

A Journey to Home Schooling

By Jim Seghers

"Home Schooling? You must be joking?" That would have been the response Michelle and I would have expressed a few years ago at the prospect of home schooling. I would have categorized home schoolers with members of the Flat Earth Society! How is it, then, that we are now beginning our third year of home schooling? We are both resolute supporters of our Catholic school system. Therefore, our journey towards home schooling occurred through a gradual three stage process.

Our first step began with lengthy discussions about the moral formation of our children. It was said that a Marshall's baton was hidden in the knapsack of every private in Napoleon's army. Similarly, the potential for holiness is wrapped in the baptismal garment of every child. Michelle and I are both deeply committed to creating an environment that raises godly children. Living the gospel directive is everything. This is the message we wanted to impart to our children.

Our initial interest was sparked by articles in sailing magazines about cruising families. These articles gave glowing reports of children who completed their basic education while sailing the world's oceans. Subsequently, these young adults achieved splendidly at the country's finest universities.

Our final step began when our oldest two girls were ready for preschool. After a comprehensive appraisal of the preschools in our area, we enrolled the girls in an exclusive school run by Benedictine Sisters in Glendora, California - a suburb of Los Angeles. We were particularly impressed with the administrator, her dynamic dedicated teachers, and a pupil to teacher ratio of 8 to 1.

Almost immediately, however, we were disappointed with attitudes the children were bringing home. We observed that they were powerfully influenced by other children who acquired many of their basic values from television. Then, too, a significant number of these children came from borderline Catholic homes within which the values of a secular society prevailed. The school was thus entrusted with the impossible task of instilling values that were neither esteemed nor practiced in the home. We wanted to explore alternatives, but were not sure where to start.

I had recently overheard one of my salesmen speaking about home schooling, and asked Michelle to investigate. She was skeptical, but began an inquiry. About this same time a home schooling mother had a car break down in front of our home. This afforded us the opportunity to ask questions about resources, support groups and her experiences.

Three considerations made home schooling appealing. Fr. John Hardon speaks about the importance of teaching the mind in such a way as to motivate the will to do good. We began to see that home schooling provided a better environment to accomplish this objective. Secondly, we liked the holistic socialization that home schooling affords, which allows children to daily interact with people of all ages rather than with a narrow group of their peers. Finally, Michelle wanted to share our children's learning experiences.

After a year of prayer and exploration we decided to start on a trial basis. We thought that in kindergarten we couldn't do too much damage. Since our primary motivation was the moral formation of our children, we hoped that Audrey would stay academically at the same level with children in private schools. Standardized test scores have long since erased that concern. Academic excellence has been a bonus.

We use the Seton Home Schooling curriculum because we feel that educational professionals have much to offer. There are other solid curriculums available. Because home schooling is a tutorial, one-on-one method of instruction, mothers are natural teachers.

We are frequently asked: "How long do you intend to continue home schooling?" Michelle answers that question best: "As long as it continues to work!"

January 6, 1995