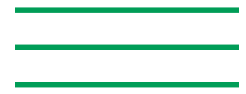




Seton Home



Study School

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◆ Newsletter 20th Anniversary Year ◆

October 2003

The Rosary

October is the month of the Rosary and this year, on October 7th, the Feast of Our Lady of the Rosary, it is also the end of the Year of the Rosary as proclaimed by Pope John Paul II.

For many Catholic homeschooling families, the Rosary is the primary daily devotion in our homes. While we go to Mass as often as possible, go to Confession once or twice a month, and observe the various yearly feast days of Our Lord, Our Lady, and the saints, the daily family devotion in our homes is the Rosary.

Saying the Rosary day after day, week after week, month after month, year after year, brings a certain spirituality into our homes and into the hearts of each member of the family.

Sometimes it may seem that the children do not appreciate saying the Rosary, or do not pay attention, or do not “get anything out of it,” but no one knows the human heart except God Himself. How God and His Mother work in the human heart, especially in the heart of a child, we may never understand. But work they do! And while we may not see it at the

moment as our little ones seem to fidget on their knees, the results are deep and long-term, in fact, everlasting and eternal.

While St. Dominic preached the Rosary all his life, and certainly was responsible for whole cities converting as a result of saying the Rosary, the saint who has been a favorite among Catholics for the meditations on the Rosary is St. Louis Mary de Montfort.

In his book, *The Secret of the Rosary*, St. Louis wrote about what happened when St. Mechtilde was trying to express her love to the Blessed Mother. The Blessed Mother appeared and explained to her what the words of the Archangel Gabriel meant to her.

“By the word *Ave* [Hail] which is the name Eve, Eva, I learned that in His infinite power God had preserved me from all sin and its attendant misery which the first woman had been subject to.

“The name *Mary* which means ‘lady of light’ shows that God has filled me with wisdom and light, like a shining star, to light up heaven and earth.

“The words *full of grace* remind me that the Holy Spirit has

showered so many graces upon me that I am able to give these graces in abundance to those who ask for them through me as Mediatrix.

“When people say *The Lord is with thee*, they renew the indescribable joy that was mine when the Eternal Word became incarnate in my womb.

“When you say to me *blessed art thou among women*, I praise Almighty God’s divine mercy which lifted me to this exalted plane of happiness.

“And at the words *blessed is the fruit of thy womb Jesus*, the whole of heaven rejoices with me to see my Son Jesus Christ adored and glorified for having saved mankind.”

With the words of the Blessed Mother herself expressing her love for the words of the Archangel, let’s teach our children to say the Rosary together as a family to show our love for her and for her Divine Son, Jesus Christ.

- MKC

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Questions We Are Asked

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

I can see that I will have difficulty in doing all the subjects every day with all my children. What do you suggest?

Each day you need to make decisions in your home about what are the most important things to do. The same is true about the daily assignments in homeschooling. You need to establish priorities. The major subjects which need to be done every day are Religion, Reading, Phonics, and Math. English is important to do every day if you possibly can, for fourth grade and up. These subjects should be done for about half an hour, but Reading and Math should be an hour if possible, in perhaps two half-hour classes.

If you still have time, assign the spelling, handwriting, and vocabulary, each of which should take about 15 or so minutes. Many children can do these subjects on their own once you set the daily routine.

The subjects which can be done once or twice a week if necessary, at the elementary levels are history and science. In fact, it is a special treat when these can be done with Dad on the weekends or in the evenings. Art, music, and physical education can be done once a week or on the weekends, in a formal or informal way.

Write out a schedule and put it up on the wall where the children can see it so they can follow it each day even when you are busy. Some of the children may be able to follow the directions in the lesson plan themselves if you are not available.

Always have the book report books available and ready if the children finish their work before you can help them. When we were in Catholic schools long ago, the nuns insisted that each student had a book to read if he or she finished up before the rest of the class. We were always encouraged to have books about

saints. We read at least a book a week during those happy pre-TV and pre-computer days.

Disciplining the children comes hard to me. I love my children and in this culture of death, I cannot seem to “get the hang” of proper discipline.

Many of us who are older see the problems that younger parents face today which we never faced. For one, parents in the past were more confident with their discipline. Today, we have a strange situation where studies show that 90% of parents use spanking at least sometimes, yet parents are often told by doctors or child rearing “experts” that spanking can be psychologically damaging. Both pro and anti-spanking advocates can point to studies to support their point of view. So, even if parents feel philosophically that spanking is appropriate, they probably feel very uneasy about it. Plus, there is the added concern that a parent who spans even slightly could be reported for child abuse by a neighbor.

The second situation which we older parents never faced is the horrendous culture of death that surrounds us. We are all so aware of the real abuse and the killing of the unborn that we want to give extra love and protection to our children. We want them to be happy all the time, and we feel that any discipline we give them will make them unhappy. Consequently, we have this internal pressure not to discipline our children.

Both the external and the internal pressure are causing parents not to properly and adequately discipline their children. It takes good judgment and self-control as well as determination and perseverance.

You need to pray every day for guidance from the Blessed Mother to help you act properly in each situation.

It is also important to set up necessary rules to keep sanity in your house, to keep your house organized and running fairly smoothly, and to keep all the children safe.

The problem is that if you do not discipline the children adequately, you have constant problems with accidents, with things being ruined, with things being broken, with children being hurt by other children. And you certainly cannot keep the homeschooling going if you are constantly cleaning up, fixing up, and yelling.

The most important part about discipline is consistency. When parents give a punishment only sometimes, then the kids take a chance that maybe this time you will not punish. If they know they will be punished for bad behavior, then the cost-benefit analysis changes pretty quickly.

The most important part about discipline is consistency. When parents give a punishment only sometimes, kids take a chance that this time you will not punish.

Seton sells several books on discipline that may be helpful. We recommend *Christian Fatherhood* by Steve Wood, a homeschooling father. He also has a tape series. Steve Wood has excellent resources listed on his web site at www.familylifecenter.net.

The book of Proverbs is especially good for parents to discipline their children. Chapter 12 starts out: “He that loves correction, loves knowledge, but he that hates reproof is foolish.” There are hundreds other gems for parents and children in the Book of Proverbs.

Seton also sells the book *Lifeline: The Religious Upbringing of Your Children* by James Stenson. James Stenson was the principal of a couple of Catholic schools. He interviewed parents whose children were obviously well-disciplined, and has filled his book with specific disciplinary recommendations.

We also sell the book *Family Bonding Through Discipline* by Father Robert Fox, the priest who took young teens on Fatima tours for many years. He observed Catholic children who were well disciplined and asked their parents to write about how they discipline in their families.

Despite the evidence to the contrary, the education establishment wants you to believe that only they can educate your child. Don't believe them.

What helps can you provide for teaching math? I am rusty after all these years!

The best way to teach your child is to go through the textbook with your child. This may be time consuming, but it is still the best way. You certainly want to go over the presentation for teaching each lesson, but your child should do the problems by himself.

If you are using the Saxon textbook rather than the MCP workbooks, one of the major difficulties is copying the problems correctly on the paper. We encourage parents to use the workbooks in the lower grades so the student can write the answers in the book. Frankly, I used the workbooks through the 8th grade, and my boys were very happy not to write out the problems.

We have recently purchased a series of computer disks which will help with

all the levels of the Saxon textbooks, from grade 5/4 and up. The tutor on the CD gives an oral presentation as well as shows the work on a black board on the computer screen. The tutor teaches every single lesson in the textbooks. Simply call Seton's SEM department to order a disk. It will help you as well as your child.

Check out web sites. There is an amazing amount of information about teaching math on the internet. You can even search for the kind of problems and the grade level. Many sites are for teachers and parents, some for students.

Another option is to hire a college student or perhaps a retired math teacher to come once a week to go over the lessons with your child. Sometimes a retired grandparent or uncle or someone from the local parish will help out.

You also might want to look for help on our Seton web site on the high school math message board, or ask one of our high school math counselors by phone or by email. If your student is at a lower grade, you can call one of our elementary counselors, or ask a question on the elementary message board on our web site.

I am frightened at the idea of homeschooling high school! How can I give my children as good an education as the teachers at the local Catholic high school?

It may seem at first that the education provided by a certified teacher at the local high school can give your child a better education. But the problem is that the teacher must proceed at the rate that he or she thinks is best for the average student in the classroom. For students who cannot keep up, or who miss some days of class, or who are bored, this can result in poor grades, poor education, and poor attitudes.

Usually when a student is taught on a one-to-one basis, the education is better because the teacher is able to help the student with his own particular needs, and proceed at the pace that is best for the student.

The factors which affect a student's learning in the classroom are many and varied: the social situation, the physical

pushing around, the desire to belong, the drugs and smoking, the pressure to not be a serious student, the pressure to wear certain clothes, have a certain kind of haircut, wear certain jewelry or jeans, and on and on and on. These are the less serious factors, but they are all factors which affect the ability of the individual student to learn.

The most important thing you need to do for your children is give them love and security and the Catholic faith and teach them how to live the Catholic lifestyle. The education will come. Seton helps you with the books, the supplemental help, the enrichment on our web site, and the counselors.

The fact is that the students who are being homeschooled are scoring higher on the achievement tests than students taught in a classroom. Our students average in the 84th percentile; they are averaging better than 84 percent of the students who have taken the achievement test.

The *Washington Times* reported on September 16, 2003, that "American high school students are trailing teens from 14 leading European and Asian countries in reading, math, and science, despite U.S. spending of up to three times as much per pupil, a new study said."

"The *Education at a Glance 2003* report to be released today by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) states 15-year-olds in Asian countries are the world's leading learners, showing much greater learning proficiency than their ninth-grade contemporaries in the United States.

"The report shows that the United States spends \$20,358 annually for each student in public schools and colleges - including educational research and development and other indirect costs - or 5 percent of its gross domestic product, compared with \$8,065 in Japan and \$6,118 in Korea, or 3.6 percent and 4.3 percent of the GDPs respectively."

Despite all the evidence to the contrary, the education establishment wants you to believe that only they can educate your child. Don't believe them.

Essentials of Home Management

by Ginny Seuffert

We often hear parents worry that, while they are committed to teaching their children at home, their houses are disintegrating into messy pits of old newspapers and strewn toys. The same moms who worry about their children's spiritual and educational growth also want them to have an occasional square meal. Teaching is too often held up while the students search for missing pencils, rulers, and textbooks, leading the teaching parent to believe rightly that the homeschooling would go better in a clean and orderly home. Domestic help is too expensive, Grandma retired to Arizona, and all the siblings are too busy with their own families to lend a hand.

This is the first in a series of articles that will present some very basic principles designed to help homeschooling families achieve some order in their homes. Each article will introduce a new "essential" component to a well-run household. While these essentials might be useful to any person seeking a serene home environment, the target audience is Catholic homeschooling parents with lots of children. Please do not hesitate to send us your comments or suggestions.

Home Management Essential # 1:
Get rid of things!

Many homeschool moms need a quick fix for their messy homes. They do not have the time to read the latest books on the subject, and have even less time to follow the prescriptions these books frequently offer: detailed lists and charts, family conferences, and complicated calendars. These moms need an answer in one line or less, and here it is: *Get rid of things!*

We Americans are drowning in our possessions. The average size of a new single family home in the

United States is up to 4000 square feet. These huge "McMansions" are filled to the rafters with fancy appliances, exercise equipment, electronic goodies, and more toys than any child could ever hope to play with. Added to the equation in teaching homes are books, math manipulatives, desks, chalkboards, microscopes, telescopes, and other educational supplies. Each and every one of these possessions had to be bought, put away, dusted, washed, repaired, and replaced. If you never acquire the item to begin with, you do not have to perform those tasks. However, it is still not too late: *Get rid of things!*

Here is your assignment, to be completed before you start your Christmas shopping and bring even more things into your home: check out each room in your house to see what you can give away, stow away, or throw away. In the kitchen, keep on the counters only those appliances you use more than once a week. If you bake only for Christmas and Easter, put the stand mixer and the bread machine in a cabinet. Appliances like ice cream makers, coffee grinders, and juicers also should be stowed unless they are used daily. If you only plan on (maybe) someday baking, or juicing, or coffee grinding, or ice-cream making, give those appliances away today. Right now, your main focus is raising your children and homeschooling. Do not clutter up your life, or your kitchen, with items that will only make you feel guilty by sitting unused.

Pitch all the old newspapers, advertisements, magazine articles, brochures, church bulletins, and homeschool catalogs you have been saving before someone drops a match and the house goes up like a torch. You probably couldn't find the one article you wanted to reread anyway. Nursing moms who are homeschooling four children and still

have two in diapers, have little time for reading and even less time for filing. One of the marvels of our age is the internet search engine (My favorite is www.google.com), which allows you to access the most current information on any topic. Throw the papers out.

Take the family photos and other memorabilia that are spilling out of drawers, and make albums for family members for Christmas. Albums are inexpensive gifts, family members just love to receive them, and the memories are preserved in an orderly way. Here's a solution if you just hate to throw out the old mismatched china, quilts, and table linens you have collected from deceased relatives. Pick a few items you really cherish, and display the rest on your dining table some Sunday. Ask all your relatives for coffee and cake and invite them to take whatever they like. Advise them you are giving the rest to some charitable organization.

Finally, take a brutal look at your dressers and closets. Will you ever really wear all those clothes? Most folks wear and re-wear the top three garments in the dresser. Get rid of anything that you haven't worn in the last 12 months. Time marches on and so does style; by the time you lose that 15 pounds you gained with the last baby, you'll probably be pregnant again! Donate those seldom/never worn garments to a thrift shop and let someone who needs them have them.

Getting rid of unnecessary clutter leaves more time to maintain the items you really need. Not worrying about the things in your life, allows you more time to concentrate on the people in your life. "Do not lay for yourselves treasures upon earth where moth and rust consume, and thieves break in and steal. Rather lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust consume, and thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there also your heart will be." (Matt, 6: 19 -21)

Our Lady of Fatima

by Fr. Robert Hermley

On October 13, we celebrate the anniversary of the great miracle of the sun which spun in the sky over Fatima in 1917. The miracle was witnessed by over 70,000 people.

The story actually began on May 13, 1917, when three little children, Lucia dos Santos and her two cousins Francisco and Jacinta, became frightened by lightning while tending sheep in the Cova da Iria. As they were turning to run away, another flash of brilliance coming from the top of a tree halted them in their tracks. In the brilliance, Lucia saw a lady "all of light."

The lady smiled and assured the children that they had nothing to fear. She told them that she was from heaven, and she asked the children to return on the same day for the next five months. She asked them to offer themselves to God, and to accept the sufferings He might send, in reparation for the sins of the world which offended God so much. The lady also asked them to pray for peace. The world was at that time enduring the dark days of World War I. The lady then moved toward the east, disappearing into the sun.

Their parents were skeptical, but the three kept their promise and returned to the Cova on the 13th of June, July, September and October. Their August rendezvous was spoiled when they were kidnapped by the government administrator of their district, who threatened them with death if they would not confess that the visions were a hoax. Bravely, the children refused to recant, even though they were told that refusal would mean their deaths. At the time, many officials hated the Catholic Church, and tried to stamp it out in Portugal. The officials kept the children in jail, and released them only after an outcry from the villagers.

In June, about 50 people went to the Cova with the children, and in July about 5000 gathered. It was in July that the children were given a vision of hell. Since the little ones were in jail in August, they were not able to go on the 13th, but Mary made a special visit after their release.

In earlier visits, the lady told the children secrets, and promised "a great sign" in October. She asked for daily recitation of the rosary and for sacrifice.

In September, some 30,000 people accompanied the children. The lady had stated that the war would end soon, but predicted that if people did not repent an even worse war would begin, and that people would endure suffering, hunger, persecution of the Church and of the Pope. To prevent this, Russia should be dedicated to her Immaculate Heart, and reparation should be made on the first Saturdays of each month. If people followed her requests, Russia would be converted and the world would have peace. If not, Russia would spread her errors and foment war and persecution of the Church. But in the end, the lady said, "My Immaculate Heart will triumph." All of this was predicted in July of 1917, months before the Communists took over the Russia, and months before the war ended. Since the children could not read or write, they could not have had any previous knowledge of any such world events.

On October 13, 1917, the children went to the Cova with 70,000 people who had heard of the promise of a great miracle. It was raining heavily, yet all obeyed Lucia's request to close their umbrellas. In this October vision, Mary declared to the children that she was Our Lady of the Rosary. St.

Joseph and the Child Jesus appeared, and Mary revealed herself also as Our Lady of Sorrows and as Our Lady of Mount Carmel.

Suddenly Lucia called out, "Look at the sun!" The huge crowd witnessed the sun grow dim, tremble, rotate three times throwing off rays of fantastic light, and then begin to fall toward earth in a zigzag pattern. The terrified spectators thought the sun would fall upon them, but suddenly, it climbed back into its normal place in the sky. People wet from the previous rain found themselves now absolutely dry. This, indeed, was the promised sign.

Why has the world ignored the message of Fatima to say the rosary and sacrifice? Probably it is the work of the devil himself! The devil wants to keep the truth away from our eyes. In the revelation of Fatima, we have the doctrine of angels: the angel of Portugal came to the children. We also have Mary, who is to crush the head of the serpent. We have a vision of hell, and the devil does not want people to think about hell.

If the world ever followed the message of Fatima, the devil would be out of business! The devil gets his friends to keep the message quiet. Surely the radical feminists are not interested in the message. Certainly the New Age witches are not intrigued by the message. They are too busy with magic wands, incantations and solstice worship. Whatever their reasons, they are aiding the prince of darkness in anesthetizing religious fervor and putting it to sleep. The devil fears the message of Fatima.

Yet, Mary's Fatima message still holds. Let us pray the rosary every day and offer up our trials, troubles, and sacrifices to Christ, first for our own sins and then for all mankind. The rosary is a small price to pay for peace. Peace must begin within ourselves before it can come to the world.

New School Year

Many of our families are starting their homeschooling for the first time. Let's review some of the suggestions we have talked about from time to time.

It is vital to keep reminding yourself WHY you are homeschooling. Write it down and tape it on your refrigerator or bedroom door. When you become frustrated over a math problem, when you can't remember how to diagram a sentence, or when your little one refuses to do his assignment, you need to remind yourself WHY you are homeschooling.

You may be homeschooling because you want to teach Catholic values to your children. You do not want your children corrupted by early and perverse sex education programs. You may feel your children are not physically safe in school anymore. Whatever the reasons are, list them and post them where you can easily read them.

Keep in mind that while homeschooling is not easy, it is not impossible, and it is rewarding. It actually brings happiness and joy! It brings special moments between you and your child. That is what we have all discovered. It makes our family a happy family. When the difficult times come, dealing with these times together helps everyone in the family to grow spiritually.

The basic requirement for success in homeschooling is living the sacramental life. This means making the seven sacraments essential in the lives of the members of the family, and using all the sacramentals we can as we live through the liturgical year.

The sacramental life means that we should be attending Mass and receiving Holy Communion every day. I could add the words "if possible," but we need to consider the impossible. We are living in a pagan society, surrounded by all sorts of evils and perversions. We parents need the daily support of Jesus Christ within us as we teach our children Christ's values, as we give our children the spiritual weapons needed to fight the evils they will face. The children need the daily reception of Jesus Christ

to practice the authentic Catholic lifestyle.

Another sacrament we need to receive often is Penance or the Sacrament of Reconciliation. We and our children need to evaluate our spiritual lives on a frequent and regular basis. The saints have said it is not enough to simply avoid a vice; it is necessary to practice the virtues. This kind of inner spiritual analysis can come only with frequent reception of the sacrament of Penance.

In addition to the sacraments, we need to use some of the hundreds of sacramentals approved by the Church to help us grow in grace, and to live the liturgical year more fully at home.

As God the Father told Moses when He gave him the Ten Commandments, we need to redecorate our homes. We need to put a crucifix in every room, pictures of Our Lord and the Blessed Mother, statues and holy water fonts and relics. We need to wear a scapular and pray the Rosary every day. We need to have an altar in the midst of our home where we can pray as a family every day.

Besides the sacraments and sacramentals, we need the support of other Catholics. We ourselves and our children need the moral and spiritual support of others to reinforce that the kind of life we are living is the authentic Catholic life. We need to attend a parish where homeschooling is respected. Perhaps we can find a Catholic homeschooling support group where our children can meet other Catholic children who are being taught at home with the same goals.

So, before we even begin to worry about the academic part of homeschooling, these basics need to be done: putting up a list reminding ourselves WHY we are homeschooling; accepting the fact that homeschooling is a sacrifice; living the authentic Catholic family life through frequent reception of the sacraments and the daily use of the sacramentals; and finding support in a parish and Catholic homeschooling support group.

In the elementary levels, remember the priorities: religion, reading and phonics, math, other language arts such as spelling, vocabulary, and English, in that order. At these levels, if you seem to run out of time, your child can simply read over the science and history before bedtime, or on the weekend with Dad. Your child can learn the minor subjects later, but the simple basics are fundamental to any further learning.

Some mothers become panicky if they believe they are "falling behind." Remember, your child should progress at the rate that is best for him or her. The lesson plans are a guide, a suggestion, a recommendation. Our motto at Seton has always been: "Adjust the program to fit the child, not the child to fit the program!"

If you are putting yourself under pressure, or if your spouse is putting you under pressure to move along more quickly with the lessons, then think of short cuts. Do more oral work with your children. Do some up-front testing before starting the chapter to see just how much your children already know.

Try to discover if your child is slow because he does not know previous concepts which should have been learned last year. Perhaps he is slow because he already knows the material and does not want to do busy work. You may need to obtain some other books from Seton for review purposes, or you may need to obtain some higher level books to keep your child challenged.

If you have several children, consider asking older children to help you with the younger children. An older child can listen to a younger one read, or help with math. An older brother might be just what a younger one needs to explain a concept. Older girls, even those only six or seven, like to play school, and are great with teaching letters and sounds to children in Kindergarten or First grade. Your greatest resource in homeschooling is your children!

Don't forget grandparents. Many grandparents are not working but are in good health and would be happy to help with homeschooling, on a part-

time basis. The kids love being taught by grandparents. Grandparents are also great for helping out with the household chores.

Many of us have discovered that combining the children in adjacent grades in the same subject really cuts down on our work and helps the children to learn better. The children not only can discuss the same assignments, but they come to have a certain respect for each other's abilities. It helps to strengthen the family relationships.

The subjects which homeschooling mothers find easiest to combine are religion, science, history, art, music, and physical education. For science, projects or hands-on assignments can be done as a family with Dad on Saturday morning. History can be done in the evening as a family, if possible, with a weekly visit to the library, perhaps.

In conclusion, let me say that, in spite of the first year difficulties, the personal rewards are tremendous: the joy of working with your children as you teach them reading and math and, most of all, about Jesus. And there are the unexpected results, such as the children growing spiritually in a way that we could never imagine, and surely more so than when we were young. And our own spiritual growth as we learn more about our Faith, as we learn more about ourselves, as we consider more deeply our personal relationship with Jesus and His Blessed Mother.

Directed Courses

For this school year, Seton is offering a new option for some high school courses: an online "directed course" option. What this means is that the course will start at a specific time, proceed week by week, and finish up at a specific time, like a regular school year. These courses began on September 15th, 2003, and will finish the first week of June, 2004. We are offering this option in the hope that it will encourage high school students to stay on track throughout the year.

For this school year, we are offering this directed option with these courses:

English 9 (ENG101)
American History (HIS301)
Spanish I (LNG131)
Latin I (LNG121)

We sent out emails to all families with students enrolling in these courses. However, we don't have email addresses for every family and some emails were returned undeliverable.

Besides the standard features of our online courses, the directed courses will offer substantial further helps to our students. First, they will feature a weekly audio lecture by the course teacher, covering a specific aspect of the studies for the week. Second, we will offer dedicated message boards for students taking the directed courses, so that students

can discuss their current assignments with each other.

You don't need to sign up to take these directed courses. You can join up with the directed courses or discontinue the directed courses as you wish. (If you have never used the Seton message boards, you will need to sign up for an account on the message boards.)

If you have already started a course and have progressed several weeks, but would like to join the directed course schedule, you might want to focus for a few weeks on your other courses, then pick up the directed course. If you are a week or two behind the directed course schedule, you could spend extra time on the course to catch up to the schedule.

To access the directed online courses, go to your My Seton page at www.setonhome.org/myseton. Click on Courses/Grades on the menu. When the course list appears, click on the open book icon (to the right of the quarter grades) to access the course.

Remember, taking the courses in this directed manner is entirely optional. And even if you don't use the directed course option, you can still access the course lesson plans, take tests, upload assignments, and view supplemental items from your My Seton page.

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Pray Without Ceasing

by Margaret Flagg

It has always been of great value to the faithful to look to the saints for instruction and encouragement in the way of prayer. Again and again we are reminded of its treasures, and of the indisputable necessity of prayer in every detail of our lives.

Saint Elizabeth Ann Seton says, "Without prayer I should be of little use." This certainly illustrates the expediency and necessity of praying always and in all things. She is a bit reminiscent of St. Paul when she tells us, "We must pray literally without ceasing, I mean that prayer of the heart which is independent of time and place, which is rather a habit of lifting up the heart to God, as in a constant communication with Him." But then comes the popular question, "How do I pray always when I am so busy and so distracted and so overwhelmed with all the daily tasks that demand my constant and immediate attention?" Perhaps you have heard some say in reply, "Let your work be your prayer."

If anyone knows the extent of this difficulty it is Jesus, the Word made flesh. Christ became flesh and so was subject to many involvements, especially as His active ministry began in the years of His public life. Often when He tried to go off to pray, He was followed by the flocks of people who were thirsting for the nourishment of His Word. He would turn then, with compassion and perhaps with a sigh of human tedium, and teach them.

As prayer is our bread, so it is that to do the will of Our Father is also our bread, as it was with Our Lord. This often means giving

up our solitude to attend to some task. How difficult it is to see this as a positive thing! Yet it is this way which follows the Way of the Cross. Our hearts are pierced, as it were, with disappointment at not being able to sit quietly and talk with God, and the blood which pours forth from the frustration of this desire is taken up to Heaven as a fragrance of love penetrating the very Heart of God. It is the desire of the soul and an act of the will which makes it prayer. This, however, does not excuse us from making time and taking the time to be with Our Lord in solitude and bringing before Him our adoration, gratitude, petitions and our sorrow for sin.

Mental prayer and spiritual reading have always been regarded as indispensable in spiritual growth and encouraged in order to progress more rapidly in the spiritual life. Mother Seton suggests, "Give some time every day, if it is only half an hour, to devotional reading, which is as necessary to the well-ordering of the mind as the hand of the gardener is to prevent the weeds from destroying your favorite plants." Another salutary practice is to recall the presence of God at various times of the day or to say a favorite aspiration such as, "Jesus, I love You," or, "Blessed be God forever!" These are especially helpful during those occasions when there is no time to sit down and rest in His presence.

With a little exercise and a bit of self discipline, the practice of praying always can become habitual in our lives. Its effects will help in the practicalities of daily life and will merit for us infinite rewards!

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