



Seton Home



Study School

Volume XXVI, Number 3



“Under the Magisterium of the Catholic Church”



March 2009

St. Joseph

On March 19, we celebrate the Feast of St. Joseph. While Scripture records no words of St. Joseph, it does show that Joseph was a virtuous man of action, promptly obeying God in his compassion and care for his family.

When Joseph thought that Mary was pregnant before they were married, he resolved to “put her away” quietly someplace, “not wishing to expose her to reproach.” Joseph, being a just man, would not accuse her of anything before the Jewish authorities because of his compassion for her.

When an angel appeared to Joseph in his sleep to tell him that Mary was not unfaithful to him because her child was conceived “of the Holy Spirit,” he immediately accepted the words of the angel. Knowing something already of the holiness of Mary, and being himself “a just man,” that is, a holy and righteous man, Joseph immediately made plans for the marriage ceremony to continue.

At the time of the Roman census, Joseph was obedient to the government authority in its legitimate functions, and took the responsibility to take Mary to Bethlehem. Most paintings show Mary riding on a donkey, and Joseph walking beside her. Joseph may even have had to carry some of their possessions. In spite of the difficulties of Mary being pregnant, Joseph did what he could to help her make this trip, walking beside her, encouraging her, and supporting her.

When an angel appeared to Joseph to warn him to escape from the soldiers of Herod and their terrible abuse of governing authority, Joseph immediately arose from his bed in the darkness of night. He gathered Mary and Jesus and their possessions, and quickly escaped from Bethlehem. With Mary and Jesus on a donkey, he began the long road to Egypt where the angel said the family would be safe.

When parents are inspired to home school their children, they often feel they are on a dark road, unsure of what is ahead and what might be the dangers. Yet they know that by leaving their children in a school, their young souls are in danger as they will be encouraged to accept the secular culture. Some of the teachers, textbooks, and students might be the “soldiers” which will attack the children’s Catholic values.

For home schooling parents, most especially for fathers, St. Joseph surely is a patron saint who will help them to protect their children against the dangers of the current anti-Christian culture.

Theologians see St. Joseph as protective of Mary, like the palm tree and the cedar of Lebanon. The Psalms say “The just man shall flourish like the palm tree, like a cedar of Lebanon shall he grow.” The palm tree provides shade when the sun is hotly beating down. The trunk of the cedar of Lebanon grows tall and its branches wide, again offering shade and protection. The wood of the cedar is

so sturdy against the weather, it is often used as siding for homes.

In the Mass for St. Joseph, a prayer reads “the just man...is planted in the courts of the house of our God.” The Church sees Joseph as a man who is so dedicated to following the word of God, the words of the angel of God, that he is like a strong man planted firmly inside the Church. Certainly the Church is encouraging us, especially home schooling fathers, to have such strong trust in the words of God that we never waver because we are “planted” solidly in the Church and its teachings.

Home schooling fathers can profitably contemplate the words in the Mass for St. Joseph, which are words Jesus and His Heavenly Father are sending to them: “The Lord loved him, adorned him, and clothed him with a robe of glory. ... My faithfulness and my kindness shall be with him.”

O Blessed St. Joseph, whose protection is so great, so strong, so prompt before the throne of God, assist us by thy powerful intercession. Obtain for our family from thy Divine Son all spiritual blessings for our home schooling. Amen.

- MKC

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Questions We Are Asked

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

I can see that my high school students may need to finish up in the summer. Do you think it is a good idea to try to force them to finish up in the summer?

There are many aspects to think about. One is that education should not be limited to nine months of the year. Working with the brain should not be limited to nine months of the year.

Also, responsibilities not finished in the time planned simply means that the job must be finished as soon as possible and not put off for three months. Fun time comes after finishing the work that needs to be done. Finishing a job late teaches that idleness is not rewarded. Not being disciplined and not finishing on time usually has unpleasant consequences. Hold yourself responsible; never excuse yourself.

Parents need to impress on their high school age students that the next few years are very important for the rest of their lives. If students slack off for several years in high school, then they will either need to suddenly start doing loads of work for 11th and 12th grade, or they will end up needing to get a GED in the hopes of getting into college. Even for students who do not intend to go to college, a high school diploma shows a potential employer that a person has successfully met a challenge.

Someone once said that ninety percent of life is just showing up. This means that intelligence and talent are not as important as persistence. The key to finishing high school is showing up—showing up every day and putting in a reasonable amount of work. If this is done, then the Seton high school program is very manageable.

To encourage showing up, don't set goals that are too far in the future. Graduating from high school is a long-term goal. Finishing the next quarter of math is a short-term goal. Short-term

goals are always easier to achieve and give a positive feedback loop—once a student achieves, then he sees that more achievement is possible.

As always, our counselors are available to help.

My son in ninth grade is bright and does his work quickly, but he does not show all his work, such as in math, and I am not sure he is really learning the process. I am busy with younger children and cannot be monitoring him all the time.

Some parents have bright children who work things out more in their heads than on paper. Because we cannot always figure out how they are doing even when their grades are very good, we should consider having someone else help out.

Fathers often are able to understand the thinking process of their bright children who are following in their father's footsteps, so to speak. Ask your husband to take over the job of supervising or monitoring the work being done in those subjects where you feel uncomfortable about what learning is actually happening. It may be that the math and science areas are the most likely subjects which need monitoring by your husband.

If your husband cannot help your son for some reason, I suggest you hire a college student who is majoring in math or science or a part-time classroom teacher from your parish. The "tutor" could come once a week and "monitor" your son's actual understanding of the process, even if it is only in his head and not on paper.

Religion is an area where often bright children can pick up the more in-depth concepts fairly easily after their early years of learning the basics. In this area, you need to be sure there is understanding, and not just memorization.

Obviously, if a bright student can produce his work in English, such as paragraphs, book analyses, and research reports without doing the preparatory work, that is very nice but that will not be acceptable in many situations. He needs to go through the process of outlining and note cards, and so on. You and your husband need to explain that he needs to practice the process of writing papers. Someday it will not be as easy as it is now, especially in college where the lack of a solid foundation can lead to an inability to learn more complex concepts.

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This means that intelligence and talent are not as important as persistence.

We have recently enrolled in Seton and we are all surprised at how little we know about Grammar. My high schoolers are having a difficult time.

Grammar is related to logical thinking, to analytical thinking. Most schools don't teach logical thinking or analytical thinking. Long ago, the Catholic schools specialized in Grammar. The young nuns taught grammar like it was candy, and we all caught on to how good it "tasted" to be up at the blackboard and diagram those long involved sentences that stretched all across the board. Diagramming was part of the Catholic culture!

At this difficult time in our nation's history, Catholic citizens who can think, speak, and write clearly and logically are well-prepared for the issues that we must be ready to debate. Automatic usage of good grammar and precise language determine how well one can communicate ideas and how well others can understand us.

Since you have several children, some in the elementary levels, consider teaching grammar to all the children at the same time. Help your older children to study the same concept in the younger children's books. Working together, discussing these ideas together, will help all the children to learn. You will be surprised at the level of the understanding as they discuss how words and ideas are related.

You might think about purchasing a large white dry erase board. With different colored pens for different parts of speech, help your children diagram sentences. Start with short, simple sentences but eventually move to longer and more complex sentences. You may find that your children will enjoy the challenge.

History is one rousing good story; but, sometimes textbooks don't present that adventure because so much needs to be covered in a limited number of pages.

My son does not seem interested in history. What can I do?

Some students see history as just facts that don't seem to relate to their own lives. History can be quite an adventure. In fact, history is one rousing good story; but, sometimes textbooks don't present that adventure because so much needs to be covered in a limited number of pages.

Most people, young and old, find history more interesting if they read biographies of people involved in historical events. Historical novels are also popular with kids who say they don't like history books. There is more depth, understanding, and adventure of history through biographies and historical novels.

If your student is in grades seven through twelve, start out with lower level biographies or novels. You don't want them discouraged by an overabundance of "facts."

Focus on American history, and even on events in areas which are close to your home, in your own state or a nearby state. Visit nearby historical museums. Museums at Gettysburg, the Alamo, and at Custer's Last Stand, for instance, offer an incredible array of books, pamphlets, calendars, movies, you name it!

If you go on the Internet, you can find excellent classic historical movies on DVD for purchase or rent. A few notable titles are: *The Far Horizons* about the Lewis and Clark expedition with Sacajawea; *The Lindberg Story*; *PT 109*, *Red River*, *Broken Arrow*. There are hundreds of others.

Some biographies of saints offer good historical background events. History becomes very personal when reading about Joan of Arc, Rose of Lima, Martin de Porres, Fr. Marquette, Kateri Tekakwitha, Mother Cabrini, Mother Seton, Katherine Drexel.

May my son take his Algebra Test open book?

The algebra tests are not "open book." Students should be able to do the test problems after going through the required lessons. As you may notice, each test covers material taken four lessons back. This is done so that a student has worked four lessons of certain concepts before being tested on them. However, the parent may choose to wait after further lessons before giving the test.

If your son is having problems, be sure to purchase the tutoring lessons on computer disks which we sell through Seton Educational Media. This gives your student not only the opportunity to hear and to see the teacher present the lesson, but it also gives your student the opportunity to go back and listen to the lecture again and again until he learns it. This is an advantage not offered in a classroom school.

My friend's child is attending another school, but she would like to start home schooling immediately. Must she wait until next year?

When a parent wants to enroll a student in mid-year or even later in the spring, there is usually a serious reason or problem. While some parents may think that a child can endure the situation for only two or three more months to the end of the school year, children may be seriously damaged by the long days of suffering. Consequently, we encourage parents to enroll their children when they realize there must be an immediate change, no matter what month or time of year.

Remind your friend that Seton has no calendar, and we accept enrollments year round.

What is the difference between the online lesson plans and the lesson plans you send in the mail?

The online lesson plans are simply the basic assignments, not the details of the assignments. The online lesson plans are meant as a "quick reference" for parents to print out to give their students when they want a single page of all the assignments for the day. This was requested by a number of our parents.

The paper lesson plans are more complete. They not only extend the daily assignments, but also offer supplemental information, such as book report guidelines, supplemental diagrams, and answer keys.

I know you have a new phone answering service for which we can press a button to find a particular department. Where can I find extension numbers for people at Seton I am trying to contact?

Go to our home page at www.setonhome.org and click on About Us, then click on Staff. The staff listing is for those who usually answer phone questions. Most of the staff member have direct phone numbers, as well as extensions through our main 540-636-9990 number. In addition, if you click on the name of the counselor, you can email the counselor. While we have listed our Academic Counselors and Admissions/Enrollment Counselors, anyone else can be found through the phone answering options when you dial our main 540-636-9990 phone number.

Conversations with Children

by John Clark

One morning a short while ago, I woke up before the rest of the family and started making myself breakfast. Roused from the smell of coffee, my five-year-old daughter Dominica wandered downstairs in her slippers and *Dora-The-Explorer* Christmas pajamas, and observed me cooking. Perhaps expecting something more in the way of *Apple Cinnamon Cheerios*, she looked at me cracking eggs, and asked me what I was making. I told her I was making an “egg white omelet.”

She had never heard of such a thing, so she asked me what that was. So I told her, “It’s an omelet made from only the white part of the egg.” Dominica paused for a moment, quizzically pondered this idea in her head, then scrunched her nose, looked up at me and asked: “You mean, you’re only going to eat the *shell*?” From her point of view, *she* didn’t say something funny—I said something funny. It’s one of those moments as a home schooling father that you realize that it’s your child’s *interpretation* of life that keeps things interesting.

Last fall, I spent about forty or fifty hours assembling my oldest three children’s home school lesson plans. I was really proud of how it all turned out. I had assembled copies of original source readings, made sure they had access to the proper classical pieces for their music lessons, and so forth. I really spent a lot of time on the lesson plans, but in the weeks to come, I became over-reliant on the fact that I had done the initial lesson plan work.

I quickly realized that home schooling does not simply consist of putting together some lesson plans and having the children do the assignments. It consists of analyzing their *interpretations* of what they are learning. A remembrance from my past illustrates this point.

When I attended Christendom College, I asked one of the professors how he endured reading thirty term papers written on the same topic. He answered that all the papers interested him, not necessarily based on the topic, but how the student *interpreted* the topic. He said: “I’m not necessarily reading term papers with the hope that the student will uncover some new aspect of Homer. Instead, I want to know what John Clark thinks about *The Odyssey*.” Frankly, I was flattered that he *cared* what I thought about it.

That brief conversation provides an academic backdrop to the father’s role in home schooling.

This year, my fifteen-year-old son is reading *The Odyssey*, and I understand what the teacher meant. The access to literature, or theology, or economics, provides an insight into the student himself, and it’s a *fascinating* insight. I want to know what my children think about *The Odyssey*. I want to know what interests *them*.

All we need to do as fathers is to talk to our children about what they are learning, and what *they* think about it. This process doesn’t have to be very formal. That’s one of the great things about home schooling—the lack of formality. I can have serious, intellectual discussions with my children about economics or theology or science while wearing Tweety Bird slippers. (Once I step out the door, it’s hard to be taken seriously with that choice of footwear.)

Some of the best conversations I have with my children occur in the car. Instead of fumbling for something decent to listen to on the radio (and since it’s not yet baseball season, there isn’t anything worth listening to), we strike up a conversation about something my son or daughter is reading, or learning, or doing.

If you do want to make it more formal, do this: take your children to a meal once a week. Go out for a

pancake breakfast with your son or daughter before work one day, and ask him about the subjects he is studying. Take your oldest children to dinner and have them bring their history books. Strike up a conversation about history. Ask them what they thought about the historical decisions of leaders. “Do you think that George Washington made a good decision?” “What do you think that St. Augustine was trying to teach us by writing his *Confessions*?”

I ask my children questions like this all the time: “What’s your favorite saint book this year?” “Why do you think Mark Twain wrote that?” “Based on the book, what can you guess about the background of the author?” “What problems are you having with math?” “What new piece are you learning to play on violin?” “Were you scared/excited/surprised when you shot that free throw/fielded that ground ball/caught that pass?”

You might surprise your children if you ask them questions like this. Your children observe you going to work every day and doing something, in their eyes, mysterious and pretty important. By conversing with them about academics, you’re showing them that what *they’re* doing is pretty important, too.

As my children get older, I have to admit: I’m learning a lot from them. Last week, my oldest son taught me something about the *Summa*. My daughter taught me something about St. Catherine Labouré. The other day, one of my children told me why the sky was blue. Maybe I shouldn’t admit this, but I never really knew why. I was the child who apparently never asked. As a father, it’s very rewarding to learn their viewpoints.

I’m even learning from Dominica, who, on the literary side, is an expert on a certain “Dr. Seuss,” and prides herself on her encyclopedic knowledge of zoo animals.

I just might have her wait a little while on the cooking.

Lenten Reflection

Unless you do penance you will likewise perish ... (Lk. 13:3)

Inquisitive young people have often asked, “What is the purpose of doing penance in Lent?” Some have been told that the whole notion of penance is a medieval idea to make us believe that we are evil.

Those who seem to disagree with all traditional Catholic policies would no doubt teach such errors, but the truth of the matter is that the underlying purpose of penance is to learn to put our lower nature under control—to take control of our emotions and actions.

Diets are the great American fad of today. Penance for Catholics is simply a spiritual diet. Some people diet to lose weight. The process can be somewhat of a torture, but people do it to achieve a strong, healthy body. It is done to achieve an earthly goal. We would never tell a friend to eat, drink, and be merry and to forget his weight problem. Why then do people ridicule the Catholic Church when it prescribes penance to teach us how to say no to sin and to be able to control our lower appetites?

Penance is saying no to an over-indulgent body which wants to smoke, over-eat and over-drink. Penance is learning how to say no to certain things in order to say no to the daily temptations which are all around us. Some of these things can be good in themselves, but we must learn to use them in moderation; or, if they are evil, to say no to them outright. The modern consensus is to belittle any restriction. The world says, “Do as you please.”

Dieters are told to re-learn how to eat. Sinners must be told how to re-think life, to eliminate those actions that have brought sin and guilt into their lives. This is the purpose of penance in Lent.

We would applaud an athlete who brings down his weight to make the football team or to make a certain weight level in wrestling. We would cheer on a friend who decided to give up smoking or end his drinking habit. We certainly would not try to

convince such a one that he was torturing himself. We would endeavor, rather, to encourage such a friend to root out any bad habits from his lower nature so as to be in control of his life. This is exactly the rationale behind Lent.

As we grow older, we have to make decisions in our lives. If we have indulged ourselves in pandering to every desire that crossed our mind when we were young, it will be difficult in later life to face the idea of giving up cravings of the body or mind which could be harmful to us or, worse yet, sinful. Those who, in conformity with Church law, practice Natural Family Planning, would tell us that self-control is a big factor in being faithful to Church teaching on the subject. Thus, little sacrifices of our younger years become the resounding no’s of our mature years—“No, I will not sin.”

A good psychologist would remind us that a habit is formed by a repetition of acts over and over so that, so to speak, a button is pushed and the action is continued until closure occurs. The same is true when we wish to erase a bad habit. The opposite virtue must be practiced until it supplants the evil habit. It takes willpower, and willpower is developed only when we are in charge—and it often requires saying no. Lent is a time to learn how to say no.

If we are overweight we say no to the foods which contain fat. To eliminate sin, we must stay away from persons, places, or things that may lead us into sin. The Church has rightly called these “occasions of sin.”

Let us be careful not to get too close to the edge of the cliff lest we fall over it. Let us not get too close to the flame of concupiscence lest we be devoured in it. Lent tells us loudly and clearly, “Stay away from temptation; practice the opposite virtues of your faults and sins.” Daily Mass in Lent and frequent confession are great helps. Lent, too, should have a positive side. Saying no is the

negative and necessary part; saying yes to good works is the positive side.

Children can be positive by doing their work without being told over and over again. They can make their beds, stop arguing, put their toys away and do the things their parents tell them right away. This is a wonderful sacrifice and it brings peace to the family.

One of the traditional activities for Lent is almsgiving. In many dioceses, the Bishop issues an annual appeal for financial support during Lent. Even in these difficult economic times, almost every family can spare a few dollars to support the Church. Parents can encourage their children to give some small part of their own money, not only to support the Church, but also as a hedge against materialism.

Lent is also a time for remembering that we must make up for past sins so that we will have very little to atone for in the next world. We can receive a plenary indulgence every day. An indulgence is a remission in whole or in part of the temporal punishment due to our sins. In modern days, many have disregarded the idea of making up for their sins, but you home schooling parents know better! We must always make reparation for past sins.

St. Peter tells us, “Charity covers a multitude of sins.” (1 Peter 4:8) Kindness to family, kindness to those we work with—especially kindness to those who hate us—can help us to be holy.

The Oscar Wilde book *The Portrait of Dorian Grey* is an unusual one. It tells of a man who was so taken in by his own good looks that he had a portrait done of himself. He then began to lead a sinful, lustful life. He became disgustingly evil. He never grew older outwardly, but his portrait began to grow older and horribly deformed. This is what happens to a sinful soul. Sin does not necessarily show on our outside, but it surely disfigures the soul. Wouldn’t it be interesting to see how our soul appears to God? Perhaps we are better off not to know, but just in case it is in need of spiritual plastic surgery, how about going on a spiritual diet this Lent? It just could be the greatest decision of your eternity.

It's Nice to Share

by Ginny Seuffert

To steal a phrase from Charles Dickens, for the Catholic Church the beginning of the Third Millennium is the best of times and the worst of times. On one hand, the Universal Church is working towards reuniting an unprecedented number of souls back into full communion. On the other hand, the Church in the United States is bleeding dollars to pay damages to abuse victims, and continues to suffer a shortage of priests and religious, leaving local parishes with scant resources for their programs, most especially their schools. Will the sacrifices of Catholic home schooling families be equal to the challenges of serving the Church in need at this crucial point in her history?

The Holy Father is working to bring several groups of our separated brethren back into full communion with the Catholic Church. Regarding the Society of Saint Pius X, the Holy Father recently lifted excommunications and is seeking a way to regularize their situation. The Holy Father reportedly is driving a plan to welcome the Traditional Anglican Church into the Catholic Church as a personal prelatore, a status presently enjoyed only by Opus Dei. Perhaps the most exciting development is the continued activity and conversation between the Holy See and the various Eastern Orthodox Churches. There are somewhere between 226 and 300 million members of Eastern Orthodox Churches in the world.

That's the good news! The bad news is the condition of Catholic schools in the United States. Economic woes are shuttering parish and private Catholic schools all over the country. Catholic school enrollment today is about two and a half million, less than half its peak enrollment of over five million in the 1960s. Although pastors, principals and bishops are working

hard to find alternative funding, I have little hope for their long-term success. Some may survive, but these schools are just no longer financially feasible on a large scale. And so we come to the real reason this column is being written.

You and I already have the answer to the problems that plague the parochial school system. I discovered it twenty years ago. You provide a Catholic education everyday around your kitchen table, in front of your computer, sitting on the living room sofa. Home schooling is not expensive, and study after study has shown it to be academically superior to most brick and mortar schools. Home schooled children generally socialize well with others from a variety of backgrounds, and most often escape the drug use and premature sexual activity that are so common in our nation's high schools. Even the academically finest, most orthodox Catholic school, cannot hope to foster family unity that years of the shared experience of home education give to parents and children alike. Although they have been known to complain, as all children do, home schooled students are generally content with their situation. In fact, we are now seeing a generation of former home schooled children teaching *their* children at home.

There is no question that Catholic home schooling works. The only question is why it is not more widespread. Why, after over a quarter of a century of stunning success, are parents still hesitating to take the plunge? My own experience tells me that most parents still do not really understand how to start, how a home classroom operates, the legal requirements, and the impact on their children. I am still asked – all the time – if home schooled children can go to college! Some of the blame for this ignorance can be laid right on the shoulders of home schooling parents – like you and me.

Not wishing to be seen as pushing our preferences on others, we talk about home schooling as our “choice” and we hesitate to extol its virtues. Now is the time to be more direct. We home schooling parents

must be missionaries to our Catholic friends who are struggling to provide a religious education for their children. Home education may be their only chance to pass on our precious Faith to the next generation. One hour of CCD class, with disinterested public school students who are attending only until they complete their sacramental requirements, simply will not produce strong Catholics. Daily religious instruction in the home, coupled with a devout family prayer life, is what accomplishes that.

Give some thought to home school “apologetics” and learn how to answer the most common questions.

- Moms worry that they cannot home school and keep up with the housework and laundry. Remind them that they will save thousands of dollars on school tuition and fees. They should have enough to pay for some domestic help periodically.
- Dads are afraid their children will be “weird” if they are taken out of school. Advise them to go to a shopping mall on any Saturday and look for the weirdest teen they can find, with tattoos and piercings, green hair and a dog collar. Ask the kid if he's home schooled. All the really bizarre teens go to school!
- Parents worry that Mom might not be able to get the kiddies to do their schoolwork and chaos will rule. Do not allow them to forget that all children, in school or out, must respect and obey their parents. If a child is disobedient, the answer is not to ship him off to school to be the teacher's problem.
- How can a parent, who is not a trained teacher, possibly hope to provide a good education? This is where a school like Seton can come in and offer expertise and top quality materials to help parents to home school.
- Some prospective home schoolers lack the courage to stand up to the pastor, the school principal, or their in-laws. The best strategy is to avoid arguing and simply state the intention to home school. Parents must recognize that interested outsiders

will not be won over by argument, but by witnessing the really terrific personalities and strong character of home schooled children.

In the coming months, identify families who would benefit from home education. Give them a call or perhaps invite them to brunch after Sunday Mass, and share your home schooling story with them. Remind your friends that it costs nothing to investigate home education, and give them Seton's website address (www.setonhome.org). Urge them to attend a Catholic home school conference (a list can be found on the Seton website) as a great way to learn more and have an opportunity to actually see the materials themselves. Help your friends to see that what seems unusual to them is an ordinary way of life for millions of students.

Pray that the SSPX, traditional Anglicans, and Orthodox Churches will soon enter into full communion with the Church of Rome. At the same time, remember that a church with more members will also need more servants. Recent history has shown that U.S. seminaries, convents and monasteries are filled with former home schoolers. Members of the first generation of home schooled children are becoming consecrated lay people, responsible parents, active in their parishes, and strong pro-life, pro-family advocates. The Catholic Church and our nation need many more of them.

Conferences

Many state and local groups are now sponsoring their own conferences, inviting various Catholic vendors and curriculum providers. Seton is happy to participate as a vendor. For more information, see our website at www.setonhome.org/conferences.

St. Louis, MO. April 3-4. St. Louis Catholic Homeschool Conference, Cardinal Rigali Center, (Fri. 6PM-9PM-Exhibits only; Sat. After 8 AM Mass - 4:30 PM), 20 Archbishop May Dr., St. Louis, MO. Info: Debbie at tbkopff@sbcglobal.net or www.stlouiscatholichomeschool.com (on-line registration)

Covington, LA. April 4. Roman Catholic Homeschool Association of Louisiana, "Catholic Home Schooling: A Way of Life" St. Peter's Catholic Church (St. Mary's Hall), (9 AM - 5 PM), 125 E 19th Ave., Covington, LA. Info: Beth at 985-796-1274 or 504-220-4626; beth@montelepre.com or www.rchal.org. Dr. Clark will be speaking.

Atlanta, GA. April 17-18. North Georgia Catholic Homeschool and Family Conference, North Metro Technical College - Bldgs. 100 & 400. (Fri. 1 PM - 6 PM; Sat. 9 AM - 5 PM), 5198 Ross Road, Acworth. Info: Annette at (770) 745-5994, ngchsc@gmail.com or www.chsconferencega.com

Harrisburg, PA. April 18. 15th Annual Catholic Homeschool Conference & Curriculum Fair, Holy Name of Jesus Parish, (8:30 AM - 5 PM), 6190 Allentown Blvd. (Route 22 West), Harrisburg, PA. For more

information call Ellen at 717-866-5425 or email conference@catholichomeschoolpa.org or www.catholichomeschoolpa.org/ccf.html

Houston, TX. April 24-25. 19th Annual ARCH Book Fair and Speakers Conference, University of St. Thomas (Jerabek Athletic Center), (Fri. 6 PM - 9 PM; Sat. After 8 AM Mass - 5 PM), W. Main Street (between Graustark and Yoakum), Houston, TX. Info: 281-797-5578 (leave message), info@arch-homeschool.org or www.arch-homeschool.org

Milwaukee, WI. April 24-25. Celebrate the Faith 2009: Catholic Homeschool Conference and Vendor Fair, Tommy G. Thompson Youth Center (State Fairgrounds-North), (Fri. 5 PM-9 PM; Sat. 8 AM-5PM) 640 S. 84th St., West Allis, WI. Info: Julie at 262-968-2438 or reuss_Julie@yahoo.com. www.gmche.com

Berlin, NJ. April 25. 10th Annual CHAPLET Catholic Homeschool Conference, Mater Ecclesiae Roman Catholic Church, (9 AM - 5 PM), 261 Cross Keys Rd, Berlin, NJ 08009. Info: Call Kelly at 856-393-4223 or email kellymantoan@yahoo.com or www.chaplet.org

Lisle, IL. May 8-9, 2009, IHM Pere Marquette Catholic Home School & Parent Conference, Benedictine University, 5700 College Road, Lisle, IL. (Fri, 3PM-9PM, Sat, 9AM-4PM), Info: 540-636-1946 or chicago@ihmconference.org, www.ihmconference.org/chicago.

The Seton Home Study Newsletter

is published monthly by
Seton Home Study School
1350 Progress Dr.
Front Royal, VA 22630
Phone: (540) 636-9990
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Subscription price for non-enrolled families is \$15 per year. Free online at www.setonhome.org/archive/default.stm

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Message of the Pope for Lent 2009

In our own day, fasting seems to have lost something of its spiritual meaning, and has taken on, in a culture characterized by the search for material well-being, a therapeutic value for the care of one's body. Fasting certainly bring benefits to physical well-being, but for believers, it is, in the first place, a "therapy" to heal all that prevents them from conformity to the will of God. In the Apostolic Constitution *Penitemini* of 1966, the Servant of God Paul VI saw the need to present fasting within the call of every Christian to "no longer live for himself, but for Him who loves him and gave himself for him ... he will also have to live for his brethren" (cf. Ch. I). Lent could be a propitious time to present again the norms contained in the Apostolic Constitution, so that the authentic and perennial significance of this long held practice may be rediscovered, and thus assist us to mortify our egoism and open our heart to love of God and neighbor, the first and greatest Commandment of the new Law and compendium of the entire Gospel (cf. Mt 22:34-40).

The faithful practice of fasting contributes, moreover, to conferring unity to the whole person, body and soul, helping to avoid sin and grow in intimacy with the Lord. Saint Augustine, who knew all too well his own negative impulses, defining them as "twisted and tangled knottiness" (*Confessions*, II, 10.18), writes: "I will certainly impose privation, but it is so that he will forgive me, to be pleasing in his eyes, that I may enjoy his delightfulness" (Sermo 400, 3, 3: PL 40, 708). Denying

material food, which nourishes our body, nurtures an interior disposition to listen to Christ and be fed by His saving word. Through fasting and praying, we allow Him to come and satisfy the deepest hunger that we experience in the depths of our being: the hunger and thirst for God.

At the same time, fasting is an aid to open our eyes to the situation in which so many of our brothers and sisters live. In his First Letter, Saint John admonishes: "If anyone has the world's goods, and sees his brother in need, yet shuts up his bowels of compassion from him – how does the love of God abide in him?" (3:17). Voluntary fasting enables us to grow in the spirit of the Good Samaritan, who bends low and goes to the help of his suffering brother (cf. Encyclical *Deus caritas est*, 15). By freely embracing an act of self-denial for the sake of another, we make a statement that our brother or sister in need is not a stranger. It is precisely to keep alive this welcoming and attentive attitude towards our brothers and sisters that I encourage the parishes and every other community to intensify in Lent the custom of private and communal fasts, joined to the reading of the Word of God, prayer and almsgiving. From the beginning, this has been the hallmark of the Christian community, in which special collections were taken up (cf. 2 Cor 8-9; Rm 15:25-27), the faithful being invited to give to the poor what had been set aside from their fast (*Didascalia Ap.*, V, 20:18). This practice needs to be rediscovered and encouraged again in our day, especially during the liturgical season of Lent.