

# The Complete Catholic Homeschool Planner

Review by Maria Rioux

*I did not think this planner could be improved upon much, but Cascia Books has definitely thought carefully about making their new planner even better. I love the way they meld the practical with the spiritual, something that helps me maintain proper perspective in an efficient manner. For example, after a basic introduction to the planner and how to use it, there's a page titled, "Principles to Remember". One of those principles is, "Focus on the present. Leave the past to God's mercy and the future to His providence." For God, everything is a present moment. We reflect that in a way: the past is lost to us, the future untouchable. The only thing that matters, the only thing we can participate in, is the present moment. That makes things more simple: all we have to do is be faithful this minute. I am not always faithful, but I'm not hopeless and neither are you.*

*In this planner there is that reminder, simply stated, with the hope that it will be lived out to the benefit of the individual and the family as a whole. That is one thread that weaves this planner together: lived faith coupled with practical helps. It's a thread we all could and should cling to.*

*There's an additional section titled, "Family Helps", and I can easily see how this would be truly helpful. I generally scribble on little pieces of paper that get lost which causes me to miss things that I really did not want to miss. For example, there is a book I learned about not too long ago, I wrote the title down, and now I can't find it. Had I chosen to write down this title in the books I hope to purchase section of this planner, how easy that would be?*

*Also, in the updated version, the sections for each student (there are 5) each have their own tabs, and each is graphically distinctive. Everything you need for each student is located in his own section: an individual page complete with room for a picture (which I find especially appealing) and ideas on assessing this child as a student (learning style, strengths, weaknesses, etc.); Year, term and weekly outlines, plans for field trips and other unusual activities, music lessons and outside classes, and daily grades, test grades, as well as planning for the coming year (because we all know the best ideas occur to us as we're trying to address those things which are difficult right when they are presenting a problem, not during the summer when we've forgotten about at least half of them.)*

*In the "For the Love of God" segment, there's a completely new section on developing the habits of virtue, which, really, is undoubtedly what our lives*

*ought to be ordered to. In fact, if I taught our children nothing but this, my job would be largely done and done well. If I use examples from history to make my point, and require that you write a properly punctuated paper with regularity, some of my academic responsibilities will be met as well. This section is both pithy and practical, something every busy mom will applaud.*

*This planner was put together by two long-time homeschooling moms with large families. And it shows. They have experience which you can benefit from.*

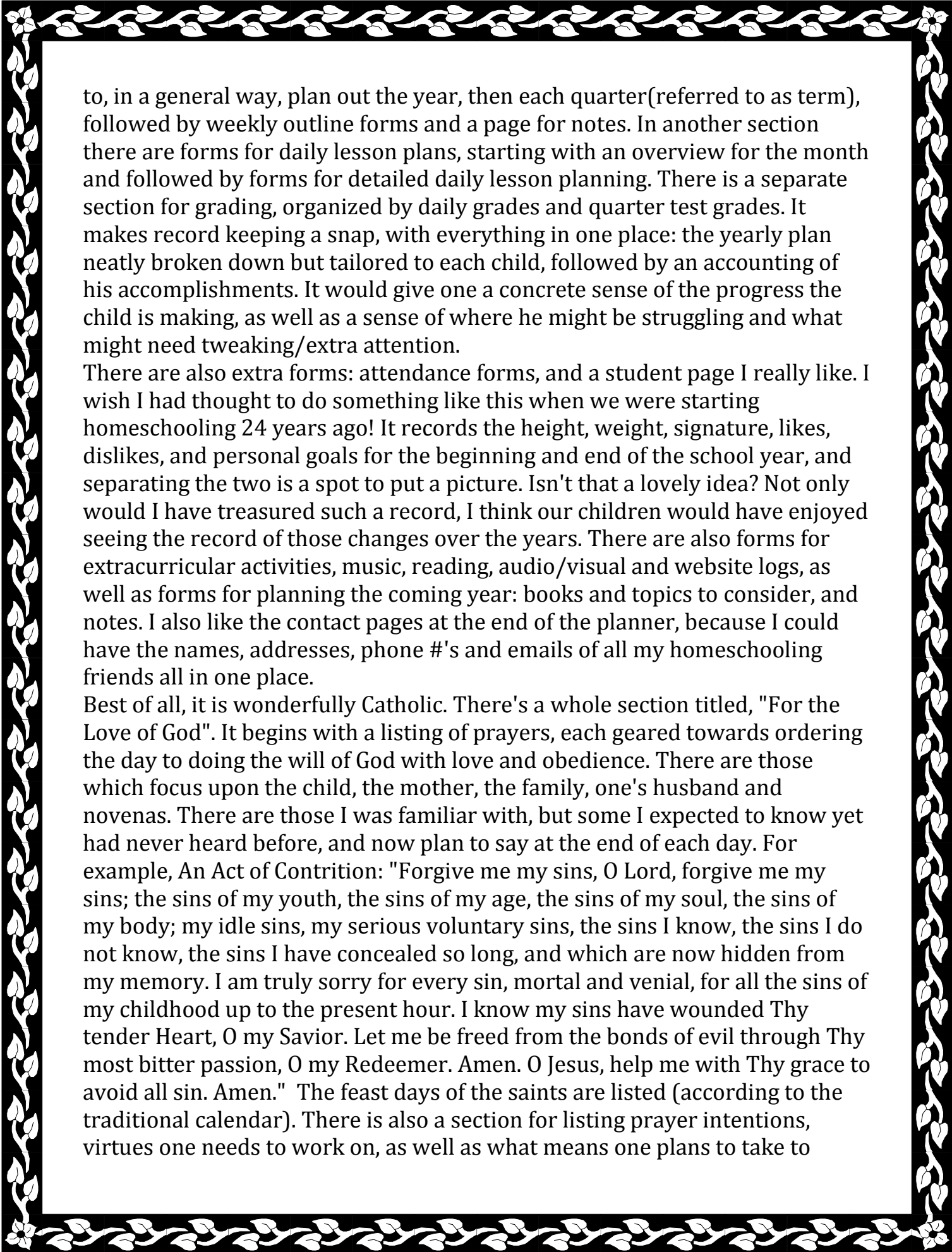
*I don't want to bore you with paper quality, etc., but I can hardly help it because it does matter and you will want to know. This is a durable planner that will stand up to the demands of your household. It is well-constructed and laid out, is easy on the eyes, and includes various helps throughout to help you grow closer to God as you grow closer to your children.*

*Lastly, everyone needs a plan. Winging it rarely produces good and desired results. Maps are truly helpful, necessary and good. So are planners, and this one will help you map your school year in a manner that will bear much fruit.*

Here's my initial review:

The Complete Catholic Homeschool Planner is just that: it organizes everything you need to plan the year, and then some. It opens with a school year calendar, for this year and for next, so one can easily determine what date one would like to start, when to schedule breaks, and when to close out the year. I really like the simple overview, with all the dates for the whole year on one page, both sides. One can then easily determine the number of school days per month, number for each quarter, and total number of days for the year. This, of course, is essential in planning out the syllabus for each child. I've never actually planned out our school year in this way as we always follow my husband's teaching schedule, which works best for us as some of our children attend the same college he teaches at. If he were not a professor with a built in teaching schedule, this simple way to concretely plan out the year, month by month, would give me peace while also keeping me honest at those times when I would be tempted to ditch the plan.

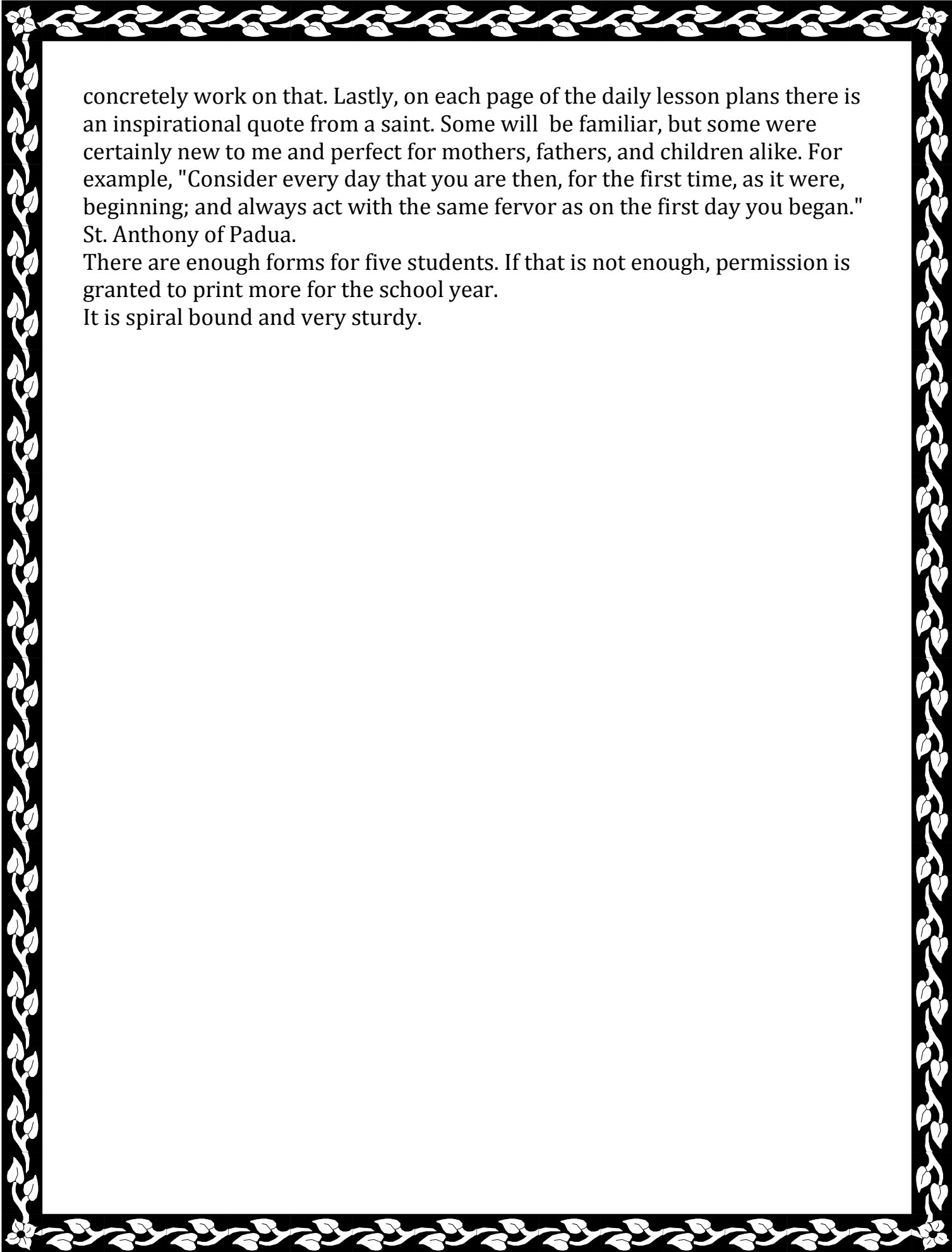
For each child there is an opening page to help you consider the best approach/how to tailor this year to his particular strengths and weaknesses. Like the year plan, it's a simple overview: learning style, strengths, weaknesses, goals, subject to over, programs/curricula of interest, books to use, and a place for additional notes all on one page. It's a great way to reflect on the individual child before drafting a plan for him. There is then a section

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to, in a general way, plan out the year, then each quarter (referred to as term), followed by weekly outline forms and a page for notes. In another section there are forms for daily lesson plans, starting with an overview for the month and followed by forms for detailed daily lesson planning. There is a separate section for grading, organized by daily grades and quarter test grades. It makes record keeping a snap, with everything in one place: the yearly plan neatly broken down but tailored to each child, followed by an accounting of his accomplishments. It would give one a concrete sense of the progress the child is making, as well as a sense of where he might be struggling and what might need tweaking/extra attention.

There are also extra forms: attendance forms, and a student page I really like. I wish I had thought to do something like this when we were starting homeschooling 24 years ago! It records the height, weight, signature, likes, dislikes, and personal goals for the beginning and end of the school year, and separating the two is a spot to put a picture. Isn't that a lovely idea? Not only would I have treasured such a record, I think our children would have enjoyed seeing the record of those changes over the years. There are also forms for extracurricular activities, music, reading, audio/visual and website logs, as well as forms for planning the coming year: books and topics to consider, and notes. I also like the contact pages at the end of the planner, because I could have the names, addresses, phone #'s and emails of all my homeschooling friends all in one place.

Best of all, it is wonderfully Catholic. There's a whole section titled, "For the Love of God". It begins with a listing of prayers, each geared towards ordering the day to doing the will of God with love and obedience. There are those which focus upon the child, the mother, the family, one's husband and novenas. There are those I was familiar with, but some I expected to know yet had never heard before, and now plan to say at the end of each day. For example, An Act of Contrition: "Forgive me my sins, O Lord, forgive me my sins; the sins of my youth, the sins of my age, the sins of my soul, the sins of my body; my idle sins, my serious voluntary sins, the sins I know, the sins I do not know, the sins I have concealed so long, and which are now hidden from my memory. I am truly sorry for every sin, mortal and venial, for all the sins of my childhood up to the present hour. I know my sins have wounded Thy tender Heart, O my Savior. Let me be freed from the bonds of evil through Thy most bitter passion, O my Redeemer. Amen. O Jesus, help me with Thy grace to avoid all sin. Amen." The feast days of the saints are listed (according to the traditional calendar). There is also a section for listing prayer intentions, virtues one needs to work on, as well as what means one plans to take to

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concretely work on that. Lastly, on each page of the daily lesson plans there is an inspirational quote from a saint. Some will be familiar, but some were certainly new to me and perfect for mothers, fathers, and children alike. For example, "Consider every day that you are then, for the first time, as it were, beginning; and always act with the same fervor as on the first day you began." St. Anthony of Padua.

There are enough forms for five students. If that is not enough, permission is granted to print more for the school year.

It is spiral bound and very sturdy.