



# Seton Home



# Study School

Volume XXVI, Number 9 ♦ "Under the Magisterium of the Catholic Church" ♦ September 2009

## The Assumption

On September 29<sup>th</sup>, we celebrate the Feast of the Archangels: St. Michael, St. Raphael, and St. Gabriel. As we begin a new home schooling year, September is a good month to reflect on angels and how much they help us in our daily lives.

Angels are assigned many different tasks, as represented by Michael who fought the devil, Gabriel who delivered an important message to the Blessed Virgin Mary, and Raphael who was a guardian angel for Tobias.

We know from the Bible that hundreds of thousands, if not millions, of angels are in heaven, praising and worshipping God. There are hundreds of references to angels in the Bible. An angel led Adam and Eve out of the Garden of Paradise after they sinned. An angel was with Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane.

The Church teaches that at every Mass, many angels are present praising God.

Besides personal guardian angels, many theologians believe that God has appointed guardian angels for towns and cities and nations, and perhaps for apostolates as well. Some of us believe that each family has a special guardian angel.

For us home schooling families, angels are enthusiastic supporters of our teaching the Faith and training

our children to practice the Faith. Angels are with us and our children every moment of the day, standing by to help, especially when our prayers are directed to them at special times of need.

Father Paul O'Sullivan wrote a book published by TAN Books called *All About the Angels*. In the chapter on Guardian Angels, he reminds us that God has given each one of us a guardian angel who is with us each moment of our lives; our angel never leaves us for an instant. Our angel devotes all his time and all his care to us. He uses all his intelligence and knowledge and power to protect us and to help us to be holy.

Father tells us that our guardian angel prays for us "unceasingly and with incredible fervor to God." Although we continue to have free will, our guardian angel is constantly whispering to us, advising us or warning us. "He acts benevolently on our imagination and on our reason, persuading us, urging us to correct our weaknesses, to fight against our evil inclinations, inspiring us with new ideals, and stimulating us to fresh and greater effort."

Father points out that by sending Raphael to find the young Tobias a virtuous wife, God shows that he intends for guardian angels to help spouses to have virtuous marriages.

God shows His concern also about the name we give our children at Baptism, as we remember the story of how the father of John the Baptist named his son at the direction of the angel Gabriel.

The angels help us especially as we pray to them in sickness and in times of suffering. The martyrs had special help from their guardian angels. St. Cecilia is reported to have seen and spoken to her guardian angel.

A statement made by Father O'Sullivan is of special interest to us home schooling parents and students. "Students who are devoted to their angels will study with far greater ease and will make far more brilliant examinations than others. Their angels will give them a love and a passion for study which is the best guarantee for acquiring knowledge."

My Guardian Angel, pray for me. My Guardian Angel, help me in my home schooling. My Guardian Angel, conduct me with wisdom. My Guardian Angel, guard me and my children from all danger. Amen.

MKC

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## Questions We Are Asked

by Dr. Mary Kay Clark

Director, Seton Home Study School

### I am not sure how much time my child should spend on each subject.

The answer to this question is very dependent on the age and grade level of the child.

As a general rule, for kindergarten, spend only the amount of time your child can focus on the subject. Some students will want to spend more time on math and less time on phonics. In general, about 20 minutes on one subject at a time is about the longest this age group can stay focused. However, you can try to teach math or phonics or religion a second time period during the day, or in the evening with Dad, and/or on the weekend. At this age level, the math and phonics are so important that doing just 20 minutes on the weekend helps maintain the concepts in the memory.

At the primary levels of grades one, two, and three, about 30 minutes per subject is about the length of time for good attention span. At the intermediate levels for grades four, five, and six, the usual attention span time is about 40 to 45 minutes.

At the junior high levels, grades seven, eight, and nine, students should be able to focus for 50 minutes, but due to adolescent growth changes, some students will struggle with this. It may be that some courses need to be split into 25 or 30 minutes per session. You should have a goal of 50 minutes for several subjects: math, reading, English, and religion; science and history could be finished up in the evening or on weekends, but realize that the concepts for these two courses will be covered again in high school. Spelling and vocabulary usually can be done in 20 minutes at these levels.

At the high school levels of tenth, eleventh, and twelfth grades, most classes will take 45 to 50 minutes. However,

outside of this class time will be reading for book reports, and perhaps extra student time to prepare for tests. For many students, there may need to be additional time for math. High school students in school classrooms are expected to do school work on weekends; it is not unreasonable for home school students to do some additional work on weekends or evenings.

### As a recently enrolled parent, I am surprised at the amount of writing.

One of the reasons we have so many writing assignments is because writing develops thinking and analysis skills. You may be surprised to learn that many Catholic schools, not just elite "prep" schools, require as much if not more writing. They assign paragraph writing as well as book reports, some of these assigned as often as once a month.

The public schools emphasize speaking and listening skills, which are in a way evaluated by the listeners, the teacher and the student's peers. A speaker must think of his audience, must convince his audience, but most of all, be accepted by his audience. To some extent, that is a good skill to learn, but the constant threat of peer rejection can mean that a student's true thoughts are not expressed.

Thinking and writing is an internal and individual process which allows the person to be himself, to pull out ideas from himself without the distraction of audience evaluation.

Encourage your child to write, even to keep a diary about events that happen each day.

### I am a new home schooling parent. I feel like I could use a "freshman" introduction to Seton.

The first place to go is to your *Parent Home School Handbook* which goes to all

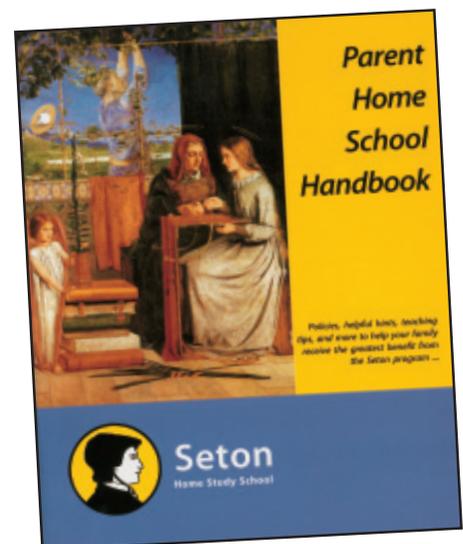
new families. It contains a wealth of information, not only about Seton's policies, practices, and services, but also about how to homeschool.

The next place to go is our website. Start with the menu on top, click on each heading, then click on every heading on the drop-down menu. You will be amazed at the amount of information available.

Log on My Seton with your Family Number. There are many helps for the enrolled parents and students. Especially helpful are the Course Resources. You will notice that tests or assignments can be sent over the internet, and most can even be taken on line. If you have a high school student, be sure your student looks on the Message Boards which correspond to his courses.

Notice that for almost every book report (except the reports on saints) there are Chapter Notes online. These are extremely helpful for students to understand the book as a whole, and at the same time, to highlight important events in each chapter. For high school, the Chapter Notes point out events which would be important in writing the essays on the particular assigned topics for Character Development, Conflict, Theme, and Morality of the main character. High schools students should take a good look at their Book Analyses' Chapter Notes before they even begin to read the book.

Don't hesitate to email or phone a counselor if you need help. The counselors answer their emails first thing in the morning and then return their calls. They are happy to help.



### How is Seton doing during these difficult economic times for families?

There is no question that Seton has been affected by the difficult economic situation, but we have been pleased that most families are continuing to enroll. Parents are so concerned about their children receiving a good Catholic education that they are willing to sacrifice, as their parents and grandparents and great-grandparents have done in the past. The people who work at Seton also are sacrificing for the sake of families who need Seton.

We are receiving an increased number of requests from parents for financial aid, and we do have a small scholarship fund to draw on. Our new Payment Plan C allows parents to have a very low downpayment and then to pay the remainder over ten months. This has definitely made it easier for parents to afford the program.

We continue to publish new books, such as the *Phonics 2* which will be ready for next year. We are working on a new Catholic vocabulary series, and by next spring, our new *Math 5 for Young Catholics* will be ready. For next year, we will have a new Catholic Church History book for the 8<sup>th</sup> grade. In addition, we will be publishing a Catholic Biology textbook. We will be testing the book, so if you have a Biology student for the 2009-2010 school year, you may want to test the new book. Contact Gene McGuirk ([gmcguirk@setonhome.org](mailto:gmcguirk@setonhome.org)), our high school counselor, to let him know.

Needless to say, any donations toward the expense of publishing these Catholic textbooks, or for providing scholarships to needy families, will be gratefully appreciated.

### My son does not know what are the important points he should be studying in his history book to prepare for the test.

Tell your son that end-of-chapter questions in all subjects are written to help students review and study the important points to remember. In addition, read over the test yourself,

and tell your student, without reading the questions to him, what are the important points he needs to study to prepare for the test.

The best approach for studying any chapter in any subject is to outline the chapter, or underline or highlight the important points in each paragraph.

We have a free online Study Skills Course especially to help high school students improve their study skills. You can access it at [http://setonhome.org/courses/study\\_skills/](http://setonhome.org/courses/study_skills/). The last three lessons are very important, but the first ones emphasize the importance of time and place to study without distractions.

### I don't have the time to read the books my children need to write about for book reports. Is that a problem?

One of the best features that Seton offers is help in writing book reports or, in high school, book analyses.

In the Reading courses, we offer extensive online chapter notes which are especially valuable at the high school level. College professors have written the best chapter notes you will see anywhere, which help the students to look for the deeper meanings in great novels. Unless students attend excellent Catholic colleges, they will never again be offered this kind of superior analytical thinking from a Catholic perspective.

If you know parents who are home schooling, but believe they cannot afford a full enrollment in Seton, show them what Seton has to offer in both the English and the Reading courses. In these courses, we offer high quality additional help for the students!

Our nation is in trouble, and only the highest level thinkers will be able to help our country to regain its traditional Christian values and respect for God and family, for religion and work, for children and the elderly, for sacrifice and prayer.

### Why are you accredited by a secular association?

We believe that accreditation is very important for Seton and for home

schooling parents. Accreditation is important first because it allows parents to have confidence that our business operation has been reviewed by an outside third party and determined to meet accepted standards. It is important also because other schools can have confidence in the credits that Seton gives students, which makes it easier to transfer credits.

There are six regional accrediting agencies recognized by the US Department of Education as accrediting agencies. These are called regional accrediting agencies because they accredit schools in different areas of the country. Seton is a member of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools because we are located in Virginia. There is now also an overarching agency called the Commission on International and Transregional Accreditation (CITA), which coordinates with all the regional accrediting agencies.

There are some Catholic or Christian accreditation agencies. While accreditation by these agencies may be desirable for some schools, we believe that for Seton and for our families, accreditation by the nationally-recognized agencies is far more beneficial.

To continue our accreditation, every five years we are visited by representatives of the CITA. The representatives have always been very supportive. They seem to be concerned primarily that we continually examine what we are doing to serve our students so that they are learning. Their questions relate to the process and techniques of teaching and learning, rather than to content.

We are currently preparing for an accreditation visit this year. Our preparation team of about ten department heads and counselors believe the process of preparing for the accreditation visit has been helpful in taking an overall look at our total operation, and in thinking about and planning for improvements.

## Reflections on St. Paul

by Ginny Seuffert

I spoke to the mother of a large family the other day who told me she dreads the beginning of the school year. Although she has been teaching her children for many years, she still chafes at the responsibility and lack of freedom to pursue her own interests. She understands the importance and will continue to home school, but has not yet received the grace to accept her sacrifices and struggles with peace and serenity. Perhaps she never will. After all, Blessed Mother Teresa of Calcutta accomplished most of her work feeling that God had abandoned her in prayer. None of us really knows the sacrifices we will be called to make for the Kingdom of God, but we must strengthen our resolve to accept them.

Many readers of this newsletter are new home schoolers. Bright-eyed and bushy-tailed, newbies often look at home education as an adventure, filled with interesting projects and fun class trips. As days go by, the reality of arithmetic drills and book reports sets in, and mom wonders why her children are not as well behaved as those nice home schoolers she read about. Sadly, my experience tells me that many home schoolers decide they are doing something wrong, or are just not cut out for home schooling, and put the children back in school. This happens most often when mom has little or no support from dad, the extended family, or friends.

To me, this is a terrible tragedy. Home schooling is not essentially about better academics, or remaining safe from drugs and promiscuity. Home education is ultimately about the souls of our children. Although there are a few precious schools scattered across the country that will work hard to assist you in raising your children to be saints, the vast majority simply will not.

**Teaching our children at home is the single most important action we can take to ensure that we pass on our Catholic values to our children.** There is really no acceptable substitute for it and most home schoolers realize that.

We just wish it were not quite so hard. We wish our spouses, family and friends agreed with us and assisted us. We wish our children were more cooperative, our houses less messy, and we could do it all in an hour each day. We see our neighbors going for coffee after dropping off their children at the school bus stop and we wonder how many years will pass before we can have some free time too.

Because Western society has drifted so far from family values, moms are bombarded with reasons they should give it all up and enroll the children in school. In the case of a large family, parents are told they cannot possibly give all those children adequate attention. Parents of fewer children become convinced the kiddies need to go to school to learn socialization skills. Children are being “cheated” if they do not get to play on a school sports team or orchestra. Mom and dad do not have the academic background to provide a first-rate education. On days when everything seems to be going wrong, these objections give parents an escape clause and they enroll the children in school.

Every week of my employment with Seton, almost every day, I speak to parents who deeply regret putting their children into brick and mortar schools. Little girls in the second grade get off the school bus crying because they don’t have the right brand sneaker or jacket. Boys model themselves after the “cool kids” and start spouting vulgar language or exhibiting defiant behavior. *Yeah* and *huh* replace *ma’am* and *sir* pretty quickly.

Rarely do parents regret home schooling, but many of them have trouble seeing the rewards that will come after years of drill, review, testing, disciplining, and trying to fit chores somewhere in the day. Never forget, you can call a Seton counselor for help and support, but when you are feeling isolated, overwhelmed, unappreciated, and doubtful of your abilities, pray to St. Paul and especially meditate on the third and fourth chapters of his Second Epistle to Timothy.

At the beginning of Chapter 3, St. Paul describes the terrible times of the last days

in terms that sound chillingly like our own time. Then he recalls his own sufferings for the gospel, and plainly states that *everyone* who seeks to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted. Not some people *might be*, *not a number of persons could be*, but rather everyone *will be* persecuted. For some of us, this persecution might come from within. We are tortured, not by men, but by our own doubts, fears, frustrations, and despair.

St. Paul reminds Timothy—and us—not to despair, but to keep calm in all situations, to endure the hardships we are given, and to discharge all our duties. A priest once told me that when he entered the priesthood, he was told to give up all hope of retiring in this world, that he “would be squeezed like a lemon until all the juice is gone.” St. Paul speaks of being poured out like a libation waiting for his final moments. Having fought the good fight, finishing the race, and keeping the faith, Paul was eagerly awaiting his crown of glory in heaven. He promises the same crown to “all who have longed” for Christ.

Shell-shocked new home schoolers and battle-scarred veterans do well to recall often this promise. After over two decades of teaching my children, I am seeing many rewards right here on earth. My adult children go to Mass and Confession; they are raising their children in the faith; they are home schooling; they enjoy time spent with their parents and with one another. What a tremendous blessing!

The greatest blessing is yet to come. If we keep the faith, the Lord will be true to His promise and bring us and our children into His heavenly kingdom. What effort is too great for such a reward? God bless you all during this coming school year.



## *What Can Seton Students Do? Find Their Vocation!*

Seton graduates have found their vocations in the priesthood, in the consecrated life, and in marriage. Let the Seton program of immersion in our Holy Catholic Faith, through our curriculum, help you to answer God's call. Pope Leo XIII proclaimed that "...the entire system of education must be permeated with the sense of Christian piety." Seton's program follows this command, and many vocations have been found because of this.



Ann Marie Solis is now Sr. Anna Christi, a Dominican Sister of St. Cecilia. She graduated from Seton in 1999. "Seton Home School was a true blessing from the time I began to be home schooled in sixth grade. It strongly supplemented the solid foundation that my parents provided through family prayer and daily living of the Faith. Through the Seton curriculum, I learned the truth of Church doctrine, the beauty of the Catholic viewpoint in literature, history, and science, and the goodness of a life lived for God. In my senior year, I discovered that God was calling me to share what I had learned with others in the vocation of a Dominican Sister of St. Cecilia. Today as a sister and teacher, I have the joy of preaching to others what I myself have received."

Fr. Justin Nolan graduated from Seton in 1995. He was ordained for the Priestly Fraternity of St. Peter in 2008. "Seton High School's religion course taught me the fundamental truths of our faith which provided the intellectual foundation for my vocation to the priesthood. I don't think I would have realized my vocation without the religious convictions they helped instill within me."



Paul Tillotson graduated from Seton in 1995, Natalie Johnson graduated from Seton in 1996. They met at Christendom College, in Virginia, and fell in love. They were married after graduating from college and now have three beautiful children, Pauline, Kristen, and James. "We are grateful to Seton for giving us an exemplary education of which Catholicism is an integral and important part. This education enabled us to hear God's call and respond to it."



Call Fr. Constantine Belisarius today. He has guided many Seton students to understand God's call to them. Here's his direct line: (540) 636-1527



## 64 Degrees of Separation

by John Clark

Pregnancy and summertime don't mix. I'm sure I'm not the first one to point this out. It was probably a comment Eve made to Adam when carrying Cain: "Boy, this place has really gone downhill after the Fall—not only that, but it's as hot as that place we just learned about." My extremely pregnant wife, Lisa, has insisted all summer that the house remain at a steady temperature of 64 degrees—anything warmer than that is unacceptable to her. I feel for her—I really do, but in the summertime, 64 degrees feels surprisingly cold.

It's just a little strange leaving my office, stepping out into a 99 degree day, driving home and then opening the door to my 64 degree house. Walking into my house lately is a little like drinking a Slurpee too fast. For the record, like most men, I'm usually hot when the women around me are cold. Growing up, I could never figure out how my mother could wear, not one, but two sweaters during the summer months. My brothers and I used to complain about the heat, turn the air conditioning on, and never really feel too much concern that my mom had to go search for her sweaters. Boy, how the tables have been turned. I tried to explain this hot/cold problem to my wife, using examples like: "when you can't defrost meat in your own kitchen, it might signify a problem," or "opening the re-frigerator door actually warms our kitchen."

You also find yourself saying some strange things to your children, like "Tarcisius, make sure you take off your sweatshirt before you go outside to play golf," or "No, Demetrius, we can't build a fire tonight."

I've suggested turning up the temperature to maybe 68 degrees, but my wife quickly reminded me of the golden rule of the thermostat: those with the babies make the rules.

Sixty-four degrees it is.

Last week, when my wife and I were sitting with our kids watching *The Dick van Dyke Show* (which brings us to the golden rule of the television: those with the babies get the remote control),

something funny happened. Well, actually two funny things happened. The first was that, in the middle of August in northern Virginia, eight children and their father were huddling for warmth around a television, while the mother of the family sipped an iced tea. But the other thing was the question my wife asked. Right after Rob Petrie tripped over the ottoman in his living room, Lisa asked us: "is it a little cool in here?" Keep in mind, when she asked this question, I had left a Wendy's Frosty on the kitchen counter, and after two hours, it had retained it's essential chemical properties (to phrase that another way, for those non-chemists reading this: it was still frozen!). Actually, that part of the story is slightly embellished—I would never leave a Frosty unattended for two hours.

Through chattering teeth, I was able to get out a response to Lisa's question, "No, honey, it feels about right to me."

"Really? It feels a little chilly. Must have been a draft," she replied.

"Yeah, must have been a draft from outside," I answered.

It's like living in a meat locker—the problem is, we can't cook any meat. We're not allowed to use the oven—it makes the house too hot for Lisa. We used to have biscuits in the morning, but now we eat cold cereal. We've collected so many toy surprises from cereal boxes this summer that it's become the Clark version of "Christmas in July". Dinner is a bit different too, in the sense that I can't cook any. I've ordered so much pizza this summer that the local pizzeria owner is starting to treat me like a family member (we're getting together next week for a Pinochle game).

Of course, these aren't the only downsides. I can't wait to see my utility bill. I can just imagine employees at the power company passing around my electric bill before they drop it in the mail, making comments like:

"Hey Frank, look at this—what do you think Clark's doing over in that house?"

I can tell you what I'm doing—freezing. At least the baby is due soon—I can't wait for summer to be over and be warm again. People say that babies bring warmth to a family. In our case, this will be literally true.

If you're new to this column, at this point, you might be thinking that this has caused some contention between my wife and me. However, nothing could be further from the truth.

With my wife, I know how good I have it.

I've always thought that on the day of my judgment, I will stand before God and He will ask me what good I did on earth. My response will be: "I loved my wife." God will pause for moment, look at me with Divine mis-belief and say: "You married Lisa McGuire; how hard was that?" After seventeen years, 11 pregnancies, up's and down's, hot's and cold's, richer and poorer, and all the rest, I can still make a claim that few men can make: I married my dream girl, and my dreams get better all the time.

I just wish she'd turn the thermostat up.



## *Tips to motivate high school students*

- 1) Take your student to daily Mass and at least monthly confession. Your student may be more affected by the secular culture than you might think.
- 2) Be sure your high school student is saying the daily Rosary and participating in all the family prayers and religious functions.
- 3) Encourage your student to pray to his Guardian Angel and Patron Saint. Have your student read a book about the Patron Saint or Confirmation Saint.
- 4) Give the student a share in making decisions, such as scheduling the class times and grading some of the assignments.
- 5) Give frequent praise for good work, but also for timely work.
- 6) Don't let the student fall behind; Dad might offer help on the weekend to finish up the week's assignments. Set short-term, reachable goals and reward good performance.
- 7) Remind the student about coming summer vacation when the work is finished.
- 8) Purchase a *How to Prepare for SAT* workbook and help your student to skim through it every week or so, thus reminding your student of what he needs to know before entering college.
- 9) Visit college campuses in your area, including the library.
- 10) Visit the colleges which your student might attend; have him spend a day or a week visiting a potential future college.
- 11) Have your student take the SAT or ACT as early as grade 10, maybe even twice in grade 10. Your student becomes more "tuned in" to what he needs to know, how to time himself on test taking, and thinks about strategies for taking the test. Grades do not need to be sent to the colleges of choice until grade 11.
- 12) Encourage relatives or family friends to ask questions about the studies, and even offers to help with a lesson.
- 13) Provide a once-a-week tutor, a college student, under your watchful eyes and supervision, in an area of difficulty.

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### *Homily of Pope Benedict XVI*

In today's second reading, Saint John invites us to "think of the love that the Father has lavished on us" by making us his adopted children in Christ. Hearing these words should make us grateful for the experience of the Father's love which we have had in our families, from the love of our fathers and mothers, our grandparents, our brothers and sisters. During the celebration of the present Year of the Family, the Church throughout the Holy Land has reflected on the family as a mystery of life-giving love, endowed in God's plan with its own proper calling and mission: to radiate the divine Love which is the source and the ultimate fulfilment of all the other loves of our lives. May every Christian family grow in fidelity to its lofty vocation to be a true school of prayer, where children learn a sincere love of God, where they mature in self-discipline and concern for the needs of others, and where, shaped by the wisdom born of faith, they contribute to the building of an ever more just and fraternal society. The strong Christian families of these lands are a great legacy handed down from earlier generations. May today's families be faithful to that impressive heritage, and never lack the material and moral assistance they need to carry out their irreplaceable role in service to society.

An important aspect of your reflection during this Year of the Family has been the particular dignity, vocation and mission of women in God's plan. How much the Church

in these lands owes to the patient, loving and faithful witness of countless Christian mothers, religious Sisters, teachers, doctors and nurses! How much your society owes to all those women who in different and at times courageous ways have devoted their lives to building peace and fostering love! From the very first pages of the Bible, we see how man and woman, created in the image of God, are meant to complement one another as stewards of God's gifts and partners in communicating his gift of life, both physical and spiritual, to our world. Sadly, this God-given dignity and role of women has not always been sufficiently understood and esteemed. The Church, and society as a whole, has come to realize how urgently we need what the late Pope John Paul II called the "prophetic charisma" of women (cf. *Mulieris Dignitatem*, 29) as bearers of love, teachers of mercy and artisans of peace, bringing warmth and humanity to a world that all too often judges the value of a person by the cold criteria of usefulness and profit. By its public witness of respect for women, and its defence of the innate dignity of every human person, the Church in the Holy Land can make an important contribution to the advancement of a culture of true humanity and the building of the civilization of love.

Amman, Jordan  
May 10, 2009