

Keeping In Touch

A quarterly newsletter for Catholic homeschooling families



AMDG

Term Two 2008

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Editorial

This issue of Keeping in Touch was edited by:

Teresa Clark
PO Box 8
Panania, NSW, 2213
Ph: 02 97723416
email: twclark21@gmail.com

I would like to thank the generous people who took the time and effort to contribute towards this edition.

All readers of this newsletter are strongly encouraged to submit an item for future newsletters. This could be any form of text including articles, essays, stories, poems, etc., etc.

Digital copies of pictures can also be included.

Please share your thoughts, ideas, useful information, artistic creations, recipes, hints, resources and stories. Articles on homeschooling, spiritual and family life topics are always well received.

By contributing to Keeping in Touch you will be ensuring the

continuance of this fine publication and you will be supporting, encouraging, entertaining and enlightening other home schooling families.

We hope that you enjoy this edition. Any complaints and/or criticisms will be cheerfully considered if accompanied by a submission for a future edition.

The next edition of Keeping In Touch will be edited by:

The Elvis Family,
PO Box 968,
Mittagong, NSW 2575
Tel/fax: 48 623 387 email:
elvisfamily@optusnet.com.au

If you would like to edit a future edition, please contact the Elvis family for more information:

Andy and Sue Elvis
PO Box 968
Mittagong NSW 2575
Tel. 02 4862 3387
elvisfamily@optusnet.com.au

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There is a Time for Every Purpose Under Heaven

by Michele Vieira

“There is a time for every purpose under Heaven...” being a teenager of the ‘70s, when this line of the song Turn, Turn, Turn inspired by the third book of Ecclesiastes, popped into my head, I realised the great connection between this and the topic on which I wanted to write today. There is a time for every purpose under Heaven. We do not have to do it all now. God has ordained it so. And in our lives there must be time for schoolwork and time for rest. Sometimes there will be time and opportunity to cover this subject and sometimes there won’t. But we are in it for the long haul so we put our trust in God and know that it is all right because for everything there is a season.

For many of us who are homeschooling we constantly battle with feelings of inferiority, failure and only just coping. We may know, or remember, that this was God’s will for our lives, yet we feel we are failing miserably at the great ideal of family-centred, faith-centred homeschooling for now and eternity. It’s only when we get to Mass and find, for example, that it’s Pentecost Sunday that we remember we were going to do a poster project on Pentecost with the children in preparation for this feast but illness intervened swallowing up all your attention and you just plain forgot. Or you read a report about a wonderful concert that was on last weekend and you realise that you didn’t get there. Or you really want your children to be involved in some regular religious activity like the Legion of Mary but you just can’t face another trip out to take them. You may wonder if you are really doing your best at this job of homeschooling.

I found great relief from two sources. One was in talking to a homeschooling father, who is also a lecturer in Catholic Adult Education. He told me that God does not judge by observable results but by the love with which we do all for Him. This is consoling for those times where we do really try but all seems to go awry. However, we must admit that there are times when we do not act out of love or even unselfishness but try to lick our wounds as

we sink under the mire. For these times it is well to remember the words of this song, the book of Ecclesiastes and a talk given at a homeschooling camp on the book of Apocalypse. What do all of these have in common? The concept that our life is a cyclical affair with times for busy-ness and times for quiet, times for working and times for resting. And, at last, I am getting to the point of this article.

Are you getting enough rest? For many of us homeschooling mothers the intensity of the calling of being responsible for all normal mothering activities as well as homeschooling our children can be overwhelming as we see ourselves failing in every direction. May I respectfully suggest that most of the time when that happens we are plain tired? Please don’t feel guilty about your need for rest – it’s part of humility to admit it and part of being able to live and act in love to respond to this need for the sake of our children and spouses. Homeschooling can be a very intense life and we need time to be re-created. Especially if you still have littlies waking you through the night and/or oldies keeping you awake late at night as you have conversations with them. Please let it go down in print that while I still had disturbed nights with babies or pregnancy or both, I had a 90 minute sleep each and every day – and my family were mighty glad that I did because it helped me to survive and be fresh to love them not a mess of over-tiredness.

When God created the world, on the last day He rested and looked back over the work of His hands and saw that it was good. We have all heard the saying that the Sabbath was made for man not man for the Sabbath. But do we take this Sabbath attitude to our lives? Do we take time out, at least each week but preferably at the end of each day, to look back and give thanks? With the birth of Christianity, we have transferred this day of rest and re-creation to Sunday – the start of the new week. Once again we can imitate this. Do we start the day with God and ask His help in all the areas we foresee and all those unexpected moments likely to happen this day? By beginning and ending our days with God, we will draw new strength and grow in our ability to do all in love.

Going back to our theme song, we realise that there is yet more that we can apply to our lives as homeschoolers. Although we may try hard to get through all those important subjects and include the seasons of the Church, the development of virtue and the pursuit of truth, beauty and goodness, we may find ourselves wanting. We should not allow this to cause us alarm. Of course, we need to prioritise so that important topics are not overlooked. However it is good to remember that for everything there is a time and a season. We may only be nibbling our way through some subjects or we may have some desirable areas on hold at the moment but we can be at peace so long as we keep in mind that it will not always be this way. There will be a time for everything in God's plan for us.

Pregnancy has a way of teaching us valuable lessons in this regard. We cannot control our bodies as they respond to our pregnancy – veins bulge, you feel sick and very tired, you cannot sleep at night, it hurts to walk or sit or lie down and you can be an emotional mess – all out of your control. After having been through this a number of times, you learn not to be phased by all of this, but to just keep going, one step after the other, and you will survive. This can be applied to homeschooling also. We may not get through as much as we'd hoped. For some of our children, they may reach a stalemate. I have always found it beneficial to have a breather for both our sakes at this point. Usually time off will refresh the child and mother so that difficulties that seemed overwhelming can be overcome. Sometimes our children are just plain tired and they need a good sleep before tackling the topic again. Sometimes they may need a fresh approach taken – but it's only by stepping back and having time out that we can appreciate this. And often a word of understanding and compassion can help them to keep going at a difficult task that proved impossible before. For everything there is a time.

We may not have a programme for music but do play good music CDs while washing up or driving or listen to good music on the radio when in the car. Our children's exposure to great works of art may be limited to those in their Religion and other text books – and they only get to linger over these when we're interrupted! Our son had a desk

with a map of the world on it. He claims he learnt a lot of geography just by being distracted during school time and reading many Biggles books. We may do little in the way of hands-on activities having difficulty just getting through the core subjects each day. This does not mean our children are not learning – learning is not confined to our school books and subjects. Each little thing we do accomplish is something more that did get done. It may not be a complete programme, but it adds to the total. We put our trust in our loving Father and we do what we can. We will be amazed at what our children have learnt when we were not really trying to teach them something.

A good rule of thumb is only to take on those things we can and still remain at peace. When we are stretched our resilience is tested and as we are tired in meeting the needs of our children and husband, we are likely not to respond in love. This is not our desire but it often is reality. Our husbands, living with us and caring for us and for our family, are the best judges of these situations and so we should humbly accept their guidance in these matters.

If we organise our lives so that at least most days we begin and end in prayer. If we only take on as a regular outside activity or at home topic of learning or work, those things we can take on and still remain at peace. If we consult our husband in a peaceful and prayerful communication about what to do and what to let go of at this time. And if we take appropriate times of rest - both actual sleep and times of quiet prayer reflecting on our lives and looking for the good and asking for help in weaknesses from God Who is abounding in love and mercy, we will find that He has worked it out that for everything there is a season – a time for every purpose under Heaven.

By Michele Vieira

Shakespeare: The Easy Way

by Sue Elvis

Do your ears prick up when someone mentions the name of Shakespeare? Does your idea of a perfect Saturday afternoon include a bar of chocolate and the long version of Branagh's Hamlet? Are your guinea pigs called Romeo and Juliet? When you see the sign, Titus Andronicus, do you think of a good cup of coffee or rather, the play of the same name? Does finding yet another version of Macbeth on DVD feel you with joy? Is everyone fed up with you talking about Shakespeare? Do they think you are trying to convert them? If so, you (like me) are a passionate Shakespeare fan!

Unfortunately, passionate Shakespeare fans seem to be few and far between. More commonly, people have given Shakespeare a go and have not been impressed. "What's all the fuss," they say. "Give him another chance," I urge. But they shake their heads, convinced they are not missing anything of importance. They can well live without Shakespeare. And I can understand this reluctance to try again: his plays are not easy to read and often difficult to understand. But what wealth can be obtained with a little persevering.

Perhaps your study of a Shakespeare play starts with a reading of the original script. You open your copy of the play but before long you've become bogged down in the unfamiliar language. Someone asks, "Did you understand any of that last speech?" Everyone looks blank and you start to wonder if it really is necessary to include Shakespeare in your educational curriculum. You begin to feel sure that Shakespeare is no longer relevant in modern times. Your study of Shakespeare is over before it was really begun. But help is on its way in the form of modern technology: the DVD.

It always amazes me that Shakespeare wrote his plays for the ordinary man (and woman) and they had no trouble understanding the action. They didn't need a university degree to appreciate the works. Admittedly, language has changed a bit since Shakespeare's day but I am sure every one of us is

capable of enjoying the plays. Perhaps if the people of Elizabethan times had been given the scripts to read for themselves, they would have had the same trouble as us. Maybe the plays need to be watched to be understood. Surely that is why Shakespeare wrote them in the first place? He wanted his work to be performed and enjoyed. I am sure he didn't intend for us to stumble our way through his scripts with a feeling of despair and confusion.

Actors can bring Shakespeare's words alive. Speeches suddenly become understandable. The beauty and the poetry of the words become obvious. With expression in the voice and appropriate actions, an obscure passage can suddenly become clear. When I listen to Kenneth Branagh deliver a speech, I constantly question if he is actually saying the same words that are in the original script of the play. Surely, he has modernised the words? Otherwise why can I suddenly understand the speech he is delivering? Shakespeare didn't really write the words exactly as Branagh is saying them, did he? Branagh changes the pace, the pitch and the volume of his voice to emphasise the meaning of his words. His facial features reflect his emotions. And then there are his actions. It is easy to see what he is thinking, feeling and doing.

Some time ago, we bought a boxed set of all Shakespeare's plays on DVD. These are the BBC productions and the scripts differ very little from the originals. It is quite possible to watch a play and follow along with a written script. Even better, we can have the subtitles on screen. By listening to the actors' voices and watching their actions, while keeping an eye on the printed words, we can easily follow the story. But just to be on the safe side, usually we read a summary of the play or each scene before turning on the DVD. Such summaries are easily available online. Sometimes we watch only a few scenes at a time. Once the DVD is turned off, we settle into a discussion of the plot, the characters, what we liked, what we disliked. Perhaps we will draw pictures of the characters and link them into family trees. This helps keep track of who's who in the play. As the play progresses, themes will become obvious: the play might be about revenge or betrayal or forgiveness. There will

always be lots to talk about during post viewing discussion sessions.

If you have viewed a play at one sitting, after a couple of hours or so, you will have become familiar with one of Shakespeare's works. If you decide to watch the film in segments, you can spread your study over a few weeks. This can be beneficial if you want to get the most out of each scene by including some discussion.

Of course, some Shakespeare productions are better than others: the casting, an actor's voice and expression, the scenery and costumes can all affect the quality and enjoyment of a particular version. And then there is the editing of Shakespeare's original script. If watching a play that retains practically all of Shakespeare's original words is important to you, I would recommend the BBC versions. These all have subtitles which certainly help with understanding. But even heavily edited versions are worth a look. These are often shorter and faster paced with more spectacular scenery, sets and costumes. They might capture your imagination and lead you, in a gentle way, to a more serious study of Shakespeare.

We still enjoy sitting in a circle, as a family, with our well thumbed scripts pretending we are Shakespearean actors. Our amateurish attempts to deliver the lines do not diminish our enjoyment. Nor are we put off by the extra effort involved in working out the meaning of all the speeches. But we do admit studying Shakespeare this way is very time consuming. We can see the advantages of 'doing' a Shakespeare play 'the easy way' by letting the DVD, and its subtitles, do the reading for us. So we have decided to read one play a term the long way, and familiarise ourselves with a second play, the quick way. By doing this, we can cover twice as many Shakespeare plays a year as we used to. Who knows? Perhaps by the time we finish homeschooling our youngest child, all Shakespeare's plays will be old friends.

So decide on a play. There are lots to choose from: a history? a tragedy? a comedy? Forget about buying copies of the script. Go get the DVD version

instead. Get someone to read out a summary of the first couple of scenes, pass out the chocolate and settle back. Soon you'll be enjoying all the drama and action of a Shakespearean story. And before you know it, you may be converted into a passionate Shakespeare fan like me.

October camp

Once again we will be holding a school-week camp at Fitzroy Falls Conference Centre, this time in the second week of term four i.e. October 20 – 24. This camp provides opportunities for the children to participate in activities that may be difficult to provide in a family setting. It also provides for the adults a time of refreshment and renewal both through formal and informal talks aimed at assisting faith development and homeschooling expertise. Costs approx. \$595 per family fully catered for the week from Monday 11 a.m. to Friday midday. Daily Mass, Benediction and Rosary will be a feature. Other features include a night of prayer before Our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament and a Eucharistic Procession.

Although this is booking out quickly, there are limited vacancies available. Please send a cheque for \$50 made out to Homeschooling Catholics to 1585 Taralga Rd, Tarlo. 2580. to register your interest. For any queries please phone Michele Vieira on (02)48290113 (afternoons or evenings please) or email to dansfarm@harboursat.com.au

Shakespeare Resources

Audio

Shakespeare Stories by Leon Garfield Tells the story of each play using original quotes; background information on Shakespeare and the theatre in his day. Presented on CD,

As You Like It
Hamlet
Julius Caesar
MacBeth
The Merchant of Venice
Midsummer Night's Dream
Romeo and Juliet
Twelfth Night

Available from www.soundbooks.com.au \$24.15 each

Plays on DVD

There are many different versions of Shakespeare's plays available. These are only a few samples available from www.leebooks.com.au

Hamlet – Kenneth Branagh - \$45.95

Hamlet – Laurence Olivier - \$14.95

Hamlet – Franco Zeffirelli - \$26

Romeo and Juliet – Franco Zeffirelli - \$29.95

Shakespearean Classics Box Set – Laurence Olivier - Hamlet, Henry V, Romeo and Juliet, Romeo and Juliet Ballet - \$29.95

Shakespeare Collection – BBC TV, 37 plays - \$395

BBC TV individual plays - \$19.95 e.g. Antony and Cleopatra, Othello, Macbeth, The Taming of the Shrew, Hamlet, Midsummer Night's Dream (not all titles available individually in Australia)

Otello – opera starring Placido Domingo \$25.95

The Taming of the Shrew – Zeffirelli - \$21.95

Henry V – Kenneth Branagh - \$21.95

BBC TV Shakespeare plays also available from ABC shops or online, www.abc.com.au \$14.95 - \$15.95

Shakespeare Books for Children

Shakespeare's Stories by Leon Garfield - \$29.95 available www.leebooks.com.au

Shakespeare for Everyone by Jennifer Mulherin - contains the background to each play, tells the story, describes the characters and explains the difficult language:

The Tempest
As You Like It
The Merchant of Venice
The Taming of the Shrew
Julius Caesar
Macbeth
Antony and Cleopatra
King Lear
Hamlet
Othello
Richard III
Romeo and Juliet
Much Ado about Nothing

Approximately \$19 per book available from www.emporiumbooks.com.au

Tales from Shakespeare by Charles and Mary Lamb \$22.95 from www.penguin.com.au

Shakespeare's Storybook, Folk Tales that Inspired the Bard, by Ryan and Mayhew, available from www.booksdirect.com.au \$30.76

Shakespeare's Plays

There are many different editions of the scripts.

Cambridge School Shakespeare editions

No Fear Shakespeare

Both available from www.emporiumbooks.com.au or www.abbeys.com.au Other editions available from these sites too.

Other Recommended Books on Shakespeare

How to Speak Shakespeare by Pritner and Colaianni, \$26.31

Shakespeare's Kings by John Julius Norwich #24.61 – compares Shakespeare's historical plays with actual historical fact

Both available www.emporiumbooks.com.au

Fifteen Minute Shakespeare, fast paced script versions of Antony and Cleopatra, Macbeth and Romeo and Juliet \$17.95 available from www.booknook.com.au

Twenty Minute Shakespeare, also available, four more plays presented in fast paced script versions.

Shakespeare Websites

There are many websites dedicated to Shakespeare and his plays. Scene summaries, character notes, themes, famous quotations are all available. Here are just a few sites:

www.shakespeare-online.com

www.absoluteshakespeare.com

www.playshakespeare.com

www.sparknotes.com

N.B. All prices are now a few months old but they will still give you an idea of what you can expect to pay.

Washing the Dishes

by Christopher Morley

When we on simple rations sup
How easy is the washing up!
But heavy feeding complicates
The task by soiling many plates.

And though I grant that I have prayed
That we might find a serving maid,
I'd scullion all my days, I think,
To see Her smile across the sink!

I wash, she wipes. In water hot
I souse each dish and pan and pot;
While Taffy mutters, purrs and begs,
And rubs himself against my legs.

The man who never in his life
Has washed the dishes with his wife
Or polished up the silver plate -
He still is largely celibate.

One warning: there is certain ware
That must be handled with all care:
The Lord Himself will give you up
If you should drop a willow cup!

Meditation

What does the Heart of Jesus do for men in the Blessed Sacrament?

CONSIDERATION: It performs there the office of a *mediator*, continually interceding for us. If God does not utterly exterminate the human race on account of sins which cry for vengeance to heaven, we know that it is because the Heart of Jesus is perpetually pleading with Him, Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." It performs the office of a *priest*, sacrificing itself every day for us on a thousand altars. It performs the office of a *father*, feeding us with its own flesh and blood. It performs the office of a *master* and *teacher*, instructing us, by its very condition in the Blessed Sacrament, in the virtues most necessary for us - silence, recollection, humility, contempt of the world, patience, resignation, devotion.

APPLICATION: These are but a few of the claims which the Heart of Jesus has upon our love. We know them; we understand and feel what it requires of us in return; and yet we are so cold, even before the Blessed Sacrament, even in our Communion! Whence does this proceed? Is it not from too strong an attachment to the world and to ourselves? Or perhaps from certain affections which, if not sinful, are at least sensual, taking too strong root in our hearts.

(from Practical Meditations, by a Father of the Society of Jesus, reprinted by Burns & Oates, 1961. Originally printed in French 1868.)

G.K. Chesterton on Platitudes in the Making

P. No two men have exactly the same religion: a church, like society, is a compromise.

GKC. The same religion has the two men. The sun shines on the evil and the good. But the sun does not compromise.

(Platitudes Undone, 1997)

Our Lady of Guadalupe

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Further articles available at

<http://www.clairval.com/index.en.html>

You may also subscribe to their printed newsletter at no cost.



One day as he was gazing at a copy of the Image of Our Lady of Guadalupe, Pope John Paul II confided, “I feel drawn to this Image, because this face is full of tenderness and simplicity. It calls to me...” Later, on May 6, 1990, during a pilgrimage to Mexico, the Holy Father beatified Juan Diego, the messenger of Our Lady, and, on this occasion, he said, “The Virgin chose Juan Diego, among the most humble, to receive this loving and gracious manifestation, the apparition of Our Lady of Guadalupe. Her maternal face on the holy Image that she left us as a gift is a permanent souvenir of this.”

In the sixteenth century, the Blessed Virgin, moved with pity for the Aztec people who, living in the darkness of idolatry, offered to their idols multitudes of human victims, deigned to take into her own hands the evangelization of these Indians of Central America who were also her children. One of the

Aztec gods, originally considered the god of fertility, had transformed himself over time into a ferocious god. A symbol of the sun, this god was in continuous battle with the moon and the stars and was believed to need human blood to restore his strength; if he died, life would be extinguished. Ever new victims, to be offered to him in perpetual sacrifice, therefore seemed essential.

An eagle on a cactus

Aztec priests had prophesied that their nomadic people would settle in the place where an eagle would be seen perched on a cactus, devouring a serpent. This eagle appears on the Mexican flag today. Having arrived on a swampy island, in the middle of Lake Texcoco, the Aztecs saw the foretold sign: an eagle, perched on a cactus, was devouring a serpent. This was in 1369. There they founded their town Tenochtitlan, which would become Mexico City. The town expanded to become a city on pilings, with many gardens abounding in flowers, fruit, and vegetables. The organization of the Aztec kingdom was very structured and hierarchical. The knowledge of their mathematicians, astronomers, philosophers, architects, doctors, artists, and artisans was excellent for that time. But the laws of the physical world remained scarcely known. Tenochtitlan drew its power and wealth primarily from war. The conquered cities had to pay a tribute of various foodstuffs and men for war and sacrifices. The Aztecs' human sacrifices and cannibalism are almost unequaled throughout the course of history.

In 1474, a child was born who was given the name Cuauhtlatoazin (“speaking eagle”). After his father's death, the child was taken in by his uncle. From the age of three, he was taught, as were all young Aztecs, to join in domestic tasks and to behave in a dignified manner. At school, he learned singing, dancing, and especially the worship of many gods. The priests had a very strong influence over the population, whom they kept in a submission bordering on terror. Cuauhtlatoazin was thirteen years old when the great temple at Tenochtitlan was consecrated. Over the course of four days, the priests sacrificed 80,000 human victims to their god.

After his military service, Cuauhtlatoazin married a young woman of his social status. Together they led a modest life as farmers.

In 1519, the Spaniard Cortez disembarked in Mexico, leading 500 soldiers. He conquered the country for Spain, yet was not lacking in zeal for the evangelization of the Aztecs. In 1524 he obtained the arrival of twelve Franciscans to Mexico. These missionaries quickly integrated into the population. Their goodness contrasted with the harshness of the Aztec priests, as well as that of some conquistadors. They began to build churches. However, the Indians were reluctant to accept Baptism, primarily because it would require them to abandon polygamy.

Cuauhtlatoazin and his wife were among the first to receive Baptism, under the respective names of Juan Diego and Maria Lucia. After his wife's death in 1529, Juan Diego withdrew to Tolpetlac, 14 km from Mexico City, to the home of his uncle, Juan Bernardino, who had become a Christian as well. On December 9, 1531, as was his custom every Saturday, he left very early in the morning to attend the Mass celebrated in honor of the Blessed Virgin, at the Franciscan fathers' church, close to Mexico City. He walked past Tepeyac Hill. Suddenly, he heard a gentle and resounding song that seemed to come from a great multitude of birds. Raising his eyes to the top of the hill, he saw a white and radiant cloud. He looked around him and wondered if he was dreaming. All of a sudden, the song stopped and a woman's voice, gentle and graceful, called him: "Juanito, Juan Dieguito!" He quickly climbed the hill and found himself in the presence of a very beautiful young woman whose garments shone like the sun.

"A church where I will show my love"

Speaking to him in Nahuatl, his native language, she said to him, "Juanito, my son, where are you going?"—"Noble Lady, my Queen, I am going to the Mass in Mexico City to hear the divine things that the priest teaches us there."—"I want you to know for certain, my dear son, that I am the perfect and always Virgin Mary, Mother of the True God from Whom all life comes, the Lord of all things,

Creator of Heaven and Earth. I greatly desire that a church be built in my honor, in which I will show my love, compassion, and protection. I am your Mother full of mercy and love for you and all those who love Me, trust in Me, and have recourse to Me. I will hear their complaints and I will comfort their affliction and their sufferings. So that I might show all My love, go now to the bishop in Mexico City and tell him that I am sending you to make known to him the great desire I have to see a church dedicated to me built here."

Juan Diego went straight to the bishop. Bishop Zumárraga, a Franciscan, the first bishop of Mexico, was a pious man and full of zeal, who had a heart overflowing with kindness towards the Indians. He heard the poor man attentively, but fearing an illusion, did not put much faith in his story. Towards evening, Juan Diego started on his way home. At the top of Tepeyac Hill, he had the pleasant surprise of meeting the Apparition again. He told her about his mission, then added, "I beg you to entrust your message to someone more known and respected so that he will believe it. I am only a simple Indian whom you have sent as a messenger to an important person. Therefore, he didn't believe me, and I do not want to greatly disappoint you."—"My dearest son," replied the Lady, "you must understand that there are many more noble men to whom I could have entrusted my message and yet, it is because of you that my plan will succeed. Return to the bishop tomorrow... Tell him that it is I myself, the Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of God, who am sending you."

On Sunday morning after the Mass, Juan Diego went to the bishop's house. The prelate asked him many questions, then asked for a tangible sign of the truth of the apparition. When Juan Diego went home, the bishop had him discreetly followed by two servants. At Tepeyac Bridge, Juan Diego disappeared from their sight, and despite all their searches on the hill and in the surrounding area, they could not find him again. Furious, they declared to the bishop that Juan Diego was an impostor who must absolutely not be believed. During this time, Juan Diego told the beautiful Lady, who was waiting for him on the hill, about his most recent meeting with the bishop. "Come back

tomorrow morning to seek the sign he is asking for,” replied the Apparition.

Roses, in the middle of winter!

Returning home, the Indian found his uncle ill, and the next day, he had to stay at his bedside to take care of him. As the illness got worse, the uncle asked his nephew to go look for a priest. At dawn on Tuesday, December 12, Juan Diego started on the road to the city. Approaching Tepeyac Hill, he thought it best to make a detour so as not to meet the Lady. But suddenly, he perceived her coming to meet him. Embarrassed, he explained his situation and promised to come back when he had found a priest to administer last rites to his uncle. “My dear little one,” replied the Apparition, “do not be distressed about your uncle's illness, because he will not die from it. I assure you that he will get well... Go to the top of the hill, pick the flowers that you will see there, and bring them to me.” When he had arrived at the top of the hill, the Indian was stunned to find a great number of flowers in bloom, Castillian roses that gave off a very sweet fragrance. Indeed, in the winter, the cold allows nothing to survive, and besides, the place was too dry for flowers to grow there. Juan Diego gathered the roses, enfolded them in his cloak, or tilma, then went back down the hill. “My dear son,” said the Lady, “these flowers are the sign that you are to give the bishop... This will get him to build the church that I have asked of him.”

Juan Diego ran to the bishop. When he arrived, the servants made him wait for hours. Amazed at his patience, and intrigued by what he was carrying in his tilma, they finally informed the bishop, who, although with several people, had him shown in immediately. The Indian related his adventure, unfolded his tilma, and let the flowers, which were still shining with dew, scatter to the floor. With tears in his eyes, Bishop Zumárraga fell to his knees, admiring the roses from his country. All of a sudden, he perceived, on the tilma, the portrait of Our Lady. Mary's image was there, as though printed on the cloak, very beautiful and full of gentleness. The bishop's doubts gave way to a sure faith and a hope filled with wonder. He took the tilma and the roses,

and placed them respectfully in his private oratory. The next day he went with Juan Diego to the hill where the apparitions had taken place. After having examined the sites, he let the seer return to his uncle's house. Juan Bernardino had been completely cured. His cure had taken place at the very hour when Our Lady appeared to his nephew. He told him, “I have also seen her. She even came here and talked to me. She wants a church to be built on Tepeyac Hill and wants her portrait to be called 'Saint Mary of Guadalupe.' But she didn't explain to me why.” The name “Guadalupe” is well known by the Spanish, because in their country there is a very old sanctuary dedicated to Our Lady of Guadalupe.

The news of the miracle spread quickly. In a short time, Juan Diego became well-known. “I will spread your fame,” Mary had told him, but the Indian remained as humble as ever. To make it easier to meditate on the Image, Bishop Zumárraga had the tilma transported to his cathedral. Then work was begun on the construction of a small church and a hermitage for Juan Diego on the hill of apparitions. The next December 25, the bishop consecrated his cathedral to the Most Blessed Virgin, to thank her for the remarkable favors with which she had blessed his diocese. Then, in a magnificent procession, the miraculous Image was carried to the sanctuary that had just been completed on Tepeyac Hill. To express their joy, the Indians shot arrows. One of them, shot carelessly, went through the throat of a participant in the procession, who fell to the ground, fatally wounded. A great silence fell and intense supplication rose to the Mother of God. Suddenly the wounded man, who had been placed at the foot of the miraculous Image, collected himself and got up, full of vigor. The crowd's enthusiasm was at its peak.

Millions of Indians become Christian

Juan Diego moved into his little hermitage, seeing to the maintenance and cleaning of the site. His life remained simple—he carefully farmed a field close to the sanctuary that had been placed at his disposal. He received pilgrims in ever larger numbers, and enjoyed talking about the Blessed Virgin and untiringly relating the details of the apparitions. He

was entrusted with all kinds of prayer intentions. He listened, sympathized, and comforted. A good amount of his free time was spent in contemplation before the image of his Lady. He made rapid progress in the ways of holiness. Day after day, he fulfilled his duty as a witness up until his death on December 9, 1548, seventeen years after the first apparition.

When the Indians had learned the news of Our Lady's apparitions, an enthusiasm and joy such as had never been seen before spread among them. Renouncing their idols, superstitions, human sacrifices, and polygamy, many asked to be baptized. Nine years after the apparitions, nine million Indians had converted to the Christian faith—nearly 3,000 a day! The details of the Image of Mary moved the Indians deeply—this woman is greater than the sun-god since she appears standing before the sun. She surpasses the moon god since she keeps the moon under her feet. She is no longer of this world since she is surrounded by clouds and is held above the world by an angel. Her folded hands show her in prayer, which means that there is Someone greater than she...

Even in our time, the mystery of this miraculous Image remains. The tilma, a large apron woven by hand from cactus fibers, bears the holy Image, which is 1.43 meters tall. The Virgin's face is perfectly oval and is a gray color verging on pink. Her eyes have a profound expression of purity and gentleness. The mouth seems to smile. The very beautiful face, similar to that of a mestizo Indian, is framed by a black head of hair that, up close, is comprised of silky locks. She is clad in a full tunic, of a pinkish red hue that no one has ever been able to reproduce, and that goes to her feet. Her bluish-green mantle is edged with gold braid and studded with stars. A sun of various shades forms a magnificent background, with golden rays shining out.

The fact that the tilma has remained perfectly preserved from 1531 to this day is inexplicable. After more than four centuries, this fabric of mediocre quality retains the same freshness and the same lively color as when it was new. By

comparison, a copy of the Image of Our Lady of Guadalupe painted in the 18th century with great care, and preserved under the same climatic conditions as Juan Diego's, had completely deteriorated in a few years.

At the beginning of the 20th century, a painful period of revolutions in Mexico, a load of dynamite was put by unbelievers at the foot of the Image, in a vase of flowers. The explosion destroyed the marble steps on the main altar, the candelabras, all the flower-holders. The marble altarpiece was broken into pieces, the brass Christ on the tabernacle was split in two. The windows in most of the houses near the basilica were broken, but the pane of glass that was protecting the Image was not even cracked. The Image remained intact.

The most moving experience of my life

In 1936, an examination conducted on two fibers from the tilma, one red and the other yellow, led to an astounding finding—the fibers contained no known coloring agent. Ophthalmology and optics confirm the inexplicable nature of the Image—it seems to be a slide projected onto the fabric. Closer analysis shows that there is no trace of drawing or sketching under the color, even though perfectly recognizable retouches were done on the original, retouches which moreover have deteriorated with time. In addition, the background never received any primer, which seems inexplicable if it is truly a painting, for even on the finest fabric, a coat is always applied, if only to prevent the fabric from absorbing the painting and the threads from breaking the surface. No brush strokes can be detected. After an infrared analysis conducted on May 7, 1979, a professor from NASA wrote, “There is no way to explain the quality of the pigments used for the pink dress, the blue veil, the face and the hands, or the permanence of the colors, or the vividness of the colors after several centuries, during which they ordinarily should have deteriorated... Studying this Image has been the most moving experience of my life.”

Astronomers have observed that all the constellations present in the heavens at the moment

Juan Diego opened his tilma before Bishop Zumárraga on December 12, 1531, are in their proper place on Mary's mantle. It has also been found that by imposing a topographical map of central Mexico on the Virgin's dress, the mountains, rivers and principal lakes coincide with the decoration on this dress.

Ophthalmological tests have found that Mary's eye is a human eye that appears to be living, and includes the retina, in which is reflected the image of a man with outstretched hands—Juan Diego. The image in the eye conforms to the known laws of optics, particularly to that which states that a well-lit object can be reflected three times in an eye (Purkinje-Samson's law). A later study allowed researchers to discover in the eye, in addition to the seer, Bishop Zumárraga and several other people present when the image of Our Lady appeared on the tilma. And the normal microscopic network of veins in the eyelids and the cornea of the Virgin's eyes is completely recognizable. No human painter would have been able to reproduce such details.

Three months pregnant

Gynecological measurements have determined that the Virgin in the Image has the physical dimensions of a woman who is three months pregnant. Under the belt that holds the dress in place, at the very location of the embryo, a flower with four petals stands out—the Solar Flower, the most familiar of Aztec hieroglyphs, and which symbolized for them divinity, the center of the earth, heaven, time, and space. On the Virgin's neck hangs a brooch, the center of which is decorated with a little cross, recalling the death of Christ on the Cross for the salvation of all mankind. Many other details of the Image of Mary form an extraordinary document for our age, which is able to observe them thanks to modern technology. Thus science, which has often been a pretext for unbelief, helps us today to give prominence to signs that had remained unknown for centuries and that science is unable to explain.

The Image of Our Lady of Guadalupe bears a message of evangelization: the Basilica of Mexico is a center “from which flows a river of the light of the

Gospel of Christ, spreading throughout the earth through the merciful Image of Mary” (John Paul II, December 12, 1981). In addition, through her intervention on behalf of the Aztec people, the Virgin played a role in saving innumerable human lives, and her pregnancy can be interpreted as a special appeal on behalf of unborn children and the defense of human life. This appeal has a burning relevance in our time, when threats against the lives of individuals and peoples, especially lives that are weak and defenseless, are widespread and becoming more serious. The Second Vatican Council forcefully deplored crimes against human life: “All offenses against life itself, such as murder, genocide, abortion, euthanasia... all these and the like are criminal: they poison civilization; and they debase the perpetrators more than the victims and militate against the honor of the Creator” (*Gaudium et spes*, 27). Faced with these plagues, which are expanding as a result of scientific progress and technology, and which benefit from wide social consensus as well as legal recognition, let us call upon Mary with confidence. She is an “incomparable model of how life should be welcomed and cared for... Showing us her Son, she assures us that in Him the forces of death have already been defeated” (John Paul II, *Evangelium vitæ*, March 25, 1995, nos. 102, 105). “Death and life are locked in an incredible battle; the Author of life, having died, lives and reigns” (Easter Sequence).

Let us ask Saint Juan Diego, canonized by Pope John Paul II on July 31, 2002, to inspire us with a true devotion to our Mother of Heaven, for “Mary's compassion extends to all those who appeal to her, even when this appeal is nothing more than a simple 'Hail, Mary' “ (Saint Alphonsus de Liguori). Especially if we have fallen into serious sin, she who is Mother of Mercy will obtain for us the Mercy of God.

Dom Antoine Marie osb.

Reading and Writing

NSW Premier's Reading Challenge

The NSW Premier's Reading Challenge is on again. To find out more information, have a look at the web site.

<https://products.schools.nsw.edu.au/prc/home.html>

The May 08 edition (<http://ha-magazine.beverleypaine.com/2008/may.html>) of the Home Education Association (www.hea.asn.au) has information for home-schoolers on how to register. "to register, please send an email to prc@det.nsw.edu.au informing them that you are a homeschooler wishing to register for the Premier's Reading Challenge. In return, they will send you a form to gather information about you, which you will need to complete and return to them so that your 'school' may be set up in the system. As soon as the system update is completed at the end of April you will be issued with a login for the system so that you may enter your reading log online."

MS Readathon

Another reading incentive program is the MS Readathon.

You can register on-line at <http://www.msreadathon.org.au/>

This is a fund-raiser for Multiple Sclerosis Research as well as a way to provide incentives and rewards for reading for all ages.

St Francis De Sales Writers Club Newsletter

Availability of KIT

KIT is available on the website of the Cardinal Newman Faith Resources Inc. for reading or downloading.

www.cardinalnewman.com.au/Downloads.htm

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, at

Mr. Shaun Fanning

"Tarlo Hill"

2142 Taralga Road

Tarlo, NSW 2580

Tel. 02 4829 0377

email:

tarlohill@aussiebroadband.com.au

St Francis de Sales Writers Club

- Do you like reading original works?
- Would you like to know more about some of the great authors and poets?
- Would you like to read more poems?

Read the St Francis De Sales Writers Club Newsletter.

To be put on the mailing list, please email Miss Carrie Leach at: carrieleach@live.com and give her your name and email address.

- Do you like writing in any form?
- Would you like to see your work in print?
- Do you want to share your favourite poem with us?

Send your work or poems to Miss Imogen Elvis at: imogenceleste@optusnet.com

- Why not write about what you have done or seen, write a review of a book or movie that you have read or watched.
- Would you recommend people read or saw it?
- Would you like to write a poem?

These are things that people enjoy reading

- What is your favourite book?
- Who is it by?

Send your answers to these questions to Imogen at imogenceleste@optusnet.com

Material Deadline

Please note that the preferred deadline for contributions from readers is the **end of the second week of each term**, especially for items which are not submitted by email.

Children's Corner

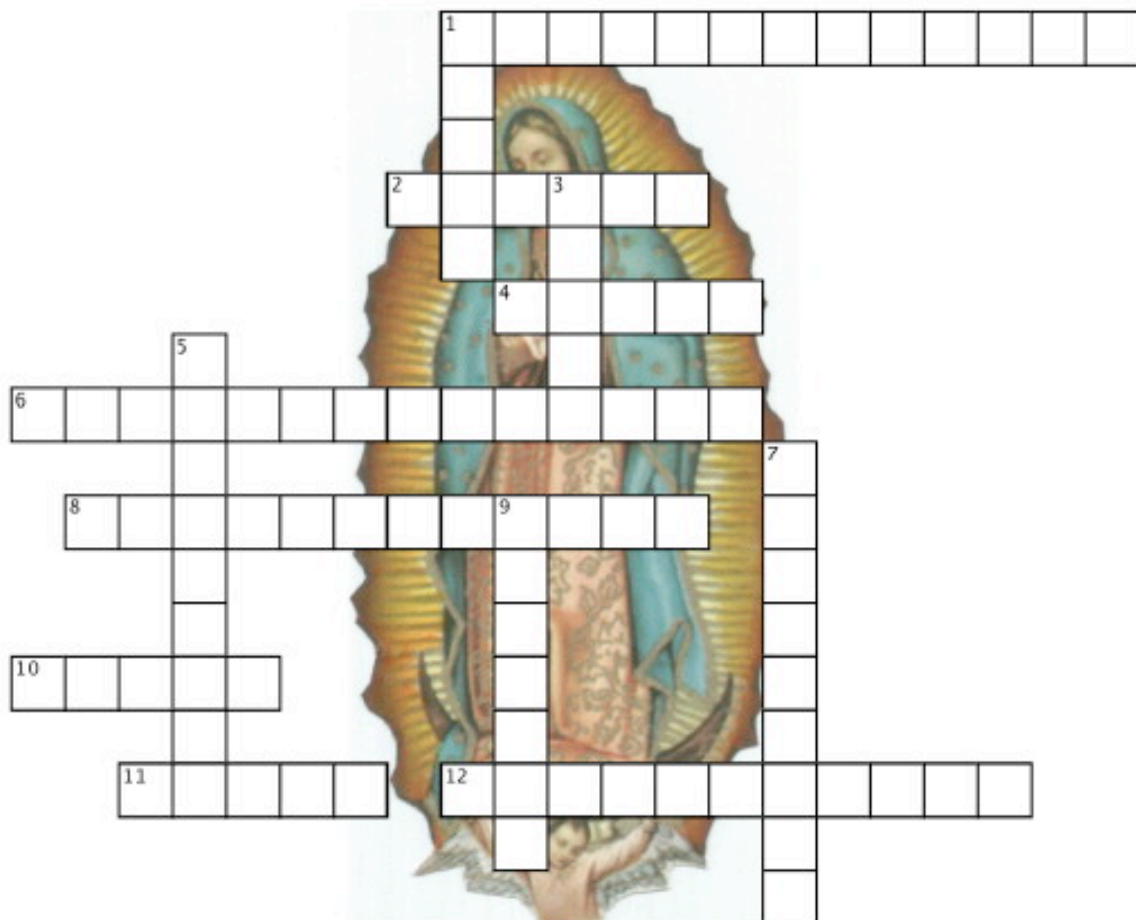
A place for submissions from our home schools.

A Story by Patrick Brandt aged 6

One day there was a huge storm. Hebrb6 was voyaging through. The very next day the storm was gone, Hebrb6 came into land. There were 5 Hebrbs there already. That's how he got his number. Then the 5 ships all had red heads. The Hebrbs with red heads were pirate Hebrbs. Then blue foxy lady reached out for aticket and jumped on Hebrb6. Then Hebrb6 set off to find Terrapin and Petrie. So they found Terrapin playing in a wonderful sandpit. Terrapin loves sand, Blue Foxy Lady thought. So Terrapin went aboard Hebrb6. Then there was a big house full of sandpits. Then Terrapin played in the sandpit all by himself, but he let blue foxy lady play with him. So then they found Petrie had landed inside the sandpit.

Our Lady of Guadalupe

answers will be found in the article.



Across

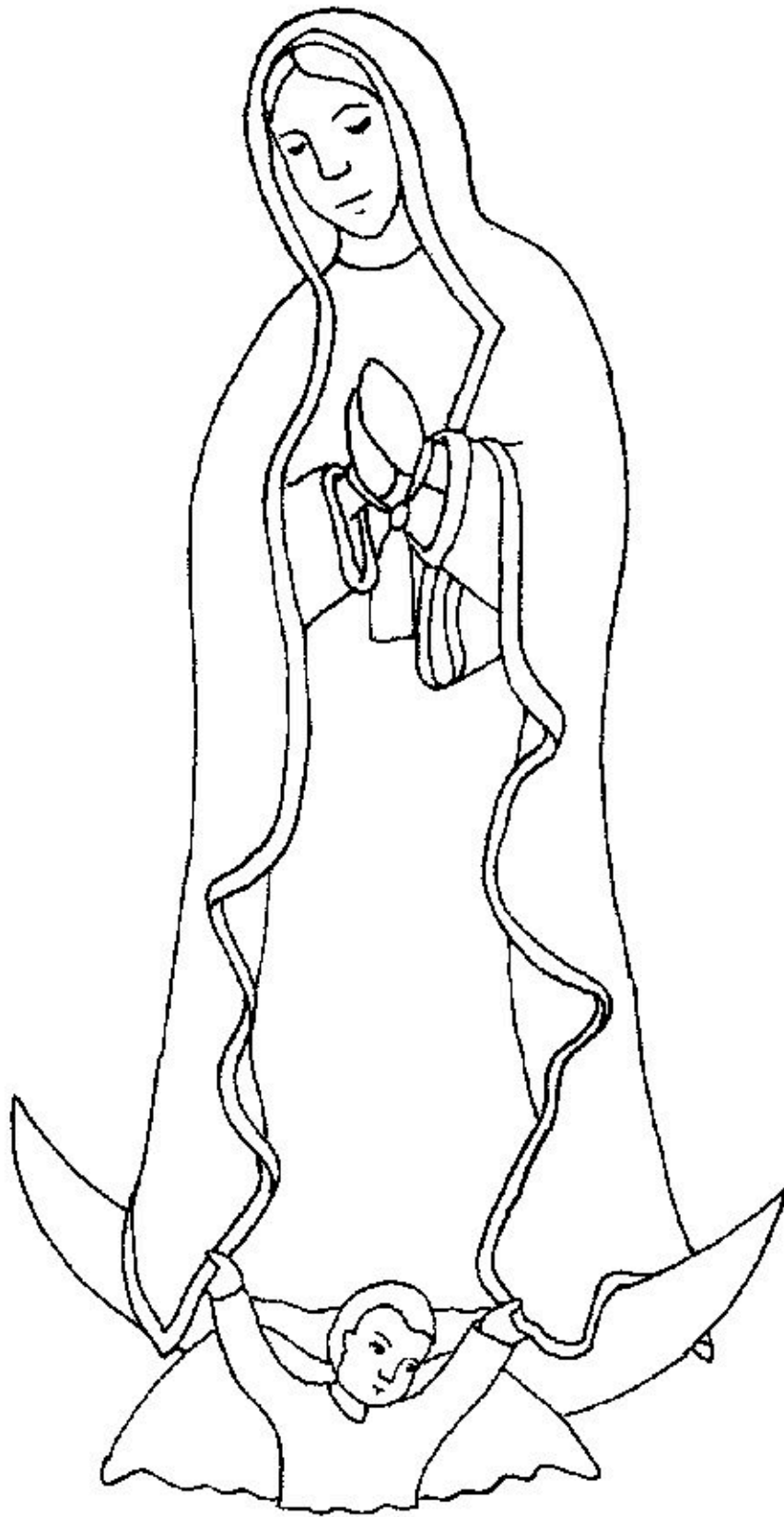
1. Juan Diego's Aztec name meant
2. The tilma is made from fibers
4. colour of Our Lady's hair in the image
6. Juan Diego's name before his conversion
8. Original name of Mexico City
10. Name of the people who lived in Mexico
11. The flowers that he found at the top of the hill were
12. the Aztecs ate human flesh - this is called

Down

1. the flower that symbolises divinity
3. The other name for a cloak
5. Mary appeared to him at Guadalupe
7. The Bishop to whom Juan Diego gave Our Lady's message
9. Name of the hill where he saw Our Lady

Colouring Page: Our Lady of Guadalupe.

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Answers to the Crossword

answers will be found in the article.

1 S P E A K I N G E A G L E
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 2 C A C T U S
 R I
 4 B L A C K
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 5 J
 6 C A U H T L A T O A Z I N
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