



Seton Home



Study School

Volume XXVI, Number 7



“Under the Magisterium of the Catholic Church”



July 2009

St. Joachim and St. Anne

On July 26, we celebrate the feast of St. Anne and St. Joachim, the parents of the Blessed Virgin Mary. Anne became the mother of Mary when she was quite advanced in age. Anne and Joachim had almost given up hope for a baby; nevertheless, they continued to pray for a miracle.

Not having a child for so many years caused their friends and relatives to believe that Anne and Joachim were being punished by God for some reason. So their personal sorrow was aggravated by the social stigma they bore.

In society today, those who seek to live according to traditional Catholic values are often stigmatized. Home schoolers are criticized as being anti-American, intolerant extremists. In 2004, a Michigan homeland security

drill even portrayed home schoolers as terrorists bombing a school bus. (*Muskegon Chronicle*, 9/20/2004)

Often, a family’s most visible commitment to traditional Catholic values is simply the size of the family. While Catholics see children as good, society sees children—at least any more than two—as bad. Families find that while some friends and relatives support our having children, the general society continues to cause trouble for those with large families. Sometimes it is snide remarks at the supermarket, sometimes open resentment, sometimes it is in legislation which puts financial pressure on large families, sometimes it is in the constantly rising expenses of gas, food, and housing.

St. Anne, help us home schooling parents to stay in grace by receiving the sacraments and saying our Rosary, thus learning to be less disturbed by the pressures of our society. Help us to see that our family home schooling is a return to basic Catholic values for our nation as well as a Catholic mission to preserve the Faith for our children.

Anne realized from the beginning that Mary was a special child, born without sin, who understood more than Anne the teachings of God in the Old Testament. It was certainly during Anne’s home schooling of Mary that she recognized Mary was a special child of God.

St. Anne, pray for our home schooling family, and especially for our fathers who often bear criticisms

at work for having a large family and for home schooling. St. Anne and St. Joachim, keep us strong in bearing unpleasant remarks. Keep us home schooling parents close to Jesus and St. Joseph by offering up these comments as a sacrifice for our children.

St. Anne, give us the strength and courage to make the necessary sacrifices to care for the physical and spiritual needs of our children but also to give our children the examples they need from us in practicing the Catholic life.

“Glorious St. Anne, filled with compassion for those who invoke you and with love for those who suffer, heavily laden with the weight of my troubles, I cast myself at your feet and humbly beg of you to take the present affair which I recommend to you under your special protection.

“Vouchsafe to recommend it to your daughter, the Blessed Virgin Mary, and lay it before the throne of Jesus, so that He may bring it to a happy issue.

“Good St. Anne, mother of her who is our life, our sweetness and our hope, pray to her for us and obtain our request.” (taken from novena prayer)

MKC



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Questions We Are Asked

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

It seems like we are always finishing up the book analysis at the end of each quarter. What do you suggest to make the book analysis easier?

At the beginning of the quarter, read over the requirements for the Book Report or Book Analysis. Make a step-by-step schedule at the beginning of each quarter, writing down the calendar dates when each step needs to be completed. Plan on having the report done at least two weeks prior to the end of the quarter, when your student needs to be studying for tests for other courses. If you follow this type of schedule, the book analysis will be much easier.

An alternate plan used by some parents is to have their student take a week or two at the beginning of each quarter to do nothing except read the book and do the assignment.

Whatever schedule you choose, take the time to discuss the book with your student even if you have not read the book. There are some general questions to ask, even chapter by chapter: "What did you like or not like in the story? What happened first? What happened next? What was the result of that incident? Was there anything new you learned? Do you think the character made a good decision when he did that?"

Chapter Notes for our Book Report books are online, so these can help your student to "follow along" from chapter to chapter.

Many students find it difficult simply to begin writing. They are not sure where to begin or where to go with an idea. An important step which helps the student to start is to do an outline first. Talk with your student as he does the outline so you can ask questions which will help him to remember relevant events. Once the outline is done, the report is practically written!

Parents in my support group keep telling me to be flexible, that I should not try so hard to keep to a schedule.

The flexibility versus schedule controversy is one that will continue as long as home schooling continues. However, this is a controversy that can never be solved, because it is like asking whether your car needs tires or a motor. Now, if your car doesn't have tires, maybe you can run on the rims for a while. And if your car doesn't have a motor, at least you can push it downhill. It really works much better, though, if you have tires and a motor.

In the same way, home schoolers will do best with a flexible schedule. If someone tells you that a schedule is not important, then ask them why their parish has scheduled masses. Ask them why the doctor's office makes appointments. Ask them why airlines have set times for their flights. Things that are really important and need to be done have schedules. Imagine how the world would be if we could not count on schedules.

At the same time, we do not want to adhere slavishly to a schedule regardless of external factors. We need to be prepared to change the schedule when something unusual arises, and we need to be prepared to modify the schedule if it is not working for us as well as we would like.

However, we should be doing our best to keep on schedule with our home schooling. Like everything else, if we keep it on schedule, if we keep to a plan, it is more likely to be done, not to mention it is more likely to be done in a timely manner.

When raising children, while we need to be prepared for flexibility, our goal should be to stay on schedule, especially in regard to the important business of home schooling our children.

How do I convince my husband to help with our home schooling?

There are several different reasons why a husband might not help with the home schooling. He might feel that home schooling is not a good idea or that it is not important. He might feel he is too busy to help. He might even feel that home schooling is your area and he doesn't want to intrude.

The flexibility versus schedule controversy is one that will continue as long as home schooling continues.

If he does not approve of home schooling or see its importance, then you need to pray every day for your husband to realize the importance of home schooling, not only so the children obtain a good education, but also because they are learning to become good practicing Catholics. Help him to understand home schooling by encouraging him to attend a local support group meeting, to attend a local Catholic home schooling play or dance program, to attend a home schooling conference, to listen to a tape of a home schooling speaker, or to read an article from our Seton newsletter.

Help your husband understand that you need and welcome his involvement. Start by asking your husband to accompany your children on a field trip to a museum or to a library for books they need for their schooling. Even this minimal support sends a message to the children. At the same time, as your husband learns particular details about their assignments, he will become more interested and start talking with you about them.

If your husband likes to do things with his hands, ask him to make some bookcases or teach the children how to sweep the sidewalk or cut the lawn. If you have an open basement, perhaps building some walls, and putting down a carpet could help with providing more study space.

My high school boy is upset because he did not finish his courses this year.

Call one of our counselors and see what he absolutely must do to obtain his grades. If he focuses on just one course and completes it in a month, and then advances to a second course and finishes it up, he will likely be able to finish up quickly.

For next year, consider having him do only two courses at a time, one all morning and one all afternoon. He needs to be successful a little more quickly to feel he is getting things done and have grades put on his report card.

The key to completing courses is to do them every day. A journey of a hundred miles is not overwhelming if you only travel one mile a day. If you constantly say you will do the mile tomorrow, then you end up with many miles to catch up and a problem that seems insoluble.

We have twelve academic counselors on duty during business hours five days a week. You can reach a counselor by phone, email, or message board.

Stay in touch with the academic counselors. If your son has a question or seems to be slowing down at some point, have him call and ask for help. We have twelve academic counselors on duty during regular business hours five days a week. You can reach a counselor by phone, email, or message board.

What are the advantages of enrolling in a program, versus home schooling on your own?

The questions you need to ask are: What are my goals? How will I best achieve those goals? Parents ought to choose the means most likely to achieve their goals. For many parents, a program is the best means of achieving their goals.

Parents often find it easier to home school if they have the lessons already laid out for their children, especially when they have several children. This allows parents to focus on the actual teaching rather than spending a lot of time just preparing the curriculum. Parents can be confident that the Seton curriculum covers all necessary areas of study, over multiple grade levels, in a logical way.

Some parents find it easier to have books already chosen by a reliable Catholic source, rather than researching books themselves.

Some parents want the back up of an unbiased grader to evaluate their children's work. Students often want this as well. We hear from parents who say their children love to send their tests to Seton and wait anxiously to receive them back with a grade.

Enrolling in a program often helps parents and students keep on a schedule and, with Seton, the academic counselors are easily available. Our Message Boards give helpful ideas from our counselors as well as ideas from other parents and students.

Seton offers many extras as well. For example, many high school students like the audio lectures on our web site, or, for the foreign language, the audio vocabulary pronunciation. Plus, when a student graduates from high school, the student receives an accredited diploma, and can participate in the Seton graduation ceremony.

How do I help my son in fourth grade realize how exciting books can be? He simply does not want to bother reading anything!

Boys who do not enjoy reading usually are struggling with their ability to read. Either they don't know their phonics, or the books they try to read are beyond them. Sometimes the words themselves are difficult to read, or the concepts are too advanced for their comprehension.

You might start by paying him to be a teacher's aide for a younger child by reading kindergarten or first grade reading level stories. You could give him a dollar a book. That will give him practice in reading. The younger child is likely to ask a few questions about the

story which will encourage your fourth grader to try to comprehend the story.

When you think it appropriate, start him on second grade level books. You might find some nice fiction books at the library, but read them yourself first since many promote anti-Christian values. If you can locate a series of books he likes, you may find that he will read on his own. Sometimes parents are shocked that a child who "does not like to read" will spend hours every day with his nose in a favorite book.

Look for primary level basic-science non-fiction books, books about magnetism or electricity or the life of a tiger. These are very interesting and fun to read. You also can find some good non-fiction at this level in the area of history, biography, and places of interest in America. Many of these have pictures and illustrations which encourage thinking skills as well as reading.

Someday you will remember this time and wonder how it could have been that he was not interested in reading!

What is the one thing you find most important to be successful in home schooling?

Prayer—being in constant prayer, praying about every little thing that comes along. Having a short prayer on the lips at all times: Jesus, Mary, Joseph; Jesus, you know I love you, help me; Blessed Mother, PLEASE help me now!; Jesus, Jesus, Jesus.

Start the day with prayer with the children; the Morning Offering is a favorite. Another favorite: Remember O Most Gracious Virgin Mary, that never was it known, that anyone who came to your protection, implored your help, or sought your intercession was left unaided!

Prayer in the morning, prayer at lunchtime, prayer in the evening, prayer to the saint for the day.

Daily Rosary! Saying the Rosary in the morning, or saying it a decade at a time throughout the day with the children. Saying the Rosary along with EWTN.

Daily Mass! Daily Mass! Daily Mass! Some days "attending" the Mass on EWTN.

Pray without ceasing!

Seton High School Graduation 2009!



Gender and Home Schooling

By Ginny Seuffert

Figures released by the United States Department of Education show the changing face of home education in the country. One attention-grabbing statistic shows the number of home-schooled children in the United States nearly doubled from 1999 to 2007. A whopping 6.8% of college-educated parents have chosen homeschooling over institutional schools, which may indicate greater confidence in their own abilities or perhaps less confidence in the American institutional school system based on their own experience. "Dissatisfaction with academic instruction", however, was given as the motivation for only 17% of parents who responded to the survey. 57% of parents cited a desire to provide "religious or moral instruction" in the home, or expressed reservations about "school environment" when asked about the basis of the home school decision. One significant number is the ratio of boys to girls who are being taught at home. In 2007, 58% of homeschooled students were girls versus 42% boys, a statistic that is clearly deserving of further study.

Henry Cate, a homeschooling father of three daughters who writes the blog *Why Homeschool*, believes that parents wish to spare their daughters from the "mean girl" environment found in institutional schools. My own conversations with parents confirms Mr. Cate's conclusion. Adolescent girls have always been tribal, exclusionary, and sometimes downright cruel, but cell phones and internet social sites (like *Facebook* and *My Space*), coupled with an education that does not seek to inculcate virtue, have elevated this spitefulness to an art form. Malicious rumors or indecent photos are distributed online for all to see.

Often the boys in the school contribute to the vulgar and hostile environment. In one Illinois public high school, a group of boys "rated" the incoming freshmen girls on their looks, figures, and rumored promiscuity. The ratings were then printed up and distributed on lunch trays. The boys were disciplined, but nothing can really make up for the damage to the girls' reputations and self-esteem.

It has been said innocence is one of the few things that, once lost, can never be recovered, so it should be no surprise that parents simply want their daughters to have the benefit of the joys of childhood a bit longer. One Utah mom, Michelle Blimes, quoted in a *USA Today* article, says she home schools her three daughters because, "They should be able to enjoy playing and being kids before being thrown into the teen culture." Keeping daughters in the safe nurturing environment of the home seems like a no-brainer. What is less understandable is why loving parents would subject their sons to this toxic setting. Based on conversations I have had with homeschooling parents, there seem to be several common reasons parents are more likely to place their sons in an institutional school setting.

A widespread motivation is Dad's desire for junior to play team sports. While physical activity is essential for growing young men, and organized sports certainly can be beneficial, watching their sons throw the winning pitch in the big game will be small comfort to parents who later witness their child embrace secular values. A little research will uncover ample opportunity to play sports outside the school setting. Communities often have football, baseball, softball, and soccer teams. Many parishes host CYO basketball, and Catholic schools in some communities will allow home schooled students to participate in their athletic programs for a pro-rated tuition; the list goes on and on. Take a look at the "Seton Student Achievement" section of our website to see that many of our students excel at sports.

Other times, it is Mom pushing Junior out the front door and onto the school bus. Let's face it: boys can be exhausting to home school! Many just cannot seem to sit still and focus. They whine about finishing their math, slip away when Mom is not looking, and seem to be constantly trolling the kitchen cabinets for a snack. Mom may seek relief by shipping off her child to school, but more often than not, the plan backfires.

Teachers do not like boys who are antsy, unfocused, and uncooperative any more than their own mothers do. Not uncommonly, the boys are shuffled off to resource rooms, or put on medications such as Ritalin to control their behaviors. Unquestionably, some children, most often males, will benefit from a medication to help them focus, but ADD and ADHD are notoriously over-diagnosed and common sense tells us medication should be prescribed only when clinically indicated, not because Junior is a brat. Successful home schoolers know that ants-in-the-pants boys respond very well to healthy doses of firm discipline, healthy exercise, and a dependable schedule.

A final reason for sending boys to school can be summed up in the words of one home schooling father. "My wife can teach our daughters to be fine women, but she can't teach our sons to be men. Adolescent boys need strong male role models, like teachers and coaches, and I work long hours to keep food on the table." This is a legitimate concern, but there is no guarantee that teachers or coaches in schools will be the type of role models parents would choose for their sons. In fact, many public and private high schools are overwhelmingly staffed by females.

There is simply no substitute for guidance a son receives from positive male role models closer to home. Even a hardworking dad can find some small amount of time in the morning or evening, during mealtimes, or over the weekend, to have an affirmative impact on his sons' lives. A great practice is for Dad to take his son to work with him on occasion. Working side-by-side, teaching sons to make household or auto repairs, is also a way to build both skills and confidence. Playing pickup games of baseball or basketball with male relatives or close friends establishes camaraderie and healthy male bonding. Finally, letting Junior know that dad expects complete cooperation is a real help during the home schooling day.

Let's all work to ensure that boys receive the benefits of home education in equal numbers as their sisters.

Hello, Good Men

by John Clark

When my oldest son Athanasius was about five years old, I observed him playing with his Star Wars toys, imagining a great battle of the good Jedi knights against “the bad guys.” As I watched him play, I asked him: “Athan, if Jedi were *real*, who would be more powerful: a Jedi knight or Father John (our parish priest)?” Immediately, he answered: “A priest, because only a priest can change bread and wine into the body and blood of Jesus.” It’s an observation that we adults often forget. In home schooling families, and in all Catholic families, the role of the priest is so important that life without them is literally unimaginable.

We’ve heard a lot of talk over the past years about the “bad priests”. The “bad priests” make news. In Hollywood, when a layman morally fails, not only is he not attacked, but the act is often celebrated. Divorced and remarried couples are fawned over, with every move reported, lest we miss a beat.

When a priest fails, he is attacked and immediately called a “hypocrite” by the media. St. John Vianney wrote that when people wish to attack the Faith, they begin by attacking the priests, since the role of the priest is vital to the Faith. Though they regard the priesthood as a sham, members of the media nevertheless hold priests to a standard that they would never hold for members of any other profession. This makes for a strange irony: even those who hate priests instinctively recognize the dignity of the priesthood.

Pope Pius XI called this a “tribute”, writing:

“A last tribute to the Priesthood is given by the enemies of the Church. ...[T]hey show that they fully appreciate the dignity and importance of the Catholic Priesthood, by directing against it their first and fiercest blows; since they know well

how close is the tie that binds the Church to her Priests. The most rabid enemies of the Catholic Priesthood are today the very enemies of God; a homage indeed to the Priesthood, showing it the more worthy of Honor and Veneration.”

Priests are not endowed with a charism of perfection. Priests are men. They have temptations and weaknesses. We have every reason to believe that they are tempted more than laymen (although we also have every reason to believe that they receive more grace to assist them). They have bad days; they encounter unfriendly administrations. They must deal with the fact that the court of public opinion has passed sentence on them because of recent scandals. They are given accusatory glances by people who know nothing about them.

Yet they persevere. And we husbands and fathers must learn from this perseverance. We fathers sometimes tremble at the thought of the responsibilities in our lives: our work, our financial responsibilities, our wives, our children. Priests are responsible for every soul in their care. We fathers need to learn this art of perseverance from priests, and pray for the grace of perseverance.

It is also vital that we fathers teach our children the power and dignity of the priesthood. Children tend to marvel at the power of angels, but we should remind our children that, as many of the saints have observed, the priest possesses power that has not been given to a single angel in heaven. St. Alphonsus Liguori observed that St. Michael the Archangel could chase away devils, but only a priest could absolve the sins of the penitent. All the saints in heaven can pray for you, but only a priest can offer you absolution. No angel has the power to offer a single

Mass. It has even been observed that the angels tremble at the power of the priest. St. John Vianney wrote: “If I were to meet a priest and an angel, I should salute the priest before I saluted the angel. The latter is the friend of God; but the priest holds His place.”

We must also learn to do something that we never do enough: thank the priests with whom God has blessed our lives. To the priests who are reading this, on behalf of myself, and I believe many home schooling fathers, *Thank you*. Your sacrifices are not in vain. By the grace of God, the souls of our children will be your trophies in heaven. Your vow to depart from the secular world is what has given our families a home. Any success we have as Catholic fathers is impossible without you. We cannot claim any victory that is not yours first. When our families are at peace, it is because you have granted us the consolation of the Sacraments. The love and dedication that you show Jesus inspires us. And please know that you are in our prayers, now and always.

Prayer for Priests

Keep them; I pray Thee, dearest Lord.
Keep them, for they are Thine
The priests whose lives burn out before
Thy consecrated shrine.

Keep them, for they are in the world,
Though from the world apart.
When earthly pleasures tempt, allure —
Shelter them in Thy heart.

Keep them and comfort them in hours
Of loneliness and pain,
When all their life of sacrifice
For souls seems but in vain.

Keep them and remember, Lord,
they have no one but Thee
Yet, they have only human hearts,
With human frailty.

Keep them as spotless as the Host
That daily they caress;
Their every thought and word and deed,
Deign, dearest Lord, to bless.

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.

Tampa, FL. July 17/18, 2009 (Fri./Sat.), Immaculate Heart of Mary Tampa Home School and Parent Conference 2009, Tampa Convention Center, 333 South Franklin Street, Tampa. Fri.: 2 PM - 8 PM; Sat.: 9 AM - 4 PM. Info: 540-636-1946 or tampa@ihmconference.org or www.ihmconference.org/tampa.

Dallas/Fort Worth, TX. July 24/25, 2009 (Fri./Sat.), Immaculate Heart of Mary Dallas Home School and Parent Conference 2009, Grapevine Convention Center, 1209 South Main Street, Grapevine, TX. Fri.: 2 PM - 8 PM; Sat.: 9 AM - 4 PM. Bishop Kevin W. Vann — Welcome and Opening Prayer. Info: 540-636-1946 or dallas@ihmconference.org or www.ihmconference.org/dallas.

Go Green!

Recycle your newsletter by giving it to a friend!



Did you know that the latest survey from the US Department of Education shows that home schooling is growing at a brisk pace? Between 2003 and 2007, the percentage of home schooled students rose from 2.3 to 2.9 percent of the school age population. That's more than 1.5 million students educated at home.

Still, there are some people who might not know that home education is such a viable alternative. That's where you can help. By passing along your newsletter (after you read it, of course), you are passing along hope to parents looking for new opportunity for their children.

The best part is, more than ten years of past issues of the newsletter are available online. So, even if you give away your newsletter, you can still read or print out a favorite article. Newsletters are available at

<http://www.setonhome.org/archive.php>

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- High School Course Approval: Gene McGuirk, 635-4728
- High School English: Walker Solis, 636-1755 or Christine Collins, 636-1633
- High School Math: Tom Herlihy, 540-636-1846
- High School Math/Science: Don Valaika, 636-1396
- History: Bruce Clark, 636-1199
- Homeschooling Father: Gene McGuirk, 635-4728
- Independent Studies: Bob Wiesner, 636-2238
- Religion/Sacraments: Fr. Constantine, 636-1527
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Message Proclaiming a Year for Priests

On the forthcoming Solemnity of the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus, Friday 19 June 2009 – a day traditionally devoted to prayer for the sanctification of the clergy –, I have decided to inaugurate a “Year for Priests” in celebration of the 150th anniversary of the “dies natalis” of John Mary Vianney, the patron saint of parish priests worldwide. This Year, meant to deepen the commitment of all priests to interior renewal for the sake of a more forceful and incisive witness to the Gospel in today’s world, will conclude on the same Solemnity in 2010. “The priesthood is the love of the heart of Jesus”, the saintly Curé of Ars would often say. This touching expression makes us reflect, first of all, with heartfelt gratitude on the immense gift which priests represent, not only for the Church, but also for humanity itself. I think of all those priests who quietly present Christ’s words and actions each day to the faithful and to the whole world, striving to be one with the Lord in their thoughts and their will, their sentiments and their style of life. How can I not pay tribute to their apostolic labours, their tireless and hidden service, their universal charity? And how can I not praise the courageous fidelity of so many priests who, even amid difficulties and incomprehension,

remain faithful to their vocation as “friends of Christ”, whom he has called by name, chosen and sent?

I still treasure the memory of the first parish priest at whose side I exercised my ministry as a young priest: he left me an example of unreserved devotion to his pastoral duties, even to meeting death in the act of bringing viaticum to a gravely ill person. I also recall the countless confreres whom I have met and continue to meet, not least in my pastoral visits to different countries: men generously dedicated to the daily exercise of their priestly ministry. Yet the expression of Saint John Mary also makes us think of Christ’s pierced Heart and the crown of thorns which surrounds it. I am also led to think, therefore, of the countless situations of suffering endured by many priests, either because they themselves share in the manifold human experience of pain or because they encounter misunderstanding from the very persons to whom they minister. How can we not also think of all those priests who are offended in their dignity, obstructed in their mission and persecuted, even at times to offering the supreme testimony of their own blood?

Benedict XVI
June 16, 2009