Faith without memorization."

Father advised home schooling parents to "Be sure you are teaching the words, and that the ideas behind your words are understood first by you, the teacher. Know what you are teaching. Understand it."

Father explained that "The truths of the Faith are to be memorized through words. There is no choice. There is no other way one believing mind can pass on possession of the truth to another mind except through words...but be sure that what is memorized is not just the words but the Faith..."

Father constantly reminded parents about our responsibility to help our children deepen their understanding of the Catholic truths which they have memorized. Most important, he said, parents need to "make sure that the believing minds of your children understand how to put these truths they believe into practice."

I have been home schooling my children for several years, but I think I need to remind them, and myself, why we are doing this rather demanding home schooling life style.

One of our former chaplains emphasized the importance of constantly reminding ourselves and our children why we are home schooling. We are

doing it to save our own souls in fulfilling our primary God-given responsibility as parents, and that is, to raise our children so they will attain eternal life and happiness in heaven with Jesus Christ. Our intention as home schooling parents is to give our children healthy Catholic family values, and to protect ourselves and our children from the spiritual disease that pervades our current culture.

We don't intend to isolate our children. In fact, most of us have good home schooling friends, and even good Catholic support groups, which offer healthy sports, music, drama, and other activities for our children.

Most of us try to teach our children Catholic values as we read and talk about the saints and what they did to help others, inspiring us to follow in their footsteps. Many of us are dedicated to celebrating, even in some small way, the special feasts of the year, such as the Immaculate Conception.

Each month of the year gives us opportunities to present lessons, for ourselves as well as the children. October is the month of the Holy Rosary, and the special appearance of the Blessed Mother at Fatima. Reading over the message of Fatima and the importance of praying for the conversion of sinners is not likely to happen anywhere except within the homes of Catholic families.

Some may say that Catholic family life can happen in families who send their children out to schools, especially Catholic schools, but in this current over-busy secular culture, parents struggle to find time even to eat dinner together much less pray together. If the only religious education that a child receives is an hour on Sunday, how will this counterbalance the false ideas the child receives from the culture the rest of the week?

These are some of my thoughts about home schooling. You can develop your own, along with your children. Spend some time discussing these ideas and more with your children so that together you will be reminded of the important reasons why you are home schooling. Remember Proverbs 29:18: "Where there is no vision, the people perish."

Driven to Distraction

by Kevin Clark

“Why can’t we ever do anything fun?” my seven-year-old son asked the other day.

This is a common enough question from children. It struck me as odd this particular time, because the phrase was uttered the day after the child in question went on a trip to the zoo in the morning and afternoon, and then went to a minor-league baseball game in the evening. That’s right—the zoo and a baseball game on the same day. Yet, he never does “anything fun.”

It is possible that my children never do anything that is fun for them. After all, I can’t read their minds and determine when they’re having fun. Still, if they’re not having fun, then I have to wonder why, whenever I tell them it’s time to leave anywhere, they always say “Can’t we stay five more minutes?!” If it’s not fun, why do they want to stay?

I don’t know if they are doing anything fun, but I know that they are *doing* a lot. On a recent Sunday, my children went to a family baptism after which they played with their friends and cousins for several hours, then two of the older children attended a ballet recital, and then we all went swimming. This was on a Sunday—a day of rest! I hope someone rested that day, because I know that we did not.

My children—and probably yours too—are always on the go. They have practices to go to and games to play in. They have dance lessons or art lessons or music lessons or some other lessons. They should have lessons in how to fit in all those lessons.

When they and their parents are constantly running around to games and practices and lessons, it can be rather expensive. There is the upfront cost of the lesson/sports league. Then there is the cost of gas to ferry the children from one thing to another. Then you have to include the cost of fast food, since there is no time left to make dinner at home. Studies have found that 96% of school-age children can identify Ronald

McDonald. That statistic makes you wonder what the other 4% are thinking about.

Okay, it’s easy to tell where this article is going, so let’s get it out there: we do too much, we ought to cut back, we ought to relax a little and spend our time and money on things that are more useful, and if we did less we might better enjoy the fewer things we do.

There is the rejoinder that life has always been hectic and that the “good old days” were never that good. People do tend to think that however things are now, life was better 20 or 30 years ago. The *Andy Griffith Show* once ran an episode in which Andy and Aunt Bea pined away for the good old days when life was slower and people had time to listen to a band concert at the town square on a Sunday night. And that was in the 1960’s, before cable television and computers.

Despite the nostalgia argument, children growing up today really do face many more distractions than their parents who grew up in the 1970’s. I can remember a time when the only thing on television was the three major networks. In the mornings, the networks ran children’s shows, but those shows ended at noon, when the stations ran their midday news. After that, until sometime after 3:00 pm, it was solid soap operas. Since there were no cable stations, no videos, and no computers to speak of, there was pretty much no electronic distraction to interest a young person for those hours. About the only thing one could do during those hours was either play an actual game or do schoolwork.

For today’s children, there is no time when there is “nothing on.” Instead of cable television with perhaps thirty channels, modern cable or satellite television delivers hundreds of channels. You don’t even have to wait for something good to come on. Cable and satellites now have on-demand programming so you can watch what you want when you want. If you can’t find anything on TV

you want to watch, most homes have hundreds of DVD’s and video tapes to watch. And if you still have nothing to do, there is always the Internet.

I am of two minds about the Internet. On Monday, Wednesday, and Friday I think the Internet is the most wonderful invention in human history. On Tuesday, Thursday, and Saturday I think the Internet is the biggest waste of time in human history. On Sunday I check my email.

Actually, the Internet is both one of the most useful tools ever conceived by human intelligence and the biggest waste of time on planet earth. There can be no doubt about the benefits of the Internet. You can find just about any information there is anytime you want it. You can shop online, you can do your taxes online, you can keep in touch with friends and relatives without long-distance bills. It’s really an amazing tool.

But the Internet has a huge downside. Leaving aside the obvious problem of the impurity available, the Internet is a massive time-waster. For starters, there is information overload. You have so much information on so many topics that it is very difficult to differentiate between good information and bad information. When you go to a library and check out a book, someone first took the time to research the book. Then they submitted the book to a publisher, who thought it worthwhile enough to print. Then editors, and perhaps fact-checkers, went over the book for accuracy and grammar. Then someone at the library thought the book useful enough to buy it and put it on the shelf.

Compare that to information on the Internet: someone had access to a keyboard and they typed something. No one is really responsible for fact-checking and ensuring accuracy. You may find a good source on any topic, but you can’t be sure.

Then there are blogs, mailing lists, and just email. *Blog*, for those who do not know (God bless you!), is short for weblog. A weblog is basically someone’s thoughts on any topic that comes up, like an online diary. Blogs can be interesting and even influential.

Blogs are like daily newspaper columns, so one might say that they are no more wasteful of time than reading the paper. But the paper—like the library book—is something that someone edited and decided was worth spending money to print. That doesn't really compare to reading the unedited and unchecked ramblings of bloggers.

Mailing lists are groups of people who get together and email each other on whatever topic is of interest, sometimes family life or home schooling. At their best, these lists can be a kind of support group, and people on the list can develop enduring friendships. That's the good part. The bad part is the hours every day it takes to read and reply to the emails on the list. Some of these lists can have thirty, forty, fifty emails a day to read through. That takes time; and, if you reply to any of these emails, that takes more time.

My personal online time-waster is reading sites such as *Slate* and then posting replies to articles. I tend to post replies that I consider to be defenses of the Faith, and that's how I internally justify the expense of time. But honestly, it's a waste of time to post replies on *Slate* or any of the other online magazines. Who is going to bother to read a reply? Not many people, and even if they do, why should they listen to anything I say? They don't know me, they don't respect my opinion, so why should they care? Answer: they don't care. So why am I wasting an hour writing and rewriting a masterful reply with just the right turn of phrase? It's like spending an hour putting the perfect garnish on your pot-bellied pig's evening meal. No matter what garnish you use and how prettily you arrange it, the pig doesn't care.

Perhaps the most justifiable use of the Internet is keeping up with friends and family by email. But even this can become too much. If you email fifteen or twenty friends once a day, how long does that take? Of course, email is almost instantaneous, so you might email people two or three or more times a day. How much time does it take to send out thirty or forty emails per day? Keeping up with friends and family is good, but is it necessary to email them

every day? We don't phone each of our friends and family members every day. Why send email so often?

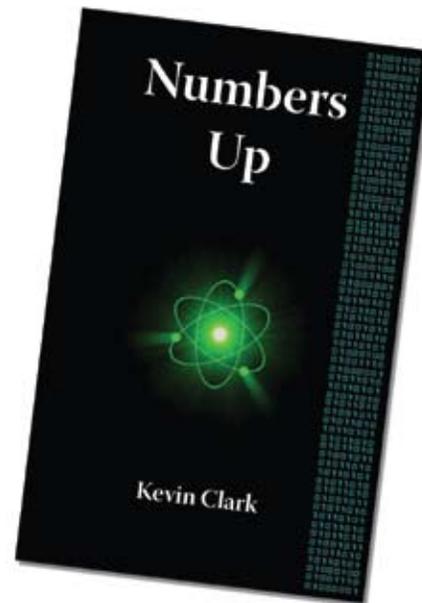
Ginny Seuffert often sings the praises of removing clutter from our houses. I agree with that, but perhaps we also need to think about removing clutter from our minds. So much of the television, videos, computer games, and the Internet is simply so much mental muddle.

Historically, peace and quiet have been regarded as necessary to commune with God. When Elijah stood on the mountain to meet God, there was a great wind, but God was not in the wind.

There was an earthquake, but God was not in the earthquake. Then there was a fire, but God was not in the fire. When God came, he came as a whisper. (1 Kings 19:11-12)

It is safe to say that we will rarely hear the voice of God in the Internet. We will rarely hear God in the television. We will rarely hear God in the video game. But if we turn all these things off and wait for God in silence, perhaps we will hear His whisper. "Wait for the Lord with courage; be stouthearted, and wait for the Lord." (Psalms 27:14)

A thought-provoking first novel from Seton Home Study Newsletter Editor Kevin Clark ...



Renowned mathematician Dr. Michael Townsend has been murdered. As a world leader in the science of data encryption, Townsend has many secrets—secrets that could lead to a new understanding of the nature of the world, or to the deaths of many. The dead often carry their secrets to the grave, and someone is hoping that Townsend will stay quiet permanently. Townsend's work touched many lives. But who is the prime suspect?

"In *Numbers Up* Kevin Clark skillfully interweaves conflicting designs: those of spies, killers, cops, blackmailers, bankers, arms dealers, and—maybe—the Designer of life. He has the reader sitting at the edge of his seat, contemplating the brutality of this world which, despite itself, hints of another."

- Michael J. Behe, author of *Darwin's Black Box*

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Hitting Your Stride

Ginny Seuffert

October is here and most of us have settled into our home schooling year. Let's face it, more than a few are already feeling overwhelmed, and even veteran moms see the holidays looming and are wondering if all the shopping, cleaning and baking will tip the family into chaos. This newsletter (and our archived articles you can access on our website) will continue to give you tips to keep your home schools running like clockwork, and a call to a Seton counselor is always in order. Both newsletter articles and Seton counselors often advise parents to prioritize, accomplishing the essentials first, doing the best one can with non-essentials, and steering clear of distractions all together. Parents tell me that they run into trouble deciding just exactly what is essential and important, what can sit on the back burner for a while, and just what should be avoided, so here are some thoughts about what your home school really needs to accomplish.

First, if you have not already done so, put together a simple schedule with set times to get up, eat, do schoolwork and household chores, and enjoy some free time. Including simple prayers helps to define the time slots and give them a supernatural value. Start the day with the Morning Offering, start class time with a Hail Mary and Guardian Angel Prayer, and start meals with Grace. End the day with an examination of conscience and an Act of Contrition. Instilling order and including prayer in our days will help us with the most essential element of our job as parent educators: to inspire virtue and character in our children.

Allow ample time for schoolwork; I always counsel parents to start no later than 8 a.m. Have the children do the most important subjects in the morning when they are fresh. For elementary grades that includes religion, phonics, reading, English and math. Science, spelling, vocabulary, and history may wait until after lunch, or perhaps until the evening with Dad when the younger children are in bed. Many children are natural spellers and can "test out" of some lessons, and vocabulary is really an

enrichment course as children learn new words mainly from conversation and reading. Although history and science gain importance in the middle school and junior high school years, they do not "build" the same way as language, math and religion do, and chapters are more self-contained units, allowing children to catch up as time allows.

High school students should devote no less than one hour per day to each subject. One common pitfall at this level is to spend time on subjects that are easier or more enjoyable, leaving the rest for "later." Too often "later" means over the summer break or even into the next school year and it is not at all unusual for high schoolers to fall behind. Unlike elementary levels, all the required assignments for each high school course must be completed to accrue credits towards a diploma, but short cuts are still fine. History, literature and science chapters can be highlighted for later study in place of writing answers out. Be creative, but still insist on one hour per day per subject.

Assigning children regular household jobs is another essential element of their development and is a huge help for Mom. Even the littlest family members can fetch needed items, put dirty laundry in the hamper, stow their toys, and put trash in receptacles. More demanding cleaning jobs can be added later, but often children will excel at the fun tasks. My children may have balked at cleaning the kitchen, but they loved preparing food, especially baked goodies. The older girls loved to fuss over their younger siblings, dressing and grooming them with far more care than I ever had time for. Besides giving Mom and Dad a break, helping around the house encourages industriousness, allows the children to gain practical life skills, and gives them the confidence that comes from being a contributing member of the family.

In addition to a predictable schedule which includes regular prayer time and their fair share of household chores, children need to have regular interaction with close and extended family members.

In most homes, that means sitting down for meals together as often as possible, but there are other ways to foster family relationships. Perhaps the most significant change you can make is to shut off the TVs, the video games and the computers. Checkers, chess, and Scrabble are games that have been popular for generations and kids still enjoy them.

Young people need lots of physical exercise, in the fresh air and sunshine, if weather allows. Organized sports can be a good resource here, but the expense and the time in the car are often a burden to home schooling families. Do not listen to the socialization baloney that scares parents into feeling that children will not be "normal" if they are not at a different organized activity every day of the week. Building forts in the backyard, playing tag and hide 'n seek, or dodge ball with siblings and neighbors is convenient, free-of-charge, and develops social skills under Mom or Dad's watchful eye.

Finally, I consider literature to be an essential element of both family life and child development. If your children are too young to read themselves, read to them. Even twenty minutes before night prayers will make all the difference in the world. Once they can read, just shut off the tube, and provide them with books according to their interests. Using the public library serves the dual purpose of getting the books for free and not having collections fill every corner of the house. Next month's column will discuss some great reading choices for all ages.

Looking back over this column, readers may notice just a few ideas. First, none of my suggestions require any real financial commitment. Second, the best resources are not found on class trips or in organized activities, but right in your own home, your family's backyard, or in your neighborhood. Everything your children really need, to grow up to be healthy, vigorous, hard-working serious learners is close to home and easily gained. Parents do not need drive themselves to distraction while driving children to classes, sports, or organized activities, all the essentials are right at hand. Never forget that "home" is at the heart of home schooling.

Boys Don't (Usually) Like to Write

Parents often call our counselors and tell them that their boys don't like to write. What many do not realize, unless they have several sons, is that most boys don't like to write. Young boys don't like to write because their fingers are not adept at writing small letters on a piece of paper, and they usually take a little longer than girls to develop a vocabulary and even develop speaking skills. Parents need



to be patient with their sons whose brains are working fine, but writing skills come a little slower than parents want them.

Start your sons and daughters as early as First Grade writing words—phonics and spelling words especially. As your child progresses in First Grade, he could write phrases, and by the end of First Grade, he may be able to write a full sentence, using words he has learned in his subjects.

Encourage your young son to write sentences he himself has made up. If he needs a “start,” give him a simple sentence and ask him to write a logical follow-up sentence. You could write a sentence about an animal, such as “Look at the little deer crossing the road.” Ask your son to write a follow-up sentence of his own. Your child might write “It is brown.” or “It is little with white dots.” or “He ran away fast.”

In Second and Third Grades, help your son, or daughter, to write a three or four sentence paragraph. You can write the first sentence, and your child can write the following sentences. Give your child praise for writing the sentences, especially for expressing his own ideas.

If your child can write two or three sentences, teach him about a Final Sentence. Teach him that the Final Sentence must “wrap up” or “finish” the paragraph. Show your child some

simple paragraphs in a reader or other book. Help your child to recognize final sentences, either a summary sentence or a personal comment. In a paragraph about a deer, the final personal comment sentence might be, “I hope that cute little deer comes back to visit us.”

This is the hardest part of teaching your child to write: You need to do it! You need to insist, to push or to pull, to reward, to do whatever it takes so that your son or daughter writes every day, at least a paragraph. The later your son or daughter starts writing paragraphs, the harder it will be to write anything. If children, especially boys, don't start writing when they are very young, attitudes begin to develop, such as “I am afraid to write!”; or “I can't write!”; or “Writing makes me sick (or miserable)”; or “As long as I resist, Mom will not make me write!”

The first three or four years, from Kindergarten through Grade Three, are critical to develop the proper attitude toward writing as well as to develop a confidence in the ability to write. When students come to us in high school and have never written a book report or much else, they think that writing is like a foreign language. They don't even want to try to write a paragraph. If we neglect teaching our young boys and girls to write, there can be serious difficulties in the years to come.

-MKC

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Mary and the Church (from Evangelium Vitae)

The mutual relationship between the mystery of the Church and Mary appears clearly in the “great portent” described in the Book of Revelation: “A great portent appeared in heaven, a woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet, and on her head a crown of twelve stars” (12:1). In this sign the Church recognizes an image of her own mystery: present in history, she knows that she transcends history, inasmuch as she constitutes on earth the “seed and beginning” of the Kingdom of God. The Church sees this mystery fulfilled in complete and exemplary fashion in Mary. She is the woman of glory in whom God’s plan could be carried out with supreme perfection.

The “woman clothed with the sun”—the Book of Revelation tells us—“was with child” (12:2). The Church is fully aware that she bears within herself the Saviour of the world, Christ the Lord. She is aware that she is called to offer Christ to the world, giving men and women new birth into God’s own life. But the Church cannot forget that her mission was made possible by the motherhood of Mary, who conceived and bore the One who is “God from God”, “true God from true God”. Mary is truly the Mother of God, the Theotokos, in whose motherhood the vocation to motherhood bestowed by God on every woman is raised to its highest level. Thus Mary becomes the model of the Church, called to be the “new Eve”, the mother of believers, the mother of the “living” (cf. Gen 3:20).

The Church’s spiritual motherhood is only achieved—the Church knows this too—through the pangs and “the labour” of childbirth (cf. Rev 12:2), that is to say, in constant tension with the forces of evil which still roam the world and affect human hearts, offering resistance to Christ: “In him was life, and the life was the light of men. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it” (Jn 1:4-5).

Like the Church, Mary too had to live her motherhood amid suffering: “This child is set... for a sign that is spoken against—and a sword will pierce through your own soul also—that thoughts out of many hearts may be revealed” (Lk 2:34-35). The words which Simeon addresses to Mary at the very beginning of the Saviour’s earthly life sum up and prefigure the rejection of Jesus, and with him of Mary, a rejection which will reach its culmination on Calvary. “Standing by the cross of Jesus” (Jn 19:25), Mary shares in the gift which the Son makes of himself: she offers Jesus, gives him over, and begets him to the end for our sake. The “yes” spoken on the day of the Annunciation reaches full maturity on the day of the Cross, when the time comes for Mary to receive and beget as her children all those who become disciples, pouring out upon them the saving love of her Son: “When Jesus saw his mother, and the disciple whom he loved standing near, he said to his mother, “Woman, behold, your son!”” (Jn 19:26).

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