



Seton Home



Study School

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Our Lady of the Miraculous Medal

No matter how the election goes, no matter how sorrowful we may be that wrong candidates won the various elections, or how happy we may be that the right candidates won, we must stay in constant prayer. As Christians, we do not put our faith in the princes of this world, who will always fail and falter to some degree. We put our faith only in the Prince of Peace, who never fails to fulfill his promises and never falters in giving us the graces we need.

The Blessed Mother appeared to Sister Catherine Labouré in June of 1830 in a convent in Paris, France. The Blessed Mother said to Sister Catherine, “The times are very evil. Sorrows will come upon France. The throne will be overturned. The whole world will be upset by miseries of every kind.”

When Catherine’s face expressed deep sadness at these words, the Blessed Mother said, “Come to the foot of the altar. There, graces will be shed upon all who ask for them.” Home schooling families must never forget these words, that at the foot of the altar, by going to Mass and receiving Jesus in the Sacrament of the Holy Eucharist, we can receive the graces we need to overcome the evil that seems to surround us.

The Blessed Mother continued, “There will be victims among the clergy of Paris. The Cross will be treated with contempt. ... Blood will flow. The whole world will be in sadness.” It is obvious that we must never forget to pray for our priests, and to pray for those in other parts of the world who suffer much more than we do. Today,

we need to pray especially for the persecuted Christians in countries with Muslim majorities, and to pray for the revival of the Catholic Faith in Europe.

Catherine had been led to the convent chapel to meet the Blessed Mother in the middle of the night by a small boy in a dazzling white gown. She realized that the child was her guardian angel. Let us teach our children to depend on their guardian angels who are not only protecting us all of the time, but are leading us daily to the Blessed Mother and eternal happiness with her Divine Son.

Only a month after the appearance to Sister Catherine, rioting broke out in the streets of Paris. Rioters attacked and stormed churches and the king’s throne and property.

On November 27th, 1830, the Blessed Mother once again appeared to Catherine. She held a globe in her hand which she said represented the whole world. She wore rings on her fingers, from which rays of light extended. Suddenly a frame appeared around her with the letters “O Mary, conceived without sin, pray for us who have recourse to thee.”

The Blessed Mother explained that the many rays flowing from her fingers represented graces that she wants to give people. However, she said, many graces which she is ready to give are not even requested.

The Blessed Mother then told Catherine that she wanted a medal struck. She said, “All who wear it will receive great graces. They should wear it around

the neck. Graces will abound for persons who wear it with confidence.”

It was some years later that the medal was struck and generously distributed. Reports of hundreds of miracles due to the medal came to the archbishop of Paris, and he began to have them recorded. So many people reported miracles that the medal began to be known as The Miraculous Medal.

Our Lady of the Miraculous Medal, pray for us home schooling families as turmoil in the society and in government surrounds us. Help our priests to speak out for justice. Help us to realize the inestimable value of the graces we receive from Jesus in the Holy Sacrament of the Eucharist.

Mary, conceived without sin, remind us to keep fighting for the little ones, the most defenseless, those born and unborn, who need us to protect them. O Mary, give us the special graces we need to persist in our home schooling in spite of the difficulties. Help our children to understand their importance as Catholics in the culture which awaits their spiritual leadership.

O Mary, conceived without sin, pray for us who have recourse to thee.

-MKC

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Questions We Are Asked

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

Is it possible that there might be some repercussions for home schoolers from the November election?

Home schooling rights are not in danger. There is a whole string of court precedents which support homeschooling, going back nearly 100 years, and those precedents are not likely to be over-ruled. However, the National Education Association is against private schooling generally and home schooling particularly, and they may propose more state restrictions on home schooling if they feel public sentiment moving their way. Certainly those enrolled in an accredited school, such as Seton, have the best protection.

Home schoolers have been vigilant in guarding their rights and freedoms over the years. As we saw in the recent unpleasantness in California, home schoolers are quick to mobilize and challenge any potentially threatening regulation or court ruling. Home schoolers are now a recognized part of the overall society, and they can expect that many politicians will support them, as Governor Schwarzenegger did in California.

It is not something to worry about now, but it is important to stay in prayer regarding not only home schooling freedoms, but other freedoms, such as freedom of speech and freedom of religion. In the history of the world, God has asked many good and innocent people to make many sacrifices. The economic situation may be a great problem for all single-income families, especially for those families who are trying to send their children to college.

My daughter is having trouble studying for the history tests. Can you give us any tips?

First, no matter what the course, students need to learn study skills. On the

Seton Home Page on the Internet, on the top bar on the right, we have a box "Free Sample Study Skills Course." Your daughter can do the 11 lessons, at no charge, right from our Home Page.

Notice the Introduction gives titles to the sections: The Best Place to Study, The Best Time to Study, The Best Way to Study, and How to get Help with your Study.

The student can click on 11 different lessons to learn about these topics. Lesson Two is about the importance of having a good attitude; if a student is determined to whine or complain, he will find something to complain about. Lesson Three is about focusing on the responsibility at hand and not worrying about the big picture. Great things are accomplished one-step-at-a-time; school assignments are accomplished the same way.

Your daughter should be sure to read the end-of-chapter review questions, then read the chapter and highlight the information which answers the questions. These underlined or highlighted phrases, as well as written answers, can serve as a great study guide to prepare for the tests.

As Catholics, we realize that our guardian angel, the Blessed Mother, our patron saint, and all the saints will help us study for our tests if we only ask for their help. Students should remember not merely to pray that they do well on tests, but that they acquire the proper study habits and proper attitudes that will let them do well.

It seems like we are studying all the time, and my son wants to get out and meet other high school boys. How can we cut down the studying time?

First, make sure that the studying time is being used to the best advantage. Paying attention during the daily assignments

and doing the assignments when it is the proper time means that other things can be scheduled. Sometimes the reason that study time is so long is that the student is being inefficient and not focusing on the work as best as he can.

Along these lines, students often waste a good deal of time pretending to study. For example, if your son has a television set or computer in his room, then much of the time that he is "studying" might actually be spent watching TV or playing on the computer. If your son does not seem to be doing a reasonable amount of work in the time allotted, then you should look at alleviating some of his distractions.

Your daughter should be sure to read the end-of-chapter review questions, then read the chapter and highlight the information which answers the questions.

Some parents say that their student is a perfectionist. The student wants every answer to be accurate and complete, and is not ready to be "finished" with an assignment until it meets the student's highest goals. While it may seem to the parent this is not a wise decision, when we are speaking about a young adult, we should consider that this is a choice the student has made for his own life. It may not be our own way of doing things, but it may make the student happy to spend long hours and obtain straight A grades. A point to consider about a perfectionist student is not only do they make A grades, but when they go to college, perhaps a year later than usual, usually they do very well in college, often obtaining generous scholarships.

Nevertheless, if your student wants to do less work, you and your husband need to help your son to balance his school time to make time for extra-curricular activities. It may take some time, but fully discuss the details of each

of the courses, evaluate the work and assignments required, work on a daily schedule and a monthly calendar, and try to find the time he wants for his outside interest.

Remember, the lesson plans are a suggestion. Your student does not need to do every last assignment. You can skip some assignments or shorten some assignments. Give more focus to the Seton-graded assignments that need to be done for a quarter grade.

The lesson plans are a suggestion. Your student does not need to do every assignment. You can skip or shorten some assignments.

By the way, if your son were in a traditional school, he would most likely spend a good deal of time on homework anyway. The National Center for Education Statistics reports that 12th grade students spend an average of 1.7 hours per day on homework.

My son seems bored with his reading assignments. How can I get him interested in reading?

Perhaps most important is to find books about things of interest to him. Let him know that if he spends a certain amount of time reading his assignments, you will let him choose a book that he wants to read.

For book reports, students often have a choice of books. Show your child the list of books to choose from, and let him pick the book he would like to read.

Another way to have him become interested in his assignments is to find books at his reading level or lower than his reading level which relate to his assignments. Many of the stories in his readers, for instance, are about real people. Help your son find information on the internet or in an encyclopedia or in an easy-read book about people in his history or science assignments.

Boys are very influenced by their fathers. Fathers are called to be role models for sons, as evidenced by the words of the Bible, especially in Proverbs. Encourage your husband to read books with your son, and to discuss books with him. They may have a common interest which they could read about together.

By the way, Seton sells books for different age levels about the saints. The saints had very interesting lives. They lived in all kinds of cultures and family situations. Their lives were never dull. Your son might be interested in reading about St. Francis Xavier, for example, who traveled to India and Japan where he had very unusual and adventuresome experiences.

My children don't want to listen!

Some teachers will tell you that boys are not good listeners, while most girls listen carefully. Let's keep in mind that girls are usually more settled down for their studies, while boys' bodies are crying out for exercise.

An effective way to train children to listen is through music. Most famous musicians in history are men who started playing their instruments when they were very young, even at three years old. For someone to play a musical instrument, the person must be listening very carefully to the notes and the timing of the music. Those young people who learn to play an instrument by hearing rather than by reading the notes, must have excellent hearing. Those learning to play by reading the notes must listen as they play; they know automatically when they play a wrong note.

Playing a musical instrument helps students listen carefully to details in school subjects. Learning to play a musical instrument is almost essential for good listening skills, for better mental concentration as well as for paying attention to small details.

Many schools now require learning to play a musical instrument because teachers have found that studying music helps students improve in all their academic subjects. In a poll of high schools, it was found that about 20% more students graduate from high school when music is a requirement than when music is not required.

Consider giving at least one of your children music lessons, and, if you are short of funds, have that child teach the other children. Check in the neighborhood for a retired music teacher who might want to help your family. Perhaps a member of your extended family would give weekly lessons.

Consider buying a used musical instrument. Check at a local high school or college, or music store. Check in your own family to see if a relative has an instrument in the attic which has not been played in some years.

For all the hundreds of references in the Bible to music and musical instruments, in heaven and on earth, it would seem that it is an important part of our nature to express ourselves in music.

Some of my friends have the children either take tests online, or submit them online. I have always sent my children's tests through the mail. Should I consider changing to online grading?

The main reason we switched to online grading, that is by teachers who grade papers submitted over the internet, or grading by the computer itself, is because of the time factor. When you send your papers by mail, depending on where you live, it could take three to seven days before we even receive the papers.

Sometimes it is a week before graders can pick up your papers, and it could be another week before they are returned to the building. Paper tests need to be recorded on the computer for time of arrival, the date the grader picks them up, and the date they are returned. A clerk types the grades into the computer, the mailing department prepares them for mailing, then it takes time for the post office to send them back.

For many students and parents, especially in the fifth grade and up, this lapse of time before getting feedback is too long. With online grading, this can be drastically reduced.

The families who use the online tests seem to like the process. The number of online tests taken by our students has dramatically increased every year. In 2008, we expect to process over 100,000 tests taken online.

Mere Fatherhood

By John Clark

This monthly column is devoted to examining the role of the Catholic father, and how we fathers can better live our calling. Mostly, it has been about theory.

This time, it is about practice.

About ten years ago, I met with one of the Hawthorne Sisters, a group of Catholic sisters who have been providing hospice care to the dying for generations. As we spoke, I commented to the sister that it must be depressing at times to be in the midst of so much death, and wondered how people spent their last moments on earth. Her comment to me was simple and profound: she said: “people die as they have lived.”

Thomas Vander Woude, who was the first director of Seton Home Study School, spent sixty-six years showing those around him how to live, and on September 8th, 2008, he showed us how to die.

On September 8th, 2008, Mr. Vander Woude’s twenty-year-old son Joseph (who has Downs Syndrome, and is the youngest of seven boys), fell through a septic field cover into a deep tank which was almost full. Seeing what had happened, Thomas ran toward the opening and tried to pull his son out of the tank from the top. Quickly realizing that pulling Joseph out was impossible, Thomas then climbed down into the tank himself, through the mucky water, past his son, and lifted his son up so he could breathe, until help arrived fifteen minutes later. Mr. Vander Woude was able to save Joseph; however, due to methane gas poisoning, Thomas was pronounced dead moments later.

The worldwide response to this story has been overwhelming. His Requiem was attended by over two thousand people, seventy priests, and about one hundred altar boys. Mr. Vander Woude’s heroic actions have been talked about on the floor of the U.S. Senate, preached about in churches all over the world, and written about in newspapers in a number of countries.

Father George Rutler wrote a book a few years ago called *A Crisis of Saints*—lamenting the fact that so few saints are in our midst. I’ve no reason to doubt him, but his comment makes me recognize that I’ve been graced in my life to know men and women who love Christ so much and so well, and certainly Thomas Vander Woude was one.

Mr. Vander Woude was an extremely accomplished man: he was a Vietnam veteran, a pilot, an educator, a sacristan, and a coach. But it was his final act of heroism that defined him as a husband and father. In the end, Thomas Vander Woude heroically gave his life to save his son—but he’d been doing that his entire life. To honor him properly, we must recognize that his heroism didn’t *start* on September 8th—it simply reached its high point that day. His life and death also go to illustrate something that men often forget: the daily practice of authentic fatherhood is heroic.

Mere fatherhood is enough.

In the weeks, months, and years that follow, people who knew Thomas will relate incidents about how he affected their lives: the families he sacrificed for, the churches he volunteered for, and the players he coached will come forward with stories about the impact Thomas had for them. If the reader will indulge me, I have one myself.

I met Thomas Vander Woude twenty years ago, but did not really know him until about four years ago. He served as the athletic director at Christendom College for five years, and four years ago, he made it known that he was looking for a coach for the Christendom baseball team. Although I’ve never been good at playing baseball myself, I’ve always been passionate about baseball, and had coached my sons in Little League for two or three years. When I heard there was a job opening, I sent Mr. Vander Woude a letter explaining to him that I’d like the job. What I *didn’t* tell him was that it was my dream job. Coaching my *alma mater’s* team in my favorite sport—what could be better than that? However, the reasons *not* to hire me were obvious—starting

with the fact that I’d never coached anyone over ten years old.

A few days later, Mr. Vander Woude called to tell me that he had picked me to coach the Christendom team. I will always remember that phone call. Although I was happy with his choice, I expressed some surprise that he had picked me because of my obvious lack of experience. But Mr. Vander Woude didn’t allow me to doubt myself; rather than harp on what I *hadn’t* accomplished, Mr. Vander Woude insisted that I recognize the things that I *had* accomplished. He believed in me—he made me believe I was better at coaching than I was. I think he believed that if he expressed confidence in me, sooner or later, I’d grow into it.

It’s only really been *now*, after his passing, that I realize what he was doing—he was coaching me how to be a better coach, and ultimately, how to be a better father. I realized through his instruction that coaching is so much like fathering. And it wasn’t only what he *did* say to guide others—it’s what he *didn’t* say: he never referenced his achievements to make a point, which he very easily could have done. In the two years I coached under him, he never questioned a decision of mine—and he easily could have.

He also did everything within his power to help others succeed. Working within the confines of a small Catholic college and a budget to match, the problem was how to practice—no baseball field, no batting cage, not much of anything. But he was determined to help us succeed. We couldn’t afford to buy a batting cage, so he designed a batting cage for us, drove to the hardware store to buy the parts, and after coaching his last basketball game of the season, after the players left, he stayed in the gym and built the cage with us.

In my rookie game as the coach, to the surprise of almost everyone (including me), we won by beating a school about three times larger than Christendom. I remember calling Mr. Vander Woude afterward to tell him we had won. When we spoke, his voice was elated. And yet, he didn’t seem surprised—he almost expected our achievements.

Cont’d on p. 7

Future Perfect

by *Kevin Clark*

When Sarah Palin was selected as a nominee for Vice President, it was quickly reported that her eldest daughter is pregnant and unmarried. Upon hearing this information, several commentators expressed surprise that evangelical Christians did not condemn Sarah Palin and her daughter. Someone commented that these Christians who stood behind Sarah Palin would have been the first to kick out of the house any pregnant daughter of their own.

Comments such as this brought back to me again the realization that, although the United States is in some ways a Christian nation, Christianity is little understood by those outside of the Faith. I suppose that there are circumstances under which a parent might feel it necessary to remove a pregnant daughter from the house—for example, if she were seriously promiscuous or a drug abuser and influencing other children in the house. Barring that, I cannot imagine that any of the Christians I know would kick out of their house a pregnant daughter.

Christianity contains within it many paradoxes, and this is one of them: God asks us to be perfect, but is incredibly understanding of imperfection. One sees this in the sacrament of confession. Yes, God sets before us a rather daunting moral law and says we ought to follow it perfectly. Yet, he also gives us confession, and tells us that all he really expects of us is that we keep trying. No matter what the sin, and no matter how many times it has been committed, all God asks is that we confess it and try not to do it anymore. The Bible advises us that we should forgive our brother “seventy times seven times.” God is at least this generous in forgiving us.

Beyond the commandments, the Church and the saints tell us that we should be entirely devoted to God. The Scriptures tell us to “Pray without ceasing” and to “Be perfect as your Heavenly Father is perfect.” We are told as well that when we have done everything asked of us, we have done no more than our duty. Yet, the Bible gives

us the parable of the workers who come late to the field who are paid the same as those who “bore the heat of the day.” No matter how little they did, God gives these workers their reward.

The paradox here is that God asks for everything, but is happy with so little. We could spend all of our time in prayer, and perhaps we should, but God requires of us only about an hour a week at Mass. And if we stray, God does not say “Good riddance” and go on. He follows after us, as the Good Shepherd, gently bringing a sheep back into the flock. It should be we who are required to chase God, showing remorse for our offenses, and begging Him to take us back. But it is rather God who seeks us, telling us He is eager to forgive, and begging us to accept Him.

There is a famous analogy of God as the Hound of Heaven, always in search of His human quarry. To think of God as the Hound, though, perhaps makes us think of Him as larger and more powerful than He wants to be thought of. He came to us as a tiny baby, so that He would not overwhelm us. Perhaps in this sense, we can think of him as a little brother, who is always begging his older brother to play with him. The little brother hopes and waits, suffering any number of rebuffs from the older brother who is too busy to pay much attention. Yet, if the older brother makes a few minutes for his younger brother, the younger brother is filled with joy, and cares nothing for the fact that he has felt so much prior rejection. We might think of God in the same way. God asks for everything, but rejoices at the smallest sign of affection.

The lesson we should take for our own lives is that we should strive for perfection in all things, but be happy with any movement in the right direction. From looking at postings on the Seton Message Board, I know that parents sometimes feel discouraged about their homeschooling. They look at the lesson plans, and then look at the work their children have actually accomplished, and they feel that they

could and should have done more. They say that they are “behind” and don’t know how to catch up.

When I read that someone is “behind” I always wonder “Behind what?” Seton has no calendar that lists what assignments must be done by what day. This is not some sort of reality television show where the first family done with the lesson plans wins. The lesson plans from Seton are merely a suggestion; they are not a command. They are your servant, not your master.

It is good to have high goals and expectations. High goals often allow us to push ourselves to do better than we otherwise would. We should set goals high. Indeed, if we always reach our goals, then perhaps our goals are set too low. If you are always striving to meet your goals, but they seem just out of your reach, your goals are probably about right, because they are challenging you to do your best.

Even if you can’t reach your goals, you need to look around and understand that much has been accomplished. If you think you are behind in your home schooling, look around and see what has been done. Maybe little Johnny hasn’t made it through his workbook entirely, but he’s finally learned long division. That’s something. Maybe Joanie hasn’t finished her reading book, but she’s finally developed a love of reading. That’s something. Maybe Tommy hasn’t finished his religion book, but he’s begun to grow in his Faith. That’s really something.

The goal of home schooling isn’t to finish the book or to finish the lesson plans. The goal is to give your child a good Catholic education that will prepare him or her to live as a Christian in the world. You are only “behind” if you are not making progress toward accomplishing that goal.

So the next time you are down on yourself about not being perfect, remember that God understands imperfection, and we are all called to imitate Him.

Kevin Clark’s novel *Numbers Up* is now available from Seton Educational Media (www.setonbooks.com)

Love of Reading

Ginny Seuffert

When I was a child, I loved reading so much that my mother had to pry me away from my books to get me to eat meals. As a result, I was able to maintain A's in all the reading-related subjects such as reading, English, spelling and vocabulary with virtually no study on my part. I devoured historical fiction, which gave me a frame of reference when I studied those time periods in history class. At the same time, formal history and geography study, which were separate subjects when I was young, would send me running to the library in search of more fiction and non-fiction to satisfy my curiosity about ancient Egypt or Tudor England. I was always near the top of my class in those subjects, and perhaps if I had read biographies of Louis Pasteur or Archimedes, I might have scored higher grades in science and math. My own experience attests that one of the least painful ways to give your children's academic life a power-boost is to foster a love of recreational reading.

Although we sometimes discussed what I was reading, my mom and dad never really questioned my choice of books borrowed from the school library or the young reader section of the public library. How times have changed! Parents I speak to want their children to love books, but understandably hesitate to allow them to choose randomly from the stacks. They want to steer impressionable minds not only away from the tawdry and frivolous, but towards the wholesome and edifying. They are wise to be cautious. Here are a few simple ideas that may help you encourage reading from the earliest grades, keep thoughts turned toward wholesome pursuits, and instill a lifelong love of books in your children.

Start with the Seton Reading List

At the back of the reading section of the lesson plans, parents will find a reading list by grade. (Encourage your

friends, homeschooling or otherwise, who are not enrolled with Seton to use this same list found in the "Parent Resources" section of the Seton website.) The books are broken down by category and this list is a great place to start. If your child loves one book by a particular author, by all means search out others by the same author. Some may be out of print, but used copies can be found on Amazon. Others you can request from the library system. Not only do you get the book you want, but the library will see a demand for more wholesome offerings.

Trust the Catholic Anthologies

Seton students receive the *Faith and Freedom Readers* as part of the regular curriculum and our book list recommends the *American Cardinal Readers*. Formal "readers" are out of favor in some quarters of home education with parents claiming that their children should read "real" books. Of course, the stories and poems in the readers are real, and most of them are of a very high quality. If your student enjoys a particular piece, again, seek out more work from the same author or in the same genre. I read "The Bishop's Candlesticks" in a reader in 7th grade, and loved it so much that I read *Les Misérables*, all 1200 pages of it, the same year.

Watch the Date

One of the reasons I feel confident recommending authors from *The Faith and Freedom Readers* and *The American Cardinal Readers* is that both sets were compiled before the social revolution of the late 1960's when the world was a more wholesome place to grow up, and that's putting it mildly! Virtually all the children's literature that was published prior to 1965 is safe and satisfying reading material for your children.

That is not to say that works published after that time are uniformly inappropriate; many are very fine, but prudent parents must exercise caution. There are several websites that can be a big help in this regard, and do not hesitate to tell the librarian that your family cherishes traditional values and ask his or her opinion.

Finally, it is a good idea to browse through the pages yourself before turning it over to your child.

Consider Universal Themes rather than Social Relevance

One particularly erroneous attitude from our own times is that literature must deal with current social issues in order to be relevant. Modern books often deal with politically correct notions of sexism, racism, and so-called gay rights. Contemporary children's literature is overflowing with stories about gangs, sports and entertainment figures, bullying, "mean" girls, and promiscuity, all thought to be "high-interest" to modern youth. As many of us pulled our children out of institutional schools to limit exposure to these less savory aspects of our culture, wise parents will look to develop their children's interest along other lines.

Themes like acceptance, faithfulness, ambition, and industriousness are found again and again in the best children's literature. The reader is not hit over the head with the values, but rather is allowed to discover the message from the story itself, fostering thoughtful intellectual growth. The obviously contrived plots of much that passes for young adult literature, at best, encourage lazy minds and fuzzy thinking. The themes of great literature are timeless.

Make Reading a Priority

Some children, often but not always boys, are reluctant recreational readers. They drag their heels. It's tough enough to get them to finish assigned school reading, much less get them to curl up with a book during free time! Here are some ideas to pique their interest:

- Read to your children starting in infancy. Often school age children still love to hear Mom and Dad read.
- Make a trip to the library part of your family's weekly routine from the children's earliest years. Steady exposure to books fosters curiosity.
- Turn off the TV and the video games. Left to their own devices, many young people will waste hours on these mindless pursuits. Wise parents must intervene.

- Give good books as birthday and Christmas gifts.
- Reluctant readers often struggle with reading fluency. It is more important that your children read daily than that they read books at a particular grade level. By all means, allow your children to pick books that they can read easily. Once they develop the actual skill of reading, they will seek more demanding stories on their own.
- Give the good example of reading yourself. Young people who see their parents reading books, magazines, and newspapers are more likely to pick up the habit themselves.
- Finally, set aside some time each day for reading, perhaps the last hour before bedtime.

Choose Books Wisely

Many parents want their children to read from a particular genre because they consider it the most developmentally advantageous. Certainly, some books are better than others, but if the idea is to develop an enthusiasm for reading, parents should look for high interest. Elementary age boys, for example, absolutely love adventure and mystery stories, so choose fiction from these categories. Many also enjoy biographies, especially of exciting historical figures like Ethan Allen or Andrew Jackson.

Younger boys like humorous stories like the *Eddie* series by Carolyn Haywood and the *Henry Huggins* series by Beverly Cleary. My own sons loved science fiction and continued to read it into their adult years.

Girls seem to enjoy historical literature and learning how people lived in other times and places. They often will follow favorite characters through a whole series of books like Laura Ingalls Wilder's *Little House* books and L.M. Montgomery's *Anne of Green Gables*.

Although I usually discourage TV and movie watching, careful choices will often be a springboard for reading. If your child loved the movie *Little Women*, find Louisa May Alcott at the library. My girls saw the *Anne of Green Gables* series on PBS after reading the books and argued endlessly about the relative merits of the TV series versus the book. Watching *Gettysburg*, *Becket*, or *A Man for All Seasons* might encourage a young person to follow up for more information at the library. Carefully choosing electronic entertainment can foster the recreational reading habit.

Buying used books and borrowing books from friends, family and the library can keep the cost of reading quite reasonable. A small investment of money and a pleasure-filled investment of time will have an enormous payoff for your children.

Fatherhood, Cont'd from p. 4

I think he cared about sports because he recognized that sports provided a proving ground for men—it was a place for men to have a chance to excel, and to have a chance to *fail*. Coaching at Christendom was not about success (although he had his share of those); it was more about how to fail, and *get back up*. I think he believed that sports served as a microcosm of the Christian life—it's not so much the batting average that matters, it's how many times you step into the batter's box.

Mr. Vander Woude and I spoke about two weeks before the accident, and, as usual, we talked about sports, we talked about fatherhood, but I never got the chance to tell him something that I always meant to: any man who has sons like his, must be a great father.

It's always difficult to write about someone who has profoundly affected your life. I need an angelic vocabulary, because words like "heroic," and "valor" don't suffice. Maybe the best way to express my thoughts and gratitude are these: I'll be a better *coach* because I knew him. I'll be a better *father* because I knew him.

Maybe that's the highest tribute I can pay.

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Pope Benedict XVI's Homily at Lourdes

When we follow the Jubilee Way in the footsteps of Bernadette, we are reminded of the heart of the message of Lourdes. Bernadette is the eldest daughter of a very poor family, with neither knowledge nor power, and in poor health. Mary chose her to transmit her message of conversion, prayer and penance, which fully accord with words of Jesus: "What you have hidden from the wise and understanding, you have revealed to babes" (Mt 11:25). On their spiritual journey, Christians too are called to render fruitful the grace of their Baptism, to nourish themselves with the Eucharist, to draw strength from prayer so as to bear witness and to express solidarity with all their fellow human beings (cf. Homage to the Virgin Mary, Piazza di Spagna, 8 December 2007). It is therefore a genuine catechesis that is being proposed to us in this way, under Mary's gaze. Let us allow her to instruct us too, and to guide us along the path that leads to the Kingdom of her Son!

In the course of her catechesis, the "beautiful lady" reveals her name to Bernadette: "I am the Immaculate

Conception". Mary thereby discloses the extraordinary grace that she has received from God, that of having been conceived without sin, for "he has looked on his servant in her lowliness" (cf. Lk 1:48). Mary is the woman from this earth who gave herself totally to God, and who received the privilege of giving human life to his eternal Son. "Behold the handmaid of the Lord; let what you have said be done to me" (Lk 1:38). She is beauty transfigured, the image of the new humanity. By presenting herself in this way, in utter dependence upon God, Mary expresses in reality an attitude of total freedom, based upon the full recognition of her true dignity. This privilege concerns us too, for it discloses to us our own dignity as men and women, admittedly marked by sin, but saved in hope, a hope which allows us to face our daily life. This is the path which Mary opens up for man. To give oneself fully to God is to find the path of true freedom. For by turning towards God, man becomes himself. He rediscovers his original vocation as a person created in his image and likeness.

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