



Seton Home Study School

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Our Lady of Good Help

On December 8, 2010, at the Mass of the Immaculate Conception, Bishop David Ricken of the Diocese of Green Bay announced a Decree on the Authenticity of the Apparitions of 1859 at the Shrine of Our Lady of Good Help in the Diocese of Green Bay.

The three apparitions of the Blessed Mother were to Adele Brise, who lived in the area now known as Champion, Wisconsin. The people in the area have long been aware of this apparition because of the many cures of supplicants who have prayed at the site.

In his Decree, Bishop Ricken said, “The Lady gave her a two-fold mission of prayer for the conversion of sinners and catechesis.”

The bishop quoted the words of the Blessed Mother in the Decree: “I am the Queen of Heaven who prays for the conversion of sinners, and I wish you to do the same. You received Holy Communion this morning, and that is well. But you must do more. Make a general confession and offer Communion for the conversion of sinners... Gather the children in this wild country and teach them what they should know for salvation... Teach them their catechism, how to sign themselves with the Sign of the Cross, and how to approach the sacraments; that is what I wish you to do. Go and fear nothing, I will help you.”

The bishop continued to say that “Adele Brise immediately began to fulfill the mandate and mission entrusted to her by the Lady and oftentimes, at great personal sacrifice, went to the homes

of the children to instruct them in the largely unsettled and forested area in Wisconsin.”

The bishop reported that there have been many conversions and physical healings over the past 150 years. “Graces have been poured out through the sacraments celebrated in this place, especially through the celebration of the Mass and the Sacrament of Reconciliation, as well as through the recitation of public devotions and private prayers.”

Bishop Ricken noted that past bishops of the area have “actively promoted the Shrine.” He finished his Decree with a declaration “that the events, apparitions, and locutions given to Adele Brise in October, 1859, do exhibit the substance of supernatural character, and I do hereby approve these apparitions as worthy of belief (although not obligatory) by the Christian faithful. I encourage the faithful to frequent this holy place as a place of solace and answered prayer. Given at the Shrine of Our Lady of Good Help, Champion, Wisconsin.”

Adele said she “saw a lady clothed in dazzling white, with a yellow sash around her waist and a crown of stars around her head, standing between two trees.” She said the Blessed Mother said, “I am the Queen of Heaven.”

A “Brief Historical Account” on the website of the Shrine of Our Lady of Good Help says that “Eventually, she was joined by several young women to form a community of Third Order (secular) Franciscans.... While Sister Adele and

her small religious community suffered trials, persecutions, and set-backs, they were also the means through which miraculous events and healings were manifest. One of the most spectacular of these events occurred in 1871, when the Shrine’s grounds were virtually untouched by the merciless fury and devastation of the Great Peshtigo Fire.”

This Decree comes at a time when we need the Help that only Jesus Christ and His mother can give. This is a time in our nation when things sometimes seem hopeless because of the serious and rampant immorality in our nation, which is dedicated to the Mother of God under her title of The Immaculate Conception. The important message from Our Lady of Good Help is to pray for the conversion of sinners and to teach catechism to our children. Certainly we home schooling parents have been given a special and timely gift this Advent Season: the knowledge that there is help from heaven for the future of our country if we teach the catechism to our children, and receive the sacraments frequently. Let’s not forget the final words of the Blessed Mother: “Go and fear nothing. I will help you.”

Our Mother of Good Help, pray for us. -MKC

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

My friends say I should send my children to an excellent nearby Catholic school. What should I say?

Sometimes we forget that according to the Church, parents have the primary responsibility to educate their children. Parents may choose schools or other means to do that, but it is a matter of choice.

However, the best education is from the parents themselves because parents have been given a special sacramental grace from the Sacrament of Matrimony to fulfill the primary duty of parents: to educate their children.

God instituted the Sacrament of Matrimony for the very purpose of producing children who would be raised in such a way that they ultimately will attain heaven.

No teacher in any classroom in any school has the sacramental graces which were given to you when you were married. The graces you have been given by God are particularly designed for you and for your children. Even the holiest saint in the world does not have the special graces a parent has which are designed for that parent and for the children of that parent.

We have fallen behind due to illness in the family. Do we rush ahead and catch up, or do we take our time and make sure the lessons are thoroughly learned, though we might need to continue school into the summer?

Some subjects might be conducive to rushing ahead. If you have an A student in spelling, for example, perhaps just studying the words and taking a test every two days would be sufficient. You could bypass the workbook exercises, and “catch up”

quickly. However, some subjects should not be rushed, especially those that are dependent on each and every past exercise being learned well. You certainly want to be sure your son has mastered each math lesson and English lesson; not doing so would prove to be a real problem in the weeks ahead.

Students in the elementary levels could read one or two history or science chapters over a weekend, but students in high school definitely will need to take more time with every subject to do well on the tests. High school students need to keep in mind that the GPA (Grade Point Average) on their transcript is important for financial aid for college. Depending on how far behind your student is, a high school student might take one course over the summer to “catch up.”

Another idea for a high school student is to have a tutor come in once a week, just to keep the student moving ahead on schedule.

However, home schooling families should not feel pressured to stay on a schedule other than their own. It is much more important to learn as much as possible and obtain good grades. Schools are required to keep moving, whether or not an individual student gets sick and falls behind, whether or not the student actually “conquers” the lessons. A good Catholic education is a worthy goal no matter how much time it takes.

I started my four-year-old son with your Kindergarten program, and it is going very slowly. My husband thinks he is not doing well and maybe I should put him in a preschool.

Let’s remember that the most important lessons we need to teach

a four-year-old are not in a book. We need to teach good attitudes about mom and dad and the other children. We need to teach the importance of helping others, picking up toys, and helping to keep the house tidy. We need to teach him not to run around the house and endanger himself and others. We need to teach prayers, respect for the Mass, and respect for others.

We need to teach a four-year-old how to brush his teeth and wash his face, to put away his clothes and put dirty clothes in the hamper. We need to teach him to eat his dinner even if

At the preschool level, there is a wide range of mental ability. Lessons should be very attuned to the individual child.

he doesn’t like everything, and to offer up to Jesus what he does not like to do. We need to make sure he gets enough exercise every day.

Once in a while, we can sit down with him and open a picture book and read to him. We need to show him books with pictures of Jesus and Mary and the saints. If he sits for more than 15 minutes, we can give him an arithmetic activity book. If he is interested, and only if he shows interest, we can teach him addition and subtraction facts using money or playing cards or flashcards.

In my opinion, institutional preschools are very problematic. At this age, there is a wide range of mental ability. Lessons should be very attuned to the individual child. In an institutional setting, the quick learner will often be held back while the child who is not quite ready will become frustrated.

My husband has lost his job. I am keeping my high school students enrolled, but I’d like to keep my

younger children enrolled in just one or two courses. Which courses do you recommend?

Keep your children enrolled in the Reading courses. They will learn reading and thinking skills, plus analytical skills, especially when they write book reports. The second course I would recommend is English. English is especially helpful for analytical skills and understanding relationships between words and ideas, and consequently helps in writing paragraphs and book reports. The third course I would recommend is math because many moms find their

Preschool children, and even toddlers, know that something is going on with the others but they are not part of it.

student needs the counseling help that is available from Seton. I recommend Religion as a fourth course because that is so important.

At Seton, we pray every day for our home schooling families, and have a special intention for all parents who are out of work.

Sometimes I cannot get through to the counselor I want to speak with.

Each one of our counselors has a personal extension number and many have direct dial numbers. You can reach them more quickly, and directly, if you use the direct number or extension. The counselor numbers are all listed in every newsletter. If you want to reach anyone else, once you do reach that person, ask for the extension number so that if you call again, you can reach that person directly.

You can find the academic counselors, as well as other departments, if you go on our website and click on "About Us".

I have a friend who is unhappy about her son in the local high school. She

wonders about enrolling him in the middle of the year.

There is no reason why he could not enroll in the middle of the year. We always suggest for mid-year enrollments that the parents and students look over our lesson plans and textbooks to see where the student should begin. In some subjects he may need to take our 2nd and 4th quarters because he covered the information in the 1st and 3rd. In subjects such as English and math, he will need to look over our 1st and 2nd quarters and make sure he has those topics covered. If not, he may need to review what we taught in 1st and 2nd before he begins the 3rd quarter. Gene McGuirk (extension 117) is our high school enrollment counselor. He can review the past course work with the parent and the student to help determine where he should begin with each subject.

I am concerned about my younger preschool children who seem jumpy and demanding, and don't want to settle down when I need to teach the older children.

Younger children, especially in a family in which the older children seem to be getting the attention, may be somewhat jealous of the time mom is spending with the older children. Also, these preschool children want to be part of what is happening all around them: home schooling.

Preschool children, and even toddlers, know that something is going on with the others but they are not part of it. You should consider how you can make the younger children part of it. The solution is simple: give them their own heavy-duty, small-child friendly, "schoolbooks."

One of the children, or a grandparent or an uncle or aunt, can be a "teacher's aide" and spend time reading the pre-school books to the pre-schoolers. Of course, Mom and Dad can do that also. While understanding might be limited in the little one, the fact is understanding may be more than we can ever know!

The main reason why pre-school children, or even children up to ten,

are fidgety and demanding is because their little brains are demanding and these demands are not being met! Children can learn much younger than we think, and their brains are jumping out of their skin with frustration at not learning.

Nevertheless, such teaching of these little ones must be done without any pressure. It is simply a matter of presenting the stories and ideas, and the child will absorb whatever he can.

Stay in constant prayer to the guardian angels for these little ones, as well as for all your children, that they will learn everything Jesus wants them to learn.

My son wants to be an engineer and wants to attend the nearby state university. I'm not sure it is the right choice.

So many parents and young people see college as a place to prepare for a future career. The only problem is that careers change. How many people are still working in the very same field for which they were trained in college?

We also could ask, "How many people are married to the same person they married when they were young?" Choice of a spouse will likely have more impact on your child's life than choice of career. Since many people find their spouse in college, you must ask yourself what type of young ladies he will be meeting at the state university.

I suggest liberal arts studies for at least two years at a good Catholic college. A liberal arts education in history, logic, and literature will teach a student how to think and how to analyze. And only at a good Catholic college will a student learn traditional Catholic philosophy and theology. After receiving this solid foundation, the student can go on to major in a specialty.

Keep praying for your son that he understands why you will help him to attain his eternal goals by attending a good Catholic college. Under Parent Resources under Home on our Home Page, we list several Catholic colleges to consider.

Saint Elizabeth Ann Seton

Elizabeth Ann Seton, born in 1774, was the first native-born American to be canonized a saint.

Her father was a physician, while her mother was the daughter of an Episcopalian minister. In 1794, Elizabeth married William Seton, a businessman. They had two boys and three girls. Her marriage was happy, but Will's health declined. William and Elizabeth journeyed to Italy for his health at the invitation of his business partners, the Filicchi brothers.

It was hoped that the Italian climate would improve William's health, but he died soon after arriving in Italy. The Filicchi brothers and their wives—all devout Catholics—were very kind to Elizabeth. Through them Elizabeth felt her first attraction to the Catholic Church. Up to this time, however, Elizabeth was a daily reader of the Scriptures and spent time in meditation and serious consideration of religious matters.

Elizabeth was impressed with the devout Catholic way of life and with the Catholic belief in the Real Presence in the Holy Eucharist.

When Elizabeth returned to New York, she opened a small school. On the recommendation of the Filicchis, she contacted Bishop John Carroll. It was not long before Elizabeth became a Catholic in 1805, in the presence of Bishop Carroll.

Many of Elizabeth's Protestant friends were very unfriendly and even tried to block her way from entering a Catholic church. Her Catholic friends had to protect her at the church door.

Only four years after becoming a Catholic, Elizabeth took her vows as a nun in the presence of Archbishop Carroll. She now became Mother Seton. Four other women joined her to become nuns in Mother Seton's

first community, which became the American Sisters of Charity.

Archbishop Carroll then invited Mother Seton to open a school for girls. A retired sea captain purchased a farm for her in Emmitsburg, Maryland, which she and her sisters turned into a school. Mother Seton named the school St. Joseph's Academy, which became the first parochial school in the United States.

Mother Seton, who was a home schooling mother, had no college degree but evidently was a great educator. Her holiness and sincere desire to help children learn their Catholic Faith made her a popular success among the Catholics in the Emmitsburg area.

Parents were particularly impressed because, being a former Protestant who spent hours a day studying the Bible, Elizabeth was known for illustrating her teaching by quoting the Gospel, especially the parables told by Jesus. She told the parents that all she was doing was teaching, but God was doing the conversion in the hearts of the children.

Elizabeth's life was not easy, and she suffered many sorrows and troubles. She watched her husband die of an illness. She worried about providing for her five children. She watched her daughter Rebecca die a slow, painful death from tuberculosis at the age of fourteen. Her two sons were a constant worry as they did not follow Elizabeth's Catholic teachings as they should have. Funds at her school were low, and it was often bitterly cold and drafty at St. Joseph's Academy. She persevered every hour of every day because she had faith that teaching children was the work God wanted her to do.

In 1814, Mother Seton opened an orphanage and a free school

in Philadelphia, two incredible endeavors for anyone.

Today, the communities of Mother Seton's sisters number about 10,000 members, who operate many schools, orphanages, and child care centers. Her sisters have convents in Canada, Bolivia, and Japan as well in the United States. Various communities of Sisters of Charity are carrying on their work throughout the world.

One might ask how one woman could accomplish so much, but she would say that she was working for Jesus and His Church. She knew what she was called to do by Jesus. She believed deeply in the teachings of the Catholic Church. She knew the Church was as solid as the Rock of Peter, and she based her work on a firm foundation.

Mother Seton was happy to be a nun and once described her convent rules as a "bit and bridle of gold." Obligations were "reins of silk." She did not count the cost. She believed every truth of the Church of Jesus, and practiced every value His Church taught. She did not pick and choose which doctrines she believed in or which virtues she would follow and which she would not follow.

Mother Seton was a saint because she was unconditional in her devotion to the teachings of Christ. She knew instinctively that being a wife, a mother, and then a nun were each a special gift.

There are many Catholic men and women today who are not rich in this world's goods but believe strongly in the Catholic Faith. They are deeply committed to their spouses and children. They work hard and daily try to practice the virtues of the saints. As one priest said, "God sees your efforts and He will never forget you."

Redeeming the Time Wisely by Ginny Seuffert

One of the biggest perks to home education is the efficiency of the method. Think of all the time wasted in school: lining up to use the bathroom, lining up for lunch, lining up to go out for recess, and then lining up again to come in, and finally lining up to leave the classroom at the end of the day. This does not even count the time spent going to and from the school building.

It is easy for home schooling families to do better than that. While kids in brick and mortar schools hang up their coats in the locker room and wait until everyone is seated to start lessons, our students need only pick up their pencils and open the first book. So, what to do when your children finish their work with time to spare?

Fresh Air and Sunshine!

American children need to play more, lots more. In nice weather, all youngsters, from preschool to high school, should spend no less than an hour a day in vigorous exercise in fresh air. Fence in a portion of your yard so the children can play in relative safety. Save money by doing without Wii and video games, and purchase bikes, swing sets, badminton sets, and a basketball hoop. If you worry about safety, consider purchasing an outside video monitor so you can keep an eye on things. If you live in an apartment, take a daily walk, or go to a park.

Join Teams

As the kids get older, many ask to join organized sports. This is often a good choice as students benefit from the structure and discipline as they increase physical coordination and learn skills. Outside the family, I prefer kids socializing on teams, where everyone shares a purpose, rather than just "hanging around" with friends. On the other hand, some families cannot afford the hefty sign-up fees, or to purchase the necessary equipment. Also, moms with big families do not always have the time to drive children to team practices and games. Although modern parents often view team sports as a must, do not worry

if your family cannot fit them in. Most generations of children grew up playing with their siblings and neighbors in the yard, and they turned out just fine.

Play Inside!

Although I am famous for sending my children outside to play in the snow, some days are just too cold, or too hot, or windy, or rainy, or dark to allow outside play. The solution to this dilemma is NOT to turn on the TV or the video games. Younger children love to play with toys that stimulate the imagination such as doll houses, kitchen sets, and army guys. They learn spatial relationships and improve small motor coordination playing with Duplos and Lincoln Logs. When they are older, Lego-type toys have loads of plans that are both fun and educational. School age kids enjoy board games and nothing is as thrifty, or as fun, as a deck of cards. Playing together builds close relationships among siblings.

Enrich Education

Seton's *Art for Young Catholics* series has several books with great ideas for home projects especially relating to the liturgical year. They also sell coloring books for the younger children and instructional DVD's for the eager artists. Other grades in the series teach art appreciation and can be reinforced with books on loan from your local library.

After school hours are often devoted to music practice, but do not despair if your family cannot afford pricey lessons. Seton has a nifty music program that involves learning to play the piano on a keyboard hooked up to the computer. That's computer time even I can get behind. If that is too much for the family purse, the recorder is an inexpensive musical instrument that can be mastered easily by almost anyone.

Learn a New Language

Experts agree that learning a second language during the early years offers multiple benefits. In addition to the obvious advantage of increased communication ability, bi-lingual students perform better on standardized

tests, especially math, and develop a stronger grasp of English itself. These students gain a greater appreciation of cultural diversity and down the road are very attractive job applicants.

The Seton catalog lists a variety of foreign language products suitable for school age children, and lots of audio programs for preschoolers are available online. It is especially nice if your child can learn your family's ancestral language, perhaps assisted by Grandma or Grandpa. If that is not possible, many Americans have bilingual friends or neighbors who might be willing to give your children some time.

Read! Read! Read!

Without question, the very best students are recreational readers, and many parents insist on an hour of recreational reading everyday. It is the best possible use of those hours after school. Nothing, absolutely nothing, brings a bigger educational bang for your buck than a well-worn library card.

Some moms wonder what to get for younger children who are not yet ready to tackle even the easiest readers? Little kids love non-fiction picture books and will often spend hours of quiet time pouring over them. Which ones specifically? Follow the children's interests. If your daughter received a dollhouse for Christmas, find a book with lots of pictures of famous dollhouses. Do the little ones miss the zoo this time of year? Find books with glossy pictures of exotic animals. Most children love dinosaur picture books. One of my grandsons was interested in planes and spent hours looking at pictures of fighter jets.

Once a student is a fluent reader, a vast world of books opens up. A good place to begin your search for great titles is the supplemental reading list found at the back of your reading lesson plans and also available in the "parent resources" section of the Seton website. All children love mystery and adventure books, especially historical fiction, and in addition to enhancing reading skills, many novels stimulate curiosity about real events.

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Forty by John Clark

As I write this article, I will turn forty years old in ten days. You would think with four decades of life on this earth under my belt that I'd have a lot of wisdom to impart, but the following will have to do anyway.

1) It doesn't matter how you start—it's how you finish. Because he had run from God for many years, and only later in life did he enter the Catholic Church, St. Augustine lamented to God: "Late have I loved thee." Although we all do it in different ways, we've all loved God late. But the hope of sinners is that God is not looking at the *lateness*; He's looking at the *love*.

2) Forgiveness is a lifelong process. Whenever I think of someone who has crossed me or done or said something mean to me (either in reality or in my imagination), I get out a sheet of paper and write down 10 things about him that are good. I might list things like: "God loves him" and "He says the Rosary," or "He works hard to provide for his children." By the time I get to the sixth or seventh attribute, I begin to realize how stupid I have been to have not forgiven him sooner. By the way, I've never finished a list. I've never needed to finish one. I also pray for something else. Other people may have had to make a list about me, and I ask God that they will have a special grace to forgive me.

3) If you want to have a better marriage, love Jesus more. Since I was married when I was 21, I've spent roughly half my life married. And I know it sounds strange, but I don't remember clearly what it feels like to *not* be married. Actually, I may remember what it's like, but I just don't want to remember. A life without Lisa is too difficult to ponder.

In college, after Lisa broke up with me (all together, I think she broke up with me three times), a friend tried to console me by saying that "there are other fish in the sea." I told him, "You don't understand. You don't get over Lisa McGuire." And I wouldn't have. The fact that I find Lisa freakishly beautiful is not what makes this marriage work. It's the simplicity of her love of

Jesus, and not the beauty of her face, that has been a main ingredient of our marriage. How do you thank someone who has taught you to love Jesus more completely?

Good marriages don't mean you never argue, or that your spouse always looks good. (If it did, Lisa would have left me years ago. There's a reason I don't include a picture with these columns.) Good marriages indicate that even though two strong wills both want something different, each spouse recognizes a third party that each defers to: Jesus. When my spiritual life is going well, my marriage is going well. I'm guessing this applies to almost everyone.

4) Children are expensive, but the payoff is massive. As a parent who is currently paying for three children simultaneously in orthodontics, let's stop trying to dance around the fact that having children is expensive. Don't let that ruin your day or influence you too much. A lot of people put off having children because they need to invest for the future. Let me tell you something: having children *is* investing for the future. The sooner the world learns that, the better off it will be.

5) Children are a lot smarter than we give them credit for. This morning, before I left for work, it began to snow for the first time of the season. In my house, "snow" is known as a four-letter-word. I have a litany of reasons not to like the powdery substance, not the least of which is that it has to be cold to snow. ("Cold" is another four-letter-word.) As my mind raced with reasons to be depressed, I heard seven-year-old Dominica from upstairs gleefully announce: "It's snowing." The wonders of God's creation are obvious in the heart of a little girl. She's the smart one.

6) God never quits. Author Francis Thompson wrote a poem called "The Hound of Heaven" in which he describes God as a loving Being who constantly pursues those He has created. Even when we run from God, God never gives up the search. Thompson writes:

I fled Him, down the nights and
down the days;
I fled Him, down the arches of the
years;
I fled Him, down the labyrinthine
ways
Of my own mind; and in the mist
of tears.

I have run from God many times through sin or lack of trust. We all have. But God never ran away from me—and He never ran away from you either. He has been with us all along, patiently waiting for us to accept His love. As I begin my fifth decade on earth, my prayer is that I stop running.

7) Kindness is the solution. I have just finished writing a book about economics from a Catholic perspective. By the grace of God, it should be out sometime in 2011. In this book, I argue that the main problem of economics is envy, which is defined as "sorrow for another's good." I further argue that the solution to economics is kindness, which could be defined as the "joy for another's good." Kindness is never wrong, but rarely practiced, at least not by me. This year, pick ten random acts of kindness to practice, and make them habits. Let me start you off with a couple ideas. First, the next time you're in the drive-through at a fast-food restaurant, when you pay for your food, also pay for the person in the car behind you. They'll talk about it for weeks. As Willy Wonka reminded us, kind deeds shine in a weary world. Second, say a Hail Mary for one stranger every day. It might be the first time that anyone has ever asked for Mary's intercession for that person in his entire life. Think about that.

8) Home-schooling means having a conversation with your child, and that's a pretty neat thing. It might be a twelve-year-old conversation, and it might be about geography and history, but it's a conversation nevertheless. By the way, for those of you having a hard time home-schooling, remember that it was once much more difficult for parents, and much more awkward for their kids. There is a song called "I Was Country When Country Wasn't Cool." I'm proud of the fact that I was home schooling when home schooling wasn't cool.

9) **Every day is a chance to love God more.** The rest of my life may have dramatic moments of loving God, but most moments will probably occur in the form of small things, such as turning the pages of a book, playing Scrabble with my kids, or watching snow fall.

10) **I am the luckiest man alive.** Recently, it's with particular understanding that I view Lou Gehrig's comment about being the luckiest man alive. We all should feel like that, and I'm ashamed for times I haven't. God came down from heaven and died on a cross for me because He loves me. The doubt we sometimes have springs from our inability to see things clearly, and to view them as a puzzle. When I was a little boy, my mom used to buy me puzzles. I remember opening the boxes and seeing various pieces which, by themselves, made very little sense. I would struggle to find the piece that fit into another. It takes patience to build a puzzle, along with the faith that the right pieces are in the box. One by one, I would patiently put the pieces together until the magical moment when I'd finally begin to recognize the picture that I had been assembling. From that point on, putting the puzzle together was easy—the pieces just become easier to find. There were times I doubted, but after forty years, the puzzle is becoming clearer to me. The times that were the hardest—the ones that seemed least likely to fit—

were the times that made the puzzle great.

After forty years, I have never been surer of my unworthiness to be with God, and never more sure of God's Holy Will to save my soul. Everything has aligned so perfectly: the family to which I was born into, my parents, the girl I married, the place I live, the friends that God put in my path, my children who constantly remind me of God's love and mercy, and the priests I have known. Everyone's path has been different, but everyone's path is meant to lead to God.

Time, cont'd from page 5

When searching for juvenile fiction, it is prudent to look for books written before 1970. That is not to say that many fine children's books have not been published since then; they most certainly have. Sadly though, standards have changed, and more recent children's literature may contain graphic themes or images, and ideas that question our Catholic values. Before 1970, you will almost always be assured of wholesome and uplifting stories. Parents need to be more vigilant with books published since then. Seton sells many fiction titles for children.

Insist that at least some student reading comes from the non-fiction section. Historical periods, characters and events come alive in biographies. A

short chapter in a science book becomes serious study when supplemented with related books. In my house, field trips were always preceded by some study of what we were going to see.

Electronics

The electronic option is dead last because most American children spend too much time plugged in. But some days, when the weather is extreme, or mom has morning sickness, they can fill a need. Properly used, electronic media offer our students options not readily available elsewhere. They can tour the Louvre or visit the moon online. Your local librarian can find CD's and DVD's to teach classical music to students of all ages. Others let students visit the Serengeti or go inside a beehive.

Caution is in order concerning some otherwise very high quality educational videos. Sensitive little ones may be distressed by graphic images of a cheetah attacking and lunging on a cute little baby gazelle that was prancing about moments before. Also, some nature videos certainly move the "birds and bees" talk to the front burner.

There is never an excuse for home schooled children to be bored. This column outlines some healthy, fun, and educational activities to keep your children occupied after school. When all else fails, I'm sure there are some undone chores around the house.

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Catechesis in Our Time

The family's catechetical activity has a special character, which is in a sense irreplaceable. This special character has been rightly stressed by the Church, particularly by the Second Vatican Council. Education in the faith by parents, which should begin from the children's tenderest age, is already being given when the members of a family help each other to grow in faith through the witness of their Christian lives, a witness that is often without words but which perseveres throughout a day-to-day life lived in accordance with the Gospel. This catechesis is more incisive when, in the course of family events (such as the reception of the sacraments, the celebration of great liturgical feasts, the birth of a child, a bereavement) care is taken to explain in the home the Christian or religious content of these events.

...these truths about the main questions of faith and Christian living are thus repeated within a family setting impregnated with love and respect... The

parents themselves profit from the effort that this demands of them, for in a catechetical dialogue of this sort, each individual both receives and gives.

...in places where anti-religious legislation endeavors even to prevent education in the faith, and in places where widespread unbelief or invasive secularism makes real religious growth practically impossible, "the church of the home" remains the one place where children and young people can receive an authentic catechesis. Thus there cannot be too great an effort on the part of Christian parents to prepare for this ministry of being their own children's catechists, and to carry it out with tireless zeal.

Catechesis in Our Time
Apostolic Exhortation of
Pope John Paul II, 1979