



Seton Home Study School

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

April 2010

St. Bernadette

On April 16, we celebrate the feast of St. Bernadette, the young French girl to whom the Blessed Mother appeared in 1858 in Lourdes, France.

St. Bernadette went to school when she was able, but because of a chronic condition which caused her shortness of breath and coughing, she missed many days. She and her family lived in a cold and damp abandoned jailhouse, which made Bernadette’s health even worse.

Bernadette’s mother was her primary teacher. Her mother taught her how to live a virtuous life in spite of terrible poverty. She taught Bernadette how to trust that God would provide.

Though Bernadette was thought to be “stupid” by some of her teachers because she could not answer all the catechism questions, several women in the village recognized Bernadette’s holiness.

When Bernadette told her parents about the vision of the Lady in the grotto where she went to gather firewood, her parents were upset by the belief that she was trying to attract attention to herself. However, several local women believed her and went to the grotto with her as she knelt in prayer to say the Rosary led by the

Blessed Mother, who was seen only by Bernadette.

The Blessed Mother was dressed in a white gown with a white veil and a wide blue belt or sash which hung down in front of her. She wore a golden rose on the top of each foot. The Blessed Mother appeared eighteen times, and finally announced “I am The Immaculate Conception.”

One thing we home schooling parents have come to realize, as Bernadette’s mother finally realized, is that as we struggle to live the Catholic life more faithfully, we are giving a powerful example to our very impressionable children. Their innocence makes them extremely receptive to our good example and Christ’s teachings.

Another thing many of us parents have come to realize is that our children are going beyond us in holiness. Their innocence makes them like little Christian sponges, soaking up all the information and examples and teachings. Consequently, their level of spirituality often exceeds our own. Their insights about the Faith and the teachings of the Church often surprise and edify us.

When many of us started home schooling, we thought we would be teaching our children how to live

the Catholic Faith. What we did not expect is that our children would be teaching us how to live the Catholic Faith, how to live a virtuous life, how to look at daily events with a different “eye.” We look back on our own sins and realize that our children will not make the same mistakes.

We are reminded of the words of Jesus Himself: “Allow the little children, and forbid them not to come to Me, for of such is the Kingdom of God.” Again He said, “Unless you be converted and become as little children, you shall not enter into the Kingdom of Heaven.”

What a blessing our Catholic Faith is, for our children and for us!

As we reflect on St. Bernadette, let’s ask her in prayer to help guide our children so that they may live the Faith as she did. Our Lady of Lourdes, pray for us and our children.

- MKC

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

My daughter wants to choose her own topics, rather than the listed topics, for the paragraphs assigned.

For the paragraph assignments, for the book reports or book analyses, and for the research reports, we sometimes give some options for topics. However, usually we do not allow the student to choose any topic or book because we are trying to teach certain concepts or skills. If your daughter chooses her own topic, what she chooses may not be suitable for the concepts we are trying to teach.

Another consideration is that our graders are familiar with the topics we list. Having a limited number of possible topics not only allows for quicker grading, but also helps the graders to give consistent grades and suggestions for improvement.

Why do you allow the student to do some tests open book?

Some test questions or essays are related to understanding character development and/or recognizing important examples of conflict or theme. Students are asked to show that they realize which events in the story contribute to character or conflict. When a student writes a book report, for instance, we want the student to look through the book and choose meaningful examples. Sometimes, a student can remember examples without looking through the book, but it is not as much about memorizing or remembering certain facts as it is about recognizing examples to prove the thesis.

When a student is being tested on knowledge of facts, then the book should not be used since it contains the answers. When the student is being tested on a skill, the book may often be used, because the skill is not contained in the book.

I am not sure that my son should be taking the math course at his grade level.

Certainly one of the problems in a school classroom situation is that a student is put in a grade level based on his age, not on his ability. In addition, if a grade level is determined by reading level, the student may not be at that level in other subject areas, such as math or English or science. An advantage of home schooling is that the student may take subjects at different levels based on his ability. While Seton may recommend a grade level, it is really up to the parents to determine the grade level for each subject. (Of course, the Seton tests and counselors can help to make that decision.) The subject most often not at the reading grade level is math. If you believe your child should be moved to a different level in math, please contact a Seton math counselor.

My husband has lost his job and I have had to return to work part-time. I am not sure I should continue home schooling.

The fact is that in spite of everything happening in our lives, our first responsibility is to teach our children the Catholic Faith and to live it diligently. In your situation, while you may not be home as much as you want, your husband may be able to take up more of the responsibility. It is difficult because he is stressed, but nevertheless, as long as he is home, he can help out.

Consider asking someone else to help. Do you have an older child who could omit a class for now and help teach a younger child? Do you have a relative nearby who could come once or twice a week and help with the home schooling? Is there another Catholic home schooling family nearby who could temporarily have one or two of

your children join her children for a half day two or three times a week?

Plan ahead and keep a schedule for each person in the family. Have the household chores done by the children so that when you are home, you are spending time with the important things you need to do with the children. Be sure you are saying your Rosary and praying as often as possible.

My son is taking algebra and I am struggling to help him.

Seton offers many helps for your son. First, we recommend using the tutoring CDs we sell for each of the Saxon math and science books. The CDs cover each and every lesson, and the student can replay the lessons if he needs to review. Your son also could

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check out Seton's high school math message board; there may be some questions and answers there which could help him. It may be possible that your son has missed an important concept somewhere along the way. It may be helpful for him to go back several lessons and redo the lessons.

Our math counselors are available to answer questions, by phone or by email. Counselors are most helpful when a student does not understand a concept. Often, once a concept is adequately explained, the problem is solved.

However, the problem sometimes is that the student does not concentrate or focus on trying to understand the problem. This lack of focus may either be a result of student not wanting to do math or because the student has "given up" after deciding he can't do it. In either case, parents need to explain that math is a very important subject both for life in general and also for successful college admissions.

If there is still a problem, consider having a college student or a retired math teacher come once a week to go over any problems your son may be having.

My friend has had a bad situation all year with her daughter in the local school. She would like to pull her daughter out of school but feels she should not make a change until the end of the school year. How can I advise her?

Some situations are so bad that the child should be pulled out immediately. Parents often don't realize the damage that can be done to a child who is abused, whether physically or psychologically, by other students or even by teachers. If it is simply a matter of school not being sufficiently challenging for the student, then waiting for the end of the

Give some sort of reward for a perfect score on her daily work.

year will not matter much. But for those truly untenable situations in which the student dreads going to school every day, immediate action can be warranted. Be sure to encourage your friend to pray about it, but not to take too long if the girl is in danger or suffering serious damage.

When a student enrolls this late in the year, we determine from achievement tests and conversation with the parent if the student needs to begin over again, or can enroll in the last half year, or if a student can move on to the next grade level in one or more subjects. Let your friend know that we will work with her and her daughter to ensure that she is enrolled in the proper grade level in each course. If the grade level is not correct to begin with, we can always make an adjustment later.

Is it okay for me to have my daughter retake her math test before I send it to Seton when I see that she has failed it?

Let's remember that the point of home schooling (after living the Catholic life) is education. If you look

over her math test and realize your child has not learned the concepts, there is no point in sending it to Seton just to get a poor grade. What you need to do is not go over the test, but go back to the textbook and review or re-teach the concepts she evidently does not understand. In home schooling, we can take the time that is needed to be sure the student does learn, even if it takes longer than originally scheduled. Once you believe she has learned the math, then have her retake the Seton test and send it to Seton.

In the future, give her a pre-test before she takes the Seton test to be sure she has learned the material and will obtain a good grade.

By the way, if you think the problem might be that she is not interested in her math lessons, give some sort of reward for a perfect score on her daily work. Sometimes that is all that is needed for a young person to put effort and focus on the lessons.

I like history but my son seems to think it is boring. What can I do to help him become more interested in reading and studying history?

History is really the story of people, what they did and what they accomplished. It is often the story of a nation trying to survive in spite of dictators or other powerful forces. The best way to interest young people in history is to tell the personal stories of those fighting for justice.

Consider looking ahead to the next chapter in your son's textbook. Check in the library and find historical fiction or a biography of individuals or families who lived at the time of the chapter they will be reading. *April Morning*, for instance, is the story told by a boy who stood by his father during a battle in the Revolutionary War. These kinds of books not only tell the facts about a battle, but they help the student to understand the *whys* of a battle or fight for freedom.

It is sometimes said you can't know where you are going if you don't know where you've been. For this, and many other reasons, history is incredibly important. When states are adopting textbooks, it is usually the history books which are the most contentious

choices, precisely because our idea of who we are is so tied up with our ideas about history.

For Catholics, history could hardly be of greater importance. The Incarnation is an historical event. Jesus lived in a specific time and place and started a Church which lives on to this day. When day to day problems come up, it is comforting to realize that we are part of a glorious tradition stretching back almost 2000 years.

One way to interest your son in history is to discuss the current issues of the day. Talk to your student about the health care debate, or about abortion law, or about cases decided by the Supreme Court. If these current events interest him, then he should be interested as well in how we came to this point.

There is an organization called "Foundations of Liberty" which has a catalog of pamphlets especially for high school, college, and adults, put out by the MacArthur Institute.

The Seton history message board, available for students to exchange ideas, has sparked a great deal of interest in history and current events!

My oldest will be starting 9th grade in the fall, and I would like help choosing high school courses which will help him for college entrance.

Senior Counselor Bob Wiesner can answer your questions. You can reach Bob directly at 540-636-2238. You can speak to our other high school counselor, Mr. Gene McGuirk, at 540-635-4728.

If you have specific colleges in mind, you should contact them regarding their admissions requirements. Most college admissions offices will be happy to give advice, such as SAT scores they want for incoming students, required courses, extracurricular activities, etc.

We also are putting in place a program, emphasizing math and science courses, for students who want to enter a military academy after graduation. Mr. McGuirk has extensive information for interested students based on visits to several military academies.

On Sleep by John Clark

When I give talks at home schooling conferences, newly-married couples sometimes ask for advice. I'm impressed that these parents care enough about their responsibilities that even before having children, they investigate their educational choices. These parents are planners, and they're expecting some insightful information they can really use. "What should we do now to prepare for home schooling in a few years?" they ask. They might consider my response somewhat flippant, insofar as it consists of a single word, but it's actually well thought out. In fact, I consider it profound.

The advice: "*sleep.*"

Socialist economists are always claiming that wealth is a zero sum game. That is absurd (as if the level of wealth has remained constant since year 1). But you know what *is* zero-sum? Sleep. It's the one thing they're not making more of. There are twenty-four hours in a day, and there's nothing anyone can do about it. If you don't get enough sleep during these 24 hours, that's just too bad. I used to make fun of old people who fell asleep on the couch watching television. Now I envy them.

Lisa and I have had an infant in the house for pretty much our entire married life. Let me translate what that means. It means that we haven't slept much. If all goes well, babies sleep in three-hour increments—and it doesn't always go well. "Slept like a baby" is a saying that was coined by either a madman or an uninformed person. In reality, no adults sleep like babies; or at least, no adults I ever want to know. When you say that you "slept

like a baby," it is supposed to mean you "slept well." What it literally means is you woke up three times crying—twice because you wanted milk, and once because you needed your diaper changed. That doesn't describe too many adults I know. The bottom line is this: being the parents of a baby, and getting a good night's sleep, are mutually exclusive pursuits.

But truth be told, infants are always getting a bad rap when it comes to sleeping habits. Older children can be more difficult. One child of mine went through a six-month stage when she felt compelled to tell me she had to go to the bathroom. She didn't need help—she just wanted to let me know she was going. Gosh, that's great to know at 2:30 in the morning. Whatever my schedule for that day, Bonaventure will promptly awake at 6:45 every morning and play with Star Wars toys in his room—complete with sound effects.

Of course, these are the things that happen after they actually go to sleep, which is no easy task. There are certain inevitable laws in life, such as: "The hardness of the butter is directly proportionate to the softness of the bread." Here's another, which we can refer to as *Clark's First Law of Narcolepsy*: "Your children will be 'jacked up' in exact proportion to your tiredness." On those nights when you are especially tired, your children will be especially restless. I'm not sure why that is the case, but it must have something to do with the fall of man. My wife and I don't even ask questions like: "Why don't the kids just fall asleep once they get in bed?" That would be the equivalent of asking

a question like: "Why don't people just knock on our door and hand us gold coins?"

Every family has a different system for bedtimes. Not a single one of them works. My guess is that Cain and Abel had pillow fights as children and endlessly asked their parents for glasses of water. And by the way, why is it that children become so parched at bedtime? I can't remember the last time I was lying in bed as an adult, dozing off to sleep, and thinking to myself: "Hold on! I forgot to drink a huge glass of water."

At least Lisa and I have a system for deciding who puts the children to bed. Feel free to use it yourself. Here's how it works. It all started when we gave Philomena and Dominica a Nintendo Wii a couple of Christmases ago. One of the games that you can play on the Wii console is bowling. Lisa and I compete against one another in Wii bowling, and the loser of the game puts the kids to bed. We call it "Bowling for Bedtimes." It might be more Biblical to cast lots, but I hate relying on pure chance. It has become a family ritual, and the children stand and cheer on their parents. The children who like to hear their father reading Dr. Seuss stories cheer for her, and the children who like to hear their mother sing to them at bedtime cheer for me. (Without revealing who usually wins, let's just say that if the kids hear one more reading of "Yertle the Turtle," I might have a mutiny on my hands.)

It's not perfect, but at least it's a system.

So if you do not have children yet, please take my advice to heart: sleep now, or forever hold your peace.

Burnout by Carole Breslin

There is always talk about burnout among home educators. What is it exactly? When does it happen? Why does it happen? How do I get through it? These are some of the questions that sit in the back of our minds as we work to finish up the school year.

The dictionary indicates that burnout is the complete depletion of fuel or mechanical breakdown. Sometimes home educators are worn out, or feeling inadequate or discouraged. As St. Ignatius teaches us, in spiritual warfare we will experience times of consolation as well as times of desolation; however, both can help us to grow in holiness. He further teaches that we must be aware, understand, and take action to fight the temptation to change our good resolutions.

Beyond temptations, there are a variety of reasons we develop burnout. A primary cause is unreasonably high expectations. While it is admirable to set high goals and strive for good grades, circumstances can change, and sticking to the schedule becomes virtually impossible. Yet we strive to be done on time and with high grades. Being too rigid will not only increase everyone's level of stress but it will also discourage our children. As we read again and again in the Seton lesson plans: be flexible. Adapt the curriculum to the child not the child to the curriculum.

Another cause of burnout is discipline issues. The more there is loving discipline in the family in terms of school work and house work, the better the atmosphere. This means parents must themselves be disciplined enough to be prompt and consistent in the disciplining of their children. If nagging, whining, and complaining are increasing, the chances of burnout will increase as well. It takes time and energy to cope with children who do not obey the first time. It is a cross we must bear as parents to train our children to be obedient, kind, and industrious. Like all crosses, we will

find joy in the peace and tranquility of doing God's will.

Monotony can lead to burnout. Children sometimes become bored and restless when sitting all day long at a desk. Schedule some exercise and outdoor time into every day's routine. Exercise is good for stimulating circulation and fostering better, clearer thinking. Try to plan regular times outside the house with the children once or twice a week. These could be field trips, work at a soup kitchen, or some other charitable endeavor. Some families have a celebration or some special outdoor event or treat when a quarter is completed. One family takes a few days off from school work. Another goes out for lunch, while yet another spends a day at the park.

Frequently overlooked is the need for children to get enough sleep and to eat a balanced diet. Snacks throughout the day such as fruits or juice can help keep the children more alert. Thinking takes energy, so make sure bedtimes are enforced and junk food is limited. Furthermore, limit the time on the computer. Computer games can be hypnotizing and intoxicating, lulling one almost to sleep.

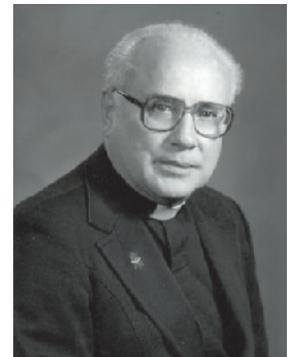
Finally, we must be humble enough to ask for help. It is not unusual to see some families helping others but never asking for help for themselves. There is nothing wrong in asking for help. Think of the opportunity you could be providing for someone to practice charity. If you are floundering under the work or one of the children is having difficulty with a particular concept, call Seton. Seton wants your children to succeed. Seton counselors, available in every subject area for every grade, have marvelous ideas. They are well-versed not only in the subject matter but also in the different learning styles that children have.

On a more spiritual note, keep close to the Lord. Begin and end your day with prayer. Seek first His will in home

schooling in order to experience more peace in your endeavor. If you have determined through prayer that it is God's will to teach your children in the home, then the question is how to go about it more effectively or cheerfully. It can be done by the grace of God.

The Church understands the great importance of family life supporting our Catholic Faith in many ways, especially with the sacraments. Read the sections in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* on marriage, the fourth commandment, and Baptism. If you have a copy of the *Code of Canon Law*, read the same sections to understand the loving care available to us through the Church. Go to Mass and Confession frequently, and remember that Confession is not just to forgive sins but to help us grow in virtue. According to St. Ignatius of Loyola, we can make use of the time of consolations to strengthen us to withstand the time of desolations. During times of burnout, we are to remember the consolations. Take courage, pray more, and resolve to continue in your efforts.

The "difficult" times of home education can be periods of grace. By weathering the storm, we grow in humility, we grow in trust of God, we grow in love as a family. It is a time to recognize our shortcomings and seek to do all things in Christ. We are nothing without Him. Like St. Paul, in Christ, I can do all things, even home school my children!



Fr. Paul Marx, founder of Human Life International, and a great friend of Catholic home schooling, passed away on March 20th.

+ Requiescat in pace +

Toddler Do's and Don'ts

by Ginny Seuffert

Sometime around a year after birth, mom and dad are getting the hang of this whole parenthood thing, and really enjoying baby, who is finally sleeping through the night. Then, for no good reason, a sweet bundle of joy turns into a defiant little terror with a strong will. Toddler time is the true test of parenthood.

In the not-too-distant past, young parents were guided and supported through these challenges by extended family. Now, often geographically apart from the generation that came before them, many moms and dads feel unequal to the task of raising toddlers. Conflicting advice, some of it very bad, is all around. How do they find a way to raise happy, well-adjusted, well-behaved children, when so many so-called experts tell them that brattiness is an unpleasant yet unavoidable step towards maturity?

The rest of us witness the sad result of this failure to take control of young children. We see screaming children in stores with parents begging them to be good. Our evenings out are ruined by out-of-control tots running around restaurants. Miserable, whining children seem to be everywhere. Can nothing be done? For those parents who do not enjoy the benefit of having extended family nearby, let Grandma Ginny offer some common-sense advice.

DO NOT give young children too many choices. Allowing toddlers to demand what foods they eat or what clothes they wear encourages them to be demanding and self-centered.

DO explain why family rules exist. Tell toddlers that they are wearing play clothes today because they might get dirty in the park. They eat eggs and toast for breakfast instead of cookies because too much sugar is not good for children.

DO NOT beg your children to be good. Tell your children they are expected to behave. Give only one warning. "You know you are not allowed to run in the restaurant. Sit still and eat your lunch now."

DO set reasonable rules and be ready to enforce them firmly. "We must go home and you must sit in the corner, so you can remember to listen to Mommy next time we have lunch in a restaurant."

DO NOT listen to whining. "I can't understand you when you whine. Calm down and then tell me what you want. Use words."

DO encourage your children to ask politely. When your toddler exclaims, "I'm thirsty," answer, "Did you mean to say, 'May I have a drink, please?'"

DO speak to your children in a simple, straightforward tone. "I expect you to be good in church." "We are not buying snacks today. You may have a cookie when we get home."

DO NOT buy your toddler something whenever you go out. This is a terrible habit that turns children into whining beggars. Warn them in the car, "Mommy is only picking up the dry cleaning and Grandma's medicine. Do not ask for anything."

DO NOT allow your children to decide when they go to bed. If baby cries when he is being put into his crib, some moms worry that maybe he is giving up his nap. When a toddler whines at bedtime, parents often relent because, "maybe she's not tired." Baloney! Since when do we allow a three-year-old to make health decisions? Pre-school children need eleven or twelve hours of sleep per night and a nap.

DO set reasonable and regular bedtimes and naptimes and enforce them. If 8 o'clock is bedtime, start the process at 7:30: bath, brush and floss, potty, story time, evening prayers, lights out. The same routine every night, with no whining allowed, will form good habits that will last a lifetime.

DO NOT lose your cool, yell, and scream. We've all done it, but it is very ineffective. The kids are afraid and might listen right away, but they will intuitively feel that mom or dad is not in control.

DO kindly but firmly insist that family rules are obeyed. Sometimes

speaking in a very low voice, almost a whisper, works best.

DO NOT argue with your children. Explain your rules occasionally, but do not give the impression that they are up for debate.

DO give lots of praise for jobs well done.

Some readers may think I am being rather strict for such young children, but think again. It is not kind to allow children to develop bad patterns of behavior. Once you establish good habits, they often last a lifetime. Well-behaved children are happier, are admired by others, and can be given MORE freedom because they can be trusted with it.

Many years ago, when we had four school age children and a couple of babies, my husband and I visited some friends with two children of their own. My older kids were excited when they heard that the local parish was having a feast and they begged to go. When my husband and I checked our wallets, we realized that putting aside toll money, we had a total of \$2 left over for the feast. (Rides were 25 cents in those days.) We told the children that each one could choose one ride, and the family would share a bag of *zeppole* (Italian doughnut holes) that cost \$1.

My children had a ball! There was lots of free entertainment: magicians, jugglers, a band, and dancing. They checked out all the rides and took forever to make their choice of one. They shared the bag of *zeppole* with Mom, Dad, and the babies. They raved about the feast on the car ride home and talked about it for weeks afterward.

Our friends shared our financial problems, but did not share our good time. Obviously their children had learned that whining and crying get them what they want. Although their parents emptied their wallets buying rides and treats, the children howled the entire time we were there because they wanted the toys and stuffed animals they saw.

My children knew behavior like that would only get them one thing – a car ride home! Who was happier?

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, or email conferences@setonhome.org.

Berlin, NJ. April 10, 2010 (Sat.) 11th Annual CHAPLET Catholic Homeschool Conference, Mater Ecclesiae Roman Catholic Church, 261 Cross Keys Road, Pine Hill. 9 AM - 5 PM. Info: Kelly at 856-393-4223. www.chaplet.podbean.com or conference@chaplet.org.

Covington, LA. April 10, 2010 (Sat.) Roman Catholic Home School Association of Louisiana, Catholic Home Schooling: A Way of Life. St. Peter's Catholic Church (St. Mary's Hall), 125 E. 19th Ave., Covington. After 8 AM Mass-5 PM. Free admission Info: Beth at 985-796-1274 or beth@montelepre.com or rchalinfo@rchal.org or www.rchal.org

Houston, TX. April 16-17, 2010 (Fri.-Sat.) 20th Annual Book Fair and Speakers Conference (Sponsored by ARCH Catholic Homeschoolers of Houston). University of St. Thomas, 3800 Montrose Blvd., Houston. Fri.:

6 PM - 9 PM. Special college info workshop with St. Thomas staff prior to conference. Sat.: 8 AM (Mass) - 5 PM. Info: 281-797-5578 (leave message) or info@arch-homeschool.org or www.arch-homeschool.org

Harrisburg, PA. April 17, 2010 (Sat.). 16th Annual Catholic Homeschool Conference & Curriculum Fair, Holy Name of Jesus Parish, 6190 Allentown Blvd. (Rt. 22 West), Harrisburg. 8:30 AM-5PM. Info: Ellen, 717-866-5425 or conference@catholichomeschoolpa.org or www.catholichomeschoolpa.org/ccf.html

Atlanta, GA. April 23-24, 2010 (Fri./Sat.). 2010 North Georgia Catholic Homeschool and Family Conference, North Metro Technical College, Buildings 100 & 400, 5198 Ross Road, Acworth, GA. Fri.: 3 PM - 8 PM; Sat.: 9 AM - 5 PM. Info: Annette, 770-745-5994 or ngchsc@gmail.com or www.chsconferencega.com.

Rosholt, WI. April 26-27, 2010 (Mon.-Tue.). Holy Family Catholic Home School Curriculum Fair, Kluck Warehouse, 5682 Shantytown Drive, Rosholt, WI. Mon.: 9 AM - 9 PM; Tue.: 9 AM - 9 PM. Info: Ruby Kluck, 715-344-3716 or CBCRD15@gmail.com

Chicago, IL. May 7-8, 2010 (Fri./Sat.). Père Marquette Home School and Parent Conference, North Central College-Wentz Hall, 30 N. Brainard St., Naperville, IL. Fri.: 2:30 PM - 9 PM; Sat.: 9 AM - 4 PM. Info: Margaret, 708-428-4540 or ryandonmargaret@comcast.net or www.nichejmi.com.

Indianapolis, IN. May 15, 2010 (Sat.). 2010 Quo Vadis Catholic Home School Conference, Marian College P.E. Center (Allison Mansion-North entrance), 3200 Cold Spring Road, Indianapolis. 7:30 AM - 5 PM. Info: Amy at 317-786-3629 or info@hfheindy.org or www.hfheindy.org.

Dayton, OH. May 21-22, 2010 (Fri.-Sat.). 6th Annual Dayton Catholic Homeschool Conference, St. Peter's Catholic Church, 6161 Chambersburg Rd, Huber Heights, OH. Fri.: 5:30 PM - 8:30 PM; Sat.: 8:30 AM - 4 PM. Info: www.daytonhomeschool.com or Alice at events@daytonhomeschool.com or Colleen at 937-235-0585

Washington, DC. June 11-12, 2010 (Fri./Sat.) 9th Annual Immaculate Heart of Mary National Home School and Parent Conference. Dulles Expo Center, Chantilly, VA. Info: 540-636-1946 or www.ihmconference.org.

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Message for World Vocations Day from Pope Benedict XVI

A fundamental element, one which can be seen in every vocation to the priesthood and the consecrated life, is friendship with Christ. Jesus lived in constant union with the Father and this is what made the disciples eager to have the same experience; from him they learned to live in communion and unceasing dialogue with God. If the priest is a “man of God”, one who belongs to God and helps others to know and love him, he cannot fail to cultivate a deep intimacy with God, abiding in his love and making space to hear his Word. Prayer is the first form of witness which awakens vocations. Like the Apostle Andrew, who tells his brother that he has come to know the Master, so too anyone who wants to be a disciple and witness of Christ must have “seen” him personally, come to know him, and learned to love him and to abide with him.

Another aspect of the consecration belonging to the priesthood and the religious life is the complete gift of oneself to God. The Apostle John writes: “By this we know love, that he laid down his life for us; and therefore we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren” (1 Jn 3:16). With these words, he invites the disciples to enter into the very mind of Jesus who in his entire life did the will of the Father, even to the

ultimate gift of himself on the Cross. Here, the mercy of God is shown in all its fullness; a merciful love that has overcome the darkness of evil, sin and death. The figure of Jesus who at the Last Supper, rises from the table, lays aside his garments, takes a towel, girds himself with it and stoops to wash the feet of the Apostles, expresses the sense of service and gift manifested in his entire existence, in obedience to the will of the Father (cf. Jn 13:3-15). In following Jesus, everyone called to a life of special consecration must do his utmost to testify that he has given himself completely to God. This is the source of his ability to give himself in turn to those whom Providence entrusts to him in his pastoral ministry with complete, constant and faithful devotion, and with the joy of becoming a companion on the journey to so many brothers and sisters, enabling them too to become open to meeting Christ, so that his Word may become a light to their footsteps. The story of every vocation is almost always intertwined with the testimony of a priest who joyfully lives the gift of himself to his brothers and sisters for the sake of the Kingdom of God. This is because the presence and words of a priest have the ability to raise questions and to lead even to definitive decisions.