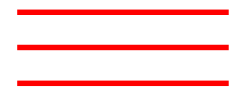




Seton Home



Study School

Volume XVIII, Number 1



“Under the Magisterium of the Catholic Church”



January 2001

Mother Seton

St. Elizabeth Ann Seton is a wonderful patron for us home schooling parents because she is a saintly model of one who searched for the truth about God, had a conversion to the Catholic Faith, and lived her life without compromise to worldly values.

Elizabeth grew up in a prominent Protestant family in New York in the last quarter of the 18th century, and married a good Protestant man. Though he was wealthy and provided well for the family, Elizabeth never became attached to the things of the world. In fact, she became involved with several charities with her sisters-in-law, who were popularly called the “sisters of charity.”

Elizabeth was dedicated to raising her children in the love of God, as well as dedicated to her husband. When he became seriously ill, she personally cared for him day and night. For the sake of his health, they traveled to Italy. While there, Elizabeth became close friends with an Italian family and began to attend their Catholic Church.

Just a few weeks after arriving in Italy, Elizabeth’s husband passed away. She then sailed back to America. While she could have

returned to the prominent and wealthy society of New York, she, instead, became a Catholic, an action which led her former friends in society to ostracize her.

Elizabeth had always taught her children herself, and now began to teach other children along with her own. Teaching the children, she learned more about her new Catholic Faith.

Eventually, Elizabeth became a religious sister, and began a little school in Emmitsburg, Maryland. There she dedicated herself day and night to teaching her children and the other Catholic children that came there. Others soon joined her in her new religious teaching order.

Elizabeth’s life was filled with the pain of her husband’s and children’s illnesses. In addition, she was without income after the death of her husband, and had to depend on others for support. After she became a Catholic, she lost her friends and her place in society. When she started her little school, she suffered from the cold, from illness, and from the deaths of her children. Through all the difficulties of her family trials, she trusted in God, attended Mass, continued in the practice of her Faith,

and persevered in teaching her children the Faith.

Elizabeth kept a diary, in which she wrote: “O Mother of Sorrows, as thy children, we are most at home with thee at the foot of the cross. Give every moment of our sufferings to our crucified Savior that He may count our pains with His. Make us trust all to Him, and some day we shall see how good and tender He has been to us to give us the thorny crown.”

“O holy Virgin, help us to remember that afflictions are steps to heaven. If we did not see the hand of God giving us this means of atonement, what aching heart we would often have! But not so, for we use our sorrows in reparation for our abuse of grace, and we look to eternity for the enjoyment of perfect love.”

“Patience and perseverance are the only ways to gain the blessings of heaven.”

- MKC

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Questions We Are Asked

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

We are struggling to make ends meet. Other mothers are working and are managing better financially. Will we spend our lives like this?

Happiness is in the heart, not in the things we have around us. Other mothers may have two cars, two computers, and two TV sets. They buy fast foods three times a week, and wear expensive pretty suits. But what about their relationships with their children and their husbands? Have they already had one or two divorces? Are they busy taking their children to their biological dad once a month?

How important are people in our lives? How important are our children? How important is our marriage? Do we know in our hearts and minds that the most important things are things which cannot be purchased?

We know, of course, that many (perhaps most) homeschooling families are one-income families with more than the average 1.7 children. There is help available for families to meet their financial obligations and be true to their principles. We especially recommend the work of Philip Lenahan who has written the book *Finances for Today's Catholic Family*. The St. Joseph's Covenant Keepers group also is very interested and active in this area. They offer many suggestions and resources online. You can find more information at the web sites www.dads.org and www.familylifecenter.net.

Some people think that home schooling is about reading, writing, and arithmetic. You and I know it is about a Catholic way of family life. It is a way of living the liturgical year as a family in our little and usually humble domestic church. It is the best way not only for

happiness in this world, but for eternal happiness in heaven. Hopefully, we will spend our lives like this.

I have a baby, a preschooler, a kindergartner, a second grader, and a fifth grader. I don't know if I can continue to manage and keep my sanity!

Relax, relax, relax! Sometimes we mothers cause our own worst problems! Look at all those sweet little faces and tell me you would want any one of them away from you, being taught the secular values of the world by a complete stranger! Pick up a newspaper once in a while, read the latest horrible thing going on in the schools, and then hug your little ones tighter!

Your children will learn more because you love them and they know you love them. They will learn more because you are the best example for them to learn how to love, and how to learn. If you think your children are not getting the amount of time they need to learn, take a day off, go over to the local school, and see how much time a teacher spends with any one child in the classroom. Do you honestly see any child getting any individual attention at all?

Think of how your older children can help you with the younger children. Can your fifth grader listen to the second grader read? Can the fifth grader help the second grader with his addition and subtraction math facts? Can the second grader do the same for the kindergartner? While these need not be more than brief but daily helps, it builds confidence in the older children, builds good relationships among the children, teaches younger ones to rely on brothers and sisters, and teaches older ones responsibility for others.

Your children can help you with household chores, as young as they are. Children want to feel important, they want to feel that what they do is important in the family. Give them chores that really do help you, such as sweeping the floor, bringing the laundry down to the basement, sorting the clothes, putting the laundry away, and so on. Children love you more for trusting them with important household assignments.

For more information, see the chapter on home management in my book *Catholic Home Schooling*. The

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above-mentioned www.familylifecenter.net website is also a good place to look. For more books about home management than you could ever read, look on www.amazon.com.

Most of all, you need to stay in constant prayer. Just saying the name of Jesus can bring great comfort. Teach your children to stay in constant prayer. Say short prayers with your children frequently. Read the saint for the day before or after breakfast, talk about one virtue of the saint, and encourage your children (and yourself) to practice that virtue for the day.

Start your day early with prayer. Pray with your husband in the evening. Read a meditation-type prayer book, such as the Bible, prayers of the Mass, prayers and meditations by saints, meditations on the mysteries of the rosary.

Go to Mass as often as possible, even more often. Take your children and

your husband. Go to confession every week, and take your children. Daily Mass, or Mass several times a week, along with weekly confession, will change your life. It will also help your children to grow in the spiritual life.

My teenage son needs to hear from someone else that home schooling is important and a good thing to do. He misses the social life at school.

Our young people have a calling from God. They are hungry to hear the truth, but usually are not aware of it specifically. Many of our young people are like St. Francis of Assisi. Francis grew up with all his needs well met. He had nice clothes, a nice home, a

When these Catholic home-schooled children understand Who is Christ, what is Truth, what is the Church, what are the enemies of the Church, some of them are going to swear a vow to be holy.

comfortable job in his father's tailor shop. He was a social leader among the local well-brought up boys in town. Yet something was missing, and he could not figure out what it was. He wanted a cause, something to challenge him, something he could sacrifice for, something to give him more reason to live. He thought becoming a soldier, going to war and fighting for a good cause would give him some important purpose in life. After just a few months, he came back discouraged. A soldier's life was still too earthly, not noble enough at all.

Shortly after, Jesus spoke to Francis, and asked him to rebuild His Church. Francis gave up all his worldly goods, even his clothes, and dedicated his life to saving souls.

St. Francis is a wonderful example for our teenage boys to help them realize that Catholic home schooling is teaching them the real meaning of life and the call to a heroic life, a life of sacrifice and virtue. A life surrounded with all kinds of comforts does not call forth the noblest virtues in our children.

I highly recommend obtaining EWTN, the Catholic television station of Mother Angelica, either by cable or by satellite dish. There are so many programs which can inspire our teenagers, not only because of the message of the Catholic Faith, but also because of the attractiveness of the call to Christ. Among the priests who present the Faith to teens in a compelling call to a life of sacrifice and virtue are Father Rutler; Father Perrone from Priests for Life; Father Levis (author of a catechism for teens) who answers questions live via email; Archbishop Fulton Sheen in selections from the highly popular "Life is Worth Living" series; Father Groeschel whose apostolate to the poor in the streets of New York is most compelling to young people; Msgr. Clark from Saint Agnes in New York City who talks with us about the acceptance of corrupt practices which we Catholics must stand up publicly against and protest.

I miss Dr. William Marra, may he rest in peace, as he was a frequent speaker at home schooling conferences. Has he ever written anything on home schooling?

I don't believe he has. We miss him too, a great Catholic who certainly influenced thousands of Catholics in thinking more seriously about living the Catholic life. The following are a few words from his home schooling talks.

"When there is a Catholic culture, it is founded on Catholic Truth. Quebec was probably that way fifty years ago. When one sees the churches, the streets named after saints, there once was the wonderful sense of the French Catholicism. Large families abounded, and no one begrudged a new baby coming into the world. A new baby was celebrated. Of course there were problems, but there was a sense of the

Catholic adventure of life.

"Anytime a given culture exists ... the citizens of that culture – from the babe in arms up to the eldest man – everyone will gain strength and light and solidarity as it were through a spiritual osmosis. The very stones of the streets, the Stations of the Cross at the crosswalks, the Madonnas on the corners of the buildings, the very names of the cities, the very fact that we say 'On St. Michael's Day, we are going to....'"

"We get the great treasures of our Catholic culture, like music, the fine arts and architecture, without any great effort because these are the result of Catholic culture when it is authentic. This culture was the cause of the wonderful harmony and the high level of civilization that we have enjoyed in the past."

"Now there is no Catholic culture. But, in the future, thanks to Christ-centered home schooling, the Catholic home schooled children who are born into this barren desert, this culture of death, will be the future heroes. These home-schooled heroes will have a dedication to Truth.

"When these Catholic home-schooled children understand Who is Christ, what is Truth, what is the Church, what are the enemies of the Church, some of them are going to swear a vow to be holy, and they will mean it.

"These young Catholic home-schooled heroes will reject our secular materialistic world and all its vices.

"These young Catholic home-schooled heroes will understand the dimension of life on earth as a pilgrimage to heaven.

"Some Catholic home schoolers are going to be dedicated to a zealous pursuit of the Truth no matter what it costs them in study, dispute, or controversy.

"These young Catholic home schooled heroes are the people who will make the Catholic cultural desert bloom once again!"

Why Home Schooling Makes Sense

Thomas A. Nelson, the owner of TAN Publishing, and a former teacher, wrote the *Preface* to Dr. Mary Kay Clark's book *Catholic Home Schooling*.

Mr. Nelson asks the question, "Does home schooling make sense academically?" He first notes that he has a Master's Degree in Education, has taught junior and senior high school students in both Catholic and public schools, and thus can speak with some authority about why home schooling makes sense academically.

Mr. Nelson points out eight reasons why home schooling makes sense academically. First, you do not waste the students' time in home schooling. In both the junior high and high school levels, in a school situation, time is wasted traveling between classes, time is wasted sitting in a "home room" getting school announcements, and time is wasted before each class while students settle down before the teacher can start teaching the class. Time is wasted traveling to and from school, often up to an hour one way for high school students. Time is wasted when a teacher is not prepared, and when students are unprepared and slow in responding to answers or discussion.

Second, in the home schooling situation, you do not re-teach what the student already knows. The parent is aware of what has been taught, not just in the current year but in past years, so new material can be covered. In a classroom, many students are at different levels of skills and knowledge; the teacher often must go back and cover or review basic information. Studies have shown that in small schools with only one or two teachers for all the children, children have gone on to win scholarships and academic awards. The studies concluded that because the teachers know the children

so well, they are able to keep each child growing academically.

Third, in home schooling, you can give your child more individualized attention. "Even if you are a mother with a large family, you can still give far more, and far faster, individual attention to each of your children than a teacher in a classroom with 25 to 30 students. You do not have to take attendance, deal as much with naughty children, or handle administrative details. You can get right to work and your children are not waiting for help."

Fourth, you can gear the work speed to a pace your children can handle and that will keep them interested. Mr. Nelson believes that the most common reason for children "failing" in school is that children are bored with the snail-like pace of the work in the classroom.

Fifth, you can and should eliminate the option to fail. Mr. Nelson believes the teachers have an administration which does not support their hard work, and a system which moves the kids in and out of the school day without an academic principle that no child should fail. In home schooling, parents have the time and the patience, the love and the perseverance, to keep teaching until the child learns. The dedication of the parent is realized by the child who is more motivated to learn because his parent is more motivated to teach until the child learns.

Sixth, you can build in automatic consequences for failure to perform. Mr. Nelson emphasizes the importance of teaching our children to do their work on time, to have it done completely, to have it done correctly, and have it done neatly with correct punctuation. It is important to have consequences for not doing the work

up to the standard. In the schools, there is no effort on the part of most teachers to expect or demand quality work.

Seventh, you can emphasize reading. "Ninety percent of academics hinges upon reading." Mr. Nelson says he required his students to read a book a week on top of all the other work. While his students moaned and complained, they eventually liked to read. He says, "The results of this practice are incredible: up goes vocabulary, up goes reading comprehension, up goes interest in school, up goes the ability to write good sentences, up goes the psychosomatic ability to read faster and faster with more and more understanding, up goes the fund of knowledge acquired, up goes the ability to spell, up goes interest in all sorts of things, up goes student confidence that they can achieve academically—and very possibly, in comes that life-time interest which will lead them to the career they should enter.

If you implement the "book a week" reading program, you can achieve amazing results with your children – even if you are the world's worst possible teacher, for your children will far out-pace whatever they could have achieved in the very best of formal schools. Make this simple reading program the "academic safety net" of your home schooling effort, and you simply cannot fail!

Eighth, home schooling eliminates the silliness and nonsense picked up from peers. The Catholic Church is clear in teaching that parents are to be the role models for their children. They are to teach by word and by example. Only if you have your children at home where you can talk to them like adults and have intelligent conversations, can you expect your children to become adults.

Internet Update

Seton is moving slowly, but we are putting some of our high school tests online. This enables our students to be able to obtain their test scores immediately. Students need only to get onto the Seton web site and click on "online testing." The directions are easy to follow. If additional essays are needed, these can be sent by email.

We are working to make the whole process of grading and testing faster and easier. We are hopeful that for next year we can have in place a system that will let parents enter parent-given grades directly in the computer. Combining that with the on-line tests, we may be able to immediately generate complete quarter grades.

While many of our families have been sending tests and assignments by fax, we are receiving more tests by email at grading@setonhome.org. When your student sends in tests by email, only the answers need to be sent, not the questions. Nevertheless, the answers need to be carefully numbered. We are also working on a new simplified method of sending assignments by email.

We are working as well on making it possible to take entire courses online. We are currently moving to put both French III and Spanish III on the Internet as online courses. This means that everything you find in your current Lesson Plan binder will be included online. This includes the lesson plans, the answer keys, and the tests.

Our purpose is to offer our students courses which are not limited to the textbooks. We plan to offer optional links to sites related to the lessons. These sites can extend

not only the information but the enjoyment of learning the subject matter. For instance, though we are just in the beginning stages of French III, we have already included links to the colorful shrine of St. Therese in Lisieux, France; the site can be read in French or English. Another link offers short summaries of the Saint of the Day, in French, sponsored by the bishops of France. Another link is to the shrine at Lourdes, and another to Christmas songs in French. All of these links have extensive web sites with a great deal of color and graphics, and unexpected other information.

We think that online courses can actually offer more interaction with teachers. Each online course would

have a teacher available to answer questions by email. The teacher will have a bulletin board so that when a student emails a question, the question and the answer by the assistant-tutor will be available to be read by the other students.

Students in French III will be encouraged to establish their own web site from our French III web site, writing a little something about themselves if they wish. Students will be able to email to other French III students, even including their own photo if they wish.

If we see a good response from our students in French III and Spanish III, and we do not encounter any major problems, we will move to do online courses with the other foreign language courses.

Religion Books from Seton Educational Media!



***Order on-line at
www.setonhome.org***

Spiritual Olympics

by Rev. Robert Hermley

The year 2000 was truly an outstanding year. Within the Catholic world we experienced a great number of blessings. Many were beatified. Sr. Faustina and Katharine Drexel were raised to the altar of saints, St. Theresa of Lisieux was declared a Doctor of the Church and the Catholic Church itself poured out forgiveness and reconciliation through its power to loose to all who cared to set their souls straight with God. Forgiveness and reconciliation were the very purpose of the Holy Year. The year 2000 was open to unbounded spiritual blessings to all who wanted them.

In the secular world we experienced the Olympics. I must admit that at first I was a bit unenthusiastic about them and watched them only from time to time to see how the Americans were doing. I became more interested as the shows began to explain all the extraordinary preparations that were necessary for the Olympics to take place. The host country and city had to build vast stadia and villages to prepare for the events. The participants had to practice day and night for years to engage in contests just to qualify for the events. They strengthened their muscles, their bodies and particularly their minds to get into a state of frenzy, anxious for victory.

No amount of time and practice was too much for an Olympic athlete. No amount of suffering, dieting, training, sweating was left undone to win the chance of entering the Olympic contests. St. Paul once commented on the same phenomenon to the Corinthians:

Run so as to win. Every athlete exercises discipline in every way. They do it to win

a perishable crown, but we, an imperishable one. (1 Cor. 9: 25).

How little we realize that more important than the Olympics, more important than city, state or national crowns is the race each one of us faces daily as we run toward eternity; and, as difficult as it might be to believe this, life will terminate for each one of us one day. Will we be able to say on that day with St. Paul:

I have competed well. I have finished the race. I kept the faith. From now on, the crown of Righteousness awaits me. (2 Tim. 4)

As the new year begins, we may well ask ourselves, "How long do I practice each day for the heavenly race?" We go to confession, tell God we are sorry for not staying in the race, but do we ever consider practicing harder to make up for failures? Many do nothing and then wonder why they fall back into sin when temptation sidetracks them in their trek toward eternity. If practice makes perfect in the sports world, it also holds true for the spiritual world.

Spiritual practice would include morning and evening prayers and also prayers before and after meals. Practice would certainly include frequent confession to see if I am improving or not. It would include a formal act of contrition every evening before going to bed. It could include daily Mass if at all possible. It would definitely include Mass every Sunday—illness excluded, of course. Don't fall for the mumbo jumbo of the liberal theologians who claim that missing Mass once or twice a year is ok. The Devil never takes a vacation and neither can we from Sunday Mass.

We need the grace.

Our practice could also include a 10 to 15 minute reading of the New Testament every day. We could also spend a like amount of time reading a portion of the life of one of our favorite saints whom we admire.

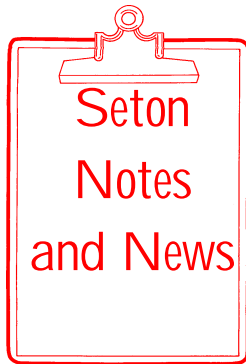
We spend hours on a treadmill to improve and strengthen our hearts; how little time we spend in the spiritual gym of the soul, rooting out our imperfections and our attachments to our sins. How can we progress if we ignore practice? For the most part, we have become so absorbed in the world that often we do not think about spirituality except on Sunday. Our arteries have become clogged with the sludge of TV, movies and soap operas. The vibrant blood that once flowed with the love of God has slowed. Luckily we can bring it back to a pulsating beat. We need practice.

Some of the most interesting stories to come out of the Olympics concerned those who overcame great difficulties and illnesses in order to win. The world counted them out, but their tenacious desire to win propelled them forward to overcome all obstacles that stood in the way.

Similar stories in the world of Spiritual Olympics also abound. Augustine, Magdalene, and even St. Paul were once on the wrong side of the fence. However, they all cooperated with God's grace and turned their lives around.

Nothing is impossible for God. He can do the same for us if we ask Him. In the worldly Olympics only one receives the gold. In the Spiritual Olympics we can all win the prize.

Fr. Robert Hermley is the chaplain of Seton Home Study School. His book Spring Can Last Forever is available from Seton Educational Media.



Conferences

Information about Seton conferences is sent by mail to home schooling families on our mailing list in the state, and usually to surrounding states as well. Conferences include talks as well as the sale of Seton textbooks and supplemental books. If your support group is interested in having a conference, please call Mary Lou Warren at Seton.

Non-Seton Conferences

Many state and local groups are now sponsoring their own conferences, inviting various Catholic vendors and curriculum providers. Seton is happy to participate at these conferences as a vendor. Dr. Mary Kay Clark is often available to speak at these conferences. We also suggest as a speaker Ginny Seuffert, mother of twelve children and home schooling mother of many years. She is a favorite speaker who offers her home schooling tips with fun and humor.

We also recommend Father James McLucas, who speaks about the role of the father in the Catholic family.

Conferences & Book Fairs

Dallas/Irving, TX. March 10, 2001. St. Luke's Church in Irving. Teaching our Children in Grade K to 8, Ginny Seuffert; The Role of the Catholic Father in a Culture in Crisis, Fr. James McLucas; Teaching Our High School Teens, Dr. Mary Kay Clark; Mary-like Modesty, Catherine Moran; Discipline Panel. To register, call Seton at 540-636-9996, or email sem@setonhome.org.

Front Royal, VA. March 24, 2001. Christendom College. Program to be announced. To register, call Seton at 540-636-9996, or email sem@setonhome.org.

Harrisburg, PA. April 28, 2001. Holy Name of Jesus Church. 7th Annual Catholic Conference. For information, call Ellen Kramer at 717-866-5425 or email Cathmschpa@ihs2000.com.

Des Moines, IA. April 28, 2001. Ginny Seuffert speaking. For information, contact Lorraine at 515-834-9191.

Indianapolis, IN. May 12, 2001. Contact Teresa at 317-849-9821.

Minneapolis, MN. June 16, 2001. Contact Deb Nelson at 763-785-8922.

California Office

Available in our Los Angeles California office are textbooks and pre-packed curriculums for grades K through 8. Mr. and Mrs. Richard Ellis are in charge of the office there. Contact them at Seton-California, 44751 Date St., Suite 8, Lancaster, CA 93534; phone: 661-948-8881; email: setonca@iol7.com; fax: 661-948-7006.

Donations

Thank you to all those who have made generous donations to Seton. Seton is doing vital work for the Church.

If you are able to make a donation to Seton, you can be sure that your money is being spent wisely on producing good Catholic textbooks for high quality Catholic education. Our new full-color religious art book, *Art Through Faith*, is sent to donors of \$100 or more. God bless you.

Catholic Home School Network of America

CHSNA has a new address: PO Box 2352, Warren OH 44484. The website is www.chsna.org. You can reach president Katie Moran at 330-652-4923.

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Kevin Clark

Accounts Overdue

Seton has been compelled to charge late fees to those overdue with their monthly payments. This apostolate relies on timely payments by parents in order to meet our own financial obligations to our employees and creditors. Please make payments on time. If you have any questions, please call Hal Brock. Thank you.

Seton Counselors

(Seton main number: 540-636-9990)

Religion/Sacraments: Fr. Hermley, Fr. Constantine, Fr. Barrett
High School English: Devin Pesta, Ext. 124
High School Math: Tom Luckey, Don Valaike
High School Science: Fr. Kevin Barrett, Ext. 120
Senior Guidance: Bob Wiesner, 540-636-2238
History: Bruce Clark, Ext. 122
Elementary: Winnie Ehlinger, 540-636-2342
Admissions, Enrollment, Re-Enrollment: 540-636-2039
Home Schooling Fathers: Tom Kosten, Randy DeClue, Tom Sayre
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Grading: Jacinta Black, Ext. 138; Rhonda Way, Ext. 166
Independent Studies: Dr. Jerry Smith, Ext. 123
Testing (CAT): Ext. 150
High School Course Approval: Paul Neulieb, 540-636-1846

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 His Holiness
Pope John Paul II, 1979
No. 68

Seton Home Study School

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