



Keeping in Touch

A quarterly newsletter for Catholic homeschooling families

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PUBLICATION

KEEPING IN TOUCH is published about the end of the fifth week of each of the four school terms.

Volunteer families take it in turns as editor, typesetter and publisher.

CONTRIBUTIONS

Contributions are invited from Catholic homeschooling families and from priests, religious and laity supporting them. Especially welcome are:

Children's contributions: stories, articles, reports, reviews, poems, pictures, puzzles etc.

Teaching articles with ideas and encouragement for other homeschooling parents.

Particularly helpful are **parental reviews of available resources** and where to get them.

Please send contributions on A4 pages and, where possible, the same text on computer diskette (in 'text file' format) or via e-mail.

MATERIAL DEADLINE

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

The editors would like to thank all those who have contributed to this edition of Keeping in Touch. As we had a surplus of articles, we chose those that were especially written by our homeschooling community rather than those obtained from outside sources. Please read this edition with tolerance and charity. Our opinions sometimes differ, but our goals are the same.

DONATIONS

Recipients are invited to make a \$10 annual donation, paid to the Cardinal Newman Catholic Bookshop Inc. and clearly marked '**DONATION FOR KEEPING IN TOUCH HOMESCHOOLING NEWSLETTER**'.

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EDITORIAL

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TERM TWO 2003

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The Transition From Homeschooling to University

Last year I finished the last year of Sister Mary Augustine's English Literature course. After I completed it I was not sure if I wanted to go to university or not. A family friend suggested that I do a course at the University of Western Sydney called Unitrack. This course is an alternative way of getting into this uni other than getting a UAI and only requires a student passing two subjects of any degree before applying for acceptance into the full degree. Since I was unsure about uni I decided to give it a try and with my results from the Literature course and my music exams I was accepted in.

For the first semester I decided just to do one subject and try to work my way in. Currently I am doing the subject Approaches to Text, which is part of the Humanities/Arts faculties. I am finding that this subject is very much English oriented and is very similar to the structure of English Literature course that I did. Many of the poems, articles and other readings are the same and has introduced me to more literary terms other than onomatopoeia, etc. It has also been introducing topics such as semiotics, ideology and discourse, which is very much talking about cultures found in texts and how they can or should be interpreted.

The challenge of actually going to uni is probably the hardest part of the transition from being at home everyday and then leaving to go to uni once a week to a place that I had never been to before. When I was accepted I made sure that I went down a couple of times beforehand to try and get a sense of the campus' layout so that when I started I knew exactly where to go. I still had to ask people but many students are used to 1st years not knowing where to go and so they are all extremely helpful. When I started attending lectures I found that it did not matter if you had not been to uni before because the coordinators have set the first year subjects out so that students can

work their way into them. The tutorials are just like classes at school because they split the students up from the lectures and a tutor takes these classes to discuss and analyse subjects more closely. It is also a chance to get to know people properly and encourage intellectual discussions so that we do not just get our teacher's opinions. This new form of communication helps when we try to grasp concepts and assignment questions.

Another valuable requirement at uni is learning how to research and use library resources. Tutorials consist of at least one library session to help us with this but as we see in schools sometimes it is difficult trying to teach over thirty people how to use the library catalogue on only ten computers in an hour. When one of our later assignments consisted of putting these skills into practice I had to spend a full day at the library working out all over again how to do everything. Once I figured this out with the help of a very co-operative librarian, however, I was able to do my research with ease and without any fear for the future.

Whether I continue with uni in the future will depend on results from this subject but so far it has been promising and interesting. It is definitely helping me to prepare for adult life if nothing else, especially in regard to communicating with other people. Everyone in my tutorial is older than me but they talk to me as though that does not matter and thus our conversations are usually mature, insightful and do not go over board.

Genevieve Smith



Children

LM Montgomery, author of Anne of Green Gables, quoted this poem in response to those who criticised her for abandoning her writing career to become a full-time mother.

Come to me, O ye children!
For I hear you at your play.
And the questions that perplexed
me
Have vanished quite away.

Ye open the eastern windows,
That look towards the sun,
Where thoughts are singing
swallows,
And the brooks of morning run.

In your hearts are the birds and the
sunshine,
In your thoughts the brooklet's flow;
But in mine is the wind of Autumn,
And the first fall of the snow.

Ah! what would the world be to us
If the children were no more?
We should dread the desert behind
us
Worse than the dark before.

What the leaves are to the forest,
With light and air for food,
Ere their sweet and tender juices
Have been hardened into wood,

That to the world are children;
Through them it feels the glow
Of a brighter and sunnier climate
Than reaches the trunks below.

Come to me, O ye children!
And whisper in my ear
What the birds and the winds are
singing
In your sunny atmosphere.

For what are all our contrivings,
And the wisdom of our books,
When compared with your
caresses,
And the gladness of your looks?

Ye are better than all the ballads
That ever were sung or said;
For ye are living poems,
And all the rest are dead.

H. W. Longfellow

Homeschooling Forum

We would like to thank those parents and teenagers who took the time to respond to our forum questions.

Parents: what are the rewards, successes, and problems, associated with homeschooling teenagers.

Teenagers: Is homeschooling preparing you for life as an adult? What are your goals? What skills are you acquiring?

How does homeschooling prepare you for real life?

Mick Fanning:

Homeschooling is obviously inadequate preparation for real life.

Ben Fanning:

Yep, needs more sex and violence.

Mick Fanning:

Less work

Ben Fanning:

That's right. More grog. More - more - more (Elisabeth comes in) And they are disobedient. More smacking.

Sarah Fanning:

Very good. Now tell me your impressions.

Mick Fanning:

Well, not bad. Well it doesn't prepare you really. You aren't exposed to the pressures of the world to a great enough extent (Nicely put, eh?). It is better than school in some ways because you are able to work up in your stronger subjects, so you don't feel you are struggling. It means you don't have to work to a set time limit. It is harder to make friends, because you don't meet as many people. But I think the friends you make are better friends. I think it has a better effect on your family life, because you see more of everybody in your family. I wouldn't want to go to school, because mostly the people I have met from schools I wouldn't want as friends.

Ben Fanning:

It's too late to think. I don't know. I found it good enough.

Mary Rose Fanning:

I don't know. I've never tried real life.

Brigid Vieira:

Yes, I reckon homeschooling is a great preparation for adult life. Since some of our parents have taken us out of school because it weakens one's faith to be taught in the schools system, it teaches us the most important thing in our lives - which is not, believe it or not, socialisation (that dreaded S word that all homeschoolers are always asked about). When we "grow up and leave home" it may be a challenge to keep our Catholic faith and our parents' concern about our faith in our school years will help us to "keep the light burning". Go home-schooling!!!

Elise Smith:

Yes. Because in school there are many distractions which could possibly turn you away from your spiritual life and badly influence you. If from a young age you are encouraged in your spiritual life you will be more likely to be strong against the evils of this world as an adult. My goal is to get to Heaven with everyone else I can take with me.

Gemma Smith:

Yes. When you're homeschooled you're not exposed to as many evils. And if you've got a particularly hard subject and you need special attention, you get it! School work is made interesting so I think I learn a lot more than I would in a school. And you get to know like-minded people who I hope will have a good influence on my life. My goal is the same as Elise's and with homeschooling I get a lot of help to achieve that goal.

Gerard Smith:

Yes. I know what I'm taught is the right teachings that will lead me on the right path. I don't believe I would get that at school as well as I do at home. I get a lot of work experience because I do a lot of different jobs around the property. While I work I say my hourly prayers and I get to concentrate better on them. My goal is the same as the others.

Rachel Gillespie and Hannah Anderson:

We recognise our responsibilities in our families more. We feel relied upon. We need to have a mature attitude.

We have more respect for our parents as they are our teachers.

We have acquired excellent, even supreme domestic skills.

In homeschooling we aren't exposed to peer pressure so we form our own tastes and opinions on matters.

We learn to work independently and be self-motivated.

Often in the schools the faith is uncool so to speak. Homeschooling is a refuge for your faith.

Being a homeschooler you can choose your own subjects more freely. You can direct your studies towards your future ambitions more so than if you were at school.

It is difficult socially in our case as we are in a rural area. We don't see our friends as often as we would like, but we mix with all age groups. When I escape from home I am going to be a real social butterfly! Well that's not really true. I think I am going to find it difficult to cope with the social environments that I find if I go to university or the work place.

Homeschooling can be a stressful environment for study as there is a lot of noise and toddlers running everywhere. It makes you less distractible from what you are concentrating on doing. Alternatively, it can turn you into an insane monster.

When I am a parent would I homeschool?

If there were no schools around that are any good I would homeschool. But I wouldn't want it to be as crazy as it sometimes gets. I would need some sort of support so I could teach without too much stress and isolation. I would need someone else to help me.

Homeschooling Teenagers

Cheradee Gillespie:

I still have to pinch myself that I am the mother of a teenager. The idea of having a teenager in the household is supposed to be like wrestling a fire-breathing dragon...well I don't know... there may be an occasional puff of smoke now and then, but nothing as dramatic as predicted....Hey let's make this very clear - I'm not disappointed about that. So how do I deal with teenagers?

Well a few years roll by and you blink your eyes and hey what happened??? They have just turned into adults!! It is that quick and I think that is the key. If they are behaving like children, I treat them like children, if they are behaving like adults - i.e. in a responsible selfless manner - I treat them with the respect and dignity of adults.

I think it is important to place yourself in the shoes of the teenager and view things from their perspective. A little extra effort to show kindness and respect goes a long way. Sometimes I forget and I need to apologise. I don't know about you guys out there, but if it wasn't for the loving efforts of my older children I don't know how I could have survived some of my pregnancies and newborn infant stages. So to my mind, the child has earned their stripes as they are often doing the work that most adults in our society today have shunned. They deserve our admiration, respect and praise - of course they still need discipline and guidance - but it is important not to be too miserly with the praise.

I also think that it is important to be aware of your child's dreams and hopes and to try to accommodate them, even if it is just sending up a prayer for them. For prayer can make the impossible dream possible. Having some goals to aspire to helps motivation regarding the same old boring schoolwork, music practise and other challenges. Having spiritual goals help too - when I achieve this I am empowered to help others, or I grow in the virtues etc. Actually the spiritual goals ought to be the primary focus.

I talk with my kids about my own dreams and how God has chosen to answer them in often a different way to what I expected. A part of my dream realised is that they are now here with me, an incredibly wonderful part of my life. I also let them know about my failures and what I have learned and how I would like them to learn from me so they don't make the same mistakes. This nearly always leads to the fact that God has provided a safe refuge for us in the teachings of the Church. The gift of their faith is so precious. They must nurture it and guard it jealously. If they cling to it it will bring them safely through the difficulties of life.

Whether we like it or not the time comes where it is necessary to mix with society and come in contact with worldly values. We try to keep a buffer between the world and our home. The family rosary and sacramental prayer life is as necessary as our meals. Sometimes music and the television are on but only at select times. The constant noise is irritating and the kids need to be able to hear silence and nature to be able to hear God and their own thoughts. The world is always telling us what to think.

The worldly value system is the most dangerous in many ways. Physical beauty is valued so highly as is intelligence,

wealth and power. It is a difficult time as fresh adolescent beauty can often become the basis of what each teenager (girls in particular) values themselves. This beauty or the perceived lack of becomes the focal point of their thoughts, they are then focused on themselves, their vanity. Then comes irritability and haughtiness and attention seeking behaviour.

I think it is important that kids feel valued and good about themselves, that they are loved for who they are. I tell my son or daughter if they are cute or smart or funny etc. Then I tell them that these qualities are gifts from God, to praise Him for them, but they are transient. They are nothing in comparison to the gifts He has planned for them in the future, for when He raises our flesh to be like His glorified body we shall have an incomparable beauty and intelligence. True happiness comes when we offer all He has given us to serve Him - we let ourselves be consumed as Jesus allowed Himself to be consumed for our salvation. They can be full of joy for what God has given them but they want to offer it back to Him and serve Him. The focus is away from themselves towards God and neighbour.

The kids are aware that their family is "different" to mainstream society but are still a part of it. Not everything is **BAD** but there are definitely some pitfalls to avoid. Individuals make up society and we can change things simply through our behaviour. What we do, what we don't do. Equipped with prayer and God's grace we go forth.

The friends they have helps or hinders them. What I have found is that homeschooled kids come from similar backgrounds where they are relied upon and so are responsible and mature. They relish the time with their peers but don't expect that time to go on ceaselessly. They return to their responsibilities of study and family life. It is very good socialisation really, as they don't waste their time in dissipation and gossip, but find comfort in friendship but then return to duty.

Well that is my 2 cents worth, straight off the top of my head - it isn't very scholastic or well researched but I have no time for that right now. I really like homeschooled teenagers. I was so impressed by their behaviour at the recent Fitzroy Falls camp. They quietly donate their talents in the kitchen, with music, with helping with younger children. They set a good example with their prayerfulness and their overall conduct. Yes like **ALL OF US** there is always room for improvement but my heart rejoices seeing how beautifully they are growing.

Sarah Fanning:

It's great. I love to have the children at home, to have them as people involved in our lives, to be able to talk things over with them, listen to their ideas and opinions, try to guide - and to pray for wisdom and discernment. I pray constantly to their guardian angels and patron saints, also to St. Joseph (always a patient source of consolation). It is fun and exciting to watch them learn and develop; frustrating sometimes too, but far more rewarding than anything else. The main thing I have learnt is that God **will** provide - always. It is just a matter of time and recognition.

Fitzroy Falls Retreat 2003

The week before the Fitzroy Falls Retreat 2003, the signs were not looking favourable as the Southern Highlands experienced rainfall of almost biblical proportions. It seemed that the usual advice to bring wet weather "clothing" might have needed to include scuba gear. Then as if divine intervention had been granted, Monday dawned and a highly improbable week of good weather commenced. This would prove to be a bonus to those families with many small "angels" that required plentiful changes to their wardrobe, with mothers given the rare opportunity to wash and dry at the Fitzroy Falls Retreat.

Helen and Michael Brearley despatched families to their allotted cabins with their usual military precision, and families from along the Eastern seaboard soon found themselves billeted in familiar surroundings. This did not apply to Helen and Michael, who made the supreme sacrifice of allocating themselves a cabin without a bathroom or seemingly any windows. Good on you, Brearleys!

It might have been assumed that with a record 180 campers that meal times would have resembled an English soccer riot. This proved not to be the case as Martin, owner of the Fitzroy Falls site, and his team, kept everyone moving along and happy with hearty fare. Martin never missed an opportunity to remind campers to tell "your friends about Fitzroy Falls."

The atmosphere of prayerfulness during daily Mass and Benediction was made all the more tangible, with so many like-minded souls in such a confined chapel. Thanks must be given to Chris Brearley and Mick Fanning for organising the altar boys that assisted Father Columba during the week.

Monday night had been scheduled as the occasion for the "Camp Volleyball Tournament" and indeed many teenagers were seen preparing strenuously for this mighty event by slouching vigorously in various directions during the day. Sadly the tournament, which was expected to make State of Origin look tame, lasted barely 20 minutes, when someone turned the floodlights off. Volleyball is not a game that transposes well into

playing blind.

Tuesday is renowned for being "Concert Night" and 2003 will be remembered as a golden year in which a rich vein of talent was discovered. Indeed, it would appear that a theatrical family dynasty had been discovered with the Brown family displaying a formidable depth of entertainment skills. Phil Murphy must be applauded for organising such a



fun night for all.

I'm told that everyone that got involved, appreciated the organised sporting events on Wednesday, however I must admit that the Elvis family went "missing in action"! We were partaking in sport Elvis-style, by celebrating with a birthday lunch. One might suspect that with the selection of sporting events on offer: abseiling, highropes, bushwalking, future retreats could be sponsored by the Army. A glaring omission, though, from this year's camp was the annual "all-in" soccer match, which failed to eventuate. Age may finally be catching up with Mr Fanning!

Several families were lulled into a false sense of security by the claim that Fitzroy Falls Camp possesses a "heated swimming pool". Judging by the number of small children and a couple of brave mothers being hauled from the pool, with a strange tinge of blue to their skin, it would appear that the pool *is* heated, but only to just above freezing point.

During the camp, it became evident that, despite the plentiful availability of food and drink from the camp caterers, a rival outlet had established itself- Café Marquis. Business was booming if judged by the long line of campers, clergy and speakers observed making their way to Café Marquis during the week.

Adoration was one of the highlights of the week, with many campers taking

the opportunity to spend time with our Lord and to focus on their spirituality.

Our heartfelt thanks must be conveyed to Helen and Michael Brearley for the program of interesting, erudite and thought-provoking speakers that visited the retreat during the week. Praise should also be given to Sr. Maur, Sr. Bede and Dr Sarah for their commitment to all the children.

Fitzroy Falls retreat revolves around its chaplain and this year was no exception. Father Columba really set the spirit for the whole retreat with his limitless energy, enthusiasm and reverence. Father Columba's bagpipe playing inspired and delighted many campers, especially the children.

As with all Fitzroy Falls retreats, the full schedule of activities and talks meant that the final night rolled around all too soon. The Wingello- Tarlo Bush Band played valiantly as Mr Bob Smith attempted to make order out of chaos, by teaching innumerable children with two left feet how to bush dance. Those children not learning the art of syncopated movement were kept occupied by trying to de-forest the camp bush and build a raging inferno on which to either toast marshmallows or incinerate each other.

After a final Mass on Friday morning, it was time to pack up and return home. We all took away with us, many happy memories and abundant graces. This year we took away something extra: Many families are at this moment, isolated, suffering the effects of chicken pox! We certainly shared a lot this year!

PS: If you missed out on this year's retreat or can't wait until next year to return to Fitzroy Falls, join us again in September. See the Notice page.



Ante-Homeschooling Tips

Toddler teachers Part 1: Faith and Music

As teachers, my husband Anthony, and I are just toddlers. Even though we both have some teaching background, the whole world of home education is very new to us, as we only have two children so far - Mary Jacinta (2 years, 2 months old) and Thomas Joseph (10 months). Yet, like all parents starting out, we are experimenting, exploring and learning every day about educating our children. Most homeschoolers with large families we know have years of experience behind them. We thought we'd share with you what it is like to start out small.

One of the catch-cries of modern schooling is "educating the whole person" - something no school I have ever worked in was able to do. Holistic education can only be successful in the home because only at home is the child truly known and loved. Only in the home can the teacher hand-pick her curriculum to suit the needs, tastes and talents of her students. The best that schools can do is try to imitate the premium learning environment: a loving home.

First steps in faith

With this in mind, Anthony and I have started to home-school our littlies. Firstly, in their faith education, Daddy has taken the lead in trying to make prayer a natural part of the day. Mary is able to pray a simple morning offering, invocation of our patron saints and the Guardian Angel prayer. Sometimes these are said while trying to stand on her head or being distracted by a toy, but what can you do? She often leads the three Hail Mary's as we head off in the car. We also try to say the Angelus and grace before meals and some little aspirations in the church.

As I'm still breastfeeding Tom, Holy Mass with Mary can be a challenge, but we are persevering and she is learning many of the prayers. Her favourite is "Blessed be God forever" said with great gusto.

Having holy images around the house and little religious books also helps them to learn the faith. I realised this one day a few years ago when I had some girlfriends over for tea and chocolate cake. I was surprised to walk into our bedroom and find my statue of Our Lady covered with chocolate. One of the little boys had been taught beautifully by his Mum always to give a kiss to Our Lady!

One thing which has started to work during Mass is whispering to the children about what Father is doing on the sanctuary, though Mary sometimes is a little too vocal in her assent of faith when she calls out "Father's got the Body and Blood" during the consecration. The promised lighting of a candle at the end of Mass also helps. If Mary is really having a bad day I take her for a "saints tour" around the church and we discuss the names of the saints, what they look like and ask them to pray for us. Mary usually sits in on my catechism class after Sunday Mass and she certainly overhears lots of discussions about the faith around the home.

We celebrate the children's baptism days (and our own) by inviting their grandparents and godparents over for a little family party. On the table we have a picture from the baptism day and their baptism candle is lit. At other times we keep these symbols near our family altar as a constant reminder of our most important "birthday".

To mark the Church seasons, Anthony and I decorate the home in the spirit of the season. In Advent there is a lovely wreath placed in a central part of the home and each night we light the candles for our rosary. As Christmas gets closer, the stable is gradually assembled with the lonely ox there for the last days of Advent. Then Joseph and Mary, the Angels and the shepherds appear on Christmas Eve. A very exciting job to do before Midnight Mass! The Christmas Tree and other decorations are put up that night too. Of course, the Baby Jesus has to be put in His manger after

Midnight Mass if anyone is still awake.

During the Christmas Season, the three Kings and their camel make a journey around the house, turning up in the strangest places, on their way to the stable. It is a challenge to find a new spot for them each night after the children are asleep. Then in the morning Mary has to find where the Kings are today - once they even ended up in the fridge! Finally, on Epiphany Day, they arrive at the stable.

In Lent we cover our statues during Holy Week with violet cloths and try to mark the solemnity of the week in other ways. I got some of these ideas from reading the books of Maria Von Trapp: *The Trapp Family Singers*, *Around the Year with the Family Von Trapp* and *Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow*. They give wonderful examples of how to create a truly Catholic home with enjoyable traditional practices. Baroness Von Trapp, even back in the fifties, knew she had to create Catholic culture in her home to try to counteract the loss of Catholic traditions in the world outside. I highly recommend her books, if you can get them.

Starting out with music

In the car Mary often calls out "Gospel songs please Daddy!" which refers to a musical biblical tape which we were given. She loves it and is learning some of the bible events, although it is very American Evangelical in parts. For Music Education, Anthony and I are acutely aware of how bad modern music can be. Even music made specifically for children tends to be closely linked to TV shows or seems to be a marketing tool for toys or children's fashions. Although groups like "The Wiggles" are a lot of fun and have some nice songs, I found that when I was a school teacher, for most children this was the only kind of music they liked. They would only enjoy a song with a 4/4 beat, electric guitar, drums and sung in a "hyped up" style. This was their only musical diet and

Ante - Homeschooling Tips

seemed to be perfect preparation for a teenage diet of "pop music" with all that goes with it.

We want our children to have a broad experience of music and for them to develop a taste for finer music of all kinds. They can't love what they don't know, so we are gradually building up our classical CDs (a good present for birthdays and anniversaries) and I try to play one for the children each day. At the moment, just hearing the music during playtime is enough.

Folk music is another type which is very neglected these days. Folk music is the "people's music" (German root word - volk), so it should be the kind of music the children are most familiar with. At the moment we are playing for Mary and Thomas some American folk songs, French, Spanish, Chilean and English folk songs, and reading them lots of nursery rhymes. They have been a great success because they have a lovely melody, a variety of time signatures, different arrangements e.g. some "a capella" songs (no instruments), varied themes and styles. Some are ballads, some are sung in rounds which is great preparation for singing in parts. They are catchy and easy to learn. I particularly love our French CDs for one reason - the quality of the singing. The style is not "over the top"; the adults and children actually sing simply and sweetly, something so rare today.

There are big gaps in our musical collection. On my wish-list is a copy of Prokofiev's *Peter and the Wolf*, and Britten's *Orchestra for Children*. Perhaps we could swap good music with other families. We'd love some good recordings of Australian songs and perhaps some Italian and German children's songs. It's fun to build up our music bit by bit and see the children's enjoyment and understanding grow. From time to time we catch Mary pottering

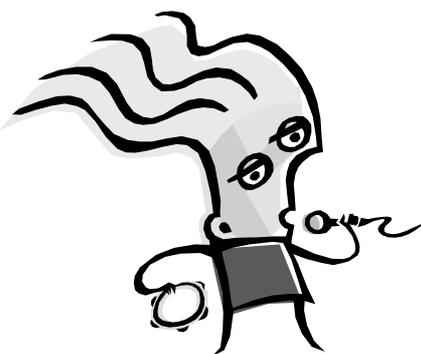
around and singing a few phrases she has heard. She doesn't understand the words and the tune is, well, almost there, but the love of music is in her heart and that's the best beginning.

Joy and affection are very important parts of our family. Many people are suspicious of homeschooling because they think it is an attempt to turn the home into a prison. The secret to homeschooling, of course, is to turn the family home into a paradise of love and wisdom so that the whole family can take that spirit with them when they leave.

To be continued. Next issue we will talk about Mary and Thomas' adventures in early language, as well as how to teach a toddler to cook the family dinner.

* That's a-n-t-e, from the Latin prefix meaning before or preceding, not a-n-t-i which means against, and is of Greek origin.

Lisa English



The Haircut

Dad says, "First victim". I try and creep silently away. "Ahem", says Dad, "First victim". I turn to flee but am caught and frogmarched to the operating chair. I gulp and say, "Reporting in, Sargeant Slaughter". "Sit here", Dad says as the blades begin to whirl. "Eek, ouch, aargh, my golden locks!" I scream. After ages of torture I get down barely alive. I heave a sigh of relief. It's over for a while. I have survived. "Next", says Dad.

Callum Elvis



Moving Into the Forbidden Room!

Last November I turned eight and I was promoted. Being promoted means that I am now one of the big kids instead of being one of the little girls.

Being promoted also means that I get more responsibility and have more privileges. I have more jobs to do like doing the dinner dishes by myself. Each year I get to do more and more jobs and it makes me feel more grown up. This year's privilege was staying up an hour later and I felt really, really happy because now I have a lot more reading time.

Recently I moved bedroom and now I sleep with my elder sister Felicity. The beds in our room are blue bunk beds and I have the bottom bunk. I like sleeping with Felicity because I feel more much safer when I hear her breathing at night in the dark.

Felicity is a considerate room mate and I try not to annoy her so we get on well. Felicity's room used to be the Forbidden Room, but now it is **OUR Room!**

Imogen Elvis

Some Thoughts on the Nature of Suffering

A few years ago, I used to say, "I'm ready to do Your Will, Lord but please don't send me any suffering". Perhaps this wasn't much of an offering, however, I think my fear of suffering is common to many people. Suffering is painful and pain is against our human nature.

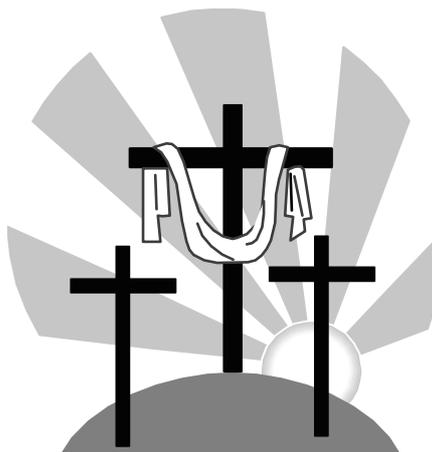
I have found out that when we try to push fears to the back of our minds, God arranges matters so that we have to face whatever we feel we can't deal with. And this was the case four years ago when for the first time in my life I was plunged into a sea of suffering like nothing I'd ever experienced before. One day I was in full control of my life, the next, my world was in pieces and I was choked with the feeling that I wouldn't survive. We had found out that our unborn baby was unlikely to live after birth. It was a very frightening, distressing feeling and I was full of panic as I looked ahead to what should have been a happy event in our lives.

The next five months were a mixture of calmness as I tried to place my trust in God and despair as I contemplated holding our dead child in my arms. How could a mother be expected to survive the death of her own child? I prayed so much during those months asking God for a miracle of healing for our child.

Well, Thomas was born and it was soon obvious that God had not healed him. There are not enough words to describe our pain and suffering. We watched Thomas being wheeled away to intensive care, seconds after his birth and our first look at him came hours later: a tiny body hooked up to a life support machine. Thomas lived 28 hours and that time seemed like months. We arrived back home 48 hours after setting off for the hospital and it was inconceivable that we had been away for such a short time. Our lives had been changed forever and it was difficult to come home and pick up the threads of every day life. Over the following months I learnt a lot about suffering. I asked God why He had let this happen. And gradually over the weeks with much

reflection, the answers came. It didn't take long to accept God's Will. But once I was able to say, "I accept Your ways are the right ways", I expected the pain to lift. But it didn't. In the end I learnt to say, "If you want me to feel like this, Lord, it's alright". I put one foot in front of the other and tried to continue with my duties even though my life felt entirely devoid of joy. And one day I realised the worst had passed. I woke up one morning and the huge physical ache of grief was not as painful. I knew then that I would survive.

Suffering is a very personal state. No matter how much a person tries to imagine what a suffering person is experiencing, they will really have no idea. After Thomas died, it was



like our family had passed through a door and no one else could follow us. Only those who'd suffered like us could be admitted. We are very fortunate in the fact that we had so many friends who accompanied us right up to the door.

It is 3 ½ years since Thomas died. There is still pain and it will never go away but at the same time our lives still go on. I can truly say that I believe that God's plan for my life is better than the one that I'd had marked out for myself. With suffering, God gives many gifts. I thought our children would be detrimentally affected by the death of a sibling. But I was mistaken. I didn't know their strength and they have learnt so many valuable lessons that many of us spend a life time learning.

Very frequently, I hear someone describing someone's suffering as "tragic" or "terrible" and I want to protest. Certainly suffering is painful and sorrowful but it is never terrible. God has allowed it to happen and would He allow anything to happen to us that wasn't for our good? To say that a suffering is terrible is to criticise God's plan, to say we know better than Him. I can almost feel another suffering person's pain and I want to help, but deep down I know that God has everything in hand. He loves each of us so much, and from my own experience, I want to shout out how good God is and how He will transform sorrow into joy. What we need to do though, is to pray fervently for each other and support one another during times of pain.

I used to wonder why God chose me for such an experience. Now I thank Him for it. He has given me gifts that He could not have given me in any other way. My whole view of life has changed, I see God in everything around me now, and in every event that occurs, and most importantly, I'm not afraid to totally place my life in God's hands. Yes, sometimes I forget the valuable lessons I've learnt and I'm tempted to take back the reins when it looks like the pathway ahead may be getting a bit rocky. But I think back to how God rescued me from that deep pit of despair and I know that God will help me through anything that might occur along my pathway to heaven.

Sometimes when our lives are comfortable, we stop thinking as much about God. Suffering is a great gift because it keeps you tied to God. You know you will never survive without God and barely a thought does not contain God in it. It was only after Thomas died, that I realised that for the first time in my life, I had something worthy of offering back to God. It is very difficult to give up a child to God and even though I didn't have a choice, I was able to give Him the offering of my acceptance and trust in His ways. Someone once said that it would be more difficult to lose a

Some Thoughts on the Nature of Suffering

child we'd had for longer. I don't know about that. I've never experienced that and I can never go through that door of suffering without that loss. However, I do think we should be prepared to give God whatever He asks of us, *everything*, however dear to us, otherwise how can we say that we love God more than anything? I am also certain that if God asks a lot of us, He will also be there every step of the way supporting us. So really there is no reason ever to worry about what could happen in our lives.

Everyone suffers in his lifetime. If he doesn't he should begin to worry. We should want to repair for at least some of the sin we commit on earth while we have the chance! However, not everyone suffers in the same way. Sometimes I feel sorry for myself and I compare my suffering to someone's suffering that, in my eyes, doesn't appear to be so big. God always puts me back on track by letting me hear of someone who is in much more pain than I ever was. Sometimes appearances can be deceptive. A very saintly friend of mine never lets anyone know when she is suffering. She says she confides in God and keeps up a cheerful face for everyone around her. I once heard that everyone prefers the cross that God has sent to him personally and wouldn't change it for someone else's. This is certainly true with me.

However much we are suffering, there is always something to thank God for. I thank God that our baby was baptised, that we had such dedicated doctors looking after him and who gave us a precious 28 hours with him. I thank God, Thomas died a natural death and not one resulting from the evil in our society and of course, I am thankful for a saint in heaven. And I am thankful for all those graces God has showered down upon our family. I prayed for a miracle and it wasn't until months after Thomas' death that I realised that God had granted me a miracle. It wasn't in

the form of a physical healing for our son, instead it was a miracle of grace. I had thought that we would never survive the death of our child but we did. It was a miracle!

Suffering also teaches us a lot about the true extent of our love for God. It is a continual fight to love God more than oneself. Someone told me that because saints enjoy suffering, they no longer suffer. I don't think it is suffering they love but God Himself and their pain is no less than ours, but is suffered more patiently and acceptingly, out of their great love for God. By suffering willingly, we put ourselves in the great company of the saints and God uses our pains for the salvation of the world.

So many people seem to be suffering in our circles. It is so easy to be overwhelmed with a sense of despair. It is difficult to see the ones we love in pain. Let us remember how much God loves each and every one of us and let us not leave God's mercy out of the picture. It is so important to pray, support, love and encourage one another but let us never despair. God rewards the suffering with unimaginable gifts. If these gifts are not immediately obvious here on earth, they will be shining clearly in heaven.

Sue Elvis

A Fight of the New and Old

The two rams snort
One old, one bought
Back away for single combat
Not disturbed by a passing wombat.

Stomping and snorting
Then rising and roaring
and ramming and slamming
and bolting and halting
and cracking and stacking
and banging and hanging
and clashing and bashing
and prancing and dancing
and crashing and smashing

Then slowing and blowing
The raging and ageing
Balking and stalking
are retreating and defeating.

Alexandra Dawson



Prayer of Resignation in Suffering

Merciful Lord of life, I lift up my heart to You in my suffering and ask for Your comforting help. I know that You would withhold the thorns of this life if I could attain eternal life without them. So I throw myself on Your mercy, resigning myself to this suffering. Grant me the grace to bear it and to offer it in union with Your sufferings. No matter what suffering may come my way, let me trust in You.

Amen

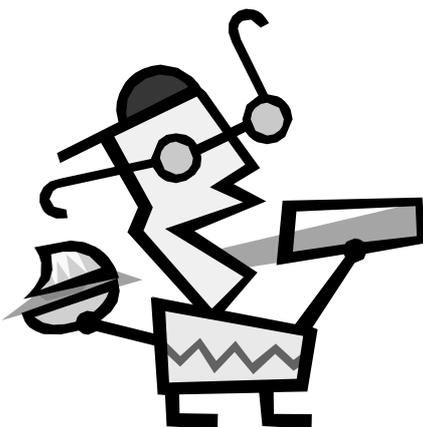
My Life as a Homeschooling Teenager

I am sixteen and the eldest of seven children. I am a Catholic homeschooler, and I've been so all my life. I live in Mittagong, a small rural township in the Southern Highlands of New South Wales. I've lived there for about seven years. I enjoy my life and my home. But obviously, living as a homeschooled teenager in a small town a long drive away from any big towns or cities has a few drawbacks. Thankfully, I don't feel them often. My parents make sure that I never feel lonely or wanting for anything and I've found that there are always things for me to do and friends for me to make, wherever I live.

I have never been to school, and I never want to go. But I do want to go to university. A lot of (non-homeschooling) people don't believe that I can get into university without going to school first. They usually look at me and say "But what about your HSC?" Well, I don't feel that I either need or want to do an HSC. I could do an HSC at home if I needed to. But I'm not going to. If I wanted to learn from a school curriculum, I would ask to be sent to school. And I don't need to do an HSC to get into university. There are other ways to get accepted, besides the HSC. Possibly I will try doing some Open Learning units, to prove that I am at a university standard. I am confident that I can and will get into university, if God wills it. It's not impossible. It has been done before by other homeschoolers.

One of the things I really, really like doing is music. I want to study music and the arts, and my music teachers have been really supportive of this. They know that I'm homeschooled and not doing an HSC and are being really great, helping me to get to the standard that I need to go to a university, and encouraging me. I play the clarinet and piano, and I do exams on both those instruments. It's a bit harder to learn music at home than at school, but my parents go to great lengths to make sure that I get every chance to learn and perform. They make sure that I am taken to play at my concert band performances, and get to practice each week. They pay and take me to a clarinet workshop held at the Sydney Conservatorium of Music every year. I'm also the organist for the 8:00 Sunday Mass down at St.

Michael's Church, Mittagong. I've been playing now for a few months, and I enjoy it. I've been teaching myself how to play from old sheets of music that I used to have for singing. I'm gradually getting the hang of it, although the congregation at St. Michael's has had to sit through some funny performances! They've all been very nice about it though, and I am getting better. Mum and Dad have just bought me an organ to practice on so



that I can practice at home everyday.

My faith is a very important part of my life. I am very thankful to the good work of my parents that it is so. We go to morning mass most days of the week, and we pray the Rosary and the Angelus together. Homeschooling has made sure that I have many very good, orthodox, Catholic friends who support me in my faith. I find it hard to believe that I would ever get such support and friendship in a school. I try as much as possible to grow in and learn about my faith, through reading, joining in at Mass, going to retreats and listening to talks about the faith. I am also trying to help the faith of others now, by helping as a catechist in Hilltop's public primary school, (Hilltop is an even smaller village than Mittagong, about twenty minutes drive away). I've done bits and pieces of helping with catechism before, and I've enjoyed it. There is a shortage of catechists in my parish, and I thought that I could help. I'm also using the helping as good experience for later on (I suppose you could dub it "work experience!"). Well, who knows, I may end up a teacher in a school and then this experience could come in very useful!

Most of my friends live a long way

away from me. One lives about three hours away! Obviously, it's impossible for me to organise an impromptu shopping trip with my best friend. I'd have to organise for my friend to come over first! But I do see my friends and we probably spend more quality time together when we do get to see each other than if all my friends lived around the corner. And because all our families are so large, anytime we have a get-together, we usually end up with quite a big group of teenaged boys and girls! They are usually people I've known for a while and we have lots of fun together. Mum also lets me invite friends over during the holidays. I go to camps, weekends and retreats with my friends as well, where I can spend longer periods of time with them.

I also have other friends besides teenagers of my own age. I try to make friends with a lot of people. I am friends with a group of older girls at church. They go to morning mass like my family and we usually talk afterwards. I also belong to a concert band. Quite a lot of people belong to it (but never enough), mostly older, retired people, but also music teachers, and other younger adults, and a smattering of younger players. I'm probably the youngest person there, but I get on well with all of them and enjoy my time with them. (It also gives me a chance to go out in the evening once a week and play music).

I don't do a great deal of sport. I'm not a very sporty type of person, really, and I'd rather play the clarinet than go for a walk. If I had to do lots of sport, I'd prefer team sport to solitary sports. But I can't really do that. But I do swim. All my family swims and we all go to the pool together. We used to get lessons at a swimming school near to us. All of us have gone to it or are going to it, from me to my smallest sister, Sophie, and we all are fairly good swimmers. The interesting thing about our swimming is that while we're all fairly competent in every stroke (backstroke, breaststroke, butterfly and freestyle) some of us are much better in some strokes than others. I am a butterfly and backstroke swimmer. My next sibling down, Duncan, is amazing at breaststroke. Callum, the next, is good at freestyle, while Imogen, the eldest of my sisters, is very good at backstroke.

My Life as a Homeschooling Teenager

I don't have a regular job. But I do want to earn money and I have found ways of getting it without a regular part-time job. I have cleaned houses for pocket money. First I used to clean our house, and later I cleaned for an older lady who was unwell and needed help keeping her house in order. Now I do something that is possibly more productive, and definitely more enjoyable for me. I busk on the main street of Bowral, playing my clarinet. This is quite fun (a bit like an extended practice) and it earns money. My sister Imogen and I did busking over the three days before Christmas. We played and sang for perhaps an hour each day and got about a hundred dollars each day. We split it between all our other brothers and sisters as well, otherwise we would have ended up with a very big amount of money each!

I think that most homeschooling kids learn about the value of money quite soon in their lives, and become good at finding bargains. I'm no exception. I like shopping –but in unusual places. I like to hunt around in second-hand stores, looking for good, but cheap stuff. It's more fun than going to a new shop, there's more variety in the things being sold (well, no two items are ever the same!), and I feel a lot less guilty about spending money or getting Mum to spend money! For me, there's a bit of a hidden thrill –the thrill of finding some perfect item of clothing for about one tenth of its cost new.

Other good things about my life include lots of my own time. If I organise my day well enough, I can usually end up with some free afternoon and a whole free evening to myself to cook, read, write letters and watch the television. I don't usually go out during this time (no transport, no interesting places to go to) but I just rest and pursue my interests at home. I have lots of interests. I like reading (especially Tolkien), sewing, listening to and playing music and cooking. I especially like cooking biscuits, cakes, puddings and other sweet things for some reason. I don't know why, because I can cook other things just as well!

So, those are some of the things that I do and enjoy. I manage to earn money, see friends, play with a band

and do sports, all while living in a rural area and being unconnected to a school. I am also learning lots of unusual and unique lessons in a way I think I would never be able to do in a school. God gives me the opportunity

No More Excuses

There used to be one subject that I tried to avoid thinking about. But every now and then it would force its way to the surface of my mind and demand attention. I'd be forced to think about exercise! Deep down, I knew I'd have to get into shape. It was no use making excuses. And it is so easy to find excuses, isn't it? The thought of all that hard work isn't attractive at all.

Well, earlier this year, the guilt finally got to me and I decided I had to do something about getting fit.

The search for the perfect exercise program was on! I visited the library and grabbed armfuls of exercise books off the shelf as I flew down the aisles in hot pursuit of my toddler. Then back in the comfort of home, I began to study the books I'd borrowed. Some were obviously not suitable and were quickly returned but eventually I found one book entitled *Pilates- The Way Forward*.



Reading the opening chapter, I realised how much we mis-use our bodies: we sit hunched over a steering wheel or a computer for hours, we load ourselves down with heavy bags of shopping, there is usually a small child permanently attached to the hip of every standing mother and then at the end of the day

we all slouch down wearily in an easy chair before curling ourselves around a sleeping baby in bed. The result of all this mis-use is an imbalance in our muscles: stressed muscles, weak muscles, tight muscles or stretched muscles, muscles which are being forced to do jobs they were never designed to do. This imbalance leads to bad posture and pain in areas like our backs and necks. The Pilates Method of exercise states that it will "rebalance the body, altering the way in which you recruit muscles to produce movement" and will change "the way you use your body, restoring natural, normal movement."

These sounded like excellent reasons for putting the Pilates Method into action. The thought of my body gradually losing its ability to keep up with the demands of life through my mis-use of it, was enough to stop me procrastinating and I actually pulled on a pair of track pants to try out some of the exercises. And what a surprise I had! The exercises weren't difficult. I didn't end up all sweaty and red faced vowing never to do such a stupid thing again. No, I actually enjoyed the session: some quiet time for myself relaxing into the exercises to the accompaniment of some soothing music: a real stress reliever. Concentrating in order to gain control over the various muscles has been satisfying, the benefits have been visible and many weeks later I am just as enthusiastic as I was at the start. Isn't that amazing: an exercise program which I look forward to doing!

So if you want to get your body back into shape, to strengthen it so that it will cope with all the demands of an active life as a parent, then Pilates is for you. Don't make any excuses about time. All you need is 20 minutes a day. Exercise isn't a luxury, an optional extra. We need to be in as good shape for our last child as we were for our first.

If you want to know more about Pilates (my more knowledgeable sister tells me that it is pronounced Pill-ar-tees), look up the Pilates website or visit a library or bookshop. I can recommend *The Official Body Control Pilates Manual* or *Pilates- The Way Forward* both by Lynne Robinson and Gordon Thomson. They are available from *Angus and Robertson's* for around \$35. Happy exercising!!

Sue Elvis

The Blistering Path to Santiago

In the early twelfth century A.D, a French monk documented his walk from Paris down to the Spanish border and then across Spain to the tomb of St. James, the Apostle. The pilgrimage was already an ancient one, but the Codex Calixtinus written by the Frenchman gave new impetus to the *Camino de Santiago de Compostela*, the Pilgrimage of St. James of Compostela.

The pilgrimage (*Camino* in Spanish means walk or journey) was often given as a penance for great sinners, and a plenary indulgence was then, and still is, granted to those who complete the journey in a spirit of faith. During the invasion of the Moors, who occupied Spain for eight centuries, Christians who walked the Camino took different paths to avoid danger. In the Middle Ages the pilgrimage became extremely popular. St. Francis of Assisi walked from his home town north of Rome up through what is now Italy, across France and then the final leg across Spain. After paying homage to the Apostle he turned around and walked back to Assisi.

In recent years the Camino has enjoyed a renewed popularity. Surprisingly, most of those who undertake it are not from countries known for their strong faith today - Holland, Sweden, Germany, France, Spain. For some it is an alternative thing to do, perhaps a safe and fashionable adventure, motivated by the love of walking or a little time alone, away from a world which despises silence and genuine reflection. There are plenty who walk the pilgrimage in a truly Catholic spirit of penance and prayer, and even those who don't more often than not find that they have the beginnings of faith or a rekindling of it if in their lives they have put God in the corner. It is truly inspiring to see genuinely poor pilgrims make the pilgrimage with little more than the shirt on their back. God provides, as He always does, through the charity of others. Pilgrims carry a pole with them (small p), and sometimes wear a traditional pilgrim's *concha* (shell), the centuries-old symbol of the Santiago pilgrim.

Where do you stay?

This is one of the most common questions asked of peregrinos (Spanish for pilgrims). There are many

little halls, huts (*refugios*) and places along the way, most of which have basic facilities such as beds, showers and toilets. You buy and cook backpacker style food, unless you are French. Some of the *refugios* are more elaborate, some have a fixed charge of \$15 per night, but others ask pilgrims to leave a voluntary donation. If the feast of St. James (Santiago in Spanish), July 25, falls on a Sunday then it is a holy year and it seems half of Spain is on the pilgrimage. The problem then isn't where you stay but whether you make the day's journey (usually between 15 and 25 km) in time to arrive to reserve some floor space for your sleeping bag, or maybe a bed for the lucky few. For those who begin from one of the three French legs of the journey, which can make the whole pilgrimage around 1500 km, there are well equipped French hostels called *gites*, perhaps \$20 per night, and you find this is well worth the expense as you pass through the nippy Pyrenees mountains, a stone's throw from Lourdes.

How do you know the way?

In some parts of the Camino, associations called Amigos of the Camino maintain the trails and mark out with arrows the direction to the tomb of St. James, even though it may be some 700 km away. Look out for the arrows on fence posts, walls, telegraph poles or cows. As the pilgrim route became the foundation of many towns and cities across the north of Spain, a recent copy of a guide to the Camino can help you through the bigger cities, as well as point out Cathedrals and tourist attractions along the way. There is plenty of walking through farmland and a little through mountain trails. The season for walking is between April and September, apart from the one crazy pilgrim each week who braves the snow in the northern Spanish winter in the middle of December or January.

The hand of providence

I have known some pilgrims who will walk through vineyards or orchards and eat of the fruit thereof, justifying their actions with the words "I'm in my Father's garden." All pilgrims find that in the difficulties of blisters and tendonitis, getting lost or sharing a room with a snoring specialist, you somehow see the Camino as a

metaphor for life. The joys and the sorrows are great, but you get there in the end by co-operating with God and making good use of what He provides. Most pilgrims make the Spanish leg of the journey in between 25 and 31 days, at about 20 km a day, and it is almost all leisurely bushwalking terrain or along roads or footpaths.

After completing the month-long route from the French border to Santiago, I headed by bus to the north of Spain to do the much shorter but more difficult mountainous walk from the north coast. This route was taken by the English who travelled there by boat to avoid the Moors, and then walked the 300 km to Santiago. I met three young Spaniards along the way and we travelled together. One rainy evening we arrived, exhausted, in a town only to find that the pilgrims' refuge was closed as it wasn't a Holy Year, and there were too few pilgrims to justify keeping it open. It was raining and two of the pilgrims insisted that they were going to share a hotel room for \$25 a night each. We left them at the hotel and the two of us, who prided ourselves on being "real pilgrims", decided to sleep on the street in this Spanish village. I was hungry and dirty and as it started to rain again I was losing my enthusiasm for this brave plan but my fellow pilgrim asked me "you're not a capitalist, are you?" I replied that I'd like to be but that I couldn't afford it. "What if the police come?" I asked him. "*Bienvenidos!* They'd be very welcome! They may have better accommodation for us."

Like real pilgrims

As we headed for a bleak night in an unknown shelter, I had a quiet whinge to my guardian angel, saying "This isn't good enough!" Within one minute one of our hotel-dwelling pilgrims came running over to us to explain that the manager of the hotel asked where the other two pilgrims were, just as our Lord asked about the other nine lepers who had been healed. When he heard that we were sleeping out "like real pilgrims" he offered us a free room for the night, muddy and hungry though we were. He made us a delicious dinner and arranged free breakfast for us and we left our mud as an unsolicited souvenir.

If the Camino is done in a spirit of faith, perseverance and, to some extent, penance, it is an enormous

The Blistering Path to Santiago

boost to the spiritual life, and far more uplifting than a mere trip to the Antarctic or climbing of Mount Everest. (Parents leave the sweets up high so the children don't touch them, and I expect that's what God did in making big mountains). The triumph of the Camino is arriving in Santiago, praying at the tomb of the Apostle whose apostolic travels ended when he was shipwrecked off the coast of Spain. You receive certificate in Latin to certify you've made the pilgrimage and you can pray at Mass in the Cathedral as millions of pilgrims, not a few saints and Popes among them, have done before you. The Camino de Santiago is a life in a month. It is a great model for living our earthly pilgrimage to Heaven where we will see the face of God, if we are faithful to the path He maps out for us and the graces He provides along the way.

Where is that in the Bible?

One of the most common objections that non-Catholic Christians have to the Catholic Church is that we don't believe in *Sola Scriptura*. *Sola Scriptura* is Latin for "Scripture Alone". There are many definitions of what *Sola Scriptura* means in practice, but as a general guide, it means that the Bible, and the Bible alone, is the sole rule of faith and morals for Christians - there is no room for Apostolic Tradition or Church infallibility. As many Protestant apologists I have debated put it: "If it ain't in the Bible, I ain't believing it!"

Naturally, Catholics have very good reasons for not believing in *Sola Scriptura*. One of the most striking reasons for rejecting *Sola Scriptura* is that it is a self-defeating position. *Sola Scriptura* is not taught in the Bible. This is a fatal flaw in the Protestant doctrine of *Sola Scriptura*. If for faith and morals we are only meant to believe what is contained in the Bible, then we should be able to find *Sola Scriptura* itself taught in the Bible. If we don't find it there, then *Sola Scriptura* is unbiblical and ought to be rejected.

One very formidable Protestant apologist has put forward the following reply to the Catholic claim that *Sola*

Scriptura is unbiblical: he claims that the doctrine is indeed biblical and is taught in St. Paul's second letter to Timothy.

Here is the text of 2 Tim 3:16-17:

"All scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work." (RSV)

The (abbreviated) Protestant argument runs something like this:

1. The Greek word for "inspired by God" is more literally translated "God breathed." Only Scripture is described as "God breathed" and so it has a quality above all other sources.
2. The passage makes the man of God "complete, equipped for every good work," so if we are complete and equipped for every good work, nothing else is needed for us apart from the Bible.

This interpretation has a number of problems and critical omissions. When we examine the passage in more depth, we see that it in fact teaches the exact opposite of what the Protestant apologist claims.

Does "all Scripture is profitable" mean "only Scripture is"?

Let's go through the passage in some detail, allowing it to speak for itself, and discover what it is saying.

1. *All scripture is God breathed.* Note that the passage does not say, "Only scripture is God breathed." We know from other passages of Scripture that Oral Apostolic Tradition is placed on the same level as Scripture. 2 Thessalonians 2:15 is perhaps one of the clearer passages showing this to be the case: *"So then, brethren, stand firm and hold to the traditions which you were taught by us, either by word of mouth or by letter."* (RSV)
2. *Scripture is profitable for teaching.* Some Protestant apologists ignore this phrase; others claim that profitable means the same thing as sufficient. The same Greek word *ophelimos* which is translated as profitable occurs, in plural form *ophelima*, in Titus 3:8, referring not to Scripture but to good works:

"The saying is sure. I desire you to insist on these things, so that those who have believed in God may be careful to apply them selves to good deeds; these are excellent and profitable to men." (RSV)

Here the word "profitable" is used in the sense that it is saying good works are profitable, in other words helpful, in many ways. But no Christian, Catholic or Protestant, would ever make the claim that good works are "sufficient" for men without falling into all sorts of heresies. Good works are not sufficient, since we need faith, and above all grace.

So the word "profitable" cannot mean sufficient. Hence, 2 Timothy 3:16 is not saying that the Bible is *sufficient* to teach, reprove, correct and train in righteousness, but that it is *profitable* for it.

3. *That the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.* There is an end in sight to having the man of God taught, reproved, corrected and trained. He is to be complete (or perfect in some translations), and capable of doing all good that is required of him. Now it is reasonable to assume that God is not teasing us when He calls us to perfection. If God makes this demand of us, then He certainly makes the demand achievable by His grace. This is critical. If we deny this then we don't worship a God of love, but a despotic deceiver.

What are we left with? We are left seeing that Scripture is profitable (i.e.. beneficial) but not sufficient (all we need), to make us able to fulfil God's call to us to be perfect. God's call is achievable and therefore something apart from Scripture is required. Hence this passage is telling us that Scripture, whilst being a significant in the arsenal of a Christian, is by no means his only tool if he is to win the battle. This truth directly rebuts *Sola Scriptura*.

When someone asks me questions like "Where is that in the Bible?" before I give an answer that includes Scripture's witness I ask them, "It has to be in the Bible, does it? Where is that in the Bible?"

David Obeid

The Man of Steel and Velvet and His Fascinating Woman

At the last homeschooler's gathering at Penrose Park Monastery, Antoinette Stevens introduced the book *Fascinating Womanhood* by Helen Andelin to us. After a brief browse that day, I obtained a copy via Angus and Robertson. I then organised a second copy as well as the book written for the husband called *Man of Steel and Velvet* by Dr Aubrey Andelin.

Both books are very good and I recommend all husbands and wives to read them. The books are complementary, with *Fascinating Womanhood* written by a woman for all women, and *Man of Steel and Velvet* written by a man for all men. As such, they have two different styles, covering the same topic from two different angles.

The underlying premise of both books is that women should begin to behave like women and stop doing the man's job, and the man should stop being a "sissy" and be the man he is supposed to be. In a world gone mad, hell bent on redefining the roles of men and women, these books are a refreshing reminder that this is not God's plan. God's plan was for men and women to be equal with different roles.

Man of Steel and Velvet

The man is the head of the household, and as such should accept that role and perform it to the best of his ability. Dr Aubrey Andelin describes the ideal man as having two different areas of qualities – The Steel and the Velvet.

The "Steel" qualities are:

1. Guide, protector, provider.
2. Builder of society
3. Masculinity
4. Character
5. Confidence
6. Health

The "Velvet" qualities are:

1. Understands women
2. Gentleness
3. Attentiveness
4. Youthfulness
5. Humility
6. Refinement.

When a man has both Steel and Velvet qualities, it brings peace, happiness and fulfilment.

The book proceeds to elaborate on each of these points in a straight forward manner. The overall style is to the point and in summary is telling men to do their job as God intended them to do.

Fascinating Womanhood

This book is far more dynamite than the *Man of Steel and Velvet*. Whilst men and women will tend to agree that men should do the job they are meant to, *Fascinating Womanhood* makes the same claim for women. Completely opposite to modern feminist teachings in all forms of media bombarding us daily, *Fascinating Womanhood* is a refreshing and possibly life changing read. Helen Andelin also presents her vision of the ideal woman having two classes of qualities which she calls the Angelic and the Human qualities.

The "Angelic" qualities are:

1. Understands men
2. Has inner happiness
3. Has a worthy character
4. Is a domestic goddess

The "Human" qualities are:

1. Is feminine
2. Radiates happiness
3. Has radiant health
4. Is childlike

Knowing that her message is so contrary to modern beliefs, Helen Andelin goes into depth on each of these areas with lots of examples from literature and personal anecdotes that readers of her books have sent to her. Over 2 million copies of *Fascinating Womanhood* have been printed and the latest update was in 1992.

Probably one of the more controversial ideas is to tell women not to try to change their husbands. There are many reasons for this ranging from the scriptural "take the beam from your eye before you take the speck out of his", to the practical "Nagging just doesn't work." Her advice is truly Christian – repent and

change your ways before you try and change your husband. If the woman truly starts to fulfil her role in the marriage, the husband will realise he has to fulfil his.

Helen Andelin encourages her readers to overlook their husband's faults. Not to accept the faults as being OK, but to sort their own lives and actions out first, and then many of their faults may not seem so bad. She claims that the husbands will change their relationships with their wives when the wives first change their actions. Women should not wait for the husbands to change – no one wins by such stubborn behaviour.

Dr Aubrey Andelin basically says similar things from the husband's point of view. The husband should begin acting like a man and doing his job so the woman can have confidence in him and can begin doing her job more fully, too. After all, it is a team effort. However, Helen Andelin points out that it is more effective for the woman to change her ways first. This is most likely because by changing her ways, the woman obviously is refuting all the tenets of feminism and allows the husband to do his job.

This pair of books should be read and the principles applied. The Andelins talk from years of experience. They have eight children and over 52 grandchildren. Just from the average number of grandchildren per child their love of family must have been imparted to their children.

You can find out more from their website:

www.fascinatingwomanhood.net.

David Bruggeman

Conscience - Our Moral Eyesight

In our physical life pain serves a purpose. In our moral life, the pain of a guilty conscience also has its role by showing us where our love is failing. What is conscience?

The Catechism says: "Conscience is a judgement of reason by which the human person recognises the moral quality of a concrete act" (no. 1796). First of all, conscience is a judgement of reason. It is not a mere feeling or even some outside "voice" ready to trap us with surprise accusations. Conscience is a reasonable judgement about our moral actions, in the here and now. Everything we do with knowledge and freedom is a moral action. It may be a perfectly good act such as praying. It may be a bad act, such as stealing.

Conscience judges about what we have done, or are intending to do, and whether it is objectively good or bad. Its role is not only to acknowledge the truth when we have done what is objectively wrong but also to confirm the truth when we have done what is objectively right. You can't accuse someone of being judgmental without being guilty of the same offence yourself. Anyway, if we can't make judgements, we can't think at all, about anything. It is true that we can't judge people's motives but we can always judge actions and conscience is the judgement of our own moral acts.

"Following your conscience" is not an excuse for doing whatever you want. Note that conscience is a judgement that *recognises* the moral quality of an action: whether it is right or wrong. The conscience does not *invent* the rules: it judges whether we have followed them.

Freedom of conscience

The Vatican Council says, "Conscience is man's most secret core and his sanctuary. There he is alone with God whose voice echoes within his depths" (Gaudium et Spes, 16). We must always follow our conscience and respect others' freedom to follow theirs. Naturally,

our conscience must be properly formed by prayer, reading the Gospels, living a fruitful sacramental life, obedience to the Church and mixing in good company. The closer you are to God the more you will see His truth and strive to live by it. When important decisions are to be made it is also wise to get advice from competent people.

A couple of moral rules will always apply. Never do evil that good may come of it. I can't kill an innocent person, even to save fifty others. And the golden rule of charity is: do unto others as you would have them do unto you.

A right conscience is important so that we don't fall into one of two distortions: laxity or scrupulosity. People who are lax fail to see their genuine sins. They grow insensitive to the fact that we are made in God's image and likeness. They can do great harm to themselves and those around them, ignoring the pain they cause.

Scruples

An opposite danger is being scrupulous. This happens when a person invents sins where there are none, or harshly exaggerates some sins, even while dismissing other more serious ones. This is often a sign of a lack of trust in God's mercy, but it can be caused by a harsh and unjust environment or even by physiological factors such as lack of sleep or proper food. Scrupulous people do not see their own actions clearly, so they require guidance from someone wise and close to God.

Which is better – to be too lax or too scrupulous? Actually, both are distortions. What we should aim at is a right conscience, one which sees good and bad actions as God sees them.

A clear conscience is a great friend. It brings peace and joy, even when the right thing to do requires heroism. If we have done wrong it is also consoling to have our conscience remind us that our

actions weren't in accord with the moral law. In that way, the pain of knowing we have failed can teach us humility and lead us to repentance. It is also a warning for the future, reminding us of our total dependence on God's grace.

Conscience - our moral eyesight – gets better attuned as we grow in God's love, so that we become more conformed to what He wants us to be, neither lax nor scrupulous, but seeing our actions in the true light of God's law.

Anthony English

The Brearley Family

They greet you with a smile,
Make every camp worthwhile,
Organising priests and speakers,
And all the other features.

Bedding for our nuns,
And priests and other ones,
Holy pictures, albs and more,
Hymn books, altar, vases galore.

To help us in these days,
To learn about God and to pray,
To keep us moving on,
Toward God with prayer and song.

It's Helen and Michael Brearley,
They fit the bill so nearly,
And all their children too,
Who help them, yes they do.

So thank you from our heart,
You've taken the better part,
Self-effacing and humble people,
Not standing on a steeple.

Thank you for all you've done,
Your family's number one,
We love you dearly,
The family Brearley.

**From your fans who went to
Fitzroy Falls Camp 2003**

NOTICES

FITZROY FALLS II 2003!

Ever dreamed of a week without schooling without you actually having to do the teaching?

Ever felt there were things your children missed out on by homeschooling?

Well we have the camp for you.

From September 1st-5th this year, the Conventual Sisters of St. Dominic have offered to run a week's fun schooling at Fitzroy Falls. This will provide the opportunity for your children to do some of those things difficult to do in a homeschooling situation like drama, group singing, debating, science experiments, sport etc.... So come and bring your family to this wonderful camp.

We will have a chaplain for daily Mass, Benediction and Confessions.

Hurry this camp is already nearly full. Quickly please ring Sarah Fanning on (02) 4829 0377 or Michele Vieira on (02) 4829 0113 to book **NOW!**

Other Newsletters

The Newman Bookshop has its own newsletter, **Book News**, which it sends to those on its list of customers. There is also Father Tierney's personal newsletter, issued under the imprint of the Cardinal Newman Catechist Consultants, called **Catechetical News**.

These newsletters, like **Keeping In Touch**, are free, but depend upon donations.

Southern Highlands 3rd Sunday Meeting for Catholic Homeschooling Families

The third Sunday meetings are held in the grounds of the Pauline Fathers Monastery at Penrose Park. The program for the day is:

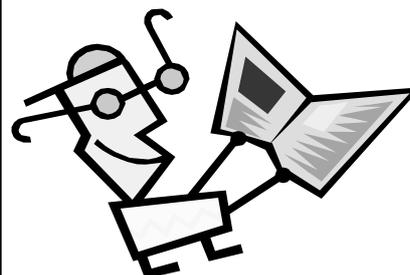
- 11.00 Mass (celebrated by Fr Columba) in the Shrine Church
- 12.00 Picnic lunch, games etc
- 2.00 Divine Mercy Devotions - Spiritual talk (Fr Columba) followed by Exposition, Chaplet of Divine Mercy, Benediction and concluding with veneration of a relic of Sr Faustina
- 3.00 Afternoon tea

Confessions will be available both before and after the 2.00 p.m. devotions
BYO lunch and afternoon tea etc - no BBQs available. If it is raining or the weather is unpleasant, we can use the large shed, which is behind the old monastery.

All welcome - You can ring the Brearleys (Ph 4884 4326) or Fr Columba (Ph 4878 9192) for further information. In particular, Fr Columba warmly invites the homeschooling families to support the 2.00 p.m. devotions.

Possible Youth Group

Fr Columba has suggested the idea of a youth group for Catholic Homeschoolers, which would meet on a Saturday afternoon, once a month, at the Pauline Fathers Monastery. Contact the Brearleys if you are interested.



Lost Property



There are numerous articles of clothing left over from the recent Fitzroy Falls retreat and anybody missing anything should contact the

Lucinda Mills NT



Lucinda Mills, please contact Michele Vieira on (02) 4829 0113 so that she can obtain your correct e-mail address for the articles on homeschooling.

THE END!