



Seton Home

Study School

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Guardian Angels

“See that you do not despise one of these little ones, for I say to you that their angels in heaven always look upon the face of My heavenly Father.”

These were the words spoken by Jesus about the little children who crowded around Him. He spoke them to the apostles and disciples, the first leaders of the Church, including St. Peter, to whom He gave the Keys of the Church.

Jesus told the parable of the poor man, Lazarus, who died and was carried to heaven by angels, one likely his guardian angel. The Bible records that Jesus was consoled by an angel as He prayed in the Garden of Gethsemane.

The Bible stories of angels helping people in times of trouble should give us an understanding of how much guardian angels are involved in our lives. In the *Catholic Bible Concordance*, angels are listed over 300 times, usually referring to angels who appear to help people. An angel appeared to Joseph to tell him what to do on several occasions, such as fleeing King Herod’s soldiers. Peter’s guardian angel opened the doors of the jail and led him out. The Angel Raphael led Tobias to the fish which cured the eyes of his father.

The Catholic Church teaches in the *Baltimore Catechism* that guardian angels “help us by praying for us, by protecting us from harm, and by inspiring us to do good.”

The Church has established a special feastday on October 2, with a Mass in honor of the Guardian Angels. The prayers read “O God, we cannot express in words the wonder of Your Providence, which has given Your holy angels care over us. May we always be safe under their protection and happy for all eternity in their company.”

Prayers include a quote from Exodus 23:20-23: “In those days, the Lord said, ‘See, I am sending you an angel before you, to guard you on the way and to bring you to the place I have prepared. Be attentive to him and heed his voice.’” And also, “To His angels, God has given commands about you, that they guard you in all your ways. Upon their hands, they shall bear you up, lest you dash your foot against a stone.”

Father John Hardon, in his *Catholic Catechism on the Angels*, wrote that the angels “speak to people, they correct those who are doing wrong, the good angels lead people to serve God faithfully... they instruct peoples’ minds, they

announce important events... they admonish and minister to human needs. Yet all the while, they are in the presence of God Whom they never cease to adore.”

God so loves us that not only did He create us, He gave us a perpetual gift: a holy, heavenly angel to stand by our side, continually to protect us physically as well as to guide our thoughts and inspirations toward Him, even while he always gazes upon the face of God.

When times are difficult for a child, whether it be for a problem working on schoolwork, struggling with a disappointment, or suffering from an illness, let’s remind our child about the angel standing beside him. Let’s impress on our children the constant presence of their guardian angels.

Angel of God, my guardian dear, to whom God’s love entrusts me here. Ever this day, be at my side, to light, to guard, to rule, to guide. Amen.

- MKC

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Questions We Are Asked

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

My son seems to take all day to do his assignments. Why are you assigning so much in one day or in one week?

In a classroom situation, a teacher decides how much to assign based on the majority of children in the classroom. Some students can do more, and end up reading a book after they finish their work. Some classroom students struggle with what is assigned, and end up either not learning the material or taking some work home.

With our program, it is up to each parent to decide how much work a student can accomplish without being frustrated or burned out. Remember, students can be enrolled in subjects at different grade levels. If your child is taking too long with math, you might consider enrolling him in a lower grade level. If there are some subjects he is doing more quickly, consider giving your son that extra time to finish up the class in which he is working more slowly.

At the beginning of the school year, it is not unusual for classes to need some adjustment. As you continue for the next few weeks and discover the strong and weak subjects for your son, you should start making some changes here and there.

You also can look ahead at the tests and see what is actually required to be learned. You may find that some areas could be skipped.

Consider working orally with your son, especially if the problem might be his writing speed, which is not unusual for a fourth grader.

How much help should I give a high school student? I have three others I am home schooling plus a toddler.

Parents should start helping their student be more independent in 7th and

8th grades. These junior high years are preparation for high school.

You and your husband should both consult with your 7th grader to help him work out a daily schedule, not only for the course work itself, but also for the other responsibilities. Boys and girls at this age should be helping with household chores, such as putting on a load of laundry each day, or clearing the table at lunchtime. In addition, a student of this age could spend a half-hour or so helping a younger child, either baby-sitting or helping with math or listening to a younger one read.

Many boys and girls of this age want to be involved in some activity outside the home, but this should be limited to once, or at most, twice a week. Students of this age are staying up later, so more can be accomplished in a longer day.

Besides working out a daily and weekly schedule for students in grades seven through twelve, parents should help these students with independent study skills. Seton offers a Study Skills course which can be accessed from our home page. (Look on the right column and click on Free Sample Study Skills Course. "Study Skills Online" will pop up, then click on Lesson Plans.) There are 11 lessons; click on each one to see what topic is covered. Your student can read the ones which you think will be helpful, such as Study Aids or Study Techniques.

If you have a good student in math, consider advancing him to Algebra 1 in 8th grade. Students become more serious about their studies and schoolwork in 8th grade if they are "introduced" to high school. Remind your student that financial aid for college comes to those who have a good overall grade point average for high school. Encourage your

student to do his best for the high school courses.

It is sometimes worthwhile for a student who earns a poor grade in a high school course to redo the course and improve the grade on the high school transcript. It can be worth thousands of dollars in financial aid.

How do I get organized?

There is no question that being organized in the home schooling, in the daily household routines, and in daily spiritual exercises is essential for success and happiness.

In my book, *Catholic Home Schooling*, read Chapter 9 on "Home Management." Also, we have written

A student could spend a half-hour or so helping a younger child, either baby-sitting or helping with math or listening to a younger one read.

articles in our monthly newsletter on Organizing. Go to our Home page, scroll down to Parent Resources. Scroll down to Topical Newsletter Index. Then scroll down to the topic Organization.

Seton has also recently published a great new book by Ginny Seuffert called *Home Management Essentials*. In this volume, Ginny lays out ten practical tips to improve the efficiency of your home schooling. We think this book is so important that we are now sending out a copy to each family with a new enrollment.

Remember that you are running a small domestic enterprise, your home and family. All those in your home should help you to run your home efficiently. They can be a part of making your home pleasant and comfortable. Only the very tiniest members of the home may not be required to help, but even a two-year old can help put away

the clean laundry in lower drawers. Young children can set the table. Have you seen the latest child-size brooms with a dustpan on a short child-size handle? Very young children can learn to pick up toys, clothes, and trash. In fact, they feel left out if everyone else has a “chore” but they don’t. They also feel left out if they don’t have a “schoolbook” or two!

My high school daughter is struggling with locating various things in her English lesson plans.

Take time to sit with your daughter and go through all the lesson plans, pointing out the “system” or arrangement of the lesson plans.

Find a special bookcase for your daughter so she can keep her materials together for each subject.

Consider putting each subject lesson plans in a separate three-ring binder. Consider using colored subject dividers to divide the lessons, the answer keys, the English Handbook, the tests, and the quarter report forms. Add a special divider for the section of the English Handbook related to the Book Analysis.

Find a special bookcase for your daughter so she can keep her materials together for each subject. Be sure she has her own dictionary and thesaurus. Schedule a regular time for her to be on the computer to type her assignments, or take online tests, or do research. Help her work out a daily schedule, scheduling not only her studies but also her breaks for some exercise, helping with a household chore, or attending daily Mass. The more you can organize your daughter’s materials and time, the more likely she will be ready to tackle the schoolwork.

Praise your children for the good work they do. If you need to reprimand them for something, be sure

to commend them also for something well done. It is sometimes suggested that we should praise our children five times for every one time we reprimand them. Unfortunately, it’s very easy to fall into the opposite pattern.

Why do my children fight writing their book reports?

Because inductive thinking is more demanding on the brain than deductive thinking, most of us must work harder on writing any original composition.

Seton has been developing work sheets for students for writing book reports. These work sheets are blank outlines to fill in with details. Some students find it difficult to deal with a totally blank sheet of paper, but with an outline worksheet in front of them, they find it easier to organize their thoughts.

We have begun to include worksheets by grade level in the lesson plans, but you can print them yourself by going to My Seton on our website. Go to your child’s course list on your My Seton page, then scroll down to Reading. Notice the yellow notebook icon on the far right. Click on that icon. You will see Chapter Notes on the various books your child might be reading, but you also will notice the Book Report Worksheet. It is several pages to help your student think about the topics or areas about which he is writing.

We have already seen improvements in the Book Reports, and parents are happier that these specific areas are explained.

Do I need to register with the state or school district if I am enrolled in Seton?

This is a legal question that needs to be answered on a state-by-state basis. Go to the Home School Legal Defense Association website: www.hsllda.org. See what they advise in regard to the regulations in your state. We encourage joining HSLDA because they continually work for home schooling families and improvements in regulations. (The Seton membership number, for a reduced rate, is 297239.)

Seton is accredited by an accrediting agency recognized by the US Department of Education. Seton is also recognized as a private school by the state of Virginia. A good argument can be made that students enrolled with Seton do not fall under the legal rules regarding home schooling. Strictly speaking, you should be recognized as a family who has enrolled children in a Catholic accredited school outside the state. However, often local superintendents, even state employees, have their own opinions. Consider contacting your Catholic or Christian state organization to learn how they are suggesting people proceed in regard to local or state authorities. Those organizations are listed on the HSLDA website.

We have an active home schooling group here, but I am hesitant to get involved because I struggle now to finish the schoolwork.

Each family needs to make its own decisions regarding extra-curricular activities such as music lessons, dance lessons, sports activities, debate clubs, whatever. The schoolwork must be the priority during these years.

Nevertheless, some outside activities can be helpful. For example, playing any kind of musical instrument actually improves learning skills, as has been proved by numerous studies. Once-a-week lessons, and an hour a day playing is certainly an advantage; however, two or three lessons a week, or two or three hours a day in practice, can cut into the time needed for school courses.

A serious consideration is time on the road. Mothers who are constantly taking their children to lessons or practices may find not only are the children not keeping up with their studies, but mother may experience stress and exhaustion. This often happens with sports teams, especially travel teams which tend to practice more and play games far away from home.

Talk about this with your husband, pray about it, and then, if you want to try it, move into the extra-curricular activities slowly.

Katie Heenan Dodson

My name is Katie Heenan Dodson and I am a proud graduate of Seton Home Study School. I am also a former gymnast and considered to be very accomplished, but accomplishments do not just happen. Of course, hard work, dedication, perseverance, patience, and a lot of other attributes are necessary, but a support system is also important. I can honestly say that without Seton Home Study, I would not have made it as far as an athlete.

I grew up all over, with my gymnastics career starting in Knoxville, Tennessee, then being groomed in Parsippany, New Jersey, and finally being polished, nurtured, and brought to my full potential in Burke, Virginia. I am one of four children and the only girl in the mix. My brothers, Danny, David, and Robby weren't always the happiest that my sport took up so much time, but at the end of the day, I think they were very proud of me, for which I am thankful. At the peak of my career, I was training thirty-six hours a week and traveling almost weekly around the country, and sometimes the world. Needless to say, I was very busy for a fifteen-year-old and school did not "fit" into my schedule.

Seton Home Study School came onto our radar at the perfect time. I was competing for the National Team

which recently made it a requirement to come to training camp twice a month in Texas. I was competing in gymnastics meets at least once a month as far away as Germany, and the school system where I lived did not want to work with my family. They were reluctant to exempt me from P.E. class, even though I could show records of my physical activity, and my teachers were putting a lot of pressure on me to be in class. So after struggling for a semester in high school, my parents, coaches, and I decided it would be best to try home



Photo courtesy William L. Castelman

schooling. My parents made the decision that a firm Catholic-based home school would be best for my education. I sincerely thank them for this decision. When you are fifteen and preoccupied with lots of distractions, you don't always appreciate or understand the choices and decisions your parents make. Now that I am on the verge of being twenty-five years old, I am so thankful they chose Seton Home School for me. Seton provided the flexibility I needed with my schooling so I could travel and concentrate on gymnastics. What I realize even more today is that I truly learned so much with Seton. It was challenging and rigorous, but it readied me for college and life in general—not only intellectually and through self-discipline, but most importantly, I grew spiritually in faith. Having a strong moral background, and the education to back it up, are the tools God intended us to have in order to survive this world, I feel. Seton provided just those tools.

I graduated from Seton in 2004 and went on to the University of Georgia on a full scholarship for gymnastics. While at the University of Georgia, I won four National Championships, three conference championships, thirteen All-American honors, was the 2008 Honda Award winner (as top female collegiate gymnast), became Georgia's all time leading scorer, and many other honors. My gymnastics career ended in 2008. I studied and graduated with a degree in education specializing in middle school education with concentrations in language arts and social studies. I graduated in 2009 with cum laude honors.

I am now married to Stephen Dodson who plays for the Colorado Rockies minor league system, and who hopes to play one day in the major leagues. We have a son, Charlie Dodson, who is ten months old. Right now we call home Norcross, Georgia, but we are moving around a lot due to my husband's profession. I am enjoying being a full time mother and supporting my husband. Seton Home Study School helped me to achieve my goals academically and athletically, and now to raise my family and be a loving wife and mother.



The Mercy of Fatherhood by John Clark

It often occurs that as a man gets older, he looks back on his life and worries about the sins of his past. As we grow spiritually closer to Jesus, even though we know that Jesus has forgiven us in the Sacrament of Penance, it can bring us pain to reflect back on those occasions when we turned from Him. When we have these thoughts, it is imperative that we consider the Divine Mercy of Jesus.

In the 1930's, Jesus appeared to a Polish religious sister named Faustina Kowalska, and revealed His message of mercy. As part of His message, Jesus explained that He wished a special Feast to be established, during which souls may seek His special mercy. As St. Faustina explains in her diary, Jesus spoke to her in these words:

My daughter, tell the whole world about My inconceivable mercy. I desire that the Feast of Mercy be a refuge and shelter for all souls, and especially for poor sinners. On that day the very depths of My tender mercy are open. I pour out a whole ocean of graces upon those souls who approach the fount of My mercy. The soul that will go to Confession and receive Holy Communion shall obtain complete forgiveness of sins and punishment. On that day all the divine floodgates through which grace flow are opened. Let no soul fear to draw near to Me, even though its sins be as scarlet. My mercy is so great that no mind, be it of man or of angel, will be able to fathom it throughout all eternity."

I've often thought that the greeting line in Heaven is composed not of the greatest saints, but of the greatest (repentant) sinners, as an eternal testimony to the unfathomable

mercy of Jesus. Perhaps that is why, on the confessional box at the shrine of Divine Mercy in Stockbridge, Massachusetts, a sign reads: "The greater the sinner, the greater his right to God's mercy." His mercy is for sinners.

If the thought of your sins begins to overwhelm you, remember that Jesus came to earth and suffered and died to save *your* soul. When Jesus was crowned with thorns, and was nailed to the cross, and rose from the dead, he was thinking of *you*.

And this mercy should never be doubted. Jesus explained to St. Faustina that He is sometimes hurt more by doubting souls who do not trust His forgiveness than by the sins they have committed. We should never doubt that the Passion and Death of Our Lord was enough to save souls. Because we might be tempted to doubt, Jesus gave us a prayer that we should say for the grace of trust: "Jesus, I trust in You." Your sins may be great, but the mercy of Jesus is greater. Whenever you are tempted, say this little prayer.

But there is another component to this message of mercy, and this is one that directly affects us as Catholic home schooling fathers. The message of Jesus is that we should show mercy towards others. As Jesus explained to St. Faustina:

Yes, the first Sunday after Easter is the Feast of Mercy, but there must also be deeds of mercy, which are to arise out of love for Me. You are to show mercy to your neighbors always and everywhere. You must not shrink from this or try to absolve yourself from it.

It is important to Jesus that, just as He shows us mercy, we show mercy toward others. There are 14 works of mercy, broken down into corporal

and spiritual works of mercy. The seven corporal works of mercy are: feed the hungry, give drink to the thirsty, clothe the naked, visit the imprisoned, shelter the homeless, visit the sick, and bury the dead. The seven spiritual works of mercy are: instruct the ignorant, counsel the doubtful, admonish sinners, bear wrongs patiently; forgive offenses willingly; comfort the afflicted, and pray for the living and the dead.

You may not have realized it before, but if you wrote a description of the life of a Catholic home schooling father, the list would pretty much look like this. The works of mercy are just fancy ways of expressing the things you do every day. The last time you bought or cooked dinner for your family, gave your daughter a glass of iced tea, helped your son get dressed for Mass, said the Rosary with your children for the souls in Purgatory, paid your mortgage, helped your son with Phonics or Spelling, ordered a History book for your daughter, gave your wife a hug, or drove your children to Confession, you probably didn't think it was a big deal. But it *was* a big deal. It was then that you imitated Jesus. It was then that you were answering the call to be merciful. The works of mercy are the résumé of an authentic Catholic father.

St. Thérèse reminded us that sainthood is often achieved, not through magnificent works, but through a "little way" of serving Christ through others. Catholic home schooling is often difficult, but we must always recognize the opportunity it presents. Every day is a chance to show mercy toward others, and often, we don't need to look far to do it.

Fathers, make Divine Mercy a part of your lives. As Jesus instructed us, immerse yourself in His mercy, and please pray that I may do the same.

Happy and Healthy

by Ginny Seuffert

In the constant battle home school parents wage to keep our students alert and motivated, we should recall that scientific evidence has demonstrated again and again that children who eat well and get lots of fresh air and regular vigorous exercise are better students in every way. They are more alert and better able to focus on their academic work and household chores. I am not sure that robust health makes children any smarter, but it does allow students to better live up to their own personal potential.

Some moms, already feeling a tad overwhelmed, struggle daily with the battle for good nutrition for the family. We all know, there is no point in telling the kids to eat their broccoli because it is good for them. Kids don't care! A few other tricks might be more effective: "pretty plates", simple substitutions, and getting the children involved in food prep.

Unhealthy food seems to be white, beige or brown and certainly not pretty – think chicken nuggets, fries, and a cola. The only colorful item on the plate is the ketchup. Tell your children you want only pretty plates on the table. The pretty will be added with colorful servings of fruit or vegetables. For example, a yellow scrambled egg, a slice of whole grain toast with jam, a serving of berries, and orange juice. This is not only a balanced meal, but it looks appetizing too.

For lunch, serve milk and a sandwich with whole grain bread. Serve it with carrot sticks, apple slices, and a glass of 100% fruit juice! Consider a roasted left-over chicken leg, homemade sweet potato "fries" (recipe to follow), a serving of fruit, and a glass of milk. Appetizing and colorful.

(To make sweet potato "fries," peel sweet potatoes, cut in the shape of French fries, and put into a large zip lock bag with olive oil and taco seasoning. Mix well. Put a single layer on baking sheets and roast in 400 degree oven, turning occasionally, until cooked through and beginning to get crispy. The kids will love them and they are

much better for you than candied sweets with marshmallows and brown sugar.)

Some simple substitutions will also go a long way to improving the nutritional value of the food you serve. As much as possible, serve whole grains in place of the processed ones. Use brown rice instead of white as a supper side. Want to pretty it up and make it tastier too? Cook the brown rice with broth replacing the water and salt. In a separate pan sauté some chopped onion and carrot in olive oil (maybe with a bit of butter), until the onion is soft and the carrot less crunchy. Add the cooked rice, mix well and serve. Add cooked meat and you have a one dish meal.

Buy 100% whole wheat bread and cereals. Move into it slowly if necessary. The children will develop a taste for it if you remain strong!

Using fresh produce in place of canned, frozen or boxed is cheaper, more appetizing to the eye, and healthier. Most veggies are best simply steamed or stir-fried. Drizzle them with oil or add a pat of butter, and add some seasoning or grated cheese to the top. Hard vegetables such as winter squash and sweet potatoes are delicious chopped, and roasted in the oven with chunks of onion, some seasoning and even some meat, for a one-dish meal.

Finally, get the children involved in food prep. It is one of the few household tasks they attack with any enthusiasm, and they are more likely to eat food they help to prepare. Children who can safely use a vegetable peeler can peel long strips of carrots to pretty up plates. Have them prepare an attractive fruit plate for dessert. If they want to try their hand at baking, encourage them to make baked goods with some nutritional value and eye appeal, like oatmeal raisin cookies or pies made with fresh fruit.

The entire family will benefit from a healthier diet, and schoolwork will go more smoothly with healthy alert students sitting at the books. But wholesome food is only one piece of the wellness puzzle. Study after study confirms that children need lots of fresh air and vigorous exercise to function at

their best. Running around in the fresh air and sunshine is a natural, healthy activity of young children.

Some parents are concerned about having their children outside before 3:00 each day. Perhaps your school day ends at 2:30. Ask the children to help you tidy up until 3:00, and then designate 3:00 until 5:00 as outdoor play time.

The tidy-up session should be designed with an eye for exercise. Encourage the children to haul the laundry from the bedrooms to the basement. Sweep and vacuum the floors. Bend, pick up the toys and put them away. Your house will look better and your children will feel better when they go outside to play.

Resist the urge to take away outdoor time from students who have dragged their heels during the school day. At some point the mind shuts down, and forcing tearful children to sit behind the books becomes a lesson in frustration for all. Announce that uncooperative students cannot play in the yard today. Since they wasted mom's time by dawdling, now they must pitch in and help with outside work. Have them sweep the walks, rake the leaves, or police the yard – all big muscle jobs. That way they get the benefits of exercise, but feel the pinch of no play.

Another way to ensure that children do not spend play time plopped in front of a tube is to unplug the electronics after school every day. Shut down the computers, and disconnect the cable or satellite TV. Keep video games on a high shelf as an occasional treat on bad weather days.

On cold winter days, park the cars in the driveway, and chalk a hop scotch on the garage floor. Let the kids play catch with bean bags or nerf balls in the bedroom hallway. Play *Simon Sez* or *Red light/Green light* in the basement.

A final thought is the value of regular chores for an active lifestyle. Every child old enough to understand the word "chore" should be assigned one that must be done every day. Accepting responsibility for household tasks and performing them energetically builds both character and muscle while it burns off excess energy. Your home schooling will be much easier with healthy, energetic, responsible students.

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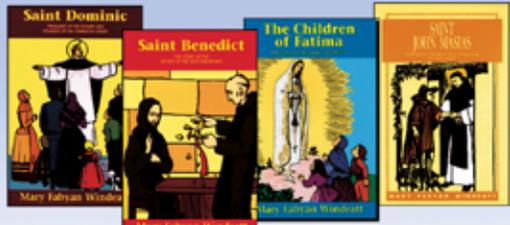
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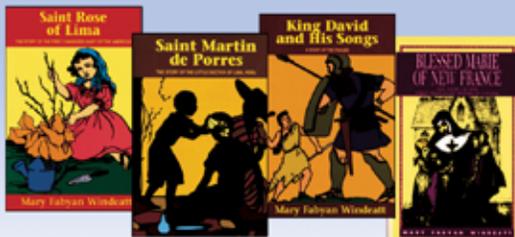
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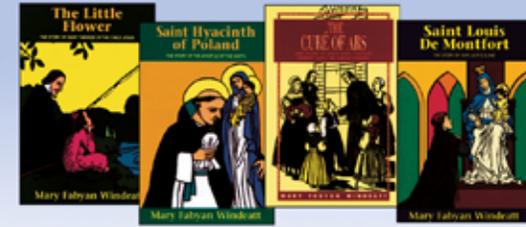
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Benedict XVI, Message for 26th World Youth Day

You are “planted and built up in Jesus Christ, firm in the faith” (cf. Col 2:7). The Letter from which these words are taken was written by Saint Paul in order to respond to a specific need of the Christians in the city of Colossae. That community was threatened by the influence of certain cultural trends that were turning the faithful away from the Gospel. Our own cultural context, dear young people, is not unlike that of the ancient Colossians. Indeed, there is a strong current of secularist thought that aims to make God marginal in the lives of people and society by proposing and attempting to create a “paradise” without him. Yet experience tells us that a world without God becomes a “hell”: filled with selfishness, broken families, hatred between individuals and nations, and a great deficit of love, joy and hope. On the other hand, wherever individuals and nations accept God’s presence, worship him in truth and listen to his voice, then the civilization of love is being built, a civilization in which the dignity of all is respected, and communion increases, with all its benefits. Yet some Christians allow themselves to be seduced by secularism or attracted by religious currents that draw them away from faith in Jesus Christ. There are others who, while not yielding to these enticements, have simply allowed

their faith to grow cold, with inevitable negative effects on their moral lives.

To those Christians influenced by ideas alien to the Gospel the Apostle Paul spoke of the power of Christ’s death and resurrection. This mystery is the foundation of our lives and the centre of Christian faith. All philosophies that disregard it and consider it “foolishness” (1 Cor 1:23) reveal their limitations with respect to the great questions deep in the hearts of human beings. As the Successor of the Apostle Peter, I too want to confirm you in the faith (cf. Lk 22:32). We firmly believe that Jesus Christ offered himself on the Cross in order to give us his love. In his passion, he bore our sufferings, took upon himself our sins, obtained forgiveness for us and reconciled us with God the Father, opening for us the way to eternal life. Thus we were freed from the thing that most encumbers our lives: the slavery of sin. We can love everyone, even our enemies, and we can share this love with the poorest of our brothers and sisters and all those in difficulty.

Note: World Youth Day will be held August 15 to 21, 2011, in Madrid, Spain.