
Keeping in Touch

A quarterly newsletter for Catholic homeschooling families



AMDG

JMJ

No More Posted Copies of Keeping in Touch

KEEPING IN TOUCH will no longer be printed and distributed by the Cardinal Newman Faith Resources Inc at Merrylands. No more donations should be sent there, except in acknowledgement of past services.

KIT will continue to be available electronically on the website of the Cardinal Newman Faith Resources Inc. (www.cardinalnewman.com.au) for reading or downloading.

If you would like to be notified by email when a new issue of KIT is coming online, please advise Mr. Shaun Fanning, who currently maintains the address list, by email on tarlohill@bigpond.com.

If you need a printed copy and cannot get a friend or neighbour to download and print it for you, please contact:

Mr. Shaun Fanning
Tarlo Hill
2142 Taralga Road
TARLO NSW 2580
Tel. 02 4829 0377

EDITORIAL

This issue was edited by the **Elvis Family**:
PO Box 968
Mittagong NSW 2575
Tel. 02 4871 3798

Contributions for **Issue 1** of Keeping in Touch for 2005 will be edited by the **Gale Family**

Loreto
256 Bathurst Road
KATOOMBA NSW 2780
Tel. 02 4782 1922
Email: petermatthewjoseph@dodo.com.au

PUBLICATION

KEEPING IN TOUCH is published about the end of the fifth week of each term. Contributions are invited from Catholic homeschooling families and from priests, religious and laity supporting them. Children's poems, stories and book reviews are very welcome.

Please send contributions on A4 paper, or (preferably) via e-mail where possible.

MATERIAL DEADLINE

Please note that the deadline for contributions from readers is the **end of the second week of each term**.

CATECHETICAL NEWS

Father Tierney regrets to announce that his personal newsletter "Catechetical News" will cease with the next issue n. 183.

He cannot cope with the work of preparing it. However new issues of his single sheet handouts will appear periodically and will be available on the website www.cardinalnewman.com.au.

On request, they will be posted as quality masterprints to those who wish to multiply them for apostolic purposes. He will refund any donations towards either newsletter made during 2004 to those who feel that they have not got value for money in what they have already received.

The newsletter "Book News" of the Cardinal Newman Faith Resources Inc. will continue to be mailed out and may sometimes include articles by Father Tierney. It will also appear on their website.

TERM FOUR 2004

CONTENTS

- Family Traditions	2
- The Sacrifices Parents make at Christmas	
- A Celebration of Love	3
- Grace From Cold Water	4
- Baby Mice	
- Homeschooling	5
- Milly Molly Mandy	
- A Thought	
- Juggling the Needs of Older and Younger Children	6
- I'm a Troubled Teenager With No Friends	7
- I am a Troubled Homeschooling Mother	
- I am a Troubled Homeschooling Mother	8
- Nicene Creed	9
- My Word	
- Oh it's Hard to be Humble	10
- Wonder vs the Beast of Boredom	11
- St John	
- The Long Walk	12
- Pretty Things	
- A Dummies Guide to Buttons	13
- A Dummies Guide to Buttons	14
- Calculus Cheat Sheet	15
- A Friendly Virtue	16
- Rosie	17

FAMILY TRADITIONS

When we first married, I was anxious to make sure that any children we might have did not grow up with the commercial Santa Claus as their Christmas 'legend', so as the children came and grew I was careful to ensure that they all knew the story of the bishop St. Nicholas, Santa Niklaus, and how it came to be transmuted into the commercialised fat man in a red suit. We celebrate St. Nicholas's day with gifts to good children (!) who put a pair of shoes outside the bedroom door on St. Nicholas's Eve; oranges and bags of chocolate coins, to represent two of the stories about St. Nicholas. (The enterprising child who tried leaving six pairs of shoes got her just desserts!).

Advent is celebrated as a preparation for Christmas; something must be given up, as in Lent, and something aspired to, such as control of one's temper; there is a religious Advent calendar, with a daily window to be opened in turn by the children, the Advent wreath with its four purple candles lit week by week at the family meal; and the crib. Our Lady and St. Joseph set off on their trek to Bethlehem (the empty crib ready in a cardboard stable, the model sheep and donkeys in the adjacent fields with their shepherds) at the beginning of the fourth week of Lent; on Christmas Eve they reach the stable. On Christmas morning Our Lord is placed in the manger and the angels and shepherds crowd in too, while the Wise Men begin their twelve day journey from the East, usually along the window sill!



There are disadvantages to this scheme. Our crib figures are battered and broken as a result of constant rearrangement by small fingers. The journeys to the stable are frequently halted by the temporary loss of the main protagonists, and quarrels about whose turn it is to legitimately move them are constant. But at least it reminds the

family of what we are supposed to be thinking.

Our 'Christmas book' is now also a tattered article, a once-beautiful book with the text from the King James bible and lovely illustrations from the Annunciation to the Flight into Egypt; but it is still read occasionally throughout Advent for bedtime. I try to teach the younger ones Christmas carols so they will be able to join the singing on Christmas day. When I was a child we had to sort our toys each Advent and give some away to 'the poor children'. No giving of rubbish was allowed, only good toys; and each of us was expected to give something we truly treasured as well. I have not continued this with my children, nor have I taken them to visit the nursing homes and orphanages as my mother took us, and I regret it.

The Christmas cake is a traditional fruit cake, decorated with twelve marzipan balls to represent the Apostles. We do have a tree, covered in tinsel and ornaments, because the children love it. It remains up from Christmas Eve till the Epiphany, when we celebrate the Feast of the Kings with the Kings' Cake, a pastry with a silver-foil-wrapped bean hidden in it; whoever gets the bean is King or Queen of the Epiphany that year.

None of these are particularly novel customs, but what interests me is the way you only have to do something once and to the children it becomes their tradition. From then on it is, "But we always... for Christmas!", and I find that very touching, even if it can become tiring to remember to do it! I try to remind the children (and myself) that we are not celebrating a self-indulgent spree of materialism, but one of the major feasts of the Church. Frequent confession during Advent is a help.

Our Christmas has over the years become a quieter celebration; I deliberately attempt to refrain from indulging in too many gifts for the children; we try to keep the focus on the coming of Christ. But I also find that special customs, special food, and particular routines can in fact help to maintain that focus.

Sarah Fanning

THE SACRIFICES PARENTS MAKE AT CHRISTMAS

An extract from *This Tremendous Lover* by Eugene Boylan

".....consider for a moment the sacrifices the parents have to make, to make Christmas all that tradition says it should be for their children. The expense, the worry, the trouble, the patience, the fatigue, the bitterness of financial limitations to one's power of gratifying a child's dream-the list is endless.

Think alone of what is involved in Christmas shopping, where a large family and a small income are involved. And the thought can easily arise, especially for the 'detached' Christian: Is it worth it all? Of course, it is worth it all. It is done in memory of Christ; it is done to build up an idea of Christ; It is done for Christ; it is done to Christ! Amen, I say to you whatsoever you did to these my least brethren, you did it to me. When the New Year brings an end to those halcyon days for the children, this service done to Christ is the consolation that the parents should have in facing the expense....."

THANKS

Our thanks and appreciation must go to Michelle Vieira for organizing and running the successful September Homeschooling camp at Fitzroy Falls.

Someone remarked that Michele should be running a multinational company as she has a flair for organisation! The camp ran like clockwork but at no time did we feel "organized" thanks to Michele's calm, friendly and welcoming attitude. It was a very enjoyable and relaxing week for us adults, with plenty of time to chat and share with other parents.

Our children were very busy involving themselves in experiences which are difficult to duplicate at home eg performing in the two musicals. Our thanks must also go to Sr Augustine and the Dominican Sisters who showed infinite patience with the children.

Thank you also to Fr Matthew Austin who was our Chaplain for the week.

A CELEBRATION OF LOVE

Each family has its own traditions. Many traditions are built up around important events in a family's life. They are anticipated with pleasure and are carried out with love. Birthday traditions are an example of this type of tradition.

Every family celebrates birthdays. In our family, our birthday traditions are, I guess, very similar to those of other families. The birthday boy (or girl) has a holiday from his household chores, receives a small gift from each of the other family members, has a birthday banner fixed to the dining-room wall in his honour, has a special family outing or activity and of course, there is the birthday cake. In our home, we also have a day's break from school work on a birthday, which means an extra ten days holiday per year!

This time four years ago, our family was anticipating the first birthday of our son, Thomas, who died as a baby. I was dreading Thomas' birthday and the closer the day drew near the more unsettled I felt as the acutely painful memories forced themselves upon me. In contrast, all my children were eagerly looking forward to the day and they started to make plans regarding how we should celebrate this special occasion. Thomas has always been a very important and integral part of our family and everyone agreed that he deserved a special celebration just like the rest of us. I wasn't so sure and in some ways I thought it would be easier to ignore his birthday and try not to think about him too much. But despite my hesitation, a celebration was planned!

“It means so much to know that others are thinking and praying for us”

In this way, a whole new set of family traditions was established and each year we dedicate a day to our precious son showing how much we love him, how important he is to us and how glad we are that he is part of our family. Yes, it is painful and not at all easy to celebrate Thomas' birthday but at the same time it is comforting to go through the rituals each year.

Just like everyone else, Thomas has a banner made for him which we tape to the

wall where everyone can see it. It remains there until Imogen's birthday which comes along nine days later. An extra banner is constructed for Thomas: a smaller version which we all write our birthday messages to him on. (This can be a teary exercise) This banner is enclosed in plastic (to protect it from the elements) and is erected over his grave.



Our birthday outing is a picnic to the cemetery. Thomas is buried in a very picturesque spot: the children's corner of the St Patrick's cemetery at Sutton Forest. There, surrounded by fields of cows and horses, are ten or so children's graves, some from the beginning of last century. It is a very peaceful place and we look upon the other buried children such as "Our Jack", as friends. The cemetery feels like "ours", a special place we have earned the right to call our own.

As soon as we arrive, we take our posy of flowers to Thomas' grave and arrange it to our satisfaction, we water his rose-bush, tidy up any weeds and then it is time for the birthday photos. Each year, the children pose around the grave smiling broadly. It is interesting to compare the yearly photos and see how much the children change in 12 months. (New members of the family have also appeared some years!) Flowers arranged and camera work completed, it is time to eat and like all birthday picnics, we make sure there is a good supply of special treats.

All birthday boys receive presents and Thomas is no exception. Besides the usual flowers and religious statues, we buy Thomas a new teddy bear each year.

I look out for especially appealing bears which we name (with a saint's name) and I attach a label with the date so we remember which birthday it was bought to commemorate. Already, "Thomas' Teddy Collection" is growing, a visible indication of how much time has passed since he died. At stressful times, such as when one of the little ones has trouble sleeping, they are allowed to take one of "Thomas' Teddies" to bed with them. It never fails to help!

Each year, I arrange a memorial to Thomas on the dining room table: I set up his birthday teddy bear, a candle, Thomas' photo, some flowers and any cards we receive on Thomas' behalf. Usually, a couple of very special and thoughtful friends remember Thomas' birthday. It means so much to know that others are thinking and praying for us; they are acknowledging that Thomas is important and they haven't forgotten that painful time we shared together when Thomas' birthday was followed so closely by his death. These friends are a real comfort to our family.



The last ritual of the day is the cutting of the birthday cake which I get the honour of choosing. We don't sing "Happy Birthday". That is something I could not cope with without breaking down into tears. Another birthday is then over and I usually go to bed early so that the day finishes as soon as possible.

Celebrating a birthday without having our birthday boy with us, is very difficult for me. Going through all our rituals is not easy but I wouldn't omit them. The other children enjoy celebrating their brother's birthday and it is a way for us to say "Thomas, we love you. You are still part of our family although you are no longer with us. Please pray for us." Happy Birthday Thomas- 9th November

Sue Elvis

GRACE FROM COLD WATER

What makes cold water hot? Something hot. Water that is cold is potentially hot. It can be hot, but its potency to be hot, its can-be-hotness, doesn't make it actually hot. It needs to be heated. It needs something which is currently hot like a fire or a hotplate. It needs a hotifier.

This simple example – obvious even to young children – reminds us of a fundamental principle of reason: potency doesn't actualise itself. What can be is potential. It doesn't go from *can be* to *does be* except by something that's already actually *does-y*. If you're put off by the philosophical term "potency", never mind. It simply means lack, but can have. The little boy lacks what it takes to be a cosmonaut, but can have it. He is potentially a cosmonaut. The marble lacks what it takes to become the shape of a statue, but can have it. It is potentially statuesque. Water, on the other hand, isn't actually statue shaped, nor is it even potentially a statue: water in its natural form lacks and can't ever have the shape of a statue.

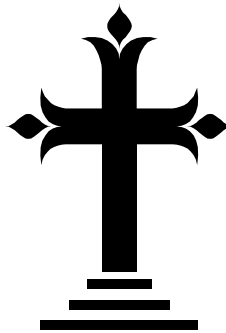
So what's all that got to do with grace? Well, sanctifying grace is a potency, a capacity to act in the supernatural order. It resides habitually in the soul, as the power to speak a language or to do maths resides in the soul, even when we're asleep or not thinking about it. Sanctifying grace is a share in God's own life and remains in the soul as a habit all the time (unless it is driven out by mortal sin). In fact, it is more than just a potency, for it is a stable disposition, a habit, in the soul.

In the life of someone with the use of reason, there is another kind of grace which is just as necessary as sanctifying grace, but less well known. It is actual grace. Actual grace is that divine push which moves us from *can do* to *does do* in the supernatural order. Sanctifying grace rests in the soul, so let's call it *rest-y* grace. Actual grace, on the other hand, is transitory, giving a little push to our supernatural engine, so we'll call it *pushy* grace. The theological term, though, is actual grace.

Running grace

In English usage today the word "actual" has a somewhat different meaning to other languages. In Spanish, for example, the word "actual" usually means "current." French has the word *actualité* which we

would translate as "current events." If we apply that meaning to actual we could speak of actual grace as current grace. The word current means running. You could think of sanctifying grace as the water in the tank and actual grace as what happens when you turn on the tap. If you take this analogy further, you can say that venial sin leads the tap to rust because of misuse. All sin – mortal and venial - is due to a resistance to actual grace. Sin is a deliberate refusal to let grace take its proper part. With venial sin, grace in the soul, like water in an unused tank, becomes stagnant, the very opposite of running. Mortal sin is worse. It takes the bottom out of the tank. Co-operation with grace, on the other hand, invites more grace to fill up our tank and if we are generous, our tank itself grows bigger.



Every time we engage in genuine prayer it is the result of an actual grace from God. We could not take a single step in the spiritual life without Him. The actual grace may come through the reminder to pray for someone, or maybe a glance at something holy or even a temptation which leads us to turn to Him. The actual grace might be an ordinary push: "It's time for me to say the rosary" or "Lord, give me patience!" However it comes, through external events or interior lights and movements of love, it is always from God. It is God's whisper to the soul, a gentle invitation to draw closer to Him. Spiritual masters speak of being awake to the grace of the present moment. Every waking moment God is offering us actual graces – graces of prayer, of fidelity to duty, of resistance to temptation. We do our part by co-operating with actual graces so as to increase our sanctifying grace. "It is God who gives the increase." (1 Cor 3:6).

Anthony English



BABY MICE

In our house we have fourteen baby mice. They belong to our two female mice, Corena and Sacarissa.

We have been mouse-keeping for many months, in fact almost a year, but this is our first litter.

When you get baby mice, you would be amazed at all the different shapes, sizes and colours. In this litter, we have tiger stripes, golden brown with white, tiger with white, black and many more patterns that are indescribable.

We first found out that Corena and Sacarissa had babies when Felicity went to clean the mice, because they ponged. She lifted out the tissue and out fell the babies. She was stunned for a moment, but Callum dashed round and round the house until everybody knew that we had baby mice.

However, that was not the end of it, six days later, Felicity went to clean the mice again, and she uncovered five more mice. Sadly, one of the baby mice died, but we still had fourteen more, so it was not a big loss.

Mum said "When they are grown up, you must sell them." When they all had their eyes open, Felicity then noticed that one of the baby mice (who was a female) was much smaller than the rest, and she was afraid that the rest of the mice would bully it. So I went down on my knees and begged Dad, whom I thought would say no to let us keep the mouse. He amazed me by saying yes after less than five minutes, so we got our mouse.

Imogen Elvis

HOMESCHOOLING

I have been homeschooled for the past eight years. When I was four, I went to pre-school. At the age of five, I began 'big' school. I was dressed in a little, red dress and made to pose for several cameras. Then, I was left in a strange classroom full of strange children. I hated school. I would cling to Mum and beg her not to leave me there. After the first term, Mum decided that it wasn't working. She pulled me out of school and began homeschooling me. Since my Nanna and one of my aunts already homeschooled, it wasn't so daunting for her.

At first, things seemed perfect. As far as I was concerned, it was all my Christmases come at once. I could stay at home all day. I could play with my sister. I could go outside whenever I wanted. Then, the school holidays finished and homeschool started. I still remember sitting at the kitchen table, staring down at my English textbook. I didn't understand any of it. Our schoolwork consisted of textbooks; textbooks for English, textbooks for maths, textbooks for science and history. I found textbooks too difficult and boring. I would try to get away without doing my schoolwork and run away to play. Mum threatened to send me back to school countless times. I think it was after the first year that I realized Mum wouldn't really send me to school and that this was only threatened to make me do my schoolwork.

When I was seven, my sister began homeschooling. At first, everyone thought that having Carrie doing schoolwork with me would make a difference to my attitude towards schoolwork. I wouldn't have to sit inside with my books while Carrie and Cameron played in the garden. It didn't make any difference, however. Carrie was the good, cooperative daughter and I was the rebellious, disobedient daughter.

After four years of homeschooling, Mum decided that we needed a schedule. She wrote down a different routine for schoolwork for every day. At first, it was much better. I knew exactly what I had to do and when I had to finish it. I was still using textbooks, though.

Finally, Mum realized that textbooks weren't working. She eliminated all textbooks from my schoolwork and the only subject that I still use a textbook for is maths. When I was

eleven, schoolwork had improved a lot. Mum had done a lot of reading and I was finally enjoying schoolwork. Then, halfway through this year, Mum made a lesson plan for each us in a little book. She talked to us about what we wanted to learn. Then, she typed into the computer everything I had to do on every day until the end of the year. The lesson plan was printed out in different colours with pictures and bible verses. Next to each subject or lesson for the day, we have a little box to tick when we are finished. Every day, I work through what Mum has planned for me for the day. She has been very imaginative with what she has put down for my schoolwork. For the first time in eight years, I cannot find one fault with my schoolwork. Each day is interesting and full of surprises.

I enjoy the lesson plan a lot more than the schedule and textbooks for a lot of different reasons. I have a lot more variety in my days, now. I read all sorts of different books about a variety of different subjects. I have piano lessons and art lessons, which I really enjoy. We all do one of Shakespeare's plays together, once a week. Even English and maths are enjoyable these days. We go to the library quite often and the science and history books that I read now are much better than the old textbooks.

The lesson plan is very free and easy. If we want to go on an excursion, we just go and do school work before or afterwards. Today we decided to go for a picnic, on the spur of the moment. We drove past a school and Mum said, "Aren't you glad you're not sitting in that hot classroom, while the sun is shining?" I definitely am glad that I wasn't sitting in that classroom. These days, I'm not the naughty and rebellious child, anymore. In fact, it's quite the opposite. I do my schoolwork when I'm supposed to and I enjoy it. Mum has found a method of homeschooling that really works for me. I'm glad she didn't give up on me and send me to school (I do know other mothers who have). By the time Mum starts homeschooling the babies, she will be an expert.

Megan Leach

BOOK REVIEW

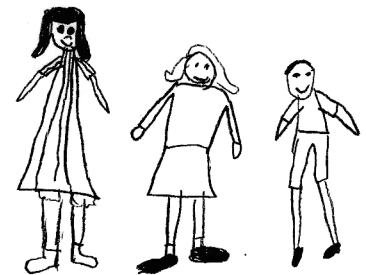
I have been reading the *Milly Molly Mandy* stories by Joyce Lankester Brisley.

Millicent Margaret Amanda is a little girl with short hair, short legs and short frocks. She is called Milly Molly Mandy for short. Milly Molly Mandy lives in a nice white cottage with a thatched roof with Mother, Father, Grandpa, Grandma, Aunty and Uncle.

The stories are all about Milly Molly Mandy's adventures with her friends little-friend Susan and Billy Blunt. Mum and I take turns reading a Milly Molly Mandy story each day.

I think all girls of five, six or seven would enjoy these stories.

Charlotte Elvis



A THOUGHT

One thing it took me years to learn about homeschooling was not to expect too much. If I set out to use, for example, the Norman Conquest as the theme for our history lessons, I would give up in despair because after a week the children didn't know everything I could expect.

Now I am content if they simply know it happened; next week, and the next, and the next, will still be there to investigate how and why and when, and knowledge will be built up piece by piece, but slowly.

Patience is not easy, nor perseverance. But trust in the Lord; He really will provide!

Sarah Fanning

JUGGLING THE NEEDS OF OLDER AND YOUNGER CHILDREN

For many of us, we struggle at times to respond to all the needs of all our children. So often they all seem to present themselves at the same time, or when we're already busy! As homeschoolers the needs we must meet for our children do not just involve the physical ones all parents have to consider – food, clothing and shelter. They do not only include the spiritual ones of teaching our children to pray, and to know, love and serve Our Lord as all Catholic parents must consider. As home-schoolers we also have taken on the academic needs of our children. And at times the sheer volume of people needing us can be overwhelming.

Our aim as Catholic homeschooling parents is to equip our children with the basics and then help lead them to the path they need to take to follow Our Lord's calling on their lives. As our children grow from infancy to adulthood they are learning more and more to be able to do things themselves. However, in order to be independent, they have to have a basic grasp of the building blocks. In order to walk, the child first has to learn to balance while standing and then learn how to shift that balance so that walking can proceed. As they get better at walking, the child progresses to balancing in more difficult situations and then onto running, skipping, hopping etc....

Likewise as the child shows an interest in cooking. First they help by pouring in items the mother has already measured out and their actual participation in cooking is minimal although they gain a lot of knowledge through exposure to us cooking. Later they are able to measure them out themselves. As they go, they learn what the various cooking terms mean – cream butter and sugar, sauté onion, braise meat etc... As they grow in ability to read, they can start using recipe books and cook under decreasing levels of supervision until finally they are competent basic cooks.

Progression in the academics of homeschooling is not unlike these procedures. First we ensure our children learn the basics – to count, to read, to write. We expose them to the beauty of creation and the wonders of the man-made world through music, art, science and technology. We read to them about other places and people as well as reading them a rich

variety of stories. Later we instruct them on the finer points of mathematics, grammar, spelling rules and the conventions of writing. As the children grow in their ability to read and write they can take on doing more and more of their learning independently. Then our role becomes more one of a supervisor, with actual teaching only needed in such things as Maths and Religion We review their work, or discuss it as they go, but the children can do more and more on their own.

As the child approaches adulthood the role of parent/ teacher again develops. Oftentimes we are only remotely involved in their studies as they begin to access outside sources for further education. Our role as parent-educator then takes on more of an advisory role. We are there to discuss the differing world-views they will be beginning to be exposed to. We are there to help them through the often traumatic times of emotional and personal growth that their age provides. In order to meet these, we often have to be flexible enough to drop our plans, like an early night in bed, to meet the needs of a particular teenager going through a particularly difficult time. Often our older high schoolers have already been very patient with their younger siblings and all the demands they've placed on the parents throughout the day and now they need their turn.

But how do we juggle all the different educational needs of each child on a day to day basis? Firstly we all need to recognize that the children have to learn to share Mum and her time just as they have to share toys, books, etc... Next we try to work out how we can do at least some of the subjects all together or in a group of some of the children together, so that it decreases how many ways we're being pulled.

However, each child will need some individual attention most days. If we develop a routine this will be more easily achieved. So, we apportion individual times for each child each day.

Some families start the day with Mass and others just with family prayers. Some families prefer to do their all together subjects first and then pursue individual

subjects or interests. This can work well so long as the individual subjects are not lost due to no time or energy left to devote to them.

Others prefer the together time to be after the individual time. If you use the latter approach, it can be good to have jobs each child must do each morning. The older children usually do their jobs quickly and well, and so are often ready to start their school work first. So you can start with the older ones, getting them started with some of the schoolwork they need you for, so that they can continue with their schoolwork when you are attending to the younger ones.

Once the younger ones have finished their jobs they could start on some easy schoolwork for which they don't need you. Then, when you're finished with the older ones, you can devote some time to your younger children. The younger ones may have two or three short sessions of Mum's time. They are often satisfied with this and then pursue hobbies, art, crafts, nature study, educational real life or games in the rest of the day. With a break for morning tea and some time to run around to refresh their short concentration span, the young child can come back refreshed for another session.

The high school child can easily go on with other work while the mother finishes working with the younger children. After a lunch break, there is then time for the mother to check how the high schoolers have gone before dealing with the day's laundry and dinner, not to mention the after school hours activities. Whichever approach you use, the basics need to be a high priority and the children need to learn to take turns with Mum and her time. Hopefully this will provide a system wherein children's needs can be met regularly and mother can be on top most of the time.

Michele Vieira

I AM A TROUBLED TEENAGER WITH NO FRIENDS

(OR, THOUGHTS AND ACTIONS, TROUBLED TEENAGER'S DAY)

Troubled Teenager wakes. It is 9.00.
I never have any time to get things done during the day! You don't understand!

Troubled Teenager spends an hour in the bathroom.
Well, do you want me to look after my appearance or not? I'm only doing what you said!

Troubled Teenager skips breakfast.
I don't want breakfast! I'm not hungry and I can take care of myself!

Troubled Teenager begins piano practice, but stops in a huff.
I can't play music feeling as bad as I do! This is happy music and I feel awful!

Troubled Teenager begins to study.
Why doesn't Mum understand how much I hate maths? She never listens to me! She never talks to me!

Troubled Teenager is called by mother.
Whaaaat? Can't you see I'm studying! Stop interfering!

Troubled Teenager returns to study and is called for lunch.
I've only just started studying algebra again! How can I study with all these interruptions? Maths is important! I bet Einstein never had to put up with my family!

Troubled Teenager goes to lunch.
I don't want lunch. Why can't I get lunch later? I can make my own, you know!

Troubled Teenager helps clean up.
When am I ever going to get the time to study? Why can't everyone clean their own mess?

Troubled Teenager is refused permission to go shopping.
Why can't I go shopping? I neeeeed to go out sometimes! It's my money! I can spend it how I like! I earn it myself!

Troubled Teenager sits down and cries.
I'm so looonely! I haven't got any frieeeeeeends! Why don't you ever let me see my friends?

Troubled Teenager receives invitation to stay with a friend.
Oh... Mum... can I go away for the weekend... uh... Please?

Troubled Teenager needs a lift to work.
Muuuum... Uh, can I pleeease have a lift to work?

Troubled Teenager buys mum a bunch of flowers at work.
Sorry Mum. I'll do better tomorrow, truly.

At least... I'll try... It's hard for me to behave sometimes... Maybe it's because I'm a Troubled Teenager.

Written by a homeschooling teenager

I AM A TROUBLED HOMESCHOOLING MOTHER

Troubled Mother wakes up. It is 5 am.

What are you doing awake so early, Baby? We didn't get much sleep last night.

Troubled Mother thrusts baby into arms of Teenage Son and rushes into the shower.

Stop knocking! I am not coming out until I'm ready.

Troubled Mother greets Troubled Teenager.

Good morning...What are you wearing? Does that top match that skirt? Uh-Oh... Wrong thing to say!

Troubled Mother runs through the house noticing the mess.

Have we been burgled? Where has the carpet gone? I must do some ironing! We can't homeschool in this mess. We'll have to do a big clean-up.

Troubled Mother settles down to homeschool with the house clean and tidy. The phone rings.

No, you're not interrupting. We haven't started work yet.

Troubled Mother finally puts down the phone.

Right, back to work...What? It's morning tea time? But we haven't done any work yet. Well... a cup of tea does sound good.

Troubled Mother gets Baby to sleep and starts to read to children. Troubled Toddler feels left out and starts to cry.

Stop making so much noise, you'll wake the baby.

Troubled Mother asks Teenage Son to remove Toddler from the room. Toddler screams. Baby wakes up crying.

It is impossible to read with all this noise. Go and start your maths.

Troubled Mother catches sight of Troubled Teenager.

What have you been doing all morning...Is that all? You won't finish your English on time at this rate... Uh-Oh... Should have been more encouraging.

Troubled Mother glances at clock and notices it is nearly lunch-time.

Morning prayers? We've forgotten them again. Better say the Rosary.

Troubled Mother leads the Rosary. After one decade Baby starts screaming and Toddler is singing at the top of her voice.

We can't pray with all this noise. One decade will have to do. Let's get some lunch.

Troubled Mother feels exhausted and is hoping for some quiet time to settle Baby to sleep.

Go outside and get some exercise. Don't look so pained, Troubled Teenager. Exercise won't kill you!

Continued Page 8

I AM A TROUBLED HOMESCHOOLING MOTHER

Troubled Mother starts to doze with Baby. There is a blood-curdling scream. Troubled Mother grabs Baby and flies outside.

How many times have I told you not to race around on your bike when your little sisters are near, Nearly Teenage Son! Look! You've ridden over my darling's ear and crashed both bikes.

Troubled Mother scoops up Younger Sister leaving Nearly Teenage Son to pick himself up and untangle the bikes.

My poor baby! Where does it hurt?

Troubled Mother notices Nearly Teenage Son who is pale and shaking.

What? You think your arm is broken?

Troubled Mother rushes Nearly Teenage Son to the hospital.

Ice? No, I didn't think to put ice on his arm. Painkillers? No, I didn't think to give him any.

Troubled Mother is feeling like the worst mother in the world.

I'm sorry, Nearly Teenage Son. I shouldn't have shouted at you. It wasn't your fault. Anyone can have an accident.

Troubled Mother arrives back home, Nearly Teenage Son's arm in plaster, Baby screaming. Is greeted by Troubled Teenager.



Why are you looking so tired? It was me who had a bad afternoon! What?.... You've made dinner and tidied up and got

the girls ready for bed? Oh, you're the best daughter in the world!

Troubled Mother is led to the sofa. Young Daughter pours her a glass of wine. Teenage Son takes screaming Baby and soothes her to sleep. Toddler cuddles up to Nearly Teenage Son and asks if he feels all right. Troubled Teenager offers to read the bed-time stories. Younger Daughter gives Troubled Mother a hug and a kiss.

Father arrives home from work.

Had a good day? How did the homeschooling go?

Troubled Mother looks around at the children.

We had the usual sort of day... and the homeschooling is going fine...Just fine!

Written by a homeschooling mother

FAMILY PROFILE

We are baby homeschoolers in Sydney. Lisa and I met relatively late in life and so we're a good deal older than many couples who are recently married. We have three young children – Mary, the eldest is three and a half. Thomas is a little over two and our baby, Christina is 8 months old at the time of writing. We have a foot in both camps – most of the homeschooling parents we know are around about our age, and most of the young couples we know have very young children, just as we do.

Lisa was for some years a teacher in Catholic schools. She taught primary and spent some years teaching English as a Second Language as well as Reading Recovery. It was an excellent introduction to homeschooling because she got to see the great advantage of personalised teaching without many of the difficulties of crowd control in the classroom.

I have done a fair amount of teaching of adults about the Catholic faith, thanks to many years of study with Sydney's Centre for Thomistic Studies. I am presently

teaching on Christian prayer, Introduction to Theology and The Theology of Mary at the Sydney Archdiocesan Catholic Adult Education Centre. It's encouraging to know some homeschooling parents and older children who are studying this by correspondence.

Being in Sydney, we're especially sensitive to the difficulties which homeschoolers may face on the cultural level. The temptations of a big city seem to be worse in a lot of ways, and the need for strong support through good friendships is all the more important. Good close friendships are especially important in the teenage years.

Monthly homeschoolers' group in Sydney

We're hoping to offer what help we can in the educational area to budding homeschoolers in Sydney. Lisa and I both have some language skills (with some good knowledge of Spanish, French and Italian, as well as some grasp of Latin and

a couple of other Slavic languages) and we're both well versed in teaching the faith at different levels. Lisa runs her own parish catechism class every Sunday after Mass at Homebush and she covers key aspects of the faith. The knowledge and enthusiasm of the children has been very encouraging.

In 2005 she is hoping to run a monthly group for homeschoolers with young children. The format would be learning a song or two in another language, perhaps a short lesson on the faith and some craft work. The group need not be big, but it would be an opportunity for a little support and practical teaching in the early years.

Can anything good come out of Sydney? We hope so and we'd be thrilled to get in touch with others around Sydney who would be glad for some Catholic homeschooling contacts. We're in the Ryde area.

Lisa and Anthony English

Tel. (02) 9889 2124

NICENE CREED

The creed at Mass is from two General Councils of the Church, the Council of Nicea in A.D. 325 and the First Council of Constantinople in A.D. 381. Hence its full name is the Nicene-Constantinople Creed. An international committee of English-speaking bishops called Vox Clara (Clear Voice) is preparing a new translation to replace the current ICEL text.

But first, here is a very literal translation from a typical layman's Missal for his devotion at Mass prior to Vatican II. Thus this predates the official texts for a vernacular Mass, texts which have changed three or four times since 1964.

I believe in one God, the Father Almighty; Maker of heaven and earth, of all things visible and invisible. And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son of God. And born of the Father before all ages. God of God, light of light, true God of true God. Begotten, not made, consubstantial with the Father: by whom all things were made. Who for us men, and for our salvation descended from heaven. And was incarnate by the Holy Ghost of the Virgin Mary: and was made man. Was crucified also for us: suffered under Pontius Pilate and was buried. And the third day he rose again, according to the Scriptures. And ascended into heaven: sitteth at the right hand of the Father. And again he shall come with glory, to judge the living and the dead: of whose kingdom there shall be no end. And in the Holy Ghost, the Lord and life-giver; who proceedeth from the Father and the Son. Who together with the Father and the Son is adored and conglorified: who spake by the prophets. And one, holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church. I confess one baptism for the remission of sins. And I expect the resurrection of the dead. And the life of the world to come. Amen.

Next, here is the Latin text according to the Roman Missal of A.D. 2002:

Credo in unum Deum, Patrem omnipotentem, factorem coeli et terrae, visibilium omnium et invisibilium.

Et in unum Dominum Iesum Christum, Filium Dei unigenitum, et ex Patre natum ante omnia saecula.

Deum de Deo, lumen de lumine, Deum verum de Deo vero.

Genitum, non factum, consubstantialem Patri: per quem omnia facta sunt.

Qui propter nos homines, et propter nostram salutem descendit de caelis.

Et incarnatus est de Spiritu Sancto ex Maria Virgine, et homo factus est.

Crucifixus etiam pro nobis sub Pontio Pilato; passus et sepultus est, et resurrexit tertia die, secundum Scripturas, et ascendit in caelum: sedet ad dexteram Patris.

Et iterum venturus est cum gloria, iudicare vivos et mortuos, cuius regni non erit finis.

Et in Spiritum Sanctum, Dominum et vivificantem: qui ex Patre Filioque procedit.

Qui cum Patre et Filio simul adoratur et conglorificatur: qui locutus est per prophetas.

Et unam, sanctam, catholicam et apostolicam Ecclesiam.

Confiteor unum baptisma in remissionem peccatorum.

Et exspecto resurrectionem mortuorum, et vitam venturi saeculi. Amen.

Note that, in Latin, the Creed begins, "I believe in", and that this

phrase is not repeated, but carries through to each of the Three Divine Persons. Further, "in" is used only before the Divine Persons, and not before the Church.

Next is a translation based on the one above but set out in the same sense-lines as the Latin, and which also preserves literal accuracy. However, it adds an "and" in brackets to make complete sentences for each Divine Person:

I believe in one God, the Father Almighty; Maker of heaven and earth, of all things visible and invisible.

And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son of God, and born of the Father before all ages; God from God, light from light, true God from true God; begotten, not made, consubstantial with the Father: by whom all things were made; who for us men, and for our salvation descended from heaven; and was incarnate by the Holy Spirit from the Virgin Mary, and was made man; crucified also for us under Pontius Pilate; suffered and was buried, and the third day he rose again, according to the Scriptures, and he ascended into heaven, (and) sits at the right hand of the Father; and he shall come again with glory to judge the living and the dead: (and) of whose kingdom there shall be no end.

And in the Holy Spirit, the Lord and life-giver: who proceeds from the Father and the Son; who with the Father and the Son is together adored and glorified: who spoke by the prophets; and one, holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church.

I confess one baptism for the remission of sins; and I expect the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come. Amen.

"Finally, it is appropriate that the faithful be able to sing in Latin at least some parts of the Ordinary [fixed parts] of the Mass, and especially the Creed and the Lord's Prayer." (General Instruction of the Roman Missal n. 41, A.D. 2002).

Father James Tierney

MY WORD

A grumpy little boy was upstairs one night when his big sister brought a book up to read to him.

It was a book about Australia. He didn't want her to read to him out of that book, so he said to her "What did you bring that book I didn't want to be read to out of (about Down Under) up for?"



OH IT'S HARD TO BE HUMBLE !

So the song starts and yes it is very hard to be humble. But doesn't God have a wonderful way of helping us? It's called being a mother. Especially a homeschooling mother.

Yes homeschooling is a great life and we all benefit from the rich family relationships and opportunities for spiritual endeavours that we can do together. But there is another side to it and at this time of year we can even be overwhelmed by it. We started the year with so many hopes and dreams. Hopes for doing so much with the children. Hopes for the children to grow and develop, to respond to their schoolwork with enthusiasm and joy. Hopes for the household to run more smoothly. Hopes for us parents to be better than we were last year – more organized, more patient, more loving, more creative etc...

We had dreams of even going beyond these hopes. Of having children who were lit up with enthusiasm, progressing at a constant (or even remarkable) rate, through days filled with joy and laughter as they were educated at home. We were going to have wonderful daily prayer time indulging in all possible forms of prayer – daily Mass, contemplation, meditation, personal prayer, vocal prayer, litanies, novenas.... We were going to have regular exercise and stick to that diet we knew we should be on.

“God gives us opportunities to grow in humility as we respond to actual grace”

So what happened? We are at the end of the year. We have had some successes and some dismal failures. Some of our wonderful plans went really well and others did not even get off the drawing board.

Although some of our children did study well in some areas, sometimes, some have not really made much progress. And as for ourselves..... We won't delve too deeply here.

I really love the line out of the movie version of “The Sound of Music” (not exactly Sacred Scripture, but true just the same), which says that God does not shut a door without opening a window somewhere. This

has certainly proved true in my life over and over again. And yet I still stand at shut doors banging and thumping and crying, trying to get shut doors open. Eventually I notice the open window, but how long will it take me to learn to trust God?

Often our plans are thwarted as we go through our days and we have to make re-adjustments. This is part of the humility of motherhood. This child cannot cope with this expectation at this time – I need to adjust my expectation of this child at this time and then help the child aim higher when he or she is ready for the next step. In all these re-adjustments we need to make, God gives us opportunities to grow in humility as we respond to actual grace (the “pushy grace” as Anthony English calls it).

Today we have had rain for three days, (not that we're complaining about the rain!). The little children are climbing the walls, the house is hung with clothes in various stages of drying, and I have the worst headache in recorded history (only a slight exaggeration). In the midst of all this, both preschool boys are crying because they can't have ham on their sandwich since it's Friday. It would be so easy to just yell at them and walk away. This is one of those times where I am called upon again to exercise this virtue of humility. To die to ourselves and our desire to curl up in bed and escape everyone and to respond in a Christlike manner to each child.

Thanks be to God, by taking the time to explain to them that Jesus died on the cross for us, (going into full description of how horrible that was), the older preschooler responded that he's have tomato and cheese. After that he completely changed and started thinking of others, talking about what Christmas presents he would make and tried very hard to be pleasant – thank God for a moment of grace!

Oftentimes children upset our well-made plans. They need attention at inconvenient times and we don't want to change what we had intended doing for the sake of this child. However, if we humbly accept the situation in which Our Lord has placed us

and beg for His grace to do His will, these can be times of real growth and blessing. Praise God for opportunities to be humble, to not be in charge and to let God open and shut doors and windows.

Michele Vieira

FAMILY PROFILE

Family Name: Elvis

Location: Rural setting on the edge of the small town of Mittagong, south of Sydney

Family Members: Andy, Sue, Felicity (17), Duncan (16), Callum (12), Imogen (10), Charlotte (7), Thomas (dec), Sophie (3), Gemma-Rose (9 months)

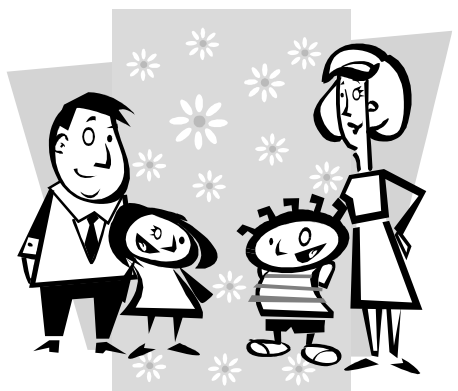
Interests: Swimming, biking, walking, pets, music, writing, reading, film making, cooking, and eating!

Type of homeschooling: Very relaxed, we like lots of Charlotte Mason's ideas

Favourite resource: Father James Tierney and Cardinal Newman Faith Resources including bookshop, local library.

Best advice: If it is God's Will that we homeschool, He will give us every grace to succeed, if only we ask. Our job is to attend to the everyday aspect of homeschooling. We can leave the end result in God's hands.

Favourite saints: St. Teresa of Avila, St. John of the Cross, St. Padre Pio, St. John Vianney, St. Joseph and lots more!



WONDER VS THE BEAST OF BOREDOM

Boredom is a loss of the sense of wonder. St. Thomas Aquinas begins explaining what wonder is: *"It is pleasant to get what one desires, and the greater the desire for the thing loved, the greater the pleasure when it is attained."* In other words, the more we want something the more we enjoy it when we do get it.

The Angelic Doctor (who, like an angel, always kept his sense of wonder), continues: *"the very increase of desire brings with it an increase of pleasure, according as it gives rise to the hope of obtaining that which is loved. That desire resulting from hope is a cause of pleasure."* We all understand that hope is a cause of joy. You can pass from near despair to great excitement and happiness with the news that something good is coming your way, even before you get it.

If you're wondering about wonder ...

So, what exactly is wonder? It is *"a kind of desire for knowledge; a desire which comes to man when he sees an effect of which the cause either is unknown to him"* or beyond his ability to know. We watch a solar eclipse or see a shape in the clouds and think "I wonder what brought that about." We come across a paradox of nature or are struck by an amazing coincidence and think "how did that happen?" He who wonders, smiles. We don't so much wonder at things we could never know, or at things we would rather not know. We aren't spellbound in the face of cynicism. Our heart isn't captivated and lightened in the face of evil, even though we don't understand it. Wonder is about something good. St Thomas again: *"wonder is a cause of pleasure, in so far as it includes a hope of getting the knowledge which one desires to have."*

If wonder brings with it hope and a certain pleasure, boredom poisons both pleasure and hope. Wonder comes when we desire something good, something a little bit out of our grasp, and when we don't know exactly what will bring it about. We may wonder at the words of geniuses or the writings of great poets, or at the wisdom of the saints. We are left with a strong desire for more and a lingering sense of "I wish I knew how they thought of that."

Boredom, on the other hand, spells the very death of wonder. We are bored when we

have strong desires for things beneath us, things which drag us down. It is those who have everything who are more likely to devalue their lives and the lives of those around them. We are also bored by exhaustive explanations of the obvious. We are bored by people who put up smokescreens to hide their vices. We are bored – oddly enough – by knowing too much about things which are trivial and petty. When we have everything money can buy, we are doomed to boredom. When we've lost our sense of mystery, we are bored. Those who seek happiness in riches are bored, not because their desires are satisfied, but because they have suppressed their capacity to desire greater things than wealth. Those who try to explain everything in terms of self-interest are profoundly bored. They think that by their suspicion and cynicism they are beyond teaching. In a sense that's true. They are beyond wondering, beyond purity, not because they have outgrown them but because they have suffocated them. They no longer desire to know about things which are greater than their own stingy hearts and they have no understanding of why the Lord should love a cheerful giver.

Enthusiasm: En-Theos-ism

The word enthusiasm, comes from having God within – it is *en-Theos-ism*. Those who indulge in an attitude of habitual boredom reject this great love for God and for life and the world. They have forgotten that life itself is a gift, and a good one. Boredom can be fed by a critical spirit. Those who are wilfully, habitually bored seek the company of others who are like-minded. The music they listen to, their conversations and entertainment, what they read, their whole lives are centred around their hatred of innocence, the disgust with what truly is wonderful. Their very sense of humour is unkind, sarcastic and often bordering on bitterness. Those who are bored tend to seek greater and greater sensual or imaginary experiences, as if their squeezing the last drop of pleasure from the orange of sensuality would cover up their deep profound disillusionment with their world. They tend to blame those around them or their circumstances for their boredom failing to realise that the real cause of their sadness is that they have turned their back on the

wonder of creation within them and about them.

There is hardly any attitude so foreign to Christian childlikeness than the indulgence in a spirit of boredom. It takes a pure heart to be able to see things once again through the eyes of a child, with a sense of hope, joy and wonder. It takes an elevated view of life to look around at things and see God's finger beneath them, to see the world from a bird's eye view, instead of the eyes of a worm. The world is truly a wonderful place, but in order to see it, we need to kill the beast of boredom and surrender again to a true sense of wonder.

Anthony English

ST JOHN

St John is a first aid organisation for people, eight and over. When you first join up you will be measured for a uniform, consisting of a white shirt with shoulder straps, a pair of black trousers and a hat. St John centres around first aid, but there are lots more things to achieve. Like earning badges from many different subjects, like child care, map reading, family care. computer skills, hygienic food handling, and many more! There are thirty seven badges to earn in the Cadets alone.

I first thought about joining St John, after Adrian Letchford's first aid talks, at this years September camp, kindly hosted by Mrs. Vieira. And after finding that we had the Southern Highlands St John station just down the road, I begged Mum to let me go, and when Mum consented and I went, I was not disappointed. There were not many people there, and me and my younger sister were warmly welcomed and declared a valuable addition to the Southern Highlands St John's Ambulance.

The Southern Highlands Cadets meet at six thirty, and leave at about eight thirty, though I am not sure that the same times imply to the rest of N.S.W. Not long ago we were visited by Mrs. Benstead, the first person in the Southern Highlands to be made a sister of the order, and she was awarded this honour in Parliament House a few months ago.

I feel that St John's is not only a source of valuable information, but is also a place to make new friends, and have a good time.

Callum Elvis

THE LONG WALK

Author: Kerry Greenwood

Paperback; 245 pp; no pictures apart from cover; price unknown; published by Hodder, 2004, a member of the Hodder Headline Group, Level 17, 207 Kent Street, Sydney NSW 2000, website www.hha.com.au

Significantly, the back of title page includes the following entry: "National Library of Australia Cataloguing-in-Publication data: for children aged 10-12 years: 1. Fathers and daughters -- Australia -- Juvenile fiction. 2. Nineteen thirties -- Juvenile fiction. I. Title." Fancy mentioning fathers and daughters together in A.D. 2004!

The back cover blurb tells us:

What do you do when your mother falls ill and is sent to a rest home, and your father is far away working on the Great Ocean Road? How do you survive when the only things you have are the clothes on your back and the promise you made to keep your family together?

For Isa Wyatt, there's only one thing she can do. She gathers together her brother and her sister, packs an old pram with their belongings, and sets off to find her father.

The author, Kerry Greenwood, is a solicitor and works part-time as a duty solicitor (i.e. legal aid) at a Magistrate's Court in a very depressed part of Melbourne.

Her work among the deprived, puts the book neatly in perspective. She also writes adult books, and this is probably her first book for children. One critic said it was "rather slow paced but worthwhile, and would lend itself to reading aloud."

She treats the abject grinding poverty of the Depression very effectively, and the relationships between the children are well done. I did like the emphasis on earning money for the family, and Isa's extensive millinery skills. And that the sexes are clearly delineated -- there is none of the current interchangeability of unisex philosophy. Isa is beautifully portrayed in the "big sister syndrome", with all its mighty strengths and little foibles.

Of course, it is a girls' book. I cannot

imagine a boy enjoying such a great heroine, especially when her brother fails her so miserably at the crucial moment. Nor do I find the two louts very convincing, but they certainly give dynamism to the journey.

The pro-family stance is so refreshing for today's "wicked & adulterous generation", and the importance of fathers for the children of both sexes, and the need for young Johnno to work with real men.

The grandmother generation are well done, too, and the need for everyone to be "useful" for someone else. The female characters display a full range of contrasts, from mean/proud to generous/kind.

The attitude to "dagoes" etc sounds authentic for the depression era, and is no doubt put in as a lesson against racism.

The typesetting is interesting: plenty of white space between lines to make it "user friendly" for those having trouble reading.

Just on that score, I liked the author's quiet approval of Isa and Johnno's reading for pleasure, and well-selected books as gifts (with proper regard for sexual differences): all this is a slap at modern additions to TV/video entertainment and political correctness. Also the author's obvious approval of Nina's classical studies, and the impression it makes on Isa.

I would have preferred the author to have omitted "the realism" of the crude language; to have dealt with the problem of telling lies under pressure with more subtlety; to have Isa more zealous to get her mother back at the end; and to have reconciled the capacity of a pram with the amount of gear they had to take with them.

The pram itself is a nifty choice: in the 1850s men used walk from Sydney to Bathurst with all their possessions, including tools for gold mining, in a

wheelbarrow, and I well remember the road on *Wheelbarrow Ridge* in the Colo country north of the Hawkesbury River upstream from Wiseman's Ferry, which suggests the same procedure.

The Long Walk is quite good and I very much enjoyed reading it.

Father James Tierney

PRETTY THINGS

I saw a very pretty fairy one day,
and I waited to hear what she would say.

After awhile, she asked me to play.

She told me about pretty things
and she saw them
when she was flying over fairyland
with her pretty fairy wings.

This is what she told me:

Raindrops on flowers
and diamonds on shining towers.

Pretty rainbows in the sky,
and unicorns racing by.

Houses with red-spotted roofs,
and horses with golden hooves.

These are all the petty things that the fairy
told me with the pretty fairy wings.

Grace Hyland



A DUMMIES GUIDE TO BUTTONS

OR, HOW I WRITE CREATIVELY

In the dark of the early morning, summoned by your alarm clock, parent, child or annoyingly pious sibling, you crawl into consciousness. You reel to your wardrobe, clutch a fistful of clothes from a shelf and stagger to the bathroom. Fifteen minutes and one hot (or hot-cold-hot, or lukewarm, or, worst, *cold*) shower later, you attempt to clothe yourself. Zips are zipped, drawstrings are tied, hooks and eyes inserted, and snappers are snapped. And generally, you manage, even with your mental-processes turned off, to complete these actions. That's all the skill you need to finish dressing and go on to more important matters, such as food, hair, morning jobs or work. Well, nearly. There is still one more terror to be navigated.

Buttons

Who has not experienced the horrors of desperately fumbling with these annoying round objects while the clock ticks and other, pressing jobs beckon? No other fastening needs half so much time or attention that buttons require. And unless you are one of those ebullient morning people who love nothing better than 5.30 a.m. rises, and bracing cold showers, no-one has the ability to concentrate hard enough in the mornings to do up more than the smoothest and most easily grasped button. And so, we lurch drowsily into battle every morning with one of mankind's most terrible inventions.

How does one, weak, befuddled, and totally unprepared as we are in the mornings cope? Sadly, there are few hard answers. One could try asking your pious sibling to rouse you ten minutes earlier (if you could bear it), or splashing your face with cold water to shock your brain into gear. Or you could step out of the shower five minutes earlier. Or run a cold shower. But I have found that all these measures require more self-control than I possess, at least at the beginning of the day. If you find yourself in my position, follow the instructions below...

Do not wear buttons. *Ever.* With the multitudes of clothes available in the Western world, one is not required to. Even shirts can be fastened with snappers! So, that's one problem of mornings sorted. Now, if we could just find a way to wake up *cheerful*...

That was an example of my creative writing. I love creative writing more than any other type of writing. For me, it is the most enjoyable type of writing, because it offers the most scope for personal opinions, invention and experimentation. When I have to write creatively, say for my English course, I might get a subject (the title Buttons for Dummies was all the guidance I was given for the above piece) and some broad outlines (it may be a short story, or have to be written in the first person) and from then on I can do what I like. I'm on my own and can have my say. I am not regurgitating someone else's writing or facts. I can express my own feelings and opinions.

This freedom is only one reason why I enjoy creative writing. I love the feeling of writing something of my very own and making other people feel the same way (I hope you remembered horror mornings of your own when you read Buttons for Dummies). I like developing my own style (do you notice how much I love adjectives, or strings of possibilities so I can cover all bases and find an answering chord in a reader?) I like bringing scenes so alive and real that I can live there.

In fact, I am so fixated on creative writing, I try to put a little bit of creativity into every piece of writing I do. I used to get stuck opening essays on historical figures. I found out several years ago if I picked a crucial and dramatic scene in the life of the figure I was writing about and described that in a paragraph *first*, as creatively as I could, the rest of the essay just flowed. I made that person interesting to myself by dramatising him, and because I was interested in him, I had to write the rest of his life down. I still do that to open pieces of writing (this article is no exception!) I also like to dress up otherwise plain and boring writing by picking exciting adjectives or using more dramatic sentence structures.

That doesn't mean that I always find writing interesting and easy. But sometimes it can become exciting and absorbing. I find this happens most often when I am doing creative writing. Even so, I can sit down to write creatively, and nothing can happen. I have found that sometimes I need to think and structure before I write. Sometimes everything is there and all you have to do is sit down and write, but most of the time you have to plan it out, if only in your own head.

For me, the hardest thing about creative writing is finding a subject. My mum (she's my editor and critic) and I must have spent twice as much time brainstorming ideas for essays and articles than I have spent actually writing. We go through all sorts of ideas (this article could have been How To Decorate Fish Tanks or I Am A Troubled Teenager With No Friends – truly!) until I hear one which appeals to me. We can refine it, add to it and change it. I've gone to the computer lots of times clutching an old envelope covered with felt-tip scribbles of ideas. The idea can change totally as I write and think more deeply. It becomes further changed as Mum and I (and sometimes, other critics) reread and revise.

I find that the two most important things to know before you begin writing are exactly what your writing is about and who it is intended for. With my creative writing, I generally find that it turns out to be about *me* – even it is meant to be about someone else. I can't decide if I am just very selfish or I just know myself much better than anything else! Mostly I think that, just like some actors declare that they only play themselves on screen, most writers write about themselves because it's simply the easiest thing to do. Why write about characters and experiences that you have no knowledge of? Why not write about things that you are very familiar with and will therefore be able to describe well? I think another reason to write about yourself is because you are far more likely to write better and stay interested in subjects you know and understand. And if you like what you are writing about, it's more likely that readers will like what you have written too!

A DUMMIES GUIDE TO BUTTONS

The second thing to remember before writing is to define who you are writing for. Whodunit writers and romance writers have it easy – they are writing for crime addicts and sentimental romantics. Because they know who they are writing for, they can plan their stories to please their audiences. When you have to do some creative writing, think about who will read it. Has your mum told you to write her a piece of creative writing? Aim it at her. That doesn't mean writing about the Super Mum of the Year, but simply means to write it at her level of understanding. For example, your mum might not appreciate a story full of silly humour. Your younger brother might, but you are not meant to be writing for your younger brother. Your mother might like reading stories with an omnipresent narrator (a narrator who can go into the minds of all the characters and narrate their thoughts). Why not try that approach for your mum? I know right now, as I'm writing this article, that it will be read by people of all ages, but mostly mums looking for homeschooling ideas and children who are (possibly) looking for creative writing help. Therefore, I have to aim at two sorts of people – those who are doing the creative writing and those who are trying to teach the creative writing.

Things I never really decide about until I begin writing are things like layout, persons, tenses and style. I've used all sorts of approaches depending on the subject I'm writing about. I'm not particularly adventurous, in my opinion. I just keep going until my writing seems to suit my subject. With articles like this, I simply write the same way I would speak, keeping my voice natural. Other types of writing may need other types of voices (could you hear my voice change as I switched from discussing buttons to discussing writing?) When my writing voice fits my subject (and my subject fits my writing voice) I can begin to put it all down and review, revise, rewrite, redo...

Something I've learnt to live with, if not like, is rewriting. I know that sometimes I have to keep hacking and adding and polishing my draft until it's just right. Still, finishing writing and feeling that I have done my best to say what I want to say in the words can be satisfying. Perhaps some creative writing is begun by unbalanced geniuses madly scrawling burning ideas down, but I bet most creative writing is finished with methodical revising.

Mum taught me most of what I know about the technical side of creative writing. Mum used to gather myself and my two younger brothers, sit us down, discuss techniques of creative writing together, such as original metaphors, personification, points of view, active verbs, humour and putting yourself *there*, and then send us off to describe an object (it could be a friend, a cushion, a bushfire, or a person making a cake!) When we had finished, we would come back and read our pieces aloud. We always enjoyed this, because we got to point out our use of techniques. We were always surprised at our different styles and methods we used. Afterwards, we'd discuss our work again and file our writing away until next time.

If I were to summarise what I considered important for writing creatively, I'd say:

- Have a subject that interests you and that you know well. The never-fail subject is yourself!
- Know who you are talking to.
- Be aware that there are techniques to creative writing. Use them if they fit, but if they don't suit you and what you're talking about, don't.
- Be descriptive. Be there. Bring your readers there.
- Show emotion. Show what you feel, not what someone else feels. If you do not show real emotion, readers will feel nothing except boredom as they read. Show real emotion, and your readers will feel the same thing.
- Have a sense of humour. To write honestly about yourself, you will have to have a sense of humour. Otherwise, you will never survive other people's comments!
- Enjoy it all! Creative writing must be enjoyable, or we would never have any novels or literature.

Now write something. Can you write the article that tells me how to awake cheerfully?

Felicity Elvis

FAMILY PROFILE

Family name: Fanning

Location: Live in the country, 21 kms. north of Goulburn

Family Members: Shaun, Sarah, Ben, 20; Mick, 17; Mary Rose, 14; Jim, 8; Elisabeth, 6; Katy, 4; Naomi, 3

Family interests: Hmm... well, farming; bushwalking for some; sport for some... hard to say

Type of homeschooling: Eclectic and disorganised

Favourite resource: Fr. Tierney

Best advice: Don't worry about matching up to some external model; worry about your children's salvation, maintain your prayer life and all will (truly, it will) come good! Get-togethers with other homeschooling Catholic families are a good thing for everyone. It is important to be charitable of others' faults; you never know when you may need their charity for yours.

Favourite saint: Different for everyone. St Joseph for Sarah and I think for Shaun; St. Thomas More for Ben; Padre Pio for Mick; too numerous to mention for Posy; Jim undecided; St. Therese of Lisieux for Tid; her guardian angel for Katy; Mimi, after deep thought, announced that it was God!

CALCULUS “CHEAT SHEET”Sketching the curve $y = f(x)$

An important part of calculus is the ability to sketch curves and to show critical points on curves. Whilst there are many computer applications that will draw graphs of functions for us, the mechanics of how this works, and how to interpret critical points like local maxima and minima (ie where the curve acts like a “hill” or a “valley”) and points of inflexion (ie where a curve changes from being arched downward to being arched upwards and vice versa) will always be needed to give meaning to graphs. The following is a ready reckoner for calculus students to work through when they are asked to sketch a curve to ensure that they obtain the most data they can and therefore arrive at the best possible picture of a graph. This sheet presumes a good grasp of algebra and differentiation. Stick this on the wall near where you do calculus!

1. Combine any fractions and then factorise both the numerator and denominator as far as possible
2. Find the domain of $f(x)$
3. Determine whether $f(x)$ is odd, even or neither
4. Find the y –intercept of $f(x)$
5. Find the x – intercept(s) of $f(x)$
6. Determine where $f(x)$ is positive and negative (i.e. where it is “above” the x –axis and where it is “below” the x axis)
7. Examine the behaviour of $f(x)$ near any discontinuities, noting any vertical asymptotes
8. Examine the behaviour of $f(x)$ as $x \rightarrow \infty$ and as $x \rightarrow -\infty$, noting any horizontal and/or oblique asymptotes
9. Find $f'(x)$
10. Find where $f'(x) = 0$
11. Find the value of y for all stationary points
12. Determine the nature of the stationary points.
13. Find $f''(x)$
14. Find where $f''(x) = 0$
15. Test any possible points of inflexion
16. Determine the value of y for all stationary points and points of inflexion.
17. Sketch the curve showing all relevant information.



As usual, David Obeid is happy to answer calculus (and apologetics!) questions over the phone (02 48292233) or via e-mail (dobeid@lumenverum.org).

David Obeid

A FRIENDLY VIRTUE

"Long faces are not made for the happy home of Heaven." So said St. Phillip Neri, a Roman saint who was a friend of St. Ignatius of Loyola, among other saints. Phillip used to carry two books with him everywhere: one was his prayer book, the other a joke book. He lived a great and rarely mentioned Christian virtue: affability.

Affability is a virtue which directs our words and actions to preservation of friendly association and agreement with others. Of course, it's easy to be friendly with our friends, tolerable with our family and positively nasty with those who have done us harm. Affability, as a Christian virtue, moves us not merely to be a good friend to our friends but to everyone. "If you love those who love you, what reward will you have? Even the tax collectors do as much. And if you salute only your brethren, what more are you doing than others? ... You, therefore, must be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect."

The perfection Our Lord is speaking of is the perfection of love. Not just any love, but charity. Charity is that love which makes us love God above all things and love our neighbours as ourselves for the sake of God. It makes us see God in people. Some people are not very God-like, and we tend not to see how they are children of God. We are all actually or potentially children of God, perhaps even called to a greater intimacy with God than we are.

Joy is contagious

Affability springs from charity. It moves us to act in a friendly and sociable manner with everyone, even when we don't feel like it or feel they don't deserve it. It's no excuse to say "I'm not a morning person" or "I don't do smiles until I've had my first coffee." There are people who think they have a vocation to grumpiness. They don't. Affability, like charity, begins at home, but it leads us to our heavenly home. It is a very attractive virtue. As Blessed Mother Teresa of Calcutta used to say: "Joy is very contagious."

There are two vices opposed to affability. One is quarrelling. Of course we are not to deny what we know to be true, but it is a vice to contradict others or to quarrel with them when fraternal (brotherly) charity demands that we live in peace with them. Some people manage never to quarrel. It's a pleasure to be with them.

The other vice against affability is one you might not think of at first: flattery. The flatterer

fears to displease others and therefore frequently resorts to insincerity in word and deed. It can be used to get something out of someone.

There is something very attractive about virtuous people who are cheerful. A smile can show such good will, and it can be given to every single person you meet along the way: even in a shop or when you say good morning to you. Our Lord said there are many chambers in His Father's house. Affability makes us friendly to everyone. It makes us realise that the person to whom we are being friendly – whoever it is – may one day have the room next to us in Heaven.

Anthony English

HISTORY TALKS

Richard Lyons from TFP has offered to present a series of talks on History, beginning in February 2005.

These talks will be held at the Wingello Hall on the first Sunday of every month, and are expected to run for about six months.

There will be a nominal charge of about ten dollars per family each month, to cover the cost of the Hall.

The talks are anticipated to occupy the afternoon comprising a talk on History, with craft provided for the young children, followed by a break for afternoon tea and a lesson on courtesy aimed at children.

For more details contact **Sarah Fanning** on **02 4829 0377**

FAMILY PROFILE

Family Name: Leach

Location: Umina, Central Coast

Family Members: Andrew & Vicky, Megan (13 going on 14), Carrie (11), Cameron (9), Adam (6), Bethany (nearly 4), Melanie (14 months)

Family interests: Our interests centre around the home with various hobbies such as sewing, gardening, writing, reading, drawing, craft, music, home renovating, etc, and such sports as cricket and swimming. We have a cocker spaniel called Zac and a tame cockatiel called Sandy.

Home schooling methods: We are influenced mainly by Charlotte Mason and Classical philosophies, but we don't rely on any method entirely as we find that no method is quite flexible enough for us.

Favourite homeschooling resource: Apart from the library which we all love, our computer is invaluable for research, creative projects, educational software and contact with the outside world.

Best homeschooling advice: That all problems are challenges which have been met and overcome, or are being overcome, by countless other, sometimes very experienced, homeschoolers (and that other homeschoolers also live in messy homes!)

Favourite saint: St. Joseph and St. Therese of Lisieux (both have guided us in our homeschooling and family life).

Annual Homeschoolers September Camp

The Annual Homeschoolers School Week at Fitzroy Falls for 2005 is 19 - 23 September. Please mark your diaries and apply for that time off. Bookings will be taken from 1st May 2005.

Contact: Michelle Vieira
Tel. 02 4829 0113



ROSIE

Once upon a time a baby pony was born. Three days after she was born her mother died, so she was left alone in the barn.

One day, a parrot came and said he knew where she could live. The parrot showed her the way. When they got there, the baby pony saw lots of baby ponies in the barn. The men who looked after horses brought the baby pony into the barn.

When she got in there she saw a pony called Daisy. Daisy asked baby pony if she had a name. Baby pony said 'No'. Daisy thought, then she said 'Maybe you could be called Rosie.' Baby pony said 'I like that name', so she was called Rosie.

One day a rabbit came and said he knew a secret hiding place. In the night he came back and they ran away from the barn. The secret hiding place was a big cave. There was lots of treasure inside the cave. The little rabbit told the ponies that his great grandfather had hidden the treasure in the cave. He had stolen the treasure from some rich men.

There were big waterfalls in the cave. At the bottom of the cave, there was a trap door. Every time the little rabbits were in danger they came to the cave. In the morning the men woke up to come and feed the ponies. The men came into the barn but saw that Daisy and Rosie weren't there. They saw the footprints of the ponies and the little rabbit. The men found the cave and stole the treasure.

Daisy, Rosie and the rabbit were very unhappy because the treasure was very special to them. Rabbit had an idea. They could make a plan to get the treasure back. The plan was that they could go to the men's house and get the treasure back from where it was hidden. So that is what they did. They thought that the treasure would be in the cellar because it could be a very sneaky hiding place. They dug up the ground and found the treasure.

When they came home, they hid the treasure in a very sneaky hiding place so that the men would never find it again. They hid the treasure in the trap door.

That night, the rabbit went to spy on the men who owned the horses. The rabbit

heard the men say that they were going to kill the horses and skin them, so that they could sell them and get lots of money. The men said that they were going to do it the next night, and that they would do a trick on them. The trick was they would come to the cave and tell the horses that if they came into the barn they would get lots of food, water and more treasure. But really when the horses came to the barn they would kill them.

Late that night, the rabbit came back to the barn and told the horses about the men's wicked plan. Rosie then said, 'We could make a plan too, so that they could get tricked.' Then Rosie told her plan: 'We could say that they could go through the trap door to get the treasure, but we will hide the treasure somewhere else in the cave. So when the men get into the trap-door, we will lock them in there!'

That night the men came to the cave as planned. But before the men could tell Rosie and Daisy to come to the barn, the rabbit said 'If you go into our trapdoor you can get all of our treasure.'

Rosie showed the men where the trap door was. The men got into the trapdoor, but as soon as they got in, Daisy locked the trap door. When the men were locked in, Rosie went to tell the police her sad story.

Rabbit listened to what the men said in the trap door. One of the men said, 'We could build a long tunnel to the barn so that we could kill the rest of the horses in the barn. Rabbit heard this and he quickly ran to the barn and told the other horses to come and hide in the cave so that the men could not find the horses.'

By the time rabbit and the other horses got to the cave, the men had already started to dig. But they didn't do what they had planned. Instead of digging a long tunnel to the barn, they were digging a hole that went up to get out of the trap door. Rabbit did not know what to do because just at the moment the men finished digging, and the horses hadn't hid yet.

Luckily, just at that moment Rosie and the policeman came into the cave. Then

Rosie said, 'The policeman and I found out the whole meaning of my sad story. When I was asleep the men had killed my mother, and the parrot who showed me the way to the barn was really their pet. The men had sent the parrot to lots of other horses too. The men were trying to get money without stealing money. Then they all agreed that if they could look after horses they could finally kill them so they could sell their skins, so that they could get lots of money.'

Then the policeman took the men to jail, and they put an advertisement in the paper to try to find homes for all of the little horses.

After a few days, someone knocked on the policeman's door. It was Isabel, Rosie's owner. She said that she could look after Rosie, Daisy and the rabbit. She wanted to look after Daisy and the rabbit so that Rosie had someone to play with. They were all happy, because now there was no-one to hurt or steal them, and now Rosie had someone to look after her.

Grace Hyland

Land For Sale

A subdivision of the Brearley's front paddock at Wingello.

Two x 2,250 m (over 1/2acre) lots will be placed on the market shortly, when all approvals have been obtained.

If you are interested please contact Michael or Helen on 02 4884 4326.

CHRISTMAS WISH

The Elvis family would like to wish all readers of this edition of Keeping In Touch a Christmas full of peace and joy.

