



# Seton Home Study School

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## Mary’s Assumption and Crowning

In the month of August, we celebrate not only the Assumption of the Blessed Mother’s body into heaven on the 15<sup>th</sup>, but also the crowning of Our Lady as Queen of Heaven on the 22<sup>nd</sup> of August.

Tradition in the Eastern Catholic Church is that the apostles were with the Blessed Mother at her death—or “dormition” as it is called, the “falling asleep.” However, St. Thomas was the only apostle not present at the time, and when he arrived three days later and asked to see her body in the tomb, they opened it for him. To their amazement, her body was gone. The traditional belief is that Mary herself appeared to the apostles and told them that her Son Jesus took her body to heaven.

The Church has declared the Blessed Mother as the Queen of Heaven, and celebrates the Feast of the Queenship of Mary a week after the feast of the Assumption.

Some of the prayers of the feast-day make us reflect on just how much God depended on Mary for the salvation of mankind. Our salvation, based on the Incarnation of the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity, was made possible by the humble assent of Mary.

“Our Lady, you have become the throne of the Most High, and today you go up from earth to heaven.

Your glory, shining forth with the radiance of divine grace, surpasses every other splendor. ...Hail, O Woman full of grace, the Lord is with you, the Lord who, because of you, bestows great mercy upon the world.”

“Behold, all the heavenly hierarchies – the Dominations, Thrones, Principalities, Virtues, Powers, Cherubim, and Seraphim – sing a hymn of glory to your Dormition. All human races rejoice at your glory, and kings, together with the angels and archangels, sing out to you: ‘Hail, O Woman full of grace!’ The Lord is with you, the Lord who, because of you, bestows great mercy upon the world.”

“As for the most sublime Powers of heaven, they came... to escort and to pay their last respect to the most honorable body that had contained Life Itself. Filled with awe, ...they professed ... in a hushed voice: ‘Behold the Queen of All, the divine maiden is coming!’ ...Lift up your gates and receive with becoming majesty the Mother of the Light that never fades. Because through her, salvation was made possible for our human race. ...For the special honor that made her sublime is beyond our understanding...”

“Wherefore, O most pure Mother of God, forever alive with your Son, the Source of Life, do

not cease to intercede with Him that He may guard and save your people from every trouble, for you are our intercessor.” [Byzantine Daily Worship, pp. 755 to 757]

“Hail, Holy Queen, enthroned above, Hail Mother of mercy and of love! Our life, our sweetness here below, Our hope in sorrow and in woe. Turn then most gracious Advocate, Towards us thine eyes compassionate. When this our exile is complete, Show us your Son, our Jesus sweet. O clement, gracious Mother sweet, O Virgin Mary, we entreat, O Maria.” (words from *Hail, Holy Queen Enthroned Above*)

Each of us homeschooling mothers needs to implore the Blessed Mother to help us to be the wife and mother we are called to be to assist our family to reach our eternal and heavenly home. The Catholic tone of a family life of sacrifice needs to come from the mother, who is usually the primary caretaker and teacher of the home and family.

- MKC

### Inside . . .

|                             |   |
|-----------------------------|---|
| Questions .....             | 2 |
| Ever Ancient, Ever New..... | 4 |
| Lost in Translation.....    | 5 |
| Cardinal Virtues .....      | 6 |
| The Priestly Calling .....  | 8 |



## *Questions We Are Asked*

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

**I am a little surprised at the number of books in the box for my child to work on this year.**

It may seem like a lot of books when you open the box, but remember that you do have a whole school year ahead of you for your child to accomplish the work. You should realize, as well, that the lesson plans don't necessarily call for every page in every book to be completed. Also, not an equal amount of time is needed for each subject for each day. Some subjects—such as music and art—you won't be teaching every day. Other subjects—such as spelling and vocabulary—should not take more than 20 minutes a day.

For some subjects, such as math, you want to make sure your child understands the new concept and then does the page on his own. In reading, you want to listen to your child read for at least some time each day. For the history and science, you need to make sure your child reads the assignments, understands the concepts, and then let him answer the review questions on his own.

Take the time, without your child first, and then with your child, before the school year begins to review the lesson plans, and to look over what tests need to be sent to Seton or be taken over the Internet. Skim through the books and see how the lessons progress and what is expected. Work with your child to develop a daily schedule. Your student is more likely to stick with the schedule which he has helped plan.

Hopefully, your husband can be involved. Let him look over the materials with you and ask him if there is a subject he might like to teach, or at least "monitor" for you.

If you have a question, please look on the Seton Message Board or contact one of our counselors.

**Do you have any tips for teaching high school English?**

Before the school year starts, you and your student should spend at least an hour looking through the English lesson plans. The lesson plans are extensive because we try to answer questions which students and parents have asked in the past.

Notice the *Handbook* in most courses. The directions are explained very thoroughly, particularly in relation to the book analyses. As your student reads the book, he should be constantly referring to the *Handbook*.

One thing to consider is to have your student start the English course early, and keep ahead of schedule, even finishing half the course before Christmas vacation. We suggest this because many students put off their English lessons and book analyses. By waiting to do the assignments until the last minute, grades are often not as good as they could be if the assignments were done earlier in the year.

Some students do the English first, and then do the other subjects. Some students do one subject at a time, thus finishing up and obtaining grades and credits more quickly. For students who get "bogged" down or discouraged, this one-at-a-time procedure has proven to be very encouraging. Be sure that your child starts every day with an uplifting type of prayer.

**My son in 7<sup>th</sup> grade seems to have a problem with knowing how to study.**

We have a study skills course on our website which can be printed out or followed online. On our new website, go to the Home Page, then click on Parent Resources, then scroll down to Free Online Study Skills course.

Probably the major reason why students struggle with most courses is their lack of study skills. Please have your son do the Study Skills course before he begins the school year. It might be worthwhile making a copy of some of the rules and putting them on his closet door. Consider asking your husband to work with your son for one of his difficult subjects, and to help him with following the Study Skill rules.

Sometimes boys and girls of this modern age become overly involved with hand-held computers and other technical gadgets. They want answers

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*Waiting to do the assignments until the last minute, grades are often not as good as if the assignments were done earlier.*

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or results immediately without recognizing that in learning, success comes from a process of applying one's brain with organizational skills.

**My daughter wants to read different books for her book reports.**

We certainly encourage your daughter to read whatever books you would like her to read, but for the book report for Seton, we need her to read and write about the books we send her. The main reason is that our teacher-graders cannot grade a book they have not read.

In the elementary grades, we have a variety of saint books for the different grade levels, so she may exchange a saint biography for a different one, as long as it on the list for that grade level.

**We still have not finished up everything from last year.**

Perhaps the most important thing for you and the children to do is to stay calm, say some prayers to the children's patron saints, and work out a schedule on a calendar.

It often helps to set short-term and long-term goals. For example,

have a goal for today, for this week, and for this month. Focus on reaching your daily goal, and your weekly and monthly goals should fall into place.

In addition, you can work out some shortcuts with your children in subjects for which they are doing well.

If you are two quarters or less behind, you need to consider which subjects are the most difficult for each one of your children. For instance, if a child is struggling with a major subject, such as math or English, don't be thinking about any shortcuts; be sure he does all the assignments. However,

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*You and your children need to work with a calendar and a schedule, and have reachable goals in a short period of time.*

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they could be done every day for two or three hours, broken up during the day.

Some subjects may be easy for a child, so you might think of shortcuts. For instance, in spelling or vocabulary, have your child study the words and do only one exercise, and take the test the next day.

The reading and writing exercises, especially the book reports, are very important. However, your child could focus on, for instance, reading the book for the report in two full days, and writing the report for the next two full days.

You and your children need to work with a calendar and a schedule, and have reachable goals in a short period of time. Realistic achievable goals will help everyone to stay on track. Don't allow interruptions. The children may need to give up certain outside activities for a time, but the homeschooling is what the children need to be doing now.

**There seems to be some concern about homeschooled students who go to college and do not have the discipline to meet certain deadlines for college assignments.**

College is a big adjustment for anyone. This is especially true when students attend a college far away from home and are on their own for the first time. They are on their own not only for eating right and getting their laundry done, but also for completing their school work properly and on time.

However, students who have graduated from Seton actually have an advantage in college. Seton students have usually already learned the necessity of self-motivation and self-discipline—two skills that are often sorely lacking in many new college students.

Seton graduates tend to do extremely well in college. Seton graduates have been accepted at hundreds of public and private colleges, and many have graduated with the highest honors.

**Why do your graders give “incomplete” instead of a grade?**

An incomplete gives the student a second chance to finish the work. Sometimes a student is asked to write two paragraphs, and we receive two sentences. Many teachers would simply give a D or F grade because it falls so far short of the assignment. We would rather give the student a second chance than receive a failing grade. If the work comes back a second time as it was sent the first time, the paper will receive a failing grade for that assignment.

Sometimes parents recognize that an assignment is incomplete and want the assignment to be graded anyway. If you want an incomplete assignment to be graded anyway, just make a note on the assignment.

**Why do you insist on four book reports for the year?**

In many Catholic schools, and even in some public schools, book reports are required each month. The four book reports we require are really necessary for students to learn thinking skills properly.

What makes book reports, or book analyses, more difficult than most other assignments is that the student is required to analyze, to think inductively, to read certain facts

and come to some conclusions. It is easy to memorize spelling words and vocabulary definitions. It is easy to learn math rules and apply them, to study various science concepts or to list the parts of an insect. It is easy to understand the meaning of a verb and to circle the verb in a sentence.

What stretches the mind is to read about the actions and words of a character in a book and then think about the character, to analyze the character, to put together certain facts and come to a conclusion, in your own words.

This analytical skill is important beyond the reading of a book. It is important in listening to the talk on radio or television about important issues of the day, and analyzing ideas in light of the truths we have learned in our religion classes.

**I have been thinking about writing a Mission Statement for my homeschool. Have you any ideas for me?**

A mission statement regarding your homeschooling should be very personal, relating to what you and your husband want to achieve for the children as a result of your homeschooling.

In the Old Testament, God tells the Israelites that His laws should constantly be before their faces and on their minds. For this reason, it has long been the custom of observant Jews to carry sacred writings attached to their arm or their head. These serve as constant reminders of what they believe.

A mission statement, placed in a prominent place in your home, such as the refrigerator door, can serve as a reminder of what you believe and why you are doing what you do. A mission statement can be a great reminder to everyone about the importance of homeschooling on those days when difficulties or frustrations come along. In my book, *Catholic Home Schooling*, the Foreword by Father Fox, and the chapters on *Why Catholic Home Schooling* and *Church Teachings on Marriage and Education* will give you plenty of ideas to start with.

## *The World is Charged with the Grandeur of God*

*by Dr. Mitchell Kalpagnian*

One of the greatest of Catholic poets, Gerard Manley Hopkins, S.J., is best known for his appreciation of the beauty, variety, and individuality (“this-ness”) of God’s creation. As a poet he saw God’s hand everywhere in nature and in human nature. As he wrote in one of his poems, “Christ plays in ten thousand places”: in the world above of stars and sky (“Look at the stars! look, look up at the skies!”); in the world below of the changing seasons (“Nothing is so beautiful as Spring”); in the kingdom of animals and plants, the “brute beauty” of powerful birds like the windhover and of stalwart stallions, and the delicate beauty of the bluebell (“I know the beauty of Our Lord by it”); and in the realm of human nature, whose wonderful diversity and richness he compares to the abundance of tastes and aromas that enhance the art of cooking. Two poems that testify to God’s everpresent love and goodness are “Pied Beauty,” perhaps Hopkins’ most famous poem, and “Brothers,” one that is not as well known as it deserves to be.

“Pied Beauty” portrays God’s handiwork as the art of a master craftsman. As an artist God leaves evidence of His stamp everywhere. The immeasurable number of beautiful things in the world, God’s inexhaustible riches in nature, His love of infinite variety and endless color all lead the poet to know the “invisible” things of God by the things that are “visible,” as St. Paul said. “Pied Beauty” or “dappled things” refer to God’s love of distinctive, individual things that are marked with “couple-color” to make them unique. In the poem Hopkins’ observations discover beauty in all its inexhaustible variety.

First, he notices the beauty of the heavens that is formed at sunrise and sunset when the blended hues of red, yellow and orange adorn the sky to create the richness of color and the beauty of contrast. Next, the poet sees in the “brinded” (brindled) cow the same pattern that shapes the sky: endless combinations of color that appear on the skin or fur of the animals — black and white

or brown and white patches and streaks that punctuate the world with beautiful strokes. God’s love of color and variety appears again in the rainbow trout that sparkle with iridescent beams of light and reflect unique configurations of rose moles, another example of “dappled” (spotted) beauty. The shapes and formations of chestnuts are also ever-varying, no two ever possessing beauty exactly the same size or contour. Thus all of creation, from the beautiful skies above to the rainbow trout in the waters below, from the animal world of brindled cows to the plant kingdom of chestnut falls, all reflect the glory of God and His exquisite workmanship.

In “Brothers” the younger brother John (Jack) is chosen for a part in a play at the parish hall. During the performance, the older brother Henry watches from off-stage as a spectator, since he has no part in the play. While “roguish” Jack, described also as “brass-bold,” shows no nervousness or hesitation about appearing on stage and acts with perfect confidence, Henry suffers stage fright, bashfulness, and jittery nerves as he watches his brother perform. How do we explain the fact that Henry, who is not even an actor in the play, feels more anxiety about the performance than his daredevil younger brother? It is Henry who blushes and bites his lip, who clutches his hands and clasps his knees, who drops his eyes and dares not look, whereas Jack, “young dog,” awaits his cue with poise and aplomb.

In the opening lines of the poem Hopkins illuminates Henry’s concern about his brother’s performance:

How lovely the elder brother’s  
Life all laced in the other’s,  
Love-laced!...

Their relationship is “love-laced,” that is intricately bound and delicately united by the many threads that entwine the hearts of family members together in love. As brothers they are so close, their hearts so interlaced, that the two become one

in happiness and in sorrow. When Jack finally makes his appearance on stage, Henry is so thrilled for his brother that he cannot contain his tears of joy, “His tear-trickled cheeks of flame.” Lives that are “love-laced” share many moments of affection and oneness and recall the tender moments and familiar memories of a lifetime. Just as lace reflects the intricate skill of human hands and the beauty of design, so too the human heart reveals the art of God’s handiwork and the wonder of love.

Henry’s heartfelt affection for his younger brother offered Father Hopkins a tell-tale sign, one of “truth’s tokens” that reminded him of the depth of human love and the mystery of the human heart. As Henry watches his brother perform his part, the priest watches Henry’s reactions, “making my play/Turn most on tender byplay.” Two plays or performances occur simultaneously—Jack’s acting on stage that the audience witnesses and Henry’s response that only the priest observes. The priest is so melted by the sight of an older brother’s crying tears of joy for a younger brother’s happiness that the priest too is brought to tears by the “love-laced” intimacy of the brothers’ pure hearts:

Ah Nature, framed in fault,  
There’s comfort then, there’s salt;  
Nature, bad, base and blind,  
Dearly thou canst be kind;  
There dearly then, dearly,  
I’ll cry thou canst be kind.

Despite the fact of original sin (“Nature, framed in fault”), despite the selfishness and depravity that prevail in the world (“Nature, bad, base and blind”), and despite the callousness, cruelty, and coldness of humans who refuse to give, love, and sacrifice or to be touched or moved by the joys and sufferings of others, God’s love continues to manifest itself in the kindness of the pure heart that bears the stamp of God’s image. Love redeems the world. Despite sin and all its destruction, the preciousness of hearts bound together in “love-laced” oneness constantly remind us of the supreme reality of love that has conquered the world: “There dearly then, dearly, I’ll cry thou canst be kind.”

## *Lost in Translation*

*by John Clark*

In ancient times, the Egyptians, lacking an advanced alphabet, used a combination of pictures to express their ideas. That might amuse us in this day and age, but it seems that the Egyptians were actually ahead of their time. Teenagers have now adopted a similar system of communication.

George Bernard Shaw once commented that “England and America are two countries separated by the same language.” I’m probably not the only father who feels separated from his teenagers by a common language. At least, I think it’s a common language. I refer not to the English language, per se, but to what has come to be known as “text.” For those uninitiated to “text” or “texting” (and you know who you are), it could be defined as a way of communicating by computer or handheld device which employs letters, numbers, symbols, or a combination of these. To account for this revolution, even the word “text” has undergone an etymological transformation. The word used to be a noun, as in: “Students, please study the text for next week’s exam.” It is now more often used as a verb, as in: “The way those jeans were ripped was, like, so cool; text me later about them,” or “I’ll be in Poly Sci class, so I’ll have my ringer off. Just text me.”

Perhaps texting is the result of a generation of children who, faced with the prospect of taking years of English grammar courses, have decided instead to “opt out” of the system. Why study things like singular-versus-plural and subject-verb agreement when you can simply text and do an end run around the problem? Texting is heavenly bliss for the syntactically unsure. Like much of modern art, it is indefensible, but it is so bizarre that

it transcends acceptable methods of critique. For instance, how can you “correct” expressions that contain an amorphous combination of dashes, parentheses, ampersands, equal signs, and numbers? Though they congratulate themselves on the creativity of text and symbolic expression, teenagers need to realize that this hieroglyphic form of communication is demonstrably austere. For instance, the English language contains hundreds of synonyms for the words “happy” and “unhappy.” But in text, there are precious few. In fact, there are essentially two: ☺ and ☹.

Parents are criticized for being unable to learn the language of their teenagers. I might stand guilty as charged, but when you write a would-be sentence which contains a happy face, a dollar sign, and the symbol for Abraham Lincoln, am I the one who can’t communicate? I have actually had to google certain expressions to know what my children are trying to write, and I’m guessing that if you’re my age (forty-something but, in my children’s eyes, pushing octogenarian status awfully fast), some of you fathers have done the same thing.

Though our linguistic integrity might feel compromised, we parents all have to learn this new odd dialect if we wish to communicate with our children. And if you’re a writer wishing to attract a younger audience of readers, you’re going to have to go along to get along. If Shakespeare wrote today, few would understand the sentence: “O Romeo, Romeo! wherefore art thou Romeo?” It might be simpler for the Bard to write: “R, ? R U?” What it lacks in beauty, it makes up for in brevity.

Like it or not, we live in a text world. Case in point: the other day,

I went with Athanasius to buy a smartphone. When you buy one, you are asked: “Do you plan on texting?” Not only do I not plan on texting, I hope that I am never desperate enough to “text.” I look at it this way: there is poetry; there is prose; and then there is “text.” Texting is among the lowest forms of communication. (I would say “the lowest” but I’ve worked in politics.) As opposed to standard typing, which employs ten fingers, texting is normally done exclusively with thumbs, and that’s appropriate considering the results.

People today like to advise others that they must “think outside the box.” However, if the “box” is the place where grammatically-correct composition takes place, count me in. I like the box. I like the world of predicate nominatives, subordinate clauses, and proper punctuation. Reading “text” for any length of time makes me want to curl up with a good grammar book for relief. Sure, it may look a little strange reading *Warriner’s English Grammar and Composition* over a cup of decaf at the local java shop, but I’m comfortable with that.

I can’t believe I’m saying this, but maybe it’s time we all took a refresher course on sentence diagramming. Maybe a good rule of thumb (no pun intended) is: “If you can’t diagram it, don’t text it.” Can you imagine teaching a course on diagramming text? It would make for an interesting combination with the fact that teachers are often discouraged from giving the conventional A, B, C, D, and F grades these days. Teachers might return homework with notes such as, “William, the semicolon with a hyphen and a parenthesis means ‘winking’ which is a verb, so it goes to the right of ☺. Try not to make that mistake again or I’ll be forced to give you a ☹.”

BBIAB.

## *The Cardinal Virtues* by Father Charles C. Fiore

Every Catholic knows the primacy of love in the Christian life. Jesus' words (Mt. 19:19 and 22:37) about love of God and love of one's neighbor as oneself immediately come to mind, as does St. Paul's warning (I Cor. 1:13) that without charity as a motive, all that we do becomes "sounding brass and tinkling cymbal." The Christian family is "the school of love," where spouses and children teach each other and learn, by trial and error, by mutual forgiveness and good example, how to love, how to go with Jesus to the Father.

Without question, homeschooling can be a boon in all this because of the give-and-take of family life. While it is not always evident in some families, and may appear tenuous in others, it is fundamental that parents and children share a natural intimacy of heart and soul that provides a "blessed floor" of which the life of the family plays itself out, and where, cleaned and swept by good will and forgiveness, we ourselves learn and help the others in our families to learn what love is all about. Whatever hurts, misunderstandings, and outright disagreements occur, the solidarity of the family ordinarily is a given, an unquestioned haven, a bedrock of compassion, the focus of truth.

It is in the context of our human circumstances—our personalities within our families—that actual and sanctifying graces usually come, and in which they ordinarily work. Family life is the object of the specific sacramental grace of marriage, which the spouses may (and should) daily call down on their families as a matter of justice.

Indeed, the benefits of this sacramental grace for their and their children's spiritual needs flows in large measure from the "contract" they made with God in their marriage vows. Those benefits are their entitlements, something they may demand, so long as they are in the state of grace,

from Jesus who promised that He would not be outdone in charity (Lk. 6:27-38), and would "not leave [us] orphans" (Jn. 14:18).

The theory and the focus of the Christian life is *love God and love your neighbor as yourself*. But as every recipe is made up of ingredients, and each successful touchdown drive is the result of the cooperative efforts of a skilled team, so too one's ability to love virtuously is the result of the coalescence and interplay of other virtues—the four supernatural cardinal virtues: prudence, justice, fortitude, and temperance.

They are called "cardinal" from the Latin word for "hinge," i.e., the living of the Christian life "hinges" upon their implementation in the lives of the faithful, and a great many other subsidiary virtues "hinge" upon, are connected with or related to them. These four, with the activity of the three theological virtues of faith, hope and charity as their common objective, make possible the Christian life—love of God and of neighbor as oneself.

Put another way, faith, hope and charity are clearly the greatest of the virtues, and of them, charity alone perdures in heaven, we know. But prudence, justice, fortitude and temperance give us the constitutive parts, the means, the guidelines, in how to love (for like everything else, love has its counterfeits).

It sounds artificial and theoretical, anything but "spontaneous." But the Christian, the follower of Jesus, must always love prudently (wisely) and justly (observing the rights of others), at times in the face of great doubt or difficulty (bravely, with fortitude), and always temperately, that is, not unreasonably, but with self-mastery.

The order in which we list the cardinal virtues is not arbitrary, but is an illustration of the hierarchy among them and their interdependence. They can neither exist in us by grace

independently, nor can temperance exist without fortitude, fortitude without justice, and justice without prudence.

Prudence is called the "matrix," the "mold," the "cause" of the other cardinal virtues. Without its pervasive influence, one cannot be truly just, brave or temperate in thought, word or deed. Our practice of the moral life here and now is dependent, first of all, on our vision or understanding of how the general principles of the Gospel are to be applied in these present circumstances.

Supernatural prudence, sometimes defined as "right reason, enlightened by grace, applied to doing things," combines one's theoretical knowledge and the dictates of a properly informed conscience, and in the light of these tells us to "Do this" or "Don't do that" here and now. It needn't be a long, deliberative process; it can happen quickly for one practiced in virtue; but, it is eminently practical.

Justice, informed by prudence, compels us in our dealings with others, to give them their "due," i.e., those things to which they have a true right, whether supernaturally by grace, or naturally as human, by promise or contract.

Fortitude, sometimes called bravery, emboldens us to do what is right in the face of opposition, despite danger or under difficult circumstances.

Temperance helps us to moderate our appetites, whether by excess or defect, according to our human nature, our personalities and our circumstances.

The supernatural cardinal virtues discipline our minds and hearts, our wills and appetites, and help to root and strengthen our faith, hope, and charity.

Loving God and our neighbor as oneself is never easy. But the practice of the cardinal and other moral virtues as means to the love of God and neighbor is a light for our minds, for our hands and feet.

## ***Would you like your assignments to be graded faster? We would, too!***

Every year, we hand-grade thousands of tests that are available to be taken online. These tests are either mailed to us, or scanned and uploaded as image files. When a test is taken online, the computer can usually score it and return the grade within seconds. When a test is mailed to us, it will take a minimum of a couple of weeks to receive a grade. When a test is scanned and uploaded, it can take between one day and a couple weeks to get a grade from a human grader.



Obviously, some tests (such as English or history essay tests) cannot be taken on the computer or cannot be scored by the computer. For those tests, uploading is a great idea. But for the tests which can be taken and immediately scored by the computer, we encourage you to use this fast and convenient service.

If you haven't tried out your My Seton page, why not try it today?

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### **The Seton Home Study Newsletter**

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Seton Home Study School  
1350 Progress Dr.  
Front Royal, VA 22630  
Phone: (540) 636-9990  
Fax Machine: (540) 636-1602  
Internet: [www.setonhome.org](http://www.setonhome.org)  
E-Mail: [info@setonhome.org](mailto:info@setonhome.org)

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Executive Editor:  
Dr. Mary Kay Clark

Editor: Kevin Clark

### ***Seton Phone Numbers*** *(Seton main line: 540-636-9990, all numbers 540 area code)*

Admissions, Enrollment, Re-Enrollment: 636-2039  
Elementary Counselors: 636-1429  
Grading: Rhonda Way, 622-5525  
High School Course Approval: Gene McGuirk, 635-4728  
High School English: Walker Solis, 636-1755; Christine Smitha, 636-1633  
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Seton Testing (CAT): 540-636-1250

### ***Seton Email Addresses***

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### *The Priestly Calling*

“Non iam dicam servos, sed amicos” - “I no longer call you servants, but friends” (cf. Jn 15:15).

Sixty years on from the day of my priestly ordination, I hear once again deep within me these words of Jesus that were addressed to us new priests at the end of the ordination ceremony by the Archbishop, Cardinal Faulhaber, in his slightly frail yet firm voice. According to the liturgical practice of that time, these words conferred on the newly-ordained priests the authority to forgive sins. “No longer servants, but friends”: at that moment I knew deep down that these words were no mere formality, nor were they simply a quotation from Scripture. I knew that, at that moment, the Lord himself was speaking to me in a very personal way. In baptism and confirmation he had already drawn us close to him, he had already received us into God’s family. But what was taking place now was something greater still. He calls me his friend. He welcomes me into the circle of those he had spoken to in the Upper Room, into the circle of those whom he knows in a very special way, and who thereby come to know him in a very special way. He grants me the almost frightening faculty to do what only he, the Son of God, can legitimately say and do: I forgive you your sins. He wants me – with his authority – to be able to speak, in his name (“I” forgive), words that are not merely words, but an action, changing something at the deepest level of being. I know that behind these words lies his suffering for us and on account of us. I know that forgiveness comes at a price: in his Passion he went deep down into the sordid darkness of our sins. He went down into the night of our guilt, for only thus can it be transformed. And by giving me authority to forgive sins, he lets me look down into the abyss of man, into the immensity of his suffering for us men, and this enables me to sense the immensity of his love. He confides in me: “No longer servants, but friends”. He entrusts to me the words of consecration in the Eucharist. He trusts me to proclaim his word, to explain it aright and to bring it to the people of today. He entrusts himself to me. “You are no longer servants, but friends”: these words bring great inner joy, but at the same time, they are so awe-inspiring that one can feel daunted as the decades go by amid so many experiences of one’s own frailty and his inexhaustible goodness.

Benedict XVI, June 29, 2011