



Seton Home Study School

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St. Joseph

On March 19, we celebrate the Feast of St. Joseph, the earthly father of Our Lord Jesus Christ.

We recall that Mary’s mother, St. Anne, was already elderly when Mary was born. While Mary was still a young child, her parents took her to live in the holy Temple of Jerusalem. When Mary came of age to be married, it is thought that the priests in the Temple made the marriage arrangements for her. We can be certain that the Temple priests knew how special and holy was Mary, and that they would have chosen a man known for holiness, courage, and industry who could provide a good home.

Joseph, known because of his devotion to God in the Temple of Jerusalem, was responsive to the Temple priests who talked to him about being engaged to Mary, who had grown up in the Temple school.

St. Joseph can help us home schooling mothers and fathers to reflect on being obedient to the Church and its teachings, not only about the holy relationship we want with our spouse, but also about the duty of parents to teach our children the Faith by living it through good example and instruction.

Joseph was known as a “just man,” so when he discovered that Mary was with child, he did not make any accusations but simply waited for an explanation, because He trusted in her innocence. His patience was rewarded when an angel appeared to Him in a dream and explained that Mary’s Child was special, conceived of the Holy Spirit. The angel said Mary would bring forth a Son, Whom Joseph should name Jesus, because He would save people

from their sins. (Jesus is the Latin form of the Hebrew word meaning “God is salvation.”)

The naming of Jesus brings to mind that we home schooling parents have a responsibility prayerfully to consider names for our children which have meaning in relation to God. Naming our children after the saints in the Bible or in the history of the Church is strongly recommended by the Church. For all their lives, our children will have a special patron saint in heaven, whom we parents have chosen for them.

Since Joseph and Mary were married according to the Jewish rite of their day, Joseph was the legal father of Jesus. Joseph had always loved God with all his heart and practiced the virtues throughout his life. God recognized Joseph as the provider of the Holy Family. God sent an angel to Joseph to tell him to take the Baby and His mother to Egypt when Herod sent his soldiers to look for the Baby. Later, God sent an angel to tell Joseph to leave Egypt, and to go to Nazareth to raise Jesus there.

Home schooling mothers must never forget that their husbands want to be actively involved with their children, not only in providing comfort in a home and its protection, but also in being involved in moral and spiritual formation as well as in teaching some school subjects and life skills. The huge satisfaction that we mothers have, those wonderful moments when a child “sees the light” as he recognizes a difficult concept, must be shared with our husbands.

Forty days after the birth of Jesus, Joseph and Mary went to the Temple in

Jerusalem to present Jesus to the priest. Joseph carried the gifts of the two doves, the usual gift brought by a father to present his newborn son to the Temple. The holy man Simeon asked to hold the Child in his arms; Simeon instantly knew the truth. Simeon spoke to God in front of Mary and Joseph, proclaiming to them that he recognized their Son as the Messiah. Mary and Joseph surely were happy that God the Father allowed Simeon, and later Anna, to recognize Jesus as the Christ, “Light to the revelation of the Gentiles, and the glory of Thy people Israel.”

Oh, St. Joseph, whose protection is so great, so strong, so prompt before the throne of God, I place in you all my interests and desires. Oh, St. Joseph, do assist me by your powerful intercession, and obtain for me from your divine Son all spiritual blessings, through Jesus Christ, our Lord, so that, having engaged here below your heavenly power, I may offer my thanksgiving and homage to the most loving of Fathers. Oh, St. Joseph, I never weary of contemplating you, and Jesus asleep in your arms; I dare not approach while He reposes near your heart. Press Him in my name and kiss His fine head for me and ask him to return the kiss when I draw my dying breath. St. Joseph, Patron of departing souls, pray for me.

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Questions We Are Asked

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

This is our first year. Should I be concerned that we are not totally on schedule according to the lesson plans?

The lesson plans are a suggestion. Most home schooling parents want a guideline based on how many lessons they need to cover in 180 days, the usual schedule for state schools. However, you can and should adjust the schedule according to the abilities and interests of each child. You certainly don't want to slow down a student who loves math, finds it easy, and can do two lessons a day. At the same time, you don't want to rush a student who is struggling with reading or grammar; that student may need two days even though the lesson plans call for only one day. It usually evens out, with students taking more time on some subjects and less time on other subjects.

Adjusting the schedule for the individual student is the best kind of education. This is a huge benefit for students who may fail in a classroom or group situation because they are pushed along with what the teacher has scheduled, whether or not particular students can keep the pace.

At this time of the year, if your child is "behind" in a key subject, such as math or English or reading, you might consider having your child do the science or history lessons on the weekend, perhaps working with your husband. That gives your student extra time during the week to work on catching up to the schedule, if you decide you want that.

Some families continue home schooling over the summer, or for one or two months over the summer. For instance, if a parent has two students in adjacent grades, the lower level student might take a whole summer to work on math, in order to start the fall with the older student in the same grade level.

The schedule is really up to the parents. Seton suggests a schedule, but in homeschooling, the parents should prayerfully decide the best schedule for each child.

I am newly pregnant and struggling to keep up with the lessons. Can I make some adjustments?

While adjustments often are made for the abilities and interests of the student, adjustments should be made for the situation of the parents as well. You may need to take a vacation from home schooling completely for a while, or you may want to give some assignments ahead of time. You may want to keep moving on some subjects with the older children since they can work pretty much on their own, but you may want to give the younger children assignments in only the essentials of Religion, Math, Phonics, and Reading.

Some of us home schooling moms would take rests while pregnant or nurse the baby in bed, while the younger children sit on the bed and do schoolwork, and the older children sit on the floor and do schoolwork around the bed. It does work.

Sometimes you can pay a teenager in the family to help some of the younger children with math or English or phonics. Another consideration is to ask a nearby relative or close friend if one or two of your children can visit their family for a couple of hours in the afternoon to give you time for a nap. In any case, you always have the summer to "catch up" if you want; younger home schooled students usually don't insist on a summer vacation.

Pray to St. Anne, the mother of the Blessed Virgin, for special help.

I am naturally a disorganized person. What should I do?

Organization is incredibly important for home schooling. It can easily mean the difference between success and failure. You need to be determined to make necessary changes in your life, the life of the family, and the home itself. You need to start with prayer, especially with a novena to a saint such as Elizabeth Ann Seton, who home schooled her own children, helped to school other children, supported herself and the children, kept up her daily prayer life, and struggled against poverty, cold, and sickness.

I suggest you obtain an alarm clock and wake up before the rest of the

Make sure you have a written plan for each day for both the home and the schooling.

household so you can start your day with prayer, get yourself dressed and ready to go, and go over your schedule for the day. Just getting up first puts you in control and you will start off feeling better.

Make sure you have a written plan for each day for both the home and the schooling. Keep a calendar and the written plan for the day at your finger tips, all day. Be determined that you will stay on your schedule. Of course, if you have a sick child, you need to be ready with a back-up plan, such as having schooling assignments written out for the day, or having an older child helping a younger.

For inspiration, skim-read Chapter 3 in my book, *Catholic Home Schooling*, on "Church teachings on Marriage and Education." Write out a couple of those quotes that are inspiring to you, and paste them on your bedroom door.

Read thoroughly Chapter 5 "Home Schooling in the Large Family." Underline or highlight some things you want to remember, and use that for a reference when you want to remind yourself about some ideas you would like to try. A week later, read the chapter on Discipline, which might give

you some ideas for yourself and the children. Underline and highlight, and then refer back to it when you want to be reminded.

You might want to make your own list of management ideas. Type out the list, and put it up on the refrigerator to remind everyone in the family about how they can help with chores around the house. Have a family meeting and talk about how everyone in the family can help maintain order and cleanliness.

If you want an extra little handbook, you can order *Home Management Essentials* by Ginny Seuffert, a home schooling mother of twelve children.

You may want to institute a program of rewards for work completed satisfactorily.

The book is available from Seton Educational Media for \$7.95, or you can purchase it for the Kindle for only \$3.95.

Can you help me with a 5th grade son who just refuses to do his schoolwork?

First, try to find out what the problem is. Is the work too easy and he is bored? Is it too hard and he is frustrated? Is it everything he refuses to do, or just some subjects? Maybe he needs to move down or up a grade in one or more subjects. If you think you need some supplemental materials, some easier problems to help him, please check our Seton Educational Media Department. Go to our website, click on Book Catalog, and type in the subject. We have several other math books, for instance, for supplemental help.

What exactly is bothering him? If he does not tell you, will he tell his Dad if Dad takes him out in the car for an ice cream treat? If you do find out, perhaps you can make some specific adjustments.

Ask your husband what he would suggest. He might have had the same

problem when he was young, and needed some inspiring. Consider asking your son which subjects he likes best, and make a schedule with him so that he can alternate between those he likes and those he does not like as much.

A boy this age needs to stay active. See if there is some way you can incorporate some action in the lessons. Can he jump rope while spelling the words you dictate? Can he walk around the kitchen while reading? Can you put on his daily schedule some activities between classes? If he spends 20 minutes reading, he can follow that with twenty minutes riding his bike.

You may want to institute a program of rewards for work completed satisfactorily. For example, if he obtains an A on a religion test, as a reward, you will take him to the park. If he reads his book report book in one week, you will pay him a dollar. If he finishes writing his book report the following week, you will give him a dollar.

Ask the Blessed Mother to help you to find out what is the problem, and then ask St. Joseph to help you solve the problem.

How can I find out more about local and state homeschooling regulations?

If you go to our Home page on our website, click on Parent Resources at the top, then click on State Laws on the drop-down menu. Under organizations to help you, click on HSLDA, the Home School Legal Defense Association. The HSLDA website has a listing of all the state laws and a legal analysis of homeschooling in each state.

We do encourage you to get in touch with your state homeschooling organization, all of which are listed on the HSLDA website. Some superintendents follow the regulations very carefully, while others do not. Your state or local homeschooling organization will be able to tell you how each county handles homeschooling compliance. Although the laws involved are state laws, each county can implement very different procedures.

Many superintendents or secretaries in public school offices are actually not familiar with changing homeschooling regulations. It is best to contact your state homeschooling organization for

the latest updates and approaches.

Remember that if you are enrolled in Seton, you are not homeschooling on your own. Your children ARE enrolled in a school which is fully accredited as a school, and is recognized as a private school by the Virginia Department of Education. State laws often have less restrictive provisions for students who are enrolled in an accredited school.

How strict should I be regarding the reading tests?

The Seton reading tests which are graded by Seton are reading comprehension tests, not memory tests. Therefore, the student should have the written story from the book or test in front of him when he takes the test. Parents should not be helping in answering the test questions, of course. We are concerned that the child not only can read phonetically, but that the child can comprehend what he reads.

Sometimes parents say their child of ten or eleven can read at a high school level. This may be true phonetically, but may not be true as regards comprehension. For example, many words have multiple meanings. Sometimes a student needs to understand a “tone” from certain words, or be able to “read between the lines.” This comes with life experience and not phonics. Reading comprehension is a more advanced reading skill, based on maturity and mental development. That is why parents need to listen to their children read, even up to 8th grade. From tone of voice and inflection, and questioning, parents can learn if their child has sufficient comprehension.

Are you still working on producing videos?

Yes, we are working as quickly as we can. We have just rented a new “studio” and will get back to a regular schedule in March, unless we have a winter storm or two. We are currently in the process of making Spanish I videos and Religion 9 videos. We hope soon to schedule some high school English and Science videos, as well as videos relating to study skills. These will be supplementary videos, not aimed at teaching the course, but to help students understand certain aspects of each weekly lesson assignments.

How Parish Schools led to Catholic Home Schooling

by Ginny Seuffert

Last month's column was the story of how a largely poor, immigrant population built a powerhouse parish school system that provided a first-rate scholastic education. By the mid 1960s, the Catholic system reached its peak with 4.5 million elementary school pupils, and another million students in Catholic high schools.

The number of students attending Catholic schools decreased to about one-half that number by the beginning of the twenty-first century. Formerly vibrant schools are being closed or merged at an alarming rate by Dioceses across the United States. In 1965, approximately half of Catholic children were educated in Catholic schools, compared to only about 15% now. Incredibly, a system built by and for an immigrant population educates a mere 3% of Latino children. Catholic children attending government schools receive, at best, a scant hour per week of formal religious instruction in parish religious education programs. Is it any wonder that Catholics now abort, contracept, divorce, and live together outside of marriage in numbers similar to those of the general population?

What caused this catastrophe and what are the implications for Catholic home schoolers?

Certainly some of the blame stems from the confusion that followed the Second Vatican Council, but other factors played major roles as well. One important factor was the highway system, built in the second half of the twentieth century. Parents moved to the suburbs, away from the city parish schools. Some parochial schools were built in the suburbs, but increasingly were unable to compete with the high end, taxpayer-funded, public school buildings.

Responsibility for ridiculously expensive, extravagantly equipped government schools can be placed squarely on the shoulders of the former Soviet Union. The USSR launched Sputnik in 1957 and launched Yuri Gagarin into space in 1961, events which

sent the United States into a cold war panic to compete. Teaching science and math grew in importance, and the liberal arts, the focus of Catholic schools, was considered dated and irrelevant. Catholic families moving to the suburbs were awed by the beautiful gyms and science labs in the public schools.

The history of the decline of Catholic education can be traced to, of all things, the Administration of President Ulysses S. Grant. At that time, an anti-Catholic faction tried to add the so-called Blaine Amendment to the US Constitution prohibiting the use of public funds for sectarian schools. Although it failed on the federal level, Blaine language was added to the laws in several states. In the 1960's Catholic school students went about in school uniforms collecting signatures to overturn Blaine regulations, and it worked! To save parents money, Catholic schools switched to public school texts except for the religion books, so the Catholic divisions of textbook publishers were eliminated.

What happened to the public school system since then is common knowledge. Academic rigor was replaced by assorted educational fads. Structure and discipline was replaced with sex education, values clarification and self-esteem training. As parish and diocesan schools were using the same texts, many of these problems crept into the Catholic schools, as well.

Parents saw little difference between Catholic and public education, and problems facing parochial schools grew exponentially. Benchmarks of Catholic education like memorization, recitation, a tightly ordered school day, lectures on diligence, and, most of all, discipline, were replaced by formless "student-centered" instruction. Plus, secular textbooks, at best, left children ignorant of their Catholic heritage. At worst, they perpetuated the nastiest of anti-Catholic bias.

Clearly, the aftermath of Vatican II shares blame for the decline of Catholic education, as well. As a result

of widespread confusion about what the faith required, parents no longer understood the mandate to provide a Catholic education for their children or what that might require. Many came to believe that an hour of CCD each week was sufficient. I have attended Mass most days of my life and I have never—not once—heard a priest contradict that notion.

Members of the teaching orders began to question their vocations. They abandoned the parish schools in droves forcing schools to hire lay teachers they couldn't afford. Coupled with the high cost of building and maintaining schools, staff expenses caused tuition cost to skyrocket. Worst of all, the catechisms used in Catholic schools often failed to present even the most basic truths of the Faith.

Often changes in the parochial schools were adopted in spite of parental protests. Many devout teachers were appalled at changes, and disgusted by some of the course material they were expected to present. Some of them banded together and formed private Catholic schools. Faced with insurmountable problems, many of these schools failed.

Private schools did provide a valuable service, however, and unwittingly started the Catholic HOME school movement. Parents who heard about them, but lived too far away to send their children, would purchase books from these private schools and teach their children at home. A few schools, like Seton School in Manassas, Virginia, provided some limited oversight and *voilà* a handful of Catholic families sort of fell into homeschooling.

Presently there are about 100 thousand Catholic homeschooled students in the United States. They have an extraordinary record of accomplishment. Overall, they score around 35 percentage points above their public school peers on standardized tests. Graduates have been accepted into virtually every university, including the Ivy League and the service academies. Homeschooled students are entering the priesthood and religious life in record numbers. Many consider them to represent the future of the American Church.

Going My Way

by John Clark

One recent morning, after working out in my local gym (I know what you're thinking...this story *already* sounds fictional), I walked outside to my car and noticed that one of the tires on my Mustang had gone flat. "No problem," I thought, "I've got a spare tire and jack in my trunk."

However, this idea proved difficult in action, as the trunk in my Mustang has, over the years, become the penultimate resting place for such things as weathered English 9 Lesson Plans, batting helmets, and empty *Snapple* bottles. I couldn't easily get at the spare tire without taking everything out of my trunk and putting it on the parking lot (in the rain).

So instead of "airing my dirty laundry in public," I opted for Plan B: I walked over to a nearby store and bought a pump, and put air in the tire. However, it was obvious that this tire had a bad leak, as I could actually *hear it* losing air as I filled it. While I knelt in the rain, putting air in my tire, a gentleman walked over to me and asked for directions to a nearby highway.

Being a man, I proceeded to give him the most confusing directions possible ("Well, you could go in one of two ways..." and "If you start driving down the windy road, and make the right turn, you'll probably see signs for it..."), peppered with irrelevant details ("You'll pass a *Wendy's* on your left.").

After I finished my exposition on the boulevards of my town, the man slowly walked back to his truck, with the look of someone who had just bumped his head and was still feeling dazed. I guess he tried to make sense of what I had explained to him for about sixty seconds, and then got back out of his truck, walked over to me again, and asked once more to clarify my instructions.

So I said, "Tell you what. I'm going that way anyway. Follow me."

So I hopped in my car and led him along. As I drove, I kept thinking about how amusing this situation was—my

own car has problems. It's not perfect. It might break down at any time. But I was also thinking that as long as I've got air in the tires, I'll help him. And when the air runs out, I'll put air back in the tire and lead him again.

As I drove, I carefully led him down the twists and turns of the roads, looking in my rearview mirror, making sure that he was keeping up with me. Of course, I was a little worried that my tire would again become too flat to drive on, so I asked God to keep air in my tire long enough to lead him to his destination. He was able to keep up with me for all but the last turn. Since he was driving a large truck, he had trouble making this last turn, and when I looked back in the mirror, I noticed that he had lost me, at least for a moment. So I pulled into a bank parking lot and waited for his truck to catch up with me, in order to lead him again. Twenty seconds later, I saw his truck go by, and instead of waiting for me to pull my car out in front of him, he looked over at me and smiled, and beeped his horn, as if to say: "Thanks for leading me. I can make it the rest of the way on my own. Thanks!" He had seen the sign for the highway by that point, and was on the way to his destination.

It immediately struck me that this set of events is so much like fathering in a home schooling family. My job is to lead, but I'm flawed. I've got the human equivalent of flat tires, rust, and chipped paint. It's hard for me to see in the rain. To make matters worse, there are others who might block the path between me and those I'm trying to lead. But even with all those deficiencies—with all those stumbling blocks—I am still able to somehow lead the way. And leading the way is surely better than simply giving directions.

As a father, you can get your children started. You can lead the way. You can take them as far as you can, but there will come a point when they have to go the rest of the way by themselves. Your job is to get them on the right road

so they can see the destination and make the rest of the way without you.

Whittaker Chambers, author of *Witness*, summed up this feeling in a letter to his children. Chambers wrote:

But, in the end, if I have led you aright, you will make out three crosses, from two of which hang thieves. I will have brought you to Golgotha — the place of skulls. This is the meaning of the journey. Before you understand, I may not be there, my hands may have slipped from yours. It will not matter. For when you understand what you see, you will no longer be children.

Fathers, hang in there. Especially for those of you who have children who seem to have taken a wrong turn, have hope. Ask God to grant your children efficacious grace. And believe that God loves every one of your children. Jesus is an expert on bringing back lost sheep. He may have even brought *you* back a few times. Remember that *God has you*, and *God has your children, too*. Wherever they are right now, keep the faith that God will give them the grace to—*one day*—look at you and smile, and assure you, "I see the destination now. Thanks for leading me."

Every issue of the Seton newsletter is available online. From our home page, click on Parent Resources, then Newsletter Archive. We also offer a topical index, so you can easily find articles on Starting Out, Discipline, the Father's Role, and other topics.

If you have gone entirely digital, and can't abide the thought of printed copies, you can tell us not to mail the newsletter to you. On your My Seton page, choose My Account, then Preferences, then check the item that says "Don't send me the Seton newsletter"

How to Study

We often receive calls from parents asking for ideas to help their children improve their study skills. While each person has a favorite way to study, these ideas have been successful for many students.

Underlining or Highlighting. Underlining or highlighting is a great way to study important points. Highlighters are special pens with see-through ink, available in many different colors. It is a great way to emphasize and study important facts.

Checkmark Pages. When reading for a book report, keep in mind the points or topics you are to write about, and highlight or note where examples appear in the novel. For instance, if you are supposed to write about how the character cared about other people, put a color-coded checkmark in the upper right hand corner on a page that gives a good example of how he cared, such as visiting his grandmother. If you are supposed to write about the same character's willingness to teach others about his Faith, use a different colored highlighter to make a check on the page where he leaves the football game early to attend Mass.

Be sure that you don't underline or highlight so much that it is useless. Consider underlining or highlighting when you read it the SECOND time; that way you will realize exactly which are the most important points or examples.

Taking Notes. Take notes for research reports. Usually students use 3" x 5" cards when taking notes. By coding the cards with the title or author's name, and also coding the subject, there is flexibility in using cards. For instance, if your topic is "The Battles of the Civil War," you might read several different books which have information about the Battle of Bull Run. Each card should have "Bull Run" on top. Then when you write the report, you can gather

together all the Bull Run cards. (Note-taking applications are also available for your computer, which may make indexing and tracking easier for some students.)

SQ3R (Survey, Question, Read, Recite, and Review). Researchers have found that the SQ3R method is the most effective method of studying.

Survey: This means you need to survey or skim through the whole chapter or lesson. Look over the headings, the subheadings, the pictures, the maps, the graphs, and whatever else is in the chapter, without actually reading the text. Take the time to read the questions at the end of each chapter. The author believes that the answers to the Review Questions tell you the important points to remember. These items are likely to be on the chapter test.

Question: This means to turn the headings and subheadings into questions. If the heading is "Causes of the Civil War," then you ask the question to yourself: What are the causes of the Civil War? You know that this section will answer that question. These questions could be written in your outline.

Read Aloud: Read the chapter aloud, carefully and thoughtfully, checking the Chapter Review questions as you read. Consider reading the chapter to one of your brothers or sisters, or another family member or relative. Be thorough in your reading; look up words in the dictionary, always by your side, if you do not know the meanings.

Think about the outline you make when you want to write a report. You choose three main topics, which would be A, B, and C in your outline. Then you put two or three examples beneath those sections. When the author wrote the book you are studying, he or she probably did the same thing. Some authors include

the outline at the beginning of the chapter, which can help you to study the important points and show you how ideas are related. However, if the author did not include an outline, be sure to *write one yourself for studying the chapter*. An outline for study purposes is invaluable. If you don't have an outline, you cannot study properly.

Recite: Since most people learn best if they **hear** information as well as read it, it is a good idea to recite aloud the ideas for each section or subdivision. This should be done without looking at the book. If you cannot recite the information, go back and read it again.

Review: Usually a textbook has review questions at the end of each section or chapter. Review should be done each day before reading the next assignment. Review should be done at the end of each week, and just before taking a test.

If at all possible, your studies *should* be done each day. Please note, however, that Math and English *must* be done each day so that previous concepts are not forgotten. Both of these subjects depend on your remembering and being able to use what you have previously learned.

If you need help, the best persons to ask are your parents. They care about you more than anyone else in the world. They will help you to learn how to study and help you while you study. Remember that you are part of a team, the family team. If you need help, your teammates in your family will help you.

I hope that you all find in your homes an atmosphere of real love. But I also wish to invite you to establish, and always maintain, a relationship of great and true affection with your parents; they are your first friends. To a large extent, your life in the future depends on how you are today in harmony with, and cherish respect for, those who begot you and brought you up. - Pope John Paul II.

2012 Conferences

Many state and local groups are now sponsoring their own conferences, inviting various Catholic vendors and curriculum providers. Seton is happy to participate as a vendor. For more information, see our website at www.setonhome.org/conferences, or email conferences@setonhome.org.

Jacksonville, FL. March 16 (Fri.). Immaculate Heart of Mary Jacksonville Homeschool and Parent Conference, Embassy Suites Jacksonville-Baymeadows, 9300 Baymeadows Rd, Jacksonville, FL. 2:00 PM – 8:00 PM. Info: 540-636-1946 or info@ihmconference.org or www.ihmconference.org.

Covington, LA. March 24, 2012 (Sat.). Roman Catholic Homeschool Association of Louisiana “Catholic Homeschooling: A Way of Life”, St. Peter’s Catholic Church, St. Mary’s Hall, 125 E. 19th Avenue, Covington, LA. After 8:30 AM Mass – 5 PM. Info: Beth at 985-796-1274 or 504-220-4626 beth@montelepre.com or rchalinfo@rchal.org or www.rchal.org.

St. Louis, MO. March 30-31 (Fri.-Sat.). St. Louis Catholic Homeschool Conference, Cardinal Rigali Center, 20 Archbishop May Drive, St. Louis, MO. Fri.: 6:00 PM – 9:00 PM (Exhibits

only); Sat.: After 8:00 AM Mass–4:30 PM. Info: Cassie at 636-398-4001 or www.stlouiscatholichomeschool.com.

Santa Clara, CA. April 13-14, (Fri.-Sat.). Northern California Catholic Homeschooling Conference, Our Lady of Peace Shrine, 2800 Mission College Blvd, Santa Clara, CA. Fri.: 2 PM – 9 PM; Sat.: After 8 AM Mass – 5 PM. Info: 408-980-9825.

Houston, TX. April 20-21, 2012 (Fri.-Sat.). Immaculate Heart of Mary Houston Homeschool & Parent Conference, University of St. Thomas, Jerabeck Athletic Center, 3800 Montrose Blvd, Houston, TX. Fri.: 2 PM – 8 PM; Sat.: 9 AM – 4 PM. Information: 540-636-1946 or info@ihmconference.org or www.ihmconference.org.

Berlin, NJ. April 21, 2012 (Sat.). 13th Annual CHAPLET Catholic Homeschool Conference, Mater Ecclesiae Roman Catholic Church, 261 Cross Keys Road, Berlin, NJ (actually in Pine Hill w/Berlin mailing address). 9 AM – 5 PM. Info: www.chaplet.org or email tschiavo@arxpub.com.

Milwaukee, WI. April 27-28 (Fri.-Sat.). Celebrate the Faith 2012: Catholic Homeschool Conference and Vendor

Fair. Sponsored by Greater Milwaukee Catholic Home Educators (GMCHE), Thomas G. Thompson Youth Center (State Fairgrounds – North End), 640 South 84th Street, West Allis, WI. Fri.: 3:30 PM – 9 PM; Sat.: 8 AM – 5 PM. Info: info@gmcheconference.com or www.gmcheconference.com

Harrisburg, PA. April 28 (Sat.). 18th Annual Catholic Homeschool Conference & Curriculum Fair, Holy Name of Jesus Parish, 6190 Allentown Blvd, Harrisburg, PA. After 8:30 AM Mass – 5 PM. Info: Ellen at (717) 866-5425. Info: www.CatholicHomeschoolPA.org conference@CatholicHomeschoolPA.org

Indianapolis, IN. May 5 (Sat.). *Quo Vadis* Catholic Homeschool Conference. Sponsored by Holy Family Home Educators and co-hosted by Holy Rosary Catholic Parish, 520 Stevens Street, Indianapolis, IN. After 8:00 AM Mass–5:00 PM Info: www.hfheindy.org or email hfheindy@yahoo.com.

Green Bay, WI. May 12 (Sat.). Immaculate Heart of Mary Green Bay Catholic Homeschool & Parent Conference, St. Agnes Parish, 1484 Ninth St., Green Bay, WI. 9:30 AM – 4 PM. Info: 540-636-1946 or info@ihmconference.org or www.ihmconference.org.

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World Day of Prayer for Vocations

The source of every perfect gift is God who is Love – Deus caritas est: “Whoever remains in love remains in God and God in him” (1 Jn 4:16). Sacred Scripture tells the story of this original bond between God and man, which precedes creation itself. Writing to the Christians of the city of Ephesus, Saint Paul raises a hymn of gratitude and praise to the Father who, with infinite benevolence, in the course of the centuries accomplishes his universal plan of salvation, which is a plan of love. In his Son Jesus – Paul states – “he chose us, before the foundation of the world, to be holy and without blemish before him in love” (Eph 1:4). We are loved by God even “before” we come into existence! Moved solely by his unconditional love, he created us “not ... out of existing things” (cf. 2 Macc 7:28), to bring us into full communion with Him.

In great wonderment before the work of God’s providence, the Psalmist exclaims: “When I see the heavens, the work of your hands, the moon and the stars which you arranged, what is man that you should keep him in mind, mortal man that you care for him?” (Ps 8:3-4). The profound truth of our existence is thus contained in this surprising mystery: every creature, and in particular every human person, is the fruit of God’s thought and an act of his love, a love that is boundless, faithful and everlasting (cf.

Jer 31:3). The discovery of this reality is what truly and profoundly changes our lives. In a famous page of the Confessions, Saint Augustine expresses with great force his discovery of God, supreme beauty and supreme love, a God who was always close to him, and to whom he at last opened his mind and heart to be transformed: “Late have I loved you, O Beauty ever ancient, ever new, late have I loved you! You were within me, but I was outside, and it was there that I searched for you. In my unloveliness I plunged into the lovely things which you created. You were with me, but I was not with you. Created things kept me from you; yet if they had not been in you they would have not been at all. You called, you shouted, and you broke through my deafness. You flashed, you shone, and you dispelled my blindness. You breathed your fragrance on me; I drew in breath and now I pant for you. I have tasted you, now I hunger and thirst for more. You touched me, and I burned for your peace.” (X, 27.38). With these images, the Saint of Hippo seeks to describe the ineffable mystery of his encounter with God, with God’s love that transforms all of life.

Pope Benedict XVI, October 18, 2011