

2026 Conference

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HG Bishop Basil: You are Encouraged to Homeschool

“Education is the first need of the community after bread”
St Habib Girgis

The Encouragement of the Scriptures

- Deuteronomy 6:6-8
 - “And these words which I command you today shall be in your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up. You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.
 - Fr Louka Sidarous says about Fr Bishoy Kamel that he was living at a higher standard than what he was saying
 - Most of the time we teach at a higher standard than what we are living
 - Be an example to your children, because they are going to see you more and see more of you
- 2 Timothy 3:13-15
 - But you must continue in the things which you have learned and been assured of, knowing from whom you have learned *them*, and that from childhood you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus.
- 2 Timothy 1:3
 - “when I call to remembrance the genuine faith that is in you, which dwelt first in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice, and I am persuaded is in you also.”
 - Go and spend time with grandma, grandpa, aunt, uncle, etc. with the flexibility of homeschooling

The Encouragement of the Church

- Baptismal Commandment
 - “Sow in them beautiful qualities; righteousness, praise, purity, obedience, love, holiness, compassion, charity, justice, godliness, patience, goodness, honesty and every good work that pleases God so that **your souls and your children’s souls may live.**”
 - It is for our own souls that we sow these qualities in our children (as well as for their souls)
 - The way that we are teaching in Homeschooling is the way we sow these qualities
 - “You have received this gift according to the Law, and the priests of God and the Church have witnessed on you the... Teach them...” etc.

- Why didn't St Paul tell parents to love their children (Colossians 3)? Because that is natural! So he commands them not to provoke their children to wrath!

The Encouragement of the Saints

- In the evenings, the family would gather to read scripture and reflect on the lives of the saints and martyrs... the family lived from the feast of one saint to another” - Life of HHPK
- The lives of the saints and the martyrs in the Synaxarion
 - Teach them all holiness
 - Teach them how to defend their faith
 - Teach them to be strong in morals and principles
 - Pilgrimage to the saints in the local area on their feast days

The Encouragement of the Liturgical Life

- The ability to live more in the Liturgical Life
 - The Lectionary of the Church
 - Lectionary of the Great Fast is like a catechism for the whole Church
 - Goes through the Sermon on the Mount part by part
 - Being able to attend the Feasts that are during school days/school weeks
 - Theophany, Ascension, Minor Feasts, Pascha
- Praying from the Agpeya
 - Like a school that has a morning routine (pledge of allegiance, etc.)
 - A Homeschool family can purposefully start their day with the Agpeya
 - “O God you are my God, early I will seek you” (Psalm 62)
 - Fr Bishoy Kamel + Tasony Angele story
 - “Is that why you don't make me breakfast??”
 - Bells in the Monastery instruct the monks to do something (e.g. prayer)
 - The hustle and bussle of the home and all the sounds, are like the bells of the monastery

The Encouragement of the Natural Life

- The heavens declare the glory of God and the firmament declares His handiwork
- With the freedom of homeschool, go out and learn from nature - God's book; God's beauty
- Incorporate the Natural Life
 - Physical nature
 - Going out for a walk
 - Learning the names of the plants
 - Plant a vegetable; Eat the vegetable
- God created nature beautiful and organized and good, so that we can see His beauty and goodness
- Having meals together
 - Sacred time for a family
- Incorporate the subjects in the chores of the day

Andrew Pudewa Lecture #1: Cultivating Language Arts - Preschool through High School

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Introduction

- Language Arts: Listening, Speaking, Reading and Writing
 - Schools focus on Reading and Writing because it is assessable, and less so on Listening and Speaking
 - Listening → Speaking
 - A child's spoken vocabulary is entirely dependent on what they have heard
 - As they get older, they might read a word (sound it out), guess how to pronounce it and maybe infer its meaning
 - Listening → Reading
 - Children cannot read and understand words they haven't already heard
 - Speaking ↔ Reading
 - When children start reading, they have to verbalize (and then hear what they said) and that's how they learn
 - Speaking → Writing
 - To write something, you must first have an idea
 - Ideas can pre-exist as memories or imagination ("write about your trip"), or about the present physical reality ("write about this room")
 - Ideas can pre-exist in words ("write about the tower of Babel" - you learned this from words, not from senses), or in sensory impressions ("write about your dog" - you have to recall the memories or emotions or experiences)
 - You have to "speak" the idea into existence
 - Reading ↔ Writing
 - Read what you wrote and edit/proofread/modify
- To cultivate one of the four language arts, you actually need to improve all of them

Preschool

Age 3.5-5.5 +- 1 year

- Listening
 - Music
 - Tonal Sensitivity and Patterns

- Attentiveness (attentive to what I'm familiar with or what I expect e.g. in a piece I've heard several times)
- Joy (when what you expect to happen, happens - joy!)
- Stories and Reading Aloud
 - Repetition is the key
 - When a kid wants to keep reading the same book day after day
 - Each day they are understanding a little bit more from it
 - Affection for it and familiarity to it
 - Sparks of joy when they expect something to happen and it happens
 - One day they will stop getting something new out of it, they know it well enough, they will move on
- Conversations
 - Children will overhear conversations of the adults
 - Youngest child usually has the best vocabulary understanding because he grew up in a more language rich environment (with all his siblings and parents)
- Minimal Technology
 - **Visually** hyper-stimulating (so less attentive to the auditory)
 - 100% Negative
- Speaking
 - Teach them simple poems and songs (e.g. nursery rhymes)
 - Moving words from passive vocabulary (I've heard it, I know what it means) to active vocabulary (I say that word, I use it, I own it)
 - The Restoration of Christian Culture by John Senior - "You have to grow up on Mother Goose to fall in love with Willy Shakespeare"
 - Self-talk
 - Children, left to themselves, often talk to themselves
 - Imagine being in a place that says "sit down and don't talk" - you're saying "turn off your brain"
 - Imagination
 - Vocabulary and Memory → Imagination
- Reading
 - Pushing reading too early can actually have the opposite effect (resentment)
 - Zero correlation with academic success
 - Reading with ears
 - When their parent reads them a book
 - Overhearing higher level books
- Writing
 - Natural
 - Drawing
 - Holding utensil
 - Simple spelling

Primary

5.5 - 8 +- 1 year

- Listening
 - Music, stories, books
 - Increase attention span
 - They can listen for longer periods of time
 - They can even close their eyes while they listen
 - They can use books that have less pictures (i.e. not on every page) - this forces some imagining of the thing
 - Minimize technology
- Speaking
 - Poetry, Prayers, Scripture
 - Memorized verses and prayers
 - Narration (Charlotte Mason - read books about her)
 - Give the child an opportunity to tell back from their experience (e.g. to tell you the process you went through to make the cookies, let them narrate back the story they heard - move words into active vocabulary)
 - Dictating Stories
- Reading
 - Phonics for decoding
 - Sounding out words
 - Use a program you like because you will teach it better
 - Increase sophistication
 - Literature via audiobooks
- Writing
 - Letter formation
 - The right way to write each letter
 - Simple Copywork
 - Builds stamina
 - High level ideas flowing through brain and to paper
 - Spelling (verbal & written)
 - Don't stop doing verbal spelling (and mental math)

Elementary

8-11 +/- 1 year

- Listening
 - Same as Primary
- Speaking
 - Continue narration
 - Memorize and Recite Poetry
 - Drama
 - Contests
- Reading
 - Continue audiobooks
 - Create abundant opportunities for reading
 - Read aloud to your parents or siblings

- Writing
 - Basic composition
 - Spelling program
 - Grammar, Latin

Middle School

- Listening
- Speaking
- Reading
- Writing

High School

- Listening
- Speaking
- Reading
- Writing