JULY-AUGUST 2022

"Instaurare omnia in Christo"

The Angelus

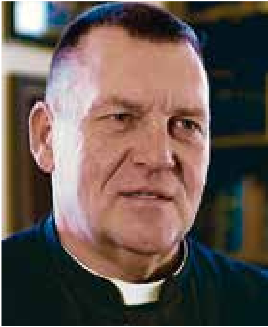
The Voice of Traditional Catholicism

Catholic Education

Dr. Matthew Childs: Grace Builds Upon Nature
Things Old and New by Robert Wyer
Patrick Murtha, The Loss of God in School
Educating for the Joy of God—Ann Marie Temple
Jonathan Wanner on the Lost Art of Poetic Knowledge

Letter from the Publisher

Dear Reader,



Fr. John Fullerton
District Superior of the United States of America

Nearly a century ago, in his encyclical *Divini Illius Magistri*, Pope Pius XI wrote: "In fact it must never be forgotten that the subject of Christian education is man whole and entire, soul united to body in unity of nature, with all his faculties natural and supernatural, such as right reason and revelation show him to be[.]" How far we have moved from this ideal in the contemporary world.

Education, which involves nothing less than the development of the intellect, the acquisition of knowledge, and the formation of character, has been reduced to a mundane means to an emaciated end. Cast in utilitarian terms, education today often means collecting the requisite pieces of paper from a secondary school, college and/or trade school, and perhaps a postgraduate program to secure a particular line of employment. Outside of historically religious educational institutions, little emphasis is placed on forging a three-dimensional person: mind, body, and spirit. All that matters is to check off a list of courses intended to make an individual a good cog in the machine, stripped of any higher purpose or the authentic freedom that only comes through adherence to God's law.

In this issue of *The Angelus* we present a number of articles that explore how education has been corrupted in our day. And so as to not present a purely gloomy picture of the state of education, you will also find in these pages examples of healthy Catholic education, the sort which the Society of Saint Pius X seeks to uphold in the face of tremendous pressure to do otherwise. The work of restoring authentic education, like the work of restoring Catholic Tradition, is a formidable task, but one which can be fulfilled through diligent effort and reliance on God's grace.

We must not despair. We must not retreat from the field. Understanding the corruption of modern education is the first step toward addressing these problems. It is my hope that the articles in this issue will assist readers in this noble undertaking.

Fr. John Fullerton
Publisher

ON OUR COVER: *The Country School*, 1871, by Winslow Homer (1836–1910).

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"To publish Catholic journals and place them in the hands of honest men is not enough. It is necessary to spread them as far as possible that they may be read by all, and especially by those whom Christian charity demands we should tear away from the poisonous sources of evil literature."
–Pope St. Pius X

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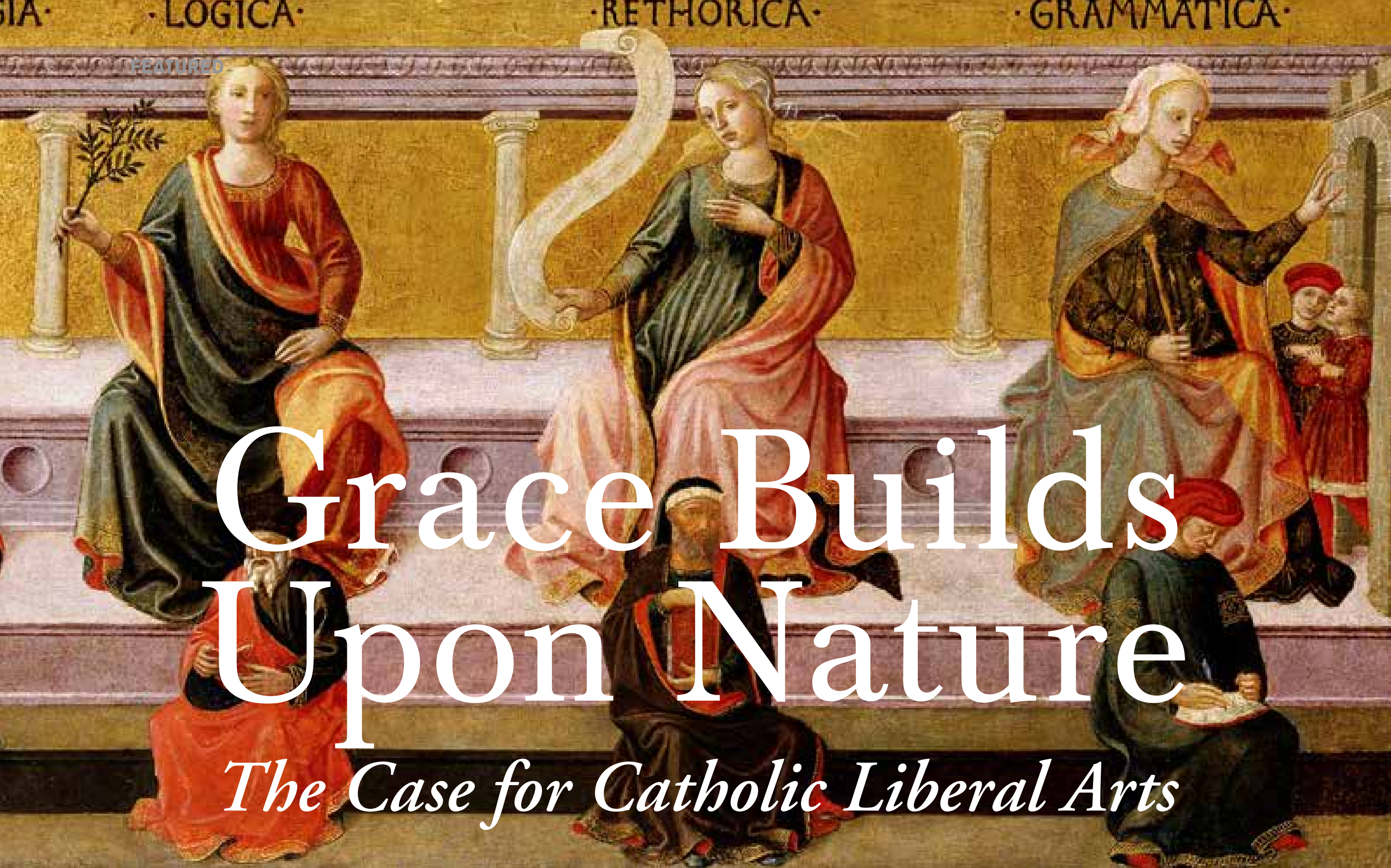


Grace Builds Upon Nature

The Case for Catholic Liberal Arts

Dr. Matthew Childs

> The sower went out to sow his seed. And as he sowed, some fell by the way side, and it was trodden down, and the fowls of the air devoured it. And other some fell upon a rock: and as soon as it was sprung up, it withered away, because it had no moisture. And other some fell among thorns, and the thorns growing up with it, choked it. And other some fell upon good ground; and being sprung up, yielded fruit a hundredfold. Saying these things, he cried out: He that hath ears to hear, let him hear. (Luke 8:5-8)

The principle that grace builds upon nature has perhaps become an axiom so familiar that we have lost the sense of its urgent implications for education. When we speak to new teachers about our profession, we often make reference to the parable of the sower and the seed because our essential job as teachers is to do what we can to prepare the soil of our students' intellects so they can fully receive the seed of truth and bear intellectual and spiritual fruit. This parable and Christ's own explanation of it vividly depict how grace builds upon nature. The seed, "the word of God," comes from the same source and has the same capacity for life no matter where it falls; the difference is in the ground, the receiver. The truth is always the truth, available for all, but only those who are properly nurtured and disposed to do so will fully receive and profit from it. The supernatural virtues are perfect, as the very life of God, but they cannot act without being received and they cannot flourish, as a soul matures, unless they are grounded in the natural virtues. In establishing the Church, *the* Word of God, *the* good Seed, instructed her leaders to teach and to sanctify; to educate or to lay the foundation of natural virtue and "give the increase" by administering the sacraments. This two-fold mandate, "the great commission," is confirmed by Pius XI in his 1929 encyclical on education *Divini Illius Magistri*: "education belongs pre-

eminently to the Church" (para. 15), and "not merely in regard to the religious instruction… but in regard to every other branch of learning and every regulation in so far as religion and morality are concerned" (para. 23)—which is *every* branch of learning, as even progressive educators prove by their own efforts to undermine the Church's prerogative and pervert every part of the educational process.

While formulating a plan for the expansion of St. Mary's College to a four-year program, I read the book *Catholic Higher Education in Protestant America: The Jesuits and Harvard in the Age of the University*, by Kathleen A. Mahoney, published in 2003. The "reformers" of higher education at the beginning of the twentieth century proceeded along the very same lines and presented many of the same arguments as the proponents for *aggiornamento*—to get with the times—within the Church several decades later. The revolutionaries were attempting to subvert the Church and academia—and thereby culture at large—early in the twentieth century. St. Pius X held them back in the Church, but they won the battle for the soul of education, paving the way for their eventual ascendancy in the Church and in the world in the latter part of the century. When Catholics chose modern education over traditional education, naturally the errors of modernism began to permeate the "soil" of their children's intellects. There are two major points emphasized in Mahoney's book: Protestantism is the motivating force behind the shift from traditional liberal arts colleges to elective and specializing universities, and the initial battle for education was lost not on principle, but because Catholics were drawn away from traditional colleges to the new, progressive universities. A closer look at the "Law School controversy" featured in the book can be read as a cautionary tale about abandoning the centuries-old tradition of Catholic liberal arts as well as a motivation to re-assess our attitudes toward the purpose and value of higher education.

The controversy, which began as a protest by Jesuit college administrators against discrimination in the admissions process of Harvard Law School, revealed the agenda of progressives there. Mahoney summarizes the importance of the battle between the university and the college approaches early in her book: "[c]ulminating in 1900, the Law School controversy proved a defining moment in American Catholic higher education… Americans had come to understand the era in which they lived as an age of modern progress, a powerful temporal construct making formidable claims on both Christianity and higher education. Being timely, modern, and up-to-date became cultural imperatives in many quarters and a driving force in the university movement" (13). The desire to get with the times is a normal human social inclination. What is more important for our understanding of the qualitative nature of the educational reform is the deeper motivation, the ideological driver, so it is critical to know that "during the academic revolution, religion helped reshape higher education, with liberal Protestantism playing patron to the modern, nonsectarian university" (8). In our times, educators shy away from religion—in its theological form, while pushing the new "religions" of the day, such as critical race theory and gender ideology—but those promoting the university of elective-specialist approach at the dawn of the twentieth century were very clear about the motivating ideology behind their "reforms." Mahoney notes that the educational reformers "understood their work as furthering… Christian goals by freeing higher education

Memorial Hall at Harvard University.

from the tyranny of tradition and the vestiges of its medieval (read Catholic and European) past that bedeviled the colleges and limited their effectiveness" (62). The essential conflict brought into relief by the "Law School controversy" is that between modernism and traditionalism, liberalism and conservatism, Protestantism and Catholicism. On the university side of the argument are all the characteristics that always accompany the revolution and about which the late nineteenth and early twentieth century popes repeatedly warned: the call for unbridled freedom, novelty, progressivism, subjectivism, autonomy, and the absolute need to get with the times, the *aggiornamento* of Vatican II and following. In his typically clear and concise way, Archbishop Lefebvre summarizes the entire thought process in a single word: liberalism, which, in its ultimate manifestation seeks the "adulterous union between the Church and the principles of the Revolution" (xvi-xvii), the confusion of and finally indifference to truth and error.

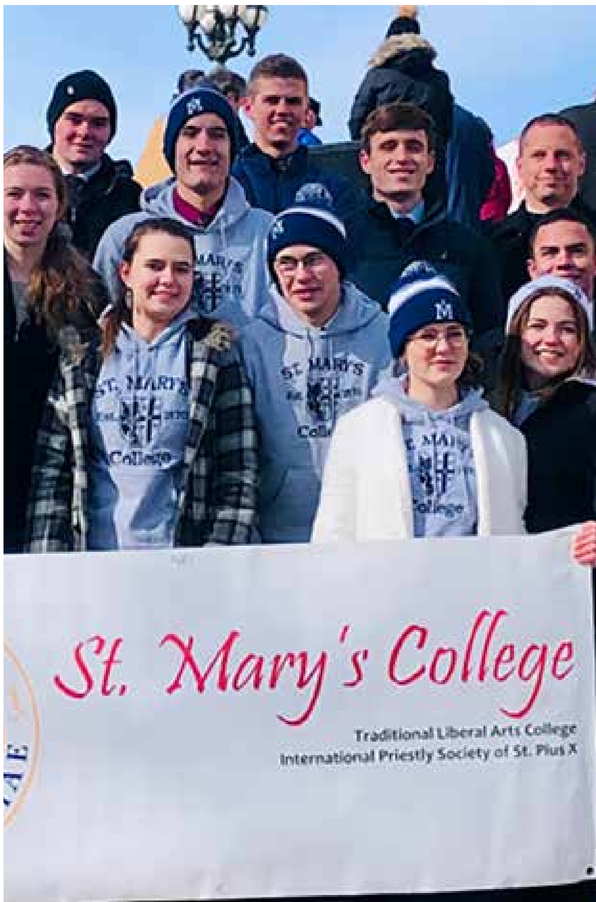
Mahoney describes the enthusiasm with which Americans welcomed the brave new world of progressive education:

> Reform and innovation swept through the academy; traditional forms of education associated with the collegiate tradition suddenly seemed out of date. Students flocked to the new universities with their professional schools, graduate programs, elective courses, looser discipline, and vital student life. At the 1893 International Congress of Education at the Chicago World's Fair, congress organizer Charles G. Bonney announced unequivocally that the "educational systems of the past have been outgrown" (12).

This should sound very familiar to anyone aware of the calls for updating the Church during Vatican II. Once the appetite for novelty had been whetted and all the old ways rejected as outmoded, it wasn't that hard to criticize Catholic liberal arts colleges since they were committing the ultimate sin of the time: "Modernity… created a new divide in an academic system already cleaved by the Reformation: the traditional and the modern… a potent critique of Jesuit education developed: that it was not modern. Jesuit education… was rooted in the past and thus irrelevant to the wants of the day in modern, Protestant America" (59). The underpinning of the movement was, unsurprisingly, "freedom," and liberation *from* a very specific source—the Catholic Church:

> Like their fellow Protestants, the leaders of the university movement defined Protestantism as the religion of liberty; this was nothing less than a bedrock conviction… Insofar as the Reformation had freed Christians from the tyranny of Rome, the university men argued that the new universities, as Protestant institutions, were to be infused with and shaped by a full measure of liberty not wholly realized in American colleges. "Above all," Eliot proclaimed in his inaugural [address as president of Harvard], a university "must be free. The winnowing breeze of freedom must blow through all its chambers." With nineteenth-century Americans increasingly convinced that they were living in modern times and headed toward a progressively better future, the winnowing breeze of freedom assumed a more pronounced temporal hue. Freedom in education meant emancipation from the deleterious constraints of an outmoded, irrelevant, past. (82-83)

As Mahoney notes, this "winnowing breeze of freedom blew through the curriculum, leaving the traditional, classical course in disarray and the elective system in place" (85). That elective system demonstrates most clearly the immanential, modernist bent of the university curricular model. Not only were schools freed from tradition, students themselves became their own guides. "While the scientific revolution helped create the curricular problem, Protestant-inspired liberty and the 'doctrine of individualism,' as Harper [president of the University of Chicago] put it, helped produce one solution: having students select their own courses" (85). Eliot was very explicit about the motivating principle behind the approach, confirming "[t]he elective system was . . . 'in the first place, an outcome of the Protestant reformation'" (86). The revolution always begins with the cry for freedom, the *non serviam* or refusal to submit to the constraints established by God and maintained by His Church and her educational dictates and institutions. In the end, the result is also predictable, since the revolution always devours its own. The modern university didn't stop at implementing the freedom of Protestantism, it ended up replacing religion altogether: "[w]hile Christians had historically argued for the importance of the schoolhouse and the



church, for the university men the schoolhouse became the church. The 'university has succeeded to the place once held by the cathedral as the best embodiment of the uplifting forces of the modern time,' claimed Columbia University President Nicholas Murray Butler" (62).

On the other side of the controversy were the Jesuits fighting for the rights and value of their colleges as institutions serving within the Church and passing down the wisdom, discerned and revealed, of the ages. As Mahoney puts it, "as the Law School controversy evolved into a public controversy the Jesuits found themselves on the defensive, forced to demonstrate that traditional forms of education were indeed relevant in modern America" (59). That defense is invaluable for us because those early twentieth-century Catholic educators left us arguments for the significance of a liberal arts education as the necessary basis for any further specialized study. Their arguments remain valid to this day, and we would do well to listen this time as we make decisions about where to send our children to school in an ever more fragmented and morally corrupt culture. The strongest, clearest sustained discussion of educational principles from the traditional or Catholic side of the argument came from Fr. Timothy Brosnahan in a response he wrote to the president of Harvard University, *President Eliot and the Jesuit Colleges*, which Mahoney includes in its entirety as an appendix to her book. Brosnahan very adeptly demonstrates the injustice of Harvard Law School's admissions policies, but more importantly explains why a liberal arts education is far preferable to the elective or "majors" system. Brosnahan argued that "abandon[ing] the doctrine of unity in education… might produce experts… but could not develop a man," (269) lowering the standard of education and the intrinsic value of a college degree by providing "one-sided formation [and] unfit men for University work" (267). This misguided approach to education is only exacerbated by the idea that the ones deciding what to specialize in are the students themselves. Fr. Brosnahan criticizes President Eliot's elective system strongly, saying that the Harvard president "banishes unity from college education and bows down before individuality" (265). He goes on to point out the absurdity of demanding a teenager who, as he says, "will work, like electricity, along the line of least resistance" (267) to "look out on the wide realm of learning, to him unknown and untrodden, and to elect his path" (265). One is led to ask "can the blind lead the blind" (Lk. 6:39) or "how shall they hear [or properly select or learn], without a preacher" (Rom. 10:14)? The university men's approach to education that leaves out the foundations of truth, ethics, *humanization* can't help but produce what Richard Weaver, echoing Brosnahan a half-century into the educational reform experiment, called "deformed" because it only "partially developed" (Weaver, 56) men and women. Weaver's sustained discussion of faulty approaches to meaning in *Ideas Have Consequences* explains perfectly why the Jesuits and all traditionalists in education insist upon a liberal arts grounding before any kind of specialization: without a moral context of good and bad, right and wrong, without the "ought" of the *Tao* as C.S. Lewis speaks of the natural law in *The Abolition of Man*, we lose our capacity to think and, therefore, to act rightly:

> There is ground for declaring that modern man has become a moral idiot… [m]ultiplying instances show complacency in the presence

> of contradiction which denies the heritage of Greece… [w]e are approaching a condition in which we shall be amoral without the capacity to perceive it and degraded without means to measure our descent (Weaver, 10).

A moral idiot cannot choose the good because he or she doesn't know (or *chooses not* to know) its definition. He or she is precisely the "blind" person, one "who strain[s] out a gnat, and swallow[s] a camel" (Mt. 23:24). The traditional liberal arts education the Jesuits were fighting to retain provides the basis for choosing the good and avoiding the evil because it defines them in accordance with the wisdom of the ages. The danger of specialists without a clear sense of right and wrong should be obvious to anyone familiar with *Frankenstein* or, in our times, anyone willing to admit the disastrous consequences of putting a career bureaucrat "specialist," with obvious motives for power and financial gain, in charge of guiding the global strategic response to the recent pandemic. Surely, we would never be foolish enough to allow a "partially formed man" or a "moral idiot" to make such important decisions outside his area of expertise! The essential positions about education highlighted by the controversy between Harvard and the Jesuits are succinctly summed up in an observation made by C. S. Lewis: "Aristotle says that the aim of education is to make the pupil like and dislike what he ought. . . .the difference between the old and the new education… [is] in a word, the old was a kind of propagation—men transmitting manhood to men; the new is merely propaganda" (*Abolition,* 26, 33). We chose the new, and the disastrous fruits of rejecting the Jesuits' stance for the old surround us on all sides.

The Jesuit defense of traditional education was brilliant on the level of principles and adequate to the task, but their arguments fell on deaf ears. The bitter irony is that "Catholic collegians proved the Jesuits' undoing… It was at the very height of their troubles with Harvard that the Jesuits discovered that most Catholic students, seeking professional education, academic credentials, and social opportunities, had bypassed Catholic colleges in favor of non-Catholic higher education" (Mahoney, 13). Surrounded by a dizzying array of scientific advancements, enticed by material advantages, and concerned with social acceptance—we may forget how ostracized Catholics were in our country at one time—many college-bound Catholic students opted for secular universities. The purveyors of the university system won, and we now have over a century of fruits by which to know them. What do we see? It is not possible to chronicle all the effects of the educational revolution of the early twentieth century, but the most obvious fruits are before us every day. The moral idiocy that Richard Weaver decried in 1948 is alarmingly evident in every profession including science, medicine, education, government, and finance. We are told by specialists to mask ourselves and cower at home in mortal fear of a virus, while infants are legally murdered by medical professionals every day. We defer to "the science" but the scientists and doctors promoted by the government and media are unable (or unwilling) to confirm basic biological facts, such as the difference between a boy and a girl. We profess equal rights for women while allowing men to compete in women's sports. We promote people to high judicial positions from which they will make laws about human rights when they are incapable of defining the most basic terms about human beings. Is this not "complacency in the presence of contradiction"? These are the fruits of a century of education unhinged from truth.

On the more mundane level, there are plenty of other indicators of problems in higher education. A post titled "37 Mind-Boggling College Student Statistics" from July 2021 includes the following data: 34% of college students in the US have an anxiety disorder; 49.8% of college students use birth control; almost 150,000 college students develop some kind of alcohol-related health problem every year; approximately 696,000 college students each year are assaulted by another student who has been drinking ("37 Statistics"). Statistics such as these indicate that modern universities are not contributing in a positive way to the formation of the whole man or woman. Not even the material outcomes are all that impressive given the monetary outlay and the utilitarian aims of contemporary higher education. According to statistics cited in a 2018 *New York Times* article about the "value" of a college education, "25 percent of college graduates now earn no more than does the average high school graduate" (Shell). Other studies have found "45% of 2,300 students at 24 colleges showed no significant improvement in 'critical thinking, complex reasoning and writ-

ing by the end of their sophomore years,'" and "that over 75% of two-year college students and 50% of four-year college students were incapable of completing everyday tasks" (Williams). As for the elective system, it is not promoting efficiency in degree completion, given that 30% of all undergraduates change their majors once and 10% change them multiple times, which explains, at least in part, why only 33% graduate in four years ("37 Statistics"). Just as Fr. Brosnahan predicted, curricula have developed to suit the whims of students who naturally proceed "along the lines of least resistance." In his *Daily Wire* article, Walter Williams finishes with a list of courses students have elected in our brave new education world: "What If Harry Potter is Real?" "Lady Gaga and the Sociology of Fame," "Philosophy and Star Trek," "Learning from YouTube," "How to Watch Television," and "Oh, Look, a Chicken" (Williams). One final statistic that 62% of institutions of higher education have sanctioned LGBTQ student groups ("37 Statistics") highlights precisely what lies at the end of the road of radical self-determination and amoral specialized skill to which we have been blown by the "winnowing wind of freedom" of the kind St. Peter calls "a cloak for malice" (I Pet. 2:16). Parents with the help of medical professionals are literally making Frankensteinian monstrosities of their own children–those they "chose" to be born–based upon the child's choice of "gender." This is the elective system writ large and the specialist gone mad. One can only imagine–though I suspect most of us would prefer not to–the extraordinary skill it must require for a surgeon to fashion a boy from a girl and vice versa, but could anyone other than a moral idiot consent to do so? In this one phenomenon, allowed by God in a dramatic attempt to open our eyes to the fact we are on the wrong road, we see a singular manifestation, the *reductio ad absurdum* (or *ad monstrositatem*) of a profoundly faulty educational approach and the "diabolically disoriented" thinking and action it engenders–pun intended.

In the "Law School controversy" we find the undeniable historical fact that higher education as we know it is directly tied to Protestant liberalism: it is a rejection of traditionalism, not just in thought or philosophy but also explicitly in theology. The university men understood what too many contemporary Catholics still either don't understand or refuse to acknowledge or deem relevant enough to determine their educational choices: traditional liberal arts education is tied directly to traditional Catholicism and secular university education is an extension and expansion of the Protestant revolt. In *Pascendi* St. Pius X drew a direct line from Protestantism to Modernism to atheism (para. 39); the educational revolution that rejected the liberal arts college accelerated the cultural trend toward that trajectory's endpoint. The evidence is overwhelmingly and ubiquitously clear. Confronted with the horrific fruits of a century of bad education, we ought to learn the lesson and listen to the Jesuits this time. C.S. Lewis summarizes the solution as well as he does the problem:

> We all want progress. But progress means getting nearer to the place where you want to be. And if you have taken a wrong turning then to go forward does not get you any nearer. If you are on the wrong road progress means doing an about-turn and walking back to the right road; and in that case the man who turns back soonest is the most progressive man… There is nothing progressive about being pig-headed and refusing to admit a mistake. And I think if

> you look at the present state of the world it's pretty plain that humanity has been making some big mistake. We're on the wrong road. And if that is so we must go back. Going back is the quickest way on. (*Mere Christianity,* 28-29)

In the Church, "going back" means returning to the Faith as taught and practiced up until the "new springtime" of Vatican II. In education, "going back" means returning to liberal arts curricula which retain ties with our traditions, grounding students in truth as pursued up until the dawn of the university age. That is what we have done at St. Mary's College from the start and will continue to do, now more comprehensively, in our expanded four-year program. Many people who are well-informed regarding the dangers of modernism to faith fail to understand or to appreciate fully the fact that without sound education that all-important faith is at risk. As Catholics, we understand Pope Pius XI's confirmation that "there can be no true education which is not wholly directed to man's last end… since God has revealed Himself to us in the Person of His Only Begotten Son, who alone is 'the way, the truth and the life,' there can be no ideally perfect education which is not Christian education" (*Divini* para 7). Going back and finding the right path toward developing virtue in our children means rejecting the errors institutionalized in our educational system after the Law School controversy; rejecting, in particular, the materialist utilitarian approach toward higher education as merely the means to getting a job. Finding the right school means more than searching out a conservative liberal arts college or an engineering program somewhere; it means finding a school tied to *the* Truth, truth in its fullness and in its practice, which can form students who have the intellectual and moral habits to judge the "ought" of anything that follows. Archbishop Lefebvre saw the contemporary crisis and its intensity more clearly than anyone else and called precisely for a going back, a restoration in all spheres, telling us "[w]e have to hold on. We have to build, while the others are demolishing… our enterprises faithful to the social doctrine of the Church… a whole tissue of Christian social life…" (251). He saw the critical role of education within that effort, directing in his society's statutes back in 1970 that "Schools really free from any constraint so as to be able to give a thoroughly Christian education to the young will be fostered and even founded by members of the Society. From these schools will come vocations and Christian homes," for traditional Catholic education prepares the "good ground" in which grace can flourish such that "they who in a good and perfect heart, hearing the word, keep it, and bring forth fruit in patience."

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TITLE IMAGE: *Seven Liberal Arts,* Francesco Pesellino, c. 1450.

Things Old and New

Some Considerations on Parish Schools

Robert Wyer

Most of us could probably readily agree on what we are *against* in education, but consensus on what we are *for* is another matter. Few disagreements are more acrimonious than this one; it is something akin to a family fight or a lovers' quarrel. Just about everyone considers himself an expert on education, perhaps because most of us have spent so much of our lives in school. And, to be sure, parents are meant to be terribly invested in their children's well-being; the years devoted to their children's schooling occupy a considerable part of their concern and cash. Any division about what those schools for their kids ought to look like stems from different ideas about what a school is and what it is meant to do, and the answers to these questions necessarily involve an accurate appreciation of the students we have and the time in which we live. A school is, by definition, a place of perennial things, but how we prudentially craft the Catholic school in our day, given the realities involved, may represent something that appears innovative, though it replicates timeless elements. Here, we are concerned with the so-called "parish school," one that strives to welcome all (or the majority of) children associated with a particular place.

Obviously, any school lives by certain principles, and these principles are worth some attention. Beyond these principles, the realties that distinguish the parish school require a closer look for our purposes. What remains, finally, are practical considerations in the life of the school that predominates in SSPX priories—how we might do well to structure them to best serve the children entrusted to our care and the families we seek to assist in the raising of their children in a challenging age.

One of the first principles of any school is the presupposition that everyone ought to know certain things. These things are worth knowing for their own sake, because they reflect (in greater or lesser measure) the goodness, truth, and

beauty that is ultimately God Himself. Knowing these things makes us more of what we are: creatures, body and soul, caught up to heaven but rooted in the earth—the unique human place between purely material creation and the spiritual world of the angels.

> For I will behold thy heavens, the works of thy fingers: the moon and the stars which thou hast founded.
> What is man, that thou art mindful of him? Or the son of man that thou visitest him?
> Thou hast made him a little less than the angels, thou hast crowned him with glory and honour: and hast set him over the works of thy hands. (Ps. 8)

Though some of these things learned might prove useful, that is not the reason we learn them.

One corollary—because we are human—is that teachers are more important than the curriculum. Ultimately we learn from others who know and teach us. Knowledge per se does not exist in books; it must be known by a knower, exist in the mind of someone. That person, much as the angels of the various hierarchies do for each other, communicates to and enlightens others. When an author communicates by means of written language, he is conveying what is in his mind to another, and even then, it often takes a teacher, like St. Philip for the Ethiopian, to ask: "Thinkest thou that thou understandest what thou readest?" And the student echoes the eunuch: "And how can I, unless some man shew me?" (Acts 8) Teachers are the heart of the school. If what Plato calls the divine spark is not leaping to and fro in the minds of the faculty in the conversation within that circle of friends, it is unlikely it will be firing in the minds of the students.

From this, it follows that much of educating involves the cultivation of relationships. Plato calls teaching "a species of friendship," and Garrigou-Lagrange says, echoing St. Thomas' commentary on Aristotle's *Metaphysics*: "the perfection of anything is that it become similar to its cause ... thus, the perfection of the student is that he become a master." Or, as one master put it:

> The gratitude a student has towards his teacher, according to St. Thomas, comes from the fact that his learning is a "becoming"; the teacher is the cause of a "similitude" of himself in his knowing, analogous to a father generating a similitude of himself in his son.

The SSPX Sisters' active apostolate includes teaching in schools.

Offspring, in the physical realm but also in the intellectual and spiritual realm, is the fruit of knowing. "And Adam knew his wife, and she conceived." Con-ception, the quickening of ideas (concepts) in the mind of another, requires the intimacy of knowing the other. The teacher must love his students, and they return this love. Ultimately, of course, it echoes and reflects the knowing and loving that is the eternal life of the Holy Trinity.

What happens in the classroom itself is not enough then, partly because of the necessity of forming these relationships, but there is more to it. A great deal of the "stuff" of learning exists outside of the school building. One could insist, for instance, that without a prolonged exposure to the natural world, beyond the classroom windows, much of what is attempted inside will not bear lasting fruit. The cultivation and exercise of the senses, imagination, and memory necessarily precede and accompany any intellectual activity. The scholastic dictum *nihil in intellectu nisi prius in sensu* ("there is nothing in the intellect unless it is not previously in the senses") is not reserved to describe the earliest stages of childhood development.

Teachers must meet students where they are. There is always something of returning to a beginning or an earlier point in the teacher's own journey (because he can only give what he has first received). The goal, the point the teacher hopes the student reaches (even surpassing the teacher), is real, but so is the starting point. Again, this requires coming to know the student. For Socrates, this involved conversation, asking questions, probing what the student knew but also countenancing dreams and passions, even tolerating a certain youthful silli-

ness. Humans are symphonic beings; they live on many levels–physical, emotional, intellectual, and spiritual. Helping another achieve harmony among these aspects of his being means knowing something of his story. Talking is how we come to know another, and close friends never exhaust this conversation.

Having been reminded of some principles common to all schools worthy of the name, we now turn our attention to the parish school. In schools run by the Society of Saint Pius X in the United States, most are attached to priories but all at least to a chapel; in other words, families choose to locate in particular areas because they want the Mass and desire a school to help them give their children a Catholic education. These places of learning represent the parish school, which exists to serve all of its families. Despite exceptions for students with special needs beyond what these schools can provide, they are meant to take all comers.

Here again, we should pause to consider certain realities that are part of this kind of school. Two factors seem paramount: size and diversity of students, and these two factors are related. The larger the student body, the more likely there will be a broader range of abilities among its members. Typically, the parish schools do not set admissions criteria based on academic performance or aptitude, though obviously the expectation exists that students admitted can handle the coursework demands. (Obviously some attrition occurs as the level of study increases.) Other factors could be involved; some schools may take boarding students, for example. A variety of settings also exist, ranging from rural or small town to quite urban. For the present consideration, however, we will concentrate on size and student aptitude, which relate to the question of academic curriculum.

We expect all students to learn certain things. They should know the truths of the Faith, be able to read and write, learn something of the history of the world and the place of Christ and His Church in it as its central event, be adept at computation, and know some basic science that helps to illuminate the world we live in. I would argue that some familiarity with Latin is crucial because it's the language of the Church. From there, one can add the significant subjects of music and art. Then, too, physical education is important. The question is: how much of each, especially of the core subjects, is the right amount for particular students? Literature can reach far and high, depending on the texts selected. Math can venture beyond addition, subtraction, multiplication, division, and fractions into geometry, algebra, trigonometry, and even into calculus. Natural history and physical or earth science can quickly progress to biology, chemistry, and physics.

We want to provide a rich, and even challenging, exposure to all students, taking them as far as they can go, developing to the fullest the minds God has given them, but we ought also to remember that, while all students possess intellects, not all are destined to become intellectuals. In the history of the world, a relatively small number of people make up the thinking elite who shape society in that way and add their share to that aspect of human endeavor and the Church's mission to "go and teach all nations." (True geniuses are even rarer.) If one of the first principles of rhetoric is an awareness of one's audience, it behooves us to bear in mind the true diversity of young minds who present themselves in our schools.

The Church has always made schools wherever it has gone in promoting salvation. Why? At least in part because of this truth, which is remarkably expressed in the words of a Carthusian novice master:

> God knows very well how to bypass this intellectual formation with simple souls, but it seems that the work of grace is seriously hampered–at least in raising the level of life– if it does not at least find a clear and honest mind… in which grace can find a home. But all things being equal (and often this is precisely the question!) a certain culture of the mind almost always offers a richer earth in which grace may work. At least a certain minimum of culture.

Is it surprising then that the Church has so assiduously sought to cultivate the soil for the good heart by nourishing the mind, given that man is a rational being? We are most like the angels and God in our intellect and will. This realization of how grace perfects nature rises to the level of principle when we undertake the task of education, informing all that we do. This attempt to provide "a certain culture of the mind" is not a mere add-on in the Church's mission; it is an essential part of its mission.

The issue is one of degree. Striving to be "all things to all men" does not mean being the

same thing to all men. If Christ, as The Teacher, shows us anything, He always goes out to meet the individual soul where it is. Every soul is unique, though souls fall into certain classes. Consider for a moment the marvelous richness in the history of the Church's religious orders. Not only does this diversity reflect the varying aspects of the Catholic Thing in meeting the various needs of mankind (teaching the young, caring for the sick and dying, taking in orphans, cultivating the mind, providing haven for contemplation and so on), but it also reflects a recognition that souls differ; the path to sanctity is not the same in the details of its *modus vivendi.* In the work of cultivating minds, an appreciation of this ought also to inform what we teach and how we teach it.

Deciding what to teach certainly depends on the aptitudes of the students, but also on the age we live in. If we live in a culturally poor time, we cannot merely fill the deficit by drowning them in the best thinkers. One approach would be: give all of them the very best; the brightest will hopefully get something enlightening and permanent—truly formative—from the experience, and those not up to the challenge, well, perhaps some bits will stick with them. However, does this mindset truly serve the majority of the class? If education is, in some sense, a "drawing out of" students what they are capable of, is this the best way to accomplish it?

The Society of Saint Pius X currently has around 20 parish schools in the United States. About half are kindergarten through twelfth grade. They range from 22 to 900 in terms of students. A number of these have 100 or more students. St. Mary's Academy, the largest, has a number of unique opportunities because of its size, but such a large school also presents its challenges. In all of the schools, limited resources remain an issue. Most importantly, large schools require more teachers, and the key here is managing class size because more can be done with smaller groups of students.

Small is beautiful, in so many things. There is a scale that seems best suited to human endeavors, particularly teaching and learning. Our Lord chose only twelve men to form that intimate association of those who would witness, hear, and transmit the revelation of His Father. Big schools simply do not afford the optimal amount of contact and influence between teachers and students. While we might disagree

SSPX priest teaching at the orphanage school in India.

about that magic number, there seems little room for disputing that smaller schools permit the personal interaction and attention best suited to learning. Ultimately, it is an encounter between an individual teacher and one (each) student... *cor ad cor loquitur.*

Another aspect of the cross section of students within the typical parish school is that it reflects two categories of the lives that students will lead after, the distinction between the (broadly speaking) intellectual and the "maker" (to borrow a term from one old definition of man, *homo faber.)* Anyone who spends time teaching the young readily discovers that some students seem more suited for, and delighted by, the exercise of their minds, while others flourish in the exercise of their hands. The Lord God has simply fashioned them in this way—and glory to Him in doing so.

Generally speaking, any student's aptitude (especially in the sixth through twelfth grades) becomes more pronounced as the child matures. Something of a primary disposition emerges; it is revealed in the things he is attracted to (though obviously it is not a hard-and-fast division.) He senses a greater fulfillment in, naturally gravitates towards, one activity or the other, without one entirely eclipsing the other. There is something beautiful—a kind of richness—about those who maintain a balance in both worlds, adept at the exercise of mind and body, knower and maker.

In the parish school, because of its distinctive diversity, both types of students will be present, and the school and its teachers owe it to them to work with and foster both kinds. In large groups, on a day-to-day basis, doing so can present challenges (again, more so in the high school years.) In growing and discovering, the student becomes more of what he is; the gifts he was born with emerge more clearly and hope-

fully flourish. Watching this unfold delights the admiring teacher.

The other broad division, looking farther into the students' future lives as adults, concerns the path of vocation: marriage, religious life, and priesthood. Most will marry and raise families. In a healthy Catholic society, probably about a third would become monks, brothers, nuns, or priests. It seems true to say that there ought to be more monks and brothers (among male graduates) than priests. Priests, as a rule, will come from the smaller percentage of the more academically-inclined students, possessing the mental aptitude for the study of philosophy and theology required in a seminary.

This being true, one might wonder how this future reality ought to be reflected and nurtured during the years in the parish school. Given that fewer students will be intellectuals (remember: we are talking about that broad division that will be found in a school that has to try and serve all children of the parish), how should the school, in its life and curriculum, correspond to this fact? If most will marry, or embrace the life of monks, brothers and sisters, ought the parish school to be ordered to this eventual reality, especially in the upper grades?

It has become somewhat common to recognize the existence of "multiple intelligences," meaning that intelligence is not limited to the more abstract, "book smart" caricature. Equally true, to maintain that a curriculum for some students ought to be perhaps less academic does not mean that such an education is anti-academic—it remains a question of degree or focus. "In My Father's house, there are many mansions" (John 14:2).

Practically speaking, what do these realities about the diversity of students mean in terms of size, curriculum, approach, and the school's daily life? What follows, because it is a consideration of how Society schools might better serve the families who rely on its priests for their spiritual needs, will be primarily proposals—a series of possibilities or questions. Here, we will not be talking about principles in the same way but struggling to suggest a vision of how things might look and a brief glimpse at their possible merits.

For one thing, we might need more schools which would be tailored more to the different kinds of students, rather than simply trying to do even more in schools whose size already makes learning less than ideal.

Not having to expand existing schools because of increasing enrollment (as in St. Mary's), which often presents itself in larger budgets with growing financial stresses and costs of additional construction on site or renovating older, existing structures, might provide some breathing room to increase faculty salaries and eliminate logistical demands of finding adequate space for classrooms and programs.

Another possible benefit: if some Society schools could then concentrate on more rigorous academic matters for those students so inclined, it might actually permit fostering priestly vocations that would necessarily come from the boys and young men in those schools. Part of the Society's reason for existing (and a duty explicitly delegated to priors) is precisely this fostering of vocations to the priesthood. Other schools (including perhaps some overseen by the Society) could be less challenging in their academic curriculum. Doing so might thus serve the other (and larger) population of students not so inclined towards intellectual endeavors.

(Before venturing farther, in honesty, I have to give something of a disclaimer about what will follow: many of the practical suggestions I am going to propose focus on the education of boys because that is what I do and have reflected on more. This is not to say that girls do not need or have a way that is appropriate to them. On the contrary, it may be even more important, and someone needs to be thinking seriously about the parish school in terms of the realties that wait there for those future mothers and nuns, for those with a more intellectual bent and for those inclined otherwise. It simply is not something I will elaborate on here and now.)

We could end up with something like this for boys, at least: a K-12 (or at least 6-12) school that spends less time in the classroom, and, as students enter junior high and high school, includes experience on a working farm. Part of the school day could be geared towards exposure to activities that are hands-on: leathercraft, woodworking, animal husbandry, gardening, and beekeeping. During the high school years, they might begin serving some sort of "junior apprenticeship" in the afternoons a few days a week, after Mass and a morning in the classroom for English, religion, Latin, and history;

math and science could be learned outdoors in the context of building projects and natural history in addition to the work of cooperating with nature in the cultivation and raising of produce and animals.

Such a school would not be a trade school—not mere job training, by any means. It would maintain an academic (intellectual) element, but likewise provide the opportunity to participate in (at first just seeing) arts and trades that might one day provide personal satisfaction in the performance of skills that could provide a livelihood for families or add to the monastery or the brotherhood. Students could acquire ennobling skills that would provide what Belloc calls "status" not mere "contract"—in other words, they could escape the plight of the wage-slave who does a mere job, something another could easily be hired to do in his stead. (They could also actually study the social teaching of the Church—a woefully neglected subject, since this would be the world they would inhabit and practice in.)

Among possible entities for these nascent apprenticeships, one might find carpentry, masonry, agriculture, metalwork, plumbing, and electrical work. Even the more artistic crafts (the province of the artisan) might be nurtured: things like sculpture, painting, and stained glass making. When the Society is building (or restoring) churches, it might be one avenue of securing the craftsmen needed to contribute to the beauty of sacred architecture; instead of searching for those proficient in disappearing skills, the schools might help to fashion them.

A school along these lines could be a place where businessmen from the parish could happily be involved in a program for a day school.

Future monks and brothers might grow in number from such schools. We might see a new dawning of that happier age when a larger percentage of youth gave their lives to The One Thing Necessary. *Labora,* one half of the Benedictine life (along with *Ora),* could receive its due because boys who learned during their school years the necessity and dignity of manual labor would be better disposed to a life that honors and embraces this element.

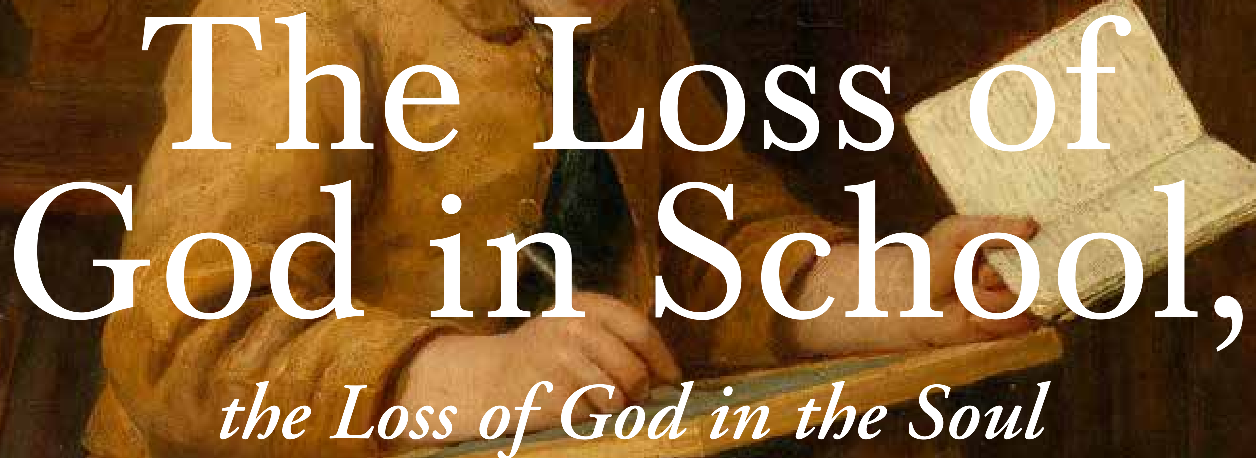
In his sketch "The Saxon School: The Summer of 1002," Hilaire Belloc depicts a monastic school, "Our Lady of Good Knowledge," attached to Hyde Abbey near Winchester. It is a place of only 20 or 30 students, "for such as would learn more than was necessary to every Christian man"—that is, more than the basic catechism. At the end of the piece, the monk who teaches the boys lingers to speak with a youngster who has reached the culmination of his studies and will enter the abbey. The priest tells him, "But if you would come now, first show me what you know." The boy (because "no pupil of his had been so word-perfect since the child of the London woman had died in the green Christmas of five years before") replies at length… "till it was plain that there was no end to his learning."

> The old man was ready to take him away, and they went together over the water meadow towards Hyde and the city, talking in the Latin tongue, and without one word in the vulgar, upon divine things, until they came to the gate of the Abbey, where Brother Porter, who had been warned, asked them, as ritual would have it, in the name of Alfred [King Alfred the Great, whose bones rest in the Abbey], "whom he brought there." The Tutor answered: "One who would be a priest," Then the porter said: "What will he do for his priesthood?" And the boy answered in reply: "I will forge in the Abbey forge." When he had said this they led him in, and they shut the gates behind him, as though to cut him off from the world.

Such would be the happiest of outcomes for all involved and for the world at large, if many of our students did likewise. There will be nothing like a Christian culture again until the contemplative life, the first thing, becomes first again.

More could be said, but—for now—my hope is that some questions have been raised, a few seeds planted, some possibilities envisioned.

The parish school is an ancient and venerable institution. It has existed in European villages, in the hedges of Ireland during times of persecution, in the neighborhoods of American cities, and in the mission fields from Africa to Alaska. It is a worthy endeavor, noble in its effects, and doubtless near to the Heart of Christ. We owe the superiors and teachers of the Society's schools an infinite debt of gratitude for their heroic labors and solicitude.



The Loss of God in School, *the Loss of God in the Soul*

Patrick Murtha

The public school system has received no shortage of flack over the past years. And it would be foolish to say that the cause was not just: lewd, sexually explicit, and even blasphemous literature, obscene sex education, the covert propaganda of transgenderism, school boards shutting out parents. These realities, as well as others, have stimulated an exodus of students, and have threatened to gut or to hollow or, at the very least, make lean the so-called "hallowed halls of learning." But these faults in modern public education are not themselves the true problems. They are no more the true problem of public education than a cough is the true problem of a cold or of Covid. They are symptoms, serious symptoms, but only symptoms nonetheless; they are not the source of the problem. But it has become one of the disorders of modern man to confuse the symptom for the source. And so, parents become enraged at the literary diet their children consume—and rightly so; parents and the general public become infuriated at the arrogance of school boards when they are barred and banned from conversations about their own children—and rightly so. But to scorn the symptoms, to attempt to find a solution for the symptoms, but not to be incensed at the source and not to attempt to find a solution for the source is part of this modern madness.

The root of the evil that has come to fruition today dates back not merely a decade but nearly two centuries in the United States. It can, not without good reason, be argued that the heart of the problem dates even farther back, to the time when Protestants first stole the keys to the Catholic colleges and the Catholic curriculum that had made Catholic education the envy of the centuries. In the United States there has never been a time when the state afforded the citizens the opportunity of a solid education. In the earliest days of the country, the schools were religious, but only in a narrow sense—they taught a sort of religion. Certainly the Bible was a key text and God's name flowed regularly off the tongue of every teacher and was repeated

by every student—not in that vulgar or blasphemous manner His name is regularly mentioned in schools today; but the religion was no sensible or real religion.. It was a false religion: Calvinist, Episcopalian, Methodist, Unitarian. And under those conditions, the Catholic parent endangered his child's soul to send his child's body to a school that taught a God that was not God. This the Catholic bishops in the U.S. acknowledged at the First Provincial Council of Baltimore in 1829, writing in their pastoral letter, "[T]he school-boy can scarcely find a book in which some one or more of our institutions or practices is not exhibited far otherwise than it really is, and greatly to our disadvantage: the entire system of education is thus tinged through its whole course; and history itself has been distorted to our serious injury." Fourteen years later, at the Fourth Provincial Council, the Bishops, without mincing words, warned again against the danger of a Protestant education: "We have seen with serious alarm, efforts made to poison the fountains of public education, by giving it a sectarian hue, and accustoming children to the use of a version of the Bible made under sectarian bias, and placing in their hands books of various kinds replete with offensive and dangerous matter… We admonish parents of the awful account they must give at the divine tribunal, should their children, by their neglect or connivance, be imbued with false principles and led away from the path of salvation." Such already were the warnings by the Catholic bishops in 1829 and 1843! And these warnings continued throughout the rest of the Provincial Councils, and then into the three Plenary Councils of Baltimore. How often nostalgia hypnotizes the mind with a hallucination of a better and more moral age!

Under the influence of Horace Mann, the schools were diverted into another direction: tossing even the false God, the false Christ, from the classrooms. In the name of "getting along," in the name of religious liberty, Secularism was enthroned in the school-master's chair. Mann, a fellow who seemed "moral" enough, who appeared to have the vestures of virtue and religion—I mean, again, a general and shallow religion—promoted personal religion, that notion of some "superior being" arising out of the inner chasms of the soul or the gut. But for him, "organized religion" was not a matter of the classroom, but only for the individual heart. The Bible was permitted, but only as a literary text promoting general morality and not the knowledge of God, and definitely not for the propagation of a particular religion. In other words, the Word of God was to lead to "good deeds" without leading to a particular deity. This idea of Mann was, and still is, rooted in liberalism, one of whose worst symptoms was, and still is, religious liberty. The secularizing of schools, the segregating of God from the daily studies of the student, perverts the idea not only of learning, implicitly and explicitly saying that God is not relevant to reading, writing, and arithmetic, but also not relevant to material life and living. If reading and writing and arithmetic have such value that it must be studied daily and yet religion is assigned merely to Sunday, or to a catechism class, then what lesson does it teach the youth?

The Catholic, in regarding this question of education, seems caught in a conundrum: should the Catholic angle towards Scylla or Charybdis? The Catholic, in the words of that great American idiom, is "caught between a rock and a hard place." And rhetoricians will employ this "either…or…" as a dichotomy: would you rather a Protestant teach your child, at least he will get some semblance of religion and morality, or a secularist who may possibly give a veneer of natural virtue? Are these the only two options? But the rhetorician in this sense is a sophist. Concerned more with winning an argument than with truth, he presents the options as if there were only two. This is a false dichotomy. There can never be, in any moral decision, only two evil choices: how can God be good or just if He permits only two options, and both evil and both leading, very possibly, to damnation? God forbid! It cannot be. There must be a third option, and possibly a fourth: a Catholic school, or homeschool at least. In this particular era, there are very few Catholics, I believe (maybe naively so), who will risk their child's soul by sending him to a Protestant school, to have his faith be tainted by adulterated doctrines. The great temptation, I suppose, lies not with Scylla, that multi-headed monster who reaches out to pluck the sailors from their boats and devour them; but the greater temptation lurks with Charybdis, that monster of the deep, hidden beneath the water, gulping down whole ships and vomiting up mere shards of timber. Too often, even with the terrible symptoms of today, Catholics, without sufficient and significant reasons, send their children to a public school.

The problem, I think, lies in a loss of, or a blindness towards, the principles of Catholicism and education. What Catholic parents–or any parent at all, worthy of the name *parent*–does not desire the best for their child? Quintilian, the famous teacher of orators, though a pagan, says as much: "I would, therefore, have a father conceive the highest hopes of his son from the moment of his birth" (*Institutio Oratoria*. I.1.). And is it not Christ who says, "Among yourselves, if a father is asked by his son for bread, will he give him a stone? Or a fish, will he give him a snake instead of a fish? Or if he asked for an egg, will he give him a scorpion?" (Luke 11: 11-12). Just as no one does anything without seeing some apparent good, so no parent sends his child to the public school without some thought of seeming goodness. But what is this goodness? To one, it is participation in sports. To another, more variety of classes. To another, more options for college. The reasons are nearly as infinite as human excuses. But the reasons are principally material, disregarding the spiritual; primarily temporal, devaluing the eternal. For what is a football season in relation to eternity? What good is landing scholarships to Harvard or Yale if the soul sinks into Hell? These must be, in the Catholic conscience, if the Catholic truly believes in eternity, among the first considerations. But the excuses themselves indicate a certain secular spirit or a materialistic attitude: "How is a man the better for it, if he gains the whole world at the cost of losing his own soul?" (Mt. 16: 26). The parent is short-sighted, at the very least. To lose one's own soul, I dare say, is a careless and appalling thing; to lose another's is callous, cruel, and contemptible. "How would your hearts be torn with grief did you foresee, that through eternity those objects of all your best feelings should be cast into outward darkness, where there is weeping and gnashing of teeth! ... But, dearly beloved, this is too frequently the necessary consequence of a neglected or an improper education. God has made you guardians of those children to lead them to His service upon earth, that they might become saints in Heaven" (Pastoral Letter, 1829). What conscientious and vigilant parent does not frequently shudder at and even lose sleep over those terrible words of the Eternal Judge: "And if anyone hurts the conscience of one of these little ones that believes in me, he had better have been drowned in the depths of the sea, with a mill-stone hung about his neck" (Mt. 18:6).

The great danger and evil of secularism in the school, as well as in society, is not my own concoction. My mind does not arrive at this judgment solely on its own, even though it has often seen its paganized and atheistic fruit in students once Catholic. I hold it most strongly by the authority of the Church through the magisterium of the popes. Leo XIII, in no fewer than eight different encyclicals, rejected the notion that a school can separate God and religion from education. (These schools were often called "mixed" or "neutral.") "To divorce these," writes the pope, "is to wish that youth should be neutral in regards its duties to God; a system of education in itself fallacious and particularly fatal in tender years, for it opens the door to atheism and closes it on religion" (*Nobilissima Gallorum Gens*, 1884). He says that such an education not only risks the child "drinking in the poison of impiety" (*Sapientiae Christianae*, 1890) but "prepares, not defenders of the nation, but a plague and a scourge on the human race. Once God is suppressed, what can keep young people dutiful or recall them when they have strayed from the path of virtue and fall into the abyss of vice?" (*Militantis Ecclesiae*, 1897). Pius X, following in his predecessor's footsteps, issues similar warnings, saying, "There both teachers' lips and students' ears are inclined to godlessness. We are referring to those schools which are unjustly called neutral or lay. In reality, they are nothing more than the stronghold of the powers of darkness" (*Editae Saepe*, 1910). Pius XI encourages founding schools with religious instruction, saying that without them they "quickly become, by logical and psychological necessity, pagan things" (*Non Abbiamo Bisogno*, 1931), and warns that this wrenching of Christ from the curriculum "foster[s] materialism which is the fertile soil of Communism" (*Divini Redemptoris*, 1937). In six different encyclicals, Pius XI condemned this deviant divorce of the schools from God and promoted the necessity of Catholic education, writing in *Divini Illius Magistri* (1929)–a jewel of the Catholic ideal of education, "From this it follows that the so-called 'neutral' or 'lay' school, from which religion is excluded, is contrary to the fundamental principles of education. Such a school moreover cannot exist in practice; it is bound to become irreligious. There is no need to repeat what Our Predecessors have declared on this point, especially Pius IX and Leo XIII, at times when laicism

was beginning in a special manner to infest the public school. We renew and confirm their declarations, as well as the Sacred Canons in which the frequenting of non-Catholic schools, whether neutral or mixed, those namely which are open to Catholics and non-Catholics alike, is forbidden for Catholic children, and can be at most tolerated, on the approval of the Ordinary alone, under determined circumstances of place and time, and with special precautions." And Pius XII, in speeches—many of which can be found in volumes of *The Pope Speaks*—and encyclicals, decries this same aberration. So the popes taught until the Second Vatican Council after which the voice of the pontiffs became enfeebled, devitalized, and wearisome with the specter of so-called dialogue which is poor excuse for spiritual pacificism. Paul VI's anxiety, for example, was for immigrants "los[ing] their respect for the priceless cultural heritage of their native land" and "reminding [all men of good will] that civil progress and economic development are the only road to peace" (*Populorum Progressio*, 1967). What is culture and economy and civil society without Christ, but tepid, vapid, and dead! How little is said of losing the Faith and the consequence of that, losing the soul!

In the same spirit of the pre-Vatican II pontiffs, the 1917 Code of Canon Law is most explicit about "the most grave obligation to take care as far as [the parents] are able for the education of children, both religious and moral, as well as physical and civil, and of providing them with temporal goods" (Can. 1113). This is similar to the current Canon 1136: "Parents have the most grave duty and the primary right to take care as best they can for the physical, social, cultural, moral, and religious education of their offspring." This is another instance of the post-Conciliar Rome switching priorities: before the Council, religious and moral education held the opening thought; after the Council, they hold the tail-end of the sentence. While Canon 1113 (1917) and Canon 1136 (1983) seem similar, if having same words is all that matters and order is no concern, the Johanno-Pauline Code is missing one of the vital pieces that the Church, in her right as parent to the spiritual life of the child, issued: "Catholic children should not frequent non-Catholic, neutral, or mixed schools, namely those that allow non-Catholics to attend. Only local Ordinaries can make decisions in accord with the instructive norms from the Apostolic See concerning circumstances of things and any necessary precautions that will prevent the danger of perversion, [and] whether these things can be tolerated and such schools used" (Can. 1374). This law specifies that the parent or the student, not only in grammar and secondary schools, but also in colleges and universities, must obtain permission from the diocesan bishop to attend a non-Catholic school. So immediate and so grave is the menace of secularism to pervert peace of soul and the preservation of faith, that this permission must be sought from the custodians of the faith, from those Fathers of the spiritual life in their dioceses. Archbishop Joseph Ritter, whom *Time* magazine reported to be a progressive in the Council, was no progressive in his reminder to Catholics of their obligation in 1960:

> We are indeed gratified and pleased to see so many high school graduates decide to pursue higher studies… At the same time, however, we are alarmed and grieved at the number of graduates who are selecting secular and non-Catholic colleges… Many do not follow the requirements of the law that they seek our permission which is to be secured through their devoted pastors to attend these secular schools… we remind them and their parents that they must always be far more concerned about nurturing and protecting their Faith than they are about pursuing higher studies… Parents and students have, therefore, the grave responsibility of choosing Catholic colleges where the atmosphere and the teaching are conducive to the proper end of Christian education. Only a grave reason will excuse this responsibility. (Canon Law Digest, 1963)

And lest the *should not frequent* in the translation of the Canon confuse a person into thinking that this law is more or less a suggestion, a

strong recommendation, Rome issued specific guidance on the circumstances when permission can be granted, such as for a lack of a Catholic school or for a lack of suitability. But as Fr. Augustine clarifies in his *Commentary on Canon Law* (1923):

> This suitability must not be identified with mere fashionableness, for there is no proportion between danger to faith and "stylishness." Hence the instruction continues: "Parents who neglect to give this necessary Christian training and instruction to their children, or who permit them to go to schools in which the ruin of their souls is inevitable, or, finally, who send them to the public schools without sufficient cause and without taking the necessary precautions to render the danger of perversion remote, and do so while there is a good and well-equipped Catholic school in the place, and while they have means to send them elsewhere to be educated;–such parents, if obstinate, **cannot be absolved**, as is evident from the moral teachings of the Church."

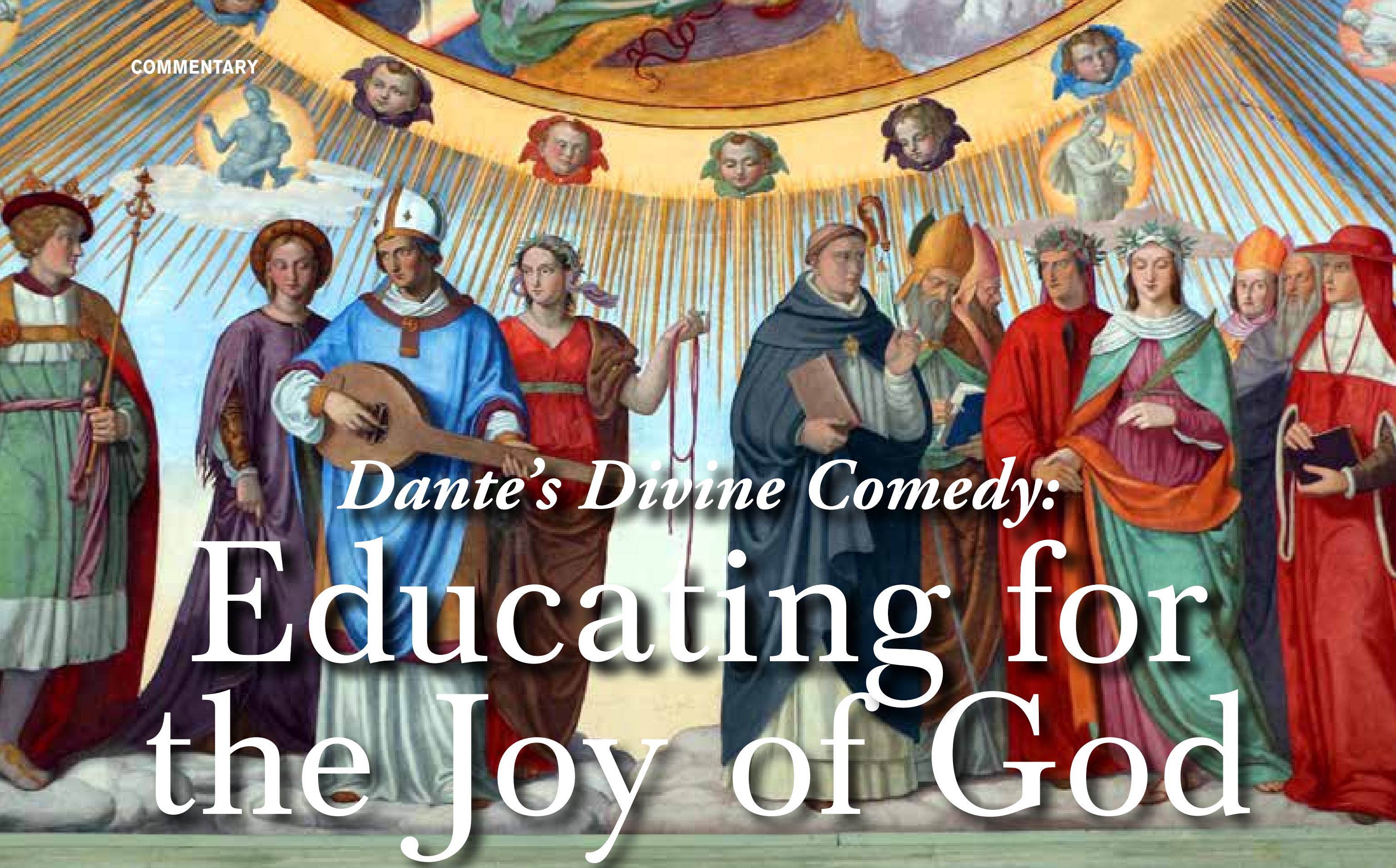
For such is the attitude of the Church: "Make it your first care to find the kingdom of God, and his approval, and all these things shall be yours without the asking" (Mt. 6:33).

The current code has softened the law, and by softening the law has lost the urgency and the justification. First, it is stated that "Parents must possess a true freedom in choosing schools" (Can. 797)–is this freedom to choose only among Catholic schools or license to choose any school? It is not specified, though the following Canon might suggest the former: "Parents are to entrust their children to schools which provide a Catholic education. If they are unable to do this, they are obliged to take care that suitable education is provided for their children outside the schools" (Can. 798). This final Canon in no way carries the weight of its former counterpart Canon 1374 (1917). While Canon 798 (1983) states the obligation, there is no insistence, there is no mention of the explicit danger, there is no consequence. The urgency and the significance of the law is watered down. And, for legalists and literalists always looking for a loophole, Canon 797, with its ambiguous pledge of freedom, counters the obligation of Canon 798 to choose rightly.

If the current Canons create an ambiguous situation, Archbishop Lefebvre, in his defense of orthodoxy, is not ambivalent in the least. If a Catholic truly believes that Christ is king of all and everything, then he must hold there is a great danger to faith, and if danger to faith, then danger to the salvation of the soul, if Christ is removed from even one subject, one class, one moment of life of a Catholic student. It is for this reason that Archbishop Lefebvre insists on Catholic schools and insists that parents be willing to make great and significant sacrifices for the Catholic education of their children. "Do not hesitate," says the Archbishop in a sermon on July 27, 1980, "to send your children, however far away it may be, to Catholic schools." This imperative is no small thing: protecting reason, religion, salvation. How trite are the excuses that excuse a Catholic child for attending a public school: sports, friends, college opportunities. This imperative is for a great and significant thing: that the Catholic may grow in reason and wisdom and virtue in his youth, that with these virtues he may work out his salvation in the society in which he lives his adult life, and that he may attain salvation for his soul and the souls of those entrusted to him. But with the principles of secularism tainting the young scholar, the pupil runs no remote risk of converting into a pagan, or worse an atheist. If Christ is expelled from the classroom, there should be no surprise to find no Christian principles in the classroom. It should be no surprise to find the young apostatizing, from both faith and reason; doubting not only the definitions of doctrines they cannot see but even definitions in nature that they can see. And if a student survives the onslaught of immorality and dechristianization, which no doubt some have, it must be chalked up to another miracle of grace. Archbishop Lefebvre says:

> No doubt we would need many more priests, many more Catholic teachers, but whatever it may be, we shall bend all our efforts, I am sure, and you will do the same, to refound Catholic schools, so that your children, after a careful upbringing at home, may not be corrupted in the schools and put you in a hopeless situation. How many parents tell us this–by letter and in person! Their children are fine until about the age of ten, or twelve or fifteen and then–all of a sudden–they fall away from the straight and narrow path of faith and morals. Parents are grief-stricken at this terrible situation–the ruin of mind and heart. (Sermon on July 27, 1980)

IMAGES: *Schoolboy, Young Girl Reading*, Albert Anker, 1883.



Dante's Divine Comedy: Educating for the Joy of God

Ann Marie Temple

When he had brought his lecture to an end,
the lofty scholar looked into my face,
searching to see if I seemed satisfied;

and I, already thirsting for more drink,
kept silent, wondering:"Could he, perhaps,
be tired of all this questioning of mine?"

But that true father, sensing my desire,
which was too timid to express itself,
spoke first, and thus encouraged me to speak.
Purgatorio XVIII, l. 1-9[1]

In his *Divine Comedy*, Dante Alighieri (1265-1321) creates himself as a character in his own work of art and unfolds before our imagination the process of his complete education, on an allegorical journey through Hell, Purgatory and Heaven (for "there was no other way to save his soul," as Beatrice explains in *Purgatorio* XXXI). "The lofty scholar" above is Virgil, and the one who says "*I*" throughout the poem is Dante "the Pilgrim." Dante was both scholar and student himself, and his teacher of predilection was St. Thomas Aquinas, who had died only ten years after Dante's birth.[2] The education which the Pilgrim receives over the course of the *Commedia* is in fact a *Thomistic* education. In the passage quoted above, the pilgrim Dante and his *maestro* Virgil are halfway through their climb of Mount Purgatory, and their discussion in these central cantos of the *Divine Comedy* takes us to the core of the principles of St. Thomas on teaching. Virgil, the educator, true father, attentive to the soul entrusted to him, seeks every means to satisfy the blessed thirst which God placed at the core of every man. "Sensing my desire," in a union of charity, Virgil "spoke first, and thus encouraged me to speak," to act, to choose, in an apprenticeship of freedom which will end finally with the gift of Dante's will to God in the enjoyment of the beatific vision. In the following pages, I would like to offer the words of the poet as illustrations of the teaching principles of St. Thomas. I have chosen the verses and scenes which most struck me in the classroom and in my own reading as embodiments of St. Thomas' vivifying ideas. I hope this taste will encourage other Catholic educators to open the *Divine Comedy* and drink for themselves with confidence at the source.

Education: A Participation in God's Creative Love

"One of the great pleasures of the intelligence is in unity, in fruitful unity," writes Dom Paul Delatte,[3] and the "fruitful unity" of the *Divine Comedy* and of St. Thomas' philosophy of teaching is in the notion of *love.* "That true father, sensing my desire… spoke first, and thus encouraged me to speak… 'So I beseech you, father, kind and dear,'" begins the disciple Dante, heartened by Virgil, "define love for me, please." Dante constructed his *Divine Comedy* on love: the "geography" of the realms and the movement of souls are determined by relation to the love of God. So also does St. Thomas establish his philosophy of education on the love of God: the first principle behind the nature and the movement of teaching is the goodness of God, origin of all things, the divine Freedom creating in an unexplainable act of love. "The divine goodness is the cause of things' being brought into existence, for God wished to communicate His goodness to others as far as this was possible to creatures," writes St. Thomas in his treatise *On Providence.* Love is the mystery of God, an eternal procession within His Trinitarian life and the motive of all His external action. God creates souls out of love, in order that they might love Him, and He allows educators to participate in His creative love by giving them a power to help souls attain their perfection of freely choosing Him.

The Soul "Sprung from Her Creator's Joy"

From the first canto of the *Inferno*, we learn that the stars shine because "Divine love set their beauty turning" (l. 40).

> Looking upon His Son with all that love
> which each of them breathes forth eternally,
> that uncreated, ineffable first One,
>
> has fashioned all that moves in mind and space
> in such sublime proportions that no one
> can see it and not feel His presence there.
> (*Paradiso* X, l. 1-6)

We "feel His presence there," looking to the Heavens, by the stars' reflection of God's uncreated, absolute perfection. Creation mirrors God; we perceive its order and proportion like a radiance, a ray of being shining back in witness to God's infinite Being. *The heavens recount the glory of God*, the Psalmist sings, and *He calls all the stars by name*,[4] but His spiritual creation is dearest to Him, because each soul is capable of reflecting back to God not only the simple radiance of its being but also a particular, personal love. Angels and men, spiritual beings, reflect God more intimately, and the progress of education is a progress of increasing this resemblance to God. The souls at the base of Mount Purgatory are urged on the path "to make their beauty whole" (*Purgatorio* II, l. 75), to perfect the particular union of mind and will with their Creator which will define them as saints. Each sanctified personality is "a facet of the immeasurable Diamond of Divine Perfections," as the Dominican Fr. Bernard-Marie de Chivré expresses it: "God is so inexhaustible in Perfection that each one of the elect is entrusted with reflecting one of the little sparks of His boundless radiance and so represents as it were an aspect of His Beauty."[5]

Education is therefore a *preparation to adore.* "Thy kingdom come to us with all its peace," pray the souls in the first Terrace of the *Purgatorio*,

> And as Thine angels offer up their wills
> to Thee in sacrifice, singing Hosannah,
> let all men offer up to Thee their own."
> (*Purgatorio* XI, l. 7-12)

This return of love for love constitutes the beauty of the personality. "The love that makes me beautiful / moves me to speak," begins St. Bonaventure in Canto XII of the *Paradiso* (l. 31-32). Love makes beautiful; "sin is the only power that takes away / man's freedom and his likeness to True Good," Beatrice explains, "and makes him shine less brightly in Its light" (*Paradiso* VII, l. 79-81). In the first sphere of the *Paradiso*, the sphere of the changing moon, we meet the soul of Piccarda, who "was a virgin sister in the world," but whom family members obliged to leave the convent and not fulfill her vows. She is blissful but pale in her reflection of God, her face barely discernible, and the reason is her instability of will, consenting in some degree to her removal from the cloister. When Beatrice in her clear, dazzling beauty, looked at Dante after the departure of Piccarda, he explains,

> her eyes
> sparkling with love and burning so divine,
> my strength of sight surrendered to her power –
>
> I was about to faint. (*Paradiso* IV, l. 139-142)

As star differs from star in brightness, soul differs from soul in beauty: in the degree of gift of will to God. Our action flows from what we are. Despite original sin, the soul yearns for its Creator because sprung from His love and made for Him, and the Catholic educator has to recognize this fundamental feature of every child before him. In the central canto of the *Divine Comedy*, Virgil describes to Dante the direct creation of each human soul, fashioned by God's tenderness:

> "From the fond hands of God, Who loves her even
> before He gives her being, there issues forth
> just like a child, all smiles and tears at play,
>
> the simple soul, pure in its ignorance,
> which, having sprung from her Creator's joy,
> will turn to anything it likes."
> (*Purgatorio* XVI, l. 85-90)

The soul, "sprung from her Creator's joy," is joy-aimed. She is God-aimed, good-aimed, on a quest of loving inclination to fill her spiritual capacity for absolute Joy.

> "The soul at birth, created quick to love
> will move toward anything that pleases it,
> as soon as pleasure causes it to move,"

Virgil explains, and he answers Dante's question: "that inclination is love."

> "Just as a fire's flames always rise up,
> inspired by its own nature to ascend,
> seeking to be in its own element,
>
> just so, the captive soul begins its quest,
> the spiritual movement of its love,
> not resting till the thing loved is enjoyed."
> (*Purgatorio* XVIII, l. 19-33)

Pope Pius XII refers to this same section in the *Divine Comedy* to show the God-instilled dynamism of the soul toward the good and at the same time the child's need for guidance in the choice of particular goods:

> An irresistible instinct for the true and the good carries the "simple soul which as yet knows nothing" toward sensible objects; and all this sensibility, all of these sensations of the child… need an education, an instruction, a vigilant direction… if we are to avoid any compromise or falsifying of the normal awakening and regular function of the noble spiritual faculties.[6]

The fundamental inclination of the soul to good, which St. Thomas calls *synderesis*, exists in a fallen nature, and the child needs an education to virtue which will habituate him to recognize and choose legitimate goods. Love is "the source of every virtue, every vice" (*Purgatorio* XVIII, l. 15), because the intention of the will to love rightly determines the moral value of an act. Virtue "winnows out the good love from the bad" (*ibid*., l. 66), the objects worthy of man's choice from those which lead him away from his end. The educator's role is to help the child recognize "the good love," nourishing the child's imagination by surrounding him in order and beauty, habituating him to love uprightly, training his reason to recognize truth and discern the virtuous action.

The Soul Sealed with the Light of God

Throughout the domains of the *Inferno* and the *Purgatorio* the poet insists that the mind's desire to know is insatiable because the only good which will entirely fill the intellect is the vision of God. Virgil fosters Dante's healthy thirst for knowledge, urging him to question and discover. In Canto XX of the *Purgatorio*, Dante describes his "violent desire for the truth" (l. 147) at the shaking of the mountain, utterly unexpected and accompanied by a great cry of *Gloria in excelsis Deo*:

> The natural thirst which nothing satisfies
> except that water begged for long ago
> by the poor woman of Samaria
>
> Tormented me… (*Purgatorio* XXI, l. 1-4).

In this permanent thirst of our intellect, which nothing slakes but the vision of God, we again see the mark of the Creator on our souls. In his treatise on *The Teacher*, St. Thomas calls the created light of reason "a kind of likeness of the uncreated truth." "The human mind is divinely illuminated by its natural light," St. Thomas explains, and he quotes Psalm 4, which the Church sings every Sunday at Compline: "*Signatum est super nos lumen vultus tui, Domine,*" "The light of Your countenance is signed upon us." By our intellect, we are stamped with the seal of God's own power to know.[7]

As we saw the educator strengthening the student's will to choose the good, so also the teacher is a strengthener of the intellect, not somehow injecting his ideas into the mind of the child but instrumentally helping the child form true concepts and actively draw conclusions. We saw Virgil encouraging Dante to ask the

question he was too timid to express; throughout the *Inferno*, along the paths which Virgil had already trodden, we see him continually foreseeing the route and adapting his pedagogy to foster Dante's learning. Whether alerting Dante to what he will encounter, allowing Dante to live an experience and then formulate his own questions, or pausing to give philosophical explanations and discuss the reasons for what they have seen, Virgil is always aiming at the most effective manner of awakening Dante to grasp truth for himself. St. Thomas explains, "The teacher's presentations are like tools that the natural reason of the student uses to come to an understanding of things previously unknown to him." As the doctor gives medicine so that the body will heal itself, so the educator fulfills all of his tasks so that the student's soul will reach knowledge and virtue by its own power.[8] "Our role in class," confirms Dominican Mother Hélène Jamet in a letter to teaching Sisters,

> is principally to help each child to discover, in each domain, and in an atmosphere of generosity and freedom… the few central notions which he must make his own and which he must be able to use as his own."[9]

The educator initiates and mediates the process of discovery, but the mind of the student works his own knowledge, just as his will works virtue.

Detail from *Empyrean*—A fresco by Philipp Veit, Dante Hall, Casino Massimo, Rome, 1818-1824.
Source: Sailko, https://commons.wikimedia.org/

The Teacher: A Manifestation of the Goodness of God

St. Thomas insists that the teacher is genuinely a cause of goodness and knowledge in the child, albeit instrumental. The teacher really does share in God's power *to do good*; the educator *saves.* "Virgil, sweet father," Dante cries, "Virgil to whom for my salvation I gave up my soul" (*Purgatorio* XXX, l. 50-51). It is Beatrice by her action who has brought Dante to the heights at which she leaves him:

> She, with the tone and gesture of a guide
> whose task is done, said: "We have gone beyond –
> from greatest sphere to heaven of pure light,
>
> light of the intellect, light full of love,
> love of the true good, full of ecstasy,
> ecstasy that transcends the sweetest joy."
> (*Paradiso* XXX, l. 37-42)

The teacher collaborates with God in bringing the soul to such sublimity. God has "woven [the created universe] together by the order and interconnection of causes": the order of the universe is a fabric of interdependence, "for the primary Cause, from Its outstanding goodness, makes other things not only to be, but also to be causes."[10]

> Just like the sun's outpoured rays, which not only illumine other bodies but make them to be sources of light, too… similarly, in the ordering of the universe, as a result of the outpouring of God's goodness, superior creatures [men and angels] are not only good in themselves, but also are causes of goodness in others.[11]

Virgil and Beatrice stabilize Dante in truth and in orientation toward the good by guiding him to perform acts of discovery and freedom. The angels in the *Paradiso* illustrate the interconnection of teachers and students in human education:

> All of the angelic ranks gaze upward,
> as downward they prevail upon the rest,
> so while each draws the next, all draw toward God.
> (*Paradiso* XXIX, l. 127-129)

Through all those who educate, God is glorified by His *goodness in sharing His power.*

The Sacred Acts of Education

St. Thomas begins at these heights when he speaks of education. The immediate and glorious filiation of every human soul from the hand of God makes it a sacred thing, and baptism brings this resemblance of nature to a sonship in grace. "When I say that [a child] resembles God by his baptism," writes Fr. de Chivré,

> I am saying that he resembles three Persons… It is the joy of the father, the joy of the mother… to sense in [their child] a heart beating in unison with three Persons… As a priest, I have to tell you that your children have spiritual reactions that you do not even suspect.[12]

Every educator–priest, parent or teacher–moves in a divine realm, acting as an instrument to bring the intellect and will into the fullness of a divinely-bestowed power to act, helping strengthen the soul in its God-given, God-aimed movement. "The end of education is that the child come to prefer freely and forever the true over the false, good over evil, the just over the unjust, beauty over ugliness, and God over all," explains theologian and educator Fr. Victor-Alain Berto.[13] The educators whom we encounter in Dante's *Divine Comedy* offer us models to apply these principles faithfully, in actions that are true to the sacredness of our task.

Education Is Charity and Generosity

Dante asks Virgil to define love for him, but Virgil's actions have been defining love from the first moment he took Dante under his care. "Have pity on my soul," are the first words cried out by Dante, lost in the "dark wood," to the dim figure approaching, in the first canto of the *Commedia.* Virgil's mission of goodness was initiated by the pity of the Blessed Virgin: "A gracious lady sits in heaven grieving… and her compassion breaks Heaven's stern decree" (*Inferno* II, l. 94-96). Education is an act of mercy, descending to the aid of a misery, a need in the student, and it is rooted in the paternal mercy of God. "Anyone who exercises providence over another shares in the character of a father," St. Thomas writes in his *Summa Theologica* (IIaIIae, q. 102, a. 1). Virgil the teacher is a father to Dante, and education is a process of paternal tenderness.

Envy has no entry where teaching is participation in divine goodness. Virgil's mission began in a conspiracy of intercession, the Blessed Virgin sending St. Lucy who sent Beatrice to summon Virgil from Limbo to help the wandering Dante. Virgil "crowns and miters [Dante] lord of himself" at the top of Mount Purgatory (*Purgatorio* XXVII, l. 142) and passes his charge on to Beatrice, the blessed; Beatrice herself passes Dante finally to St. Bernard (*Paradiso* XXXI), so that he might intercede with the Blessed Virgin to obtain for Dante a glimpse of the beatific vision before his time. Envy has no place in sanctified society: "The more souls there above who are in love / the more there are worth loving," explains Virgil (*Purgatorio* XV, l. 73-74), and the souls in the sphere of Mars sing out, "Behold one more who will increase our love," as Virgil and Beatrice approach (*Paradiso* V, l. 105). "Never be jealous of your influence," writes Fr. Berto.

> We can never be too many doing good. Moreover, be sure that your influence will increase to the extent that you facilitate that of others. Do not forget that souls are born for God, and that it would be a crime to stop them at ourselves.[14]

The educator is entirely focused outside of himself, on the good which he desires the student to obtain. When Dante and Beatrice pass into the sphere of the sun and Dante finds himself more open to the divine light and approaching the goal of his quest, he momentarily forgets his guide. "And now give thanks," Beatrice says, "thanks to the Sun of Angels by whose grace you have ascended to this sun of sense."

No mortal heart was ever more disposed
to do devotion and to yield itself
to God so fully and so readily

than mine was at her words. So totally
did I direct all of my love to Him,
that Beatrice, eclipsed, had left my mind.

But this did not displease her, and she smiled
so that the splendor of her laughing eyes
broke my mind's spell. (*Paradiso* X, l. 52-63)

The educator who is *in order* delights to be eclipsed by the light and to see his student gradually confirmed in confident, independent, virtuous action.

This sacred generosity sparks in the student a desire for the good and the energy to pursue it. "Love, / kindled by virtue, always kindles love" (*Purgatorio* XXII, l. 10-11), and the virtuous love of the teacher inspires love in the student. Dante describes his final firm resolve to begin the path to virtue: at Virgil's words,

…such warm courage flowed into my heart
that I spoke like a man set free of fear:

"O she, compassionate, who moved to help me!
And you, all kindness, in obeying quick
those words of truth she brought with her for you –

you and the words you spoke have moved my heart
with such desire to continue onward
that now I have returned to my first purpose.

Let us start, for both our wills, joined now, are one.
You are my guide, you are my lord and teacher."
These were my words to him and, when he moved,

I entered on that deep and rugged road.
(*Inferno* II, l. 131-142)

At every step of the rugged road, Virgil is ready with attentive goodness. Virgil and Beatrice guide Dante out of love, and love binds him to his guides: their wills are one, joined in desire for the same good.

Education Is an Apprenticeship of Trust

Rather than obedience, Virgil asks of Dante *trust.* The Pilgrim trembles at the moment of passing through the gates to "the Doleful City": "Abandon every hope, all you who enter." "'Master, I said, 'these words I see are cruel.'"

He answered me, speaking with experience:
"Now here you must leave all distrust behind;
let all your cowardice die on this spot.

We are at the place where earlier I said
you could expect to see the suffering race
of souls who lost the good of intellect."

Placing his hand on mine, smiling at me
in such a way that I was reassured,
he led me in, into those mysteries.
(*Inferno* III, l. 1-21)

Virgil's rational encouragement is joined to gestures of affection, and Dante finds the strength to move forward.

Yet dangers are real, particularly in the *Inferno.* Gorgons perched on the walls of the City of Dis, the domain of hell reserved for the demonic sins of malice, summon Medusa to freeze Dante's will with despair. The threat is not empty: Virgil not only warns Dante, "Turn your back and cover up your eyes," but as Dante tells us, "he turned me round / and did not trust my hands to hide my eyes / but placed his own on mine and kept them covered" (*Inferno* IX, l. 55-60). Half of the voyage through the *Inferno* is spent in the realms of fraud and treachery, and Virgil has to be particularly on his guard for his charge. They travel down into these lowest depths on the back of the mythical dragon Geryon, "that repulsive spectacle of fraud," "the one that makes the whole world stink" by the rotting corruption of death it causes in society.

His face was the face of any honest man,
it shone with such a look of benediction;
and all the rest of him was serpentine.
(*Inferno* XVII, l. 1-12)

Virgil does not let Dante witness his negotiation with this "malignant beast," but sends him out of earshot. When Dante returned, he tells us,

I found my guide already sitting high
upon the back of that fierce animal;
he said: "And now, take courage and be strong…

Get on up front. I want to ride behind,
to be between you and the dangerous tail."

…I felt those stabs of shame that make
a servant brave before his valorous master.

As I squirmed around on those enormous shoulders,
I wanted to cry out, "Hold on to me,"
but I had no voice to second my desire.

> Then he who once before had helped me out
> when I was threatened put his arms around me
> as soon as I was settled, and held me tight…
> (*Inferno* XVII, l. 79-96)

Virgil's prudence and Dante's docility make every experience serve Dante's growth in virtue.

A trusting, ordered affection makes Dante quick to receive guidance from Virgil and saddened at the least hint of displeasing his educator. "All absorbed" in the low debate between two souls in the *Inferno*, Virgil said to him merely, "Keep right on looking, / a little more, and I shall lose my patience."

> I heard the note of anger in his voice,
> and turned to him; I was so full of shame
> that it still haunts my memory today…
>
> "Less shame than yours would wash away a fault
> greater than yours has been," my master said,
> "and so forget about it, do not be sad.
>
> If ever again you should meet up with men
> engaging in this kind of futile wrangling,
> remember I am always at your side;
>
> to have a taste for talk like this is vulgar!"
> (*Inferno* XXX, l. 130-148)

This filial turning to his *maestro* forms Dante's conscience; it is an exercise of *sursum corda*, an act of openness preparing him for the divine light that will eventually flow directly into his strengthened eyes.

Virgil encourages Dante to trust so that he might learn to act on his own. "O my dear son," Virgil reassures Dante, as they are about to pass through the wall of purifying fire at the top of Mount Purgatory,

> "Remember all your memories! If I
> took care of you when we rode Geryon,
> shall I do less when we are nearer God?...
>
> It's time, high time, to put away your fears;
> turn towards me, come, and enter without
> fear!" (*Purgatorio* XXVII, l. 20-24, 31-32)

Perfect love casts out fear, and Virgil uses all his influence to bring Dante toward a final act of will, confirming him in the pursuit of good.

A Curriculum of Beauty

"Good perceived as good enkindles love," Dante answers St. John, who is testing the graduate for entry to the vision of God (*Paradiso* XXVI, l. 28). In the *Inferno*, Virgil mediated Dante's journey through the disorder of those "who lost the good of intellect," but it is particularly in the *Purgatorio* that we see the chosen curriculum of the Church for souls in grace. Before the joy of the Beatific Vision, souls advance in the joy of the Beatitudes. Christian art surrounds Dante as he climbs: "all the inner cliff" of the first Terrace of Purgatory "was pure white marble," forming an image of the Annunciation. Gabriel, "carved in an attitude of marble grace, / an effigy that could have spoken words," seems to be saying "Ave!"

> for she who turned the key, opening for us
> the Highest Love, was also figured there;
>
> the outlines of her image carved the words
> *Ecce ancilla Dei*, as clearly cut
> as is the imprint of a seal on wax.
> (*Purgatorio* X, l. 29-42)

Song, story, drama, history sacred and profane… organized, ordered, infuse order in souls. Fr. Calmel indicates an application of this same principle of educating through art:

> In school, what has in itself the most power to form the children – whether girls or boys – is their contact with beautiful works (and later on with a philosophical and theological teaching) that express man in the use he makes of his freedom.[15]

The liturgy of the Church envelops souls in their climb up Mount Purgatory. "I could hear voices," Dante tells us from the third Terrace;

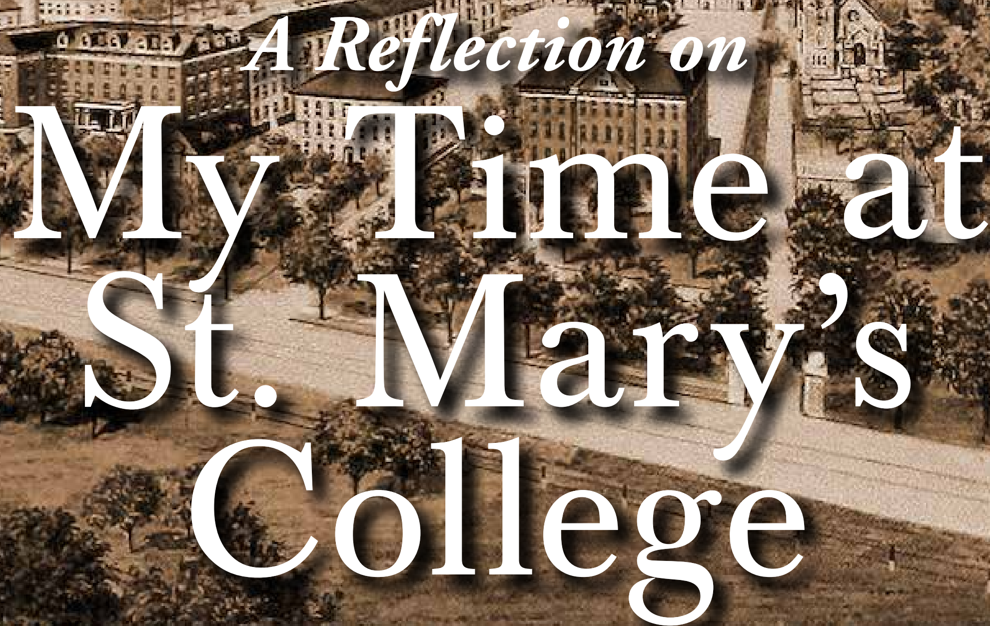
> Each prayer they sang began with *Agnus Dei*;
> the same words, sung in unison, produced
> an atmosphere of perfect harmony.
> (*Purgatorio* XVI, l.16-21)

"There is no infallible means of education," warns Fr. Berto, "but we hold for certain that education through Gregorian chant is the best, being the most theological and at the same time the most apt to forge characters."[16] Dante educates as the Church educates: through beauty, to adoration.

Invitation to Receive a Tradition

"I think it best you follow me," is Virgil's invitation to Dante in the first canto of the *Divine Comedy*. St. Thomas describes education

Continued on page 29...



A Reflection on My Time at St. Mary's College

Jane Spencer

In the children's novel *Carry on, Mr. Bowditch,* ship clerk Nathaniel Bowditch teaches his uneducated shipmates to navigate by measuring the stars. "It [does] things to a man," Nat thinks, "to find out he has a brain." The point isn't that the ship arrives at its destination any more efficiently manned by a whole crew of navigators than by one. Nat is just glad that the men are intellectually satisfied and consequently happy. When I arrived as a first-year student at St. Mary's College, I was surprised to find that–like myself–many of my classmates hadn't originally wanted to come to St. Mary's. They were persuaded by parents, mentors, religious or friends to make a decision which, to an ambitious teenager, seemed pointless: working hard for two years at an unconventional liberal arts college which wasn't even fully accredited. In hindsight, I see that this decision was a mark of freedom: only a free person "wastes" time on an education which is simply good for him.

This essay reflects on the relation between freedom, which has grown misunderstood (and consequently fragile) today, and the mission of St. Mary's College. It draws three connections and explores how the liberal arts are critical in the connecting: the first is between freedom and time, the second between freedom and understanding, and the last is between freedom and pilgrimage.

My two years at St. Mary's were a step out of time. I remember trying to capture one night, shortly before graduation, when my friends and I sat on a dock watching the stars come out. It was an "eternal moment," like Dostoyevsky described, or T.S. Eliot's "intersection of the timeless with time," and I told myself that it would stay for the rest of my life, continuing somewhere in my soul. Two years had passed quickly, but they had also been marked by interior stillness and a freedom from time because what would come *after* was not the purpose of what happened *during* those two years. Some educations are preparations for a busy life in the world: Nursing students study to take care of the sick, MBA students study so they can become successful businessmen, and students of trades study to put their trades into practice. The present is dominated by the shadow of the future, and the education isn't free; it is at the service of something to come. At St. Mary's,

however, the future held the mission to carry on what we were doing in the present. Rather than preparing us for life as nursing school prepares functional nurses, our liberal education marked us with the mission of returning to itself and of spreading it into whatever active role we played in the world. It established a core of contemplation which defied being "useful" because it, itself, was the final goal. A liberal education is a journey to the heart of what *is*–not to manipulate, cure or fix it, but simply to contemplate its deepest reasons. This is why the liberal arts have been dismissed by a use-driven society: they can't be used, but only lived. Learning dead languages or theology yields no method for making factory production more efficient, and no one dissects Homer's *Iliad* to harness the words into something practical for ending poverty or curing cancer; the essence would be lost in the harnessing. Instead, the persisting same-ness of the piece testifies to the persisting truths which it celebrates. When Francis Bacon—at the beginning of the scientific revolution—re-defined "the true ends of knowledge… [to be] benefit and use," he sapped education of its inherent worth: learning was no longer contemplative but became a tool whose worth was measured by its productivity. Since our minds are so closely tied to our identity, this is only a step away from the conclusion that people *themselves* should be measured by their productivity. Bacon's modern day disciples champion an exclusively STEM system of education in which the classroom is merely a springboard to material inventions. The liberal arts classroom is not a springboard, but a resting place. It is free from the passage of time because its value doesn't lie in a subsequent product or event, but in the activity of the present moment.

At St. Mary's, this activity was one of understanding: we were invited to know the way things are most deeply, as a whole, and from a higher perspective. My liberal arts classes were like a kaleidoscope in which many layers contributed to a whole picture which, while greater than any individual subject, depended on all of them. In history, we learned the context of the ideas we discussed in philosophy. At the same time, we saw these ideas play out in the art of epic poetry and novels, and ultimately sought the source of truth in theology. In a spiritual conference, one of the priests at the college explained that our education was freeing us from our own opinions. We could step from the world of our own prejudices to the world as it *is,* which was always more beautiful. It's true that this inspired us to plan for vocations which would "set fire to the earth," but even more importantly our new understanding set fire in our hearts: *cor ardens* was our college motto. This was the point of our freedom: not primarily in anything we would accomplish, but in setting our minds on noble things to understand and love, and in our consequent happiness. Freedom depends on understanding not only because we need to know what a man *should* be before we can choose to be a good one, but because understanding is the heart of the human identity. Aristotle says that contemplation, or a wondering gaze at the highest truths, is the act which defines a human person; we are men because we can see the way things are. Our desire to understand is consequently closely tied to our desire to *be*, and an exploration of the world through the liberal arts is an act of being. As Aristotle explains, "a human being is free… when he is for his own sake and not for someone else." The liberal arts are deeply for our own sake—not, however, enclosing us on ourselves. Aristotle's understanding of "for our own sake" is expansive rather than isolating because he sees our highest fulfillment to be an act of contemplation: we gaze in worship at God, the deepest Reason of all. The liberal arts open our minds to contemplation, the friendship with Christ which is our purpose.

At St. Mary's, we were told that we were, at heart, pilgrims. Pilgrimage was "a microcosm of life," in the words of our chaplain. Freedom is an invitation to enter into pilgrimage because our identity is, first of all, a call towards a goodness which must be pursued. Aristotle defines identity as a readiness for action. He calls it a "starting point": from the moment of our conception in the womb we have the capacity to thrive, while actualizing this capacity is the journey of a lifetime. The destination—our perfection—is as fixed as a lighthouse, but this doesn't make us any less free in pursuing it because perfection is the purpose of freedom. Our being, with its aspirations, weaknesses and complex union of body and soul, can't be changed to serve other ends; we can't alter human nature to further medicine, advance the arts, or stop wars. The constraints of the puzzles we solve in life are set *by*, rather than imposed *on* our nature. This makes our identity and our pilgrimage to fulfill it free, subject to nothing but itself and its

author, God. It also means that the knowledge of what we are and of what goodness means—a knowledge pursued in the liberal education—is essential to freedom. People don't find liberation by removing every constraint, but by learning and embracing the essential constraints, journeying towards what is best for them. Seeing the world truly is an invitation to set out boldly towards the good.

One of Solzhenitsyn's reproaches to the Russian people is that they "didn't love freedom enough," causing apathy and cowardice in the rise of Soviet power. It isn't a coincidence that Stalin targeted the educated, seeing them as a special threat to his regime. Study which uncovers reality as a unified whole in light of the stars safeguards a man's freedom by allowing him to order his life for his highest good. My peers from St. Mary's have gone on to start families, work in trades, enter careers, pursue higher education, or enter the religious life. We were educated, however, for no particular vocation except one: a friendship with truth in the Person of Christ.

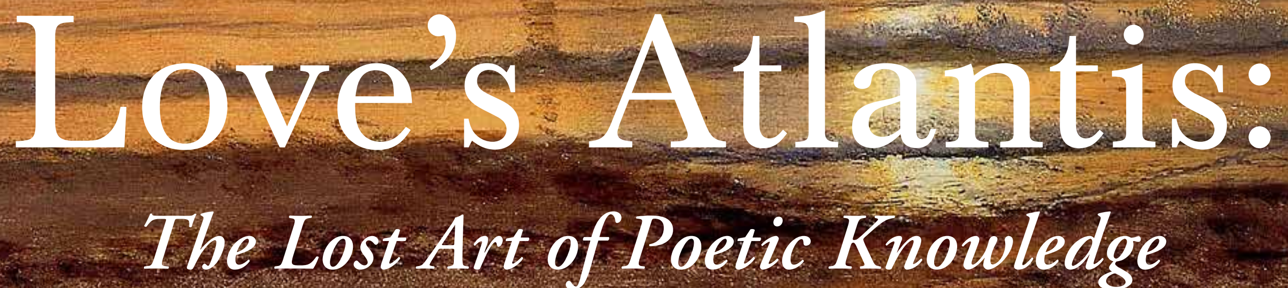
In the years since I've left St. Mary's, I've become grateful for something which I hardly noticed at the time. It is the strong sense of humor of our professors and priests, and their inability to be scandalized or to take offense. Laughter is easy in an atmosphere of freedom because it flows from trust: trust in one another, in the good of the present, and in the promise that truth will end up on top. Our classrooms were places for hearty attitudes and hard laughter because we knew that the truth was trustworthy. It wasn't sensitive or overly delicate. Remembering this has given me confidence in moments when the principles I learned at St. Mary's have been challenged in broader environments. While I might feel shaken and inexperienced, I can rest knowing that my mentors passed through the same challenges, and after years of trial, have preserved and refined conviction in the truth which is deep enough to be merry.

Dante's *Divine Comedy*: Educating for the Joy of God
Continued from page 26

as a leading by the hand, a *manuductio*, a gradual advancing, together, in confidence. Both Dante and St. Thomas were poets and philosophers, but most of all they were teachers, guides of souls; they can be our guides as we rediscover the vivifying principles of Catholic education. May we *believe in charity*, take the hand they offer, and receive from them a tradition of teaching able "to forge characters" *in love with the good.*

Endnotes

1. Translation of the *Divine Comedy* by Mark Musa (*The Portable Dante*, Penguin Books, 1995).
2. See Pope Benedict XV's 1921 encyclical honoring Dante on the 600th anniversary of the poet's death, *In Praeclara Summorum*: "Among the many celebrated geniuses of whom the Catholic faith can boast who have left undying fruits in literature and art especially and to whom civilization and religion are ever in debt, highest stands the name of Dante Alighieri. Dante lived in an age which inherited the most glorious fruits of philosophical and theological teaching and thought, and handed them on to the succeeding ages with the imprint of the strict scholastic method. Amid the various currents of thought diffused then too among learned men Dante ranged himself as disciple of that Prince of the school so distinguished for his angelic temper of intellect, Saint Thomas Aquinas. From him he gained nearly all his philosophical and theological knowledge, and while he did not neglect any branch of human learning, at the same time he drank deeply at the founts of Sacred Scripture and the Fathers."
3. Third Abbot of the Benedictine monastery of Solesmes and former professor of Thomistic theology. *Retraite avec Dom Delatte*, Solesmes, 1991, pp. 56-57.
4. Psalm 18:2, Psalm 146:4.
5. *The Mass of St. Pius V*, STAS Editions, 2010, p. 57.
6. Pius XII, Allocution to Italian Mothers, October 26, 1941.
7. Commentary on Boethius' *De Trinitate*, q. 1, a. 1, sc.
8. *On the Teacher*, *De Veritate*, q. 11, a. 1.
9. May 1953. Mother Hélène was Superior General of the Dominican Teaching Sisters of the Holy Name of Jesus of Toulouse.
10. *On the Teacher*, *De Veritate*, q. 11, a. 1.
11. *On Providence*, *De Veritate*, q. 5, a. 8.
12. *Le Mariage*, *Carnet spirituel 1*, Association du R.P. de Chivré, June 2004, p. 28.
13. Theologian of Archbishop Lefebvre at Vatican II, Dominican tertiary, founder of the Dominican Sisters of the Holy Ghost, in *Réflexions sur l'éducation*.
14. Letter of December 28, 1934, in *Notre Dame de Joie*, Nouvelles Editions Latines, 1973.
15. *Ecole chrétienne renouvelée*, Téqui, 1958, p. 63. Fr. Roger-Thomas Calmel was a friend of Archbishop Lefebvre and chaplain of the Dominican Teaching Sisters of the Holy Name of Jesus of Toulouse.
16. "*L'Education par le grégorien*," in *Itinéraires* 246, Sept.-Oct. 1980.



Love's Atlantis:

The Lost Art of Poetic Knowledge

Jonathan Wanner

"Love takes up where knowledge leaves off."
–Aquinas

When students dip their toes into a poem, they usually wade their way through its figurative language until they wash up to some shore of meaning. The problem is the students' eyes: they believe they've discovered a new continent when, in reality, they've hit a sandbar. The irony is that the poem's meaning is not even on land: it is in a New Atlantis fathoms below, and you must drown a little to see it. To show you what I mean, here are a few "sandbars" my college students recently discovered:

Student 1: Wordsworth's "Ode: Intimations of Immortality" poignantly reminds readers to appreciate nature with child-like wonder.

Student 2: Wordsworth's "Ode: Intimations of Immortality" touches upon some rather deep feelings about youth, nature, and growing up.

Student 3: Wordsworth's "Ode: Intimations of Immortality" really paints a vivid picture in the reader's mind through the use of imagery, personification, and metaphors.

No one would disagree, and that is precisely the problem. These observations are so universal, so agreeable that they lack purpose entirely: the first two are true of nearly every Wordsworth poem, and the third describes millions of literary works. Student 1 already knows that he should appreciate nature as children do; Student 2 simply records a list of themes he found on LitCharts, neither specifying them nor explaining why they matter; and Student 3—utterly confused about the poem's content—avoids interpreting it altogether, commenting only on stock stylistic devices. In each case, the student affirms familiar notions at the expense of new-found wisdom, at the expense of experiencing the poem's true artistry. They would be better off if they drowned a little more in the inconvenience of wonder.

To be fair, these catch-all formulae are not without incentives: they abolish the risk of disagreement; they hasten the writing process; and most primary and secondary schools explicitly encourage them since 1) they are easy to imitate, and 2) the appearance of logic is easier to teach than actual logic. One can scarcely imagine what chaos—what anarchy!—would ensue if we removed the "funnel" of meaningless generalities that *must* inaugurate every introduction: *e.g.* "Since the dawn of time people have been *quite fascinated* by the beneficial influence of nature. One such person is Wordsworth…" Surely our memories would sink into oblivion if the conclusion of every two-page paper did not repeat what immediately came before it. Surely morality would dissolve if we did not tyrannize teenagers to memorize bullet-point indexes of trite platitudes. Lady Liberty herself would crumble lest we forget the laundry lists of character names, literary devices, and banal plot summaries…

The bare truth is that poetic knowledge is not so quantifiable as mainstream schools, textbooks, and Sparknotes make it seem. There is, Cleanth Brooks reminds us, a certain "heresy"[1] of paraphrasing a poem: a curtailed summary, a familiar maxim, a handful of figurative devices are poor substitutes for the total aesthetic experience of reading—the "living out" of creation's vacuity and transcendence in the composite intimacy of the soul. Imagine if a memory machine could vacuum up your childhood experiences, with all its scrapes and ice cream, and replace them with a bullet-point list of "themes." It would be a curse nothing short of diabolical! Nor is a simple reminder "to know, love, and serve God" a fair replacement for a first-hand *encounter* of sanctification: the salt-tears of a frank contrition, the lisping of nuptial vows, the aroma of chrism seeping into your pores. This is the stuff of poetry—the grit and silk, the ebb and flow of meeting your own humanity face-to-face, with all its trials and transfigurations.

Of course, describing what poetic knowledge is only takes one to the edge of the precipice: poetry is an intuitive acquisition, and you must leap to really know what the plummet feels like. You cannot pin this kind of knowledge down with scientific abstractions. It is not a moth collection. It is a living, intuitive knowing grounded in a constant fluctuation of colors, pitches, odors, flavors, and textures. Reading a poem is like peeking through a kaleidoscope where contraries exchange and collide in patterns ever new, mixing the familiar with the strange, pleasure with pain, life with death, order with chaos, grief with joy.

> So the canvas spins,
> Never twice the same.

Only in those best of moments, the colors stop their heaping. Through this little telescope of shards and light, something beatific—what it is, who can say?—shines:

> Through the stillness the glass holds
> (In its frame and in our eyes)
> The raiment of the morn.
> For an instant, the little world pauses
> As a second sun.

When the vision fades, all that is left is wonder. What did you find, you ask, through the kaleidoscope's narrow way? You close your eyes. You look up: you are back where you were before.

> And yet, a ring – new-made –
> Is stamped about your brow.
> Look down. You might mistake the tube
> For a flute that breathes colors instead of notes
> Or a pipe that endlessly drains the stain
> Of every worldly thing.
> But whatever your mistake,
> Captured somewhere in this cylinder,
> Which is as long as your vision,
> Is a paraphrase of the dawn.

At its best, poetry is a seeing of the divine: a "peering through the lattices" (Song of Songs 2:9). It wipes the dust off our eyes so we can get a better glint of how the world is "apparelled in celestial light."[2]

Of course, poetry is sublunary as well. The angelic inevitably encounters the bestial as high meets low, as the extraordinary greets the ordinary. A poem could be as casual as a stubbed toe or as set-apart as the marbled eyes of a new-breathing babe. A poem is a zip-line through the Alps, or a waltz in the rain, or the crest of a tsunami, or a hornet's sting, or the puzzlement of a perfectly aggravating riddle. Over daffodiled hills, through wasted plains, you laboriously plod or skate with graceful ease. You skim and dive and sometimes drown. You seek, you sometimes find and often yield, but

whatever is lost or found you return always to the meter's drumming, the ink's humming, the lyre's strum. Always the heartstrings tug: a sad mirth here, or there a pleasing pain—and the gut cries that you have imagined more than you will know. The lights dim, the curtains close, and the world keeps its habit of going on. Yet the memories whirl in the cosmic space between your ears—the music of spheres, Dante's rings, and the elliptical planets on peacock tails.[3]

Of course, peacocks do not trail literal solar systems behind them, and most educators would hardly believe that even a feather has a cosmic purpose, or that every little ornament of nature tends toward time's ultimate end. Poetic fancy, they presume, is only meaningful when it teaches students "innovation" or when it fools them into learning quantifiable facts and catch-all platitudes. A castle in the sky, under terms of common sense, becomes an O-so-fun! opportunity to learn about meteorology, or to teach a lesson about cloud pollution, or yet another random occasion to remind children to "just be nice." How easily we demote the fine arts by performing them like servile arts, as if poetry were just like hiring a mechanic or prescribing the right medication. If we believe the only point of a castle in the sky is to "get the job done," then we miss the opportunity of actually looking at it, of admiring its Edenic glory. What fool would say that God made roses beautiful only so that we could make money selling them or only so that children would have another noun to memorize? The purpose of their beauty is desirability: we are drawn to them for their own sake since, in themselves, they are a foretaste of the divine. For "the beauty of anything created is nothing else than a similitude of divine beauty," so that to gaze upon a rose is to touch, in a simple way, God's transcendental desirability, to peer at our very likeness of God, and to ennoble the soul with an encounter of its origins: indeed "divine beauty is the cause of… all that is (*Ex divina pulchritudine esse omnium derivatur*)."[4] How much more useful beauty would be to us if we used it a little less and instead listened to its sparrow's song, touched its hem, smelled its incense, tasted its savor, and watched it ebb and soar.

William Allingham **by Helen Allingham, 1876.**

Still, to the angel-eyed, there is an indulgent taint to the aesthetic encounter: stopping to smell the roses, even in the phantasmic theater of the imagination, feels so material, so mutable, so vain. Surely infatuation with art pales in comparison to the eternal realm of immaterial concepts and universal essences. As high-witted as this view may seem, Thomas Gilby assures us it is snobbery: "We must distrust the philosophical journalese that … imagines the mind as a cold impersonal being lodged in us somehow, but quite apart from the rhythm, the color, the scent of life, from the untidiness and infinite variety of individual wholes."[5] Roses are undeniably corruptible, contingent, not an ultimate end in themselves, yet their concrete presence, their individuality, their transience are the very reasons we coil them in the palms of our hands:

> "oh, the very reason why
> I clasp them, is because they die."
> —*William Johnson Corey*

There is a simple and immediate contact with the real when we contemplate the particular *existence* of beauty, not with the bestial appetite of a Netflix binger, but with the all-encircling body-mind union of a lover.

Certainly abstract concepts have some share in this encounter. Dogs cannot comprehend what a rose is, so they cannot understand a sonnet about one. Yet, *universals do not beget or attract*

except in so far as they are in particular[6] and *He who is drawn to something desirable does not desire to have it as a thought but as a thing.*[7] Contemplating *what* a rose is universally is not the same as contemplating *this* rose. In the words of Gilby, "Though the contemplative reason must rest in types rather than in things for the present, the mind still aspires to a closer imitation of the divine knowledge, which regards first the individual distinctions of things, not their common denominators."[8] To put it more simply, "Beatitude is not in principles but in things."[9]

Mendelssohn, when pressed to explain the meaning of his *Song Without Words*, simply played the piece over again. In a brief instant, he found that ineffable crossroad between the senses, reason, and love.

> *Loving draws us to things more than knowing does.*[10]
>
> *A thing may be loved more than it is known.*[11]
>
> *A thing can be immediately loved though mediately known.*[12]

Yet, for all art's beauty, students have no time to look, no time to rest in the cross-eyed vision. They are too busy working, and teachers are too busy pouring the "imperial gallons of facts" into the "vessels" of the student's brains: the catch-all generalities of PowerPoints slides and Sparknotes webpages; the pre-packaged summaries of Youtube, Google, and Reddit; the mass-produced trends of television and social media. Plug in the formula, type your answer in the search bar: at the touch of your fingertips a screen or an arbitrary stranger can hand you the facts, and "In this life, we want nothing but Facts, sir; nothing but Facts!"[13] Why even read the poem when you can skip to "what it means"?

The "liberal" in "liberal arts" insinuates freedom: freedom from the flux of a groupthink mentality, freedom to exercise the higher dials of the body-soul union. Ironically, what English students need is less support and fewer answers. They need to sit in a silent place, blink at nature, gape at art with senses wide open. They need to listen to their own breath, trace their palms' cracks, touch the million pore-holes that prick about their skin. They need to sing stories from their throat's vessel, versify them, illumine them, scratch them on pulp. They need to drown a little more in the world around so that they can breathe a little more in the Atlantis it has always been.

***A Herbaceous Border*, Helen Allingham (1848-1926).**

Endnotes

1 Cleanth Brooks, *The Well Wrought Urn: Studies in the Structure of Poetry* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1947), 193.

2 William Wordsworth, "Ode: Intimations of Immortality," *The Norton Anthology of English Literature*, 10th ed. (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 2018), 347.

3 Cf. Flannery O'Connor, "The King of the Birds."

4 Jacques Maritain, *Art and Scholasticism and the Frontiers of Poetry*, trans. Joseph W. Evans (Notre Dame: Notre Dame University Press, 1974), 31. Quotations from Aquinas' *Commentary* (lect. 5).

5 Thomas Gilby, *Poetic Experience: an Introduction to Thomistic Aesthetic* (New York: Sheed & Ward Inc., 1934), 34.

6 Thomas Aquinas, Comm. In I Meta. Lect. I. 1a: V: 3, ad 4.

7 XXII de Veritate, 3, ad 4.

8 *III Contra Gentes*, 63, 1a: XLVII: I.

9 Thomas Gilby, *Poetic Experience: an Introduction to Thomistic Aesthetic* (New York: Sheed & Ward Inc., 1934), 9.

10 Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, 1a-2ae: XXII: 2.

11 *Summa Theologica*, 1a-2ae: XXVII: 2, ad 2.

12 Q. *de Caritate*, 2, ad II.

13 Charles Dickens, *Hard Times* (London: Chapman and Hall, 1905), 3.

TITLE IMAGE: *Sunset over a Mountain Lake*, Albert Bierstadt (1830–1902).

The Corruption of Art Education *in the Modern Era*

Prof. David Clayton

Crucifix of San Damiano - Santa Chiara - Assisi.

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The Church has always seen the need of art for the communication and sustenance of the Faith. The Seventh Ecumenical Council, which closed in 787 A.D., did not simply permit the use of images–rather, it mandated the veneration of images of Christ, Our Lady, and the Saints as an essential aspect of devotional prayer and worship of the prototypes that the images depict.

Every Catholic church therefore must have images that inspire in the faithful right worship and devotion. Such images will not only have the right content–*what* they portray–but also must portray that content in the *right way*–how it is portrayed. The style of the art is just as important as the content, because style enables the artist who understands what he is doing to convey both visible and invisible realities through his painting.

Visible realities are conveyed by conformity to natural appearances. Put simply, we know that we are looking at a painting of Jesus because it looks like what we all believe Jesus to have looked like, as handed on to us through tradition.

Invisible realities are conveyed by partial abstractions–slight deviations from natural appearances that are undertaken by the artist in such a way that we perceive truths about that person that visual appearances alone could not convey. For example, a man has an invisible and immortal soul. An artist conveys to the viewer that this person is alive and possesses a soul by deviating from a strict naturalism. The viewer understands that what is represented is not simply a model that is identical to a man in every visible detail.

The precise way in which the artist deviates from strict naturalism gives him or her a distinctive and recognizable artistic style. We recognize a Fra Angelico, not by his adherence to natural appearances, but by the way he consistently deviates from them. Furthermore, we recognize Fra Angelico as a great Christian artist because tradition has judged his stylistic vocabulary to consist of a partial abstraction that *abstracts*–i.e. draws out– and hence reveals even greater truths than mere naturalistic appearances alone could portray. This is why, for example, the modern style of photorealism or the 19th-century realism of artists such as Bouguereau are not considered authentically Christian. They are too naturalistic.

Sketch for *The Crucifixion*, Graham Sutherland, 1946.
https://www.wikiart.org/

Similarly, this partial abstraction can be done well or badly. Consider, for example, the work of Picasso. His works were a deliberate distortion of naturalistic appearances inspired originally by traditional west African artistic styles. He wished to portray man as the innocent noble savage, uncorrupted (as he saw it) by a society of Christian values. This Romantic anthropology, which originated with Rousseau in the seventeenth century, manifests itself in Picasso as both a false (and not to mention highly patronizing) view of west African society and culture, and of Christian society and culture.

Given what Picasso was setting out to do, we should be highly suspicious of any attempt to portray Christian subjects in his style or those that are consistent with any wrong anthropology. A painting of the Crucifixion in, say, a 20th-century expressionistic style will very likely have within it an inbuilt contradiction. The content might speak of Christ, but the style speaks directly against it by design. To admit such works into our churches is to risk undermining the Faith. Picasso himself painted a Crucifixion which is so distorted that it is just about unrecognizable; one should not be surprised that an avowed atheist should be so disrespectful of the subject. However, we see also what is to my eye grave distortion of the 16th-century Isenheim altarpiece–or at the very least a significant departure from the Christian tradition–in the expressionistic style of the crucifixion painted in 1946 by the British artist Graham Sutherland. Sutherland was a convert to Catholicism and so was presumably sincere in trying to por-

tray the Christian message. This ignorance goes all the way to the top: a version of Sutherland's Crucifixion is held in the Vatican Museum.

The reason that such works of art do make it, and so often in the recent period, into our churches, is that so few artists or those who commission their work, even committed Catholics, understand Christian traditions of art. They most especially misunderstand how both style and content can work either for against the Gospel. There are some who hate the Faith and seek deliberately to use art to undermine the Church. However, they would not get very far if everyone else understood the traditional ways in which Christian traditions in art balanced naturalism and idealism so as to convey the mysteries of the Faith.

There is a need, therefore, for the re-establishment of the principles of a traditional Christian approach to the formation of taste and artistic skill. The essential elements of such a formation are as follows:

First, the observation of natural appearances and the study, with explanation leading to understanding, of past works of great Masters. For those who wish to learn to draw and paint this would involve copying nature and past Masters from a canon of works. The choice of Old Masters copied by artists in their training dictates the natural style of the artist. So while there is always a distinctive individual component as well, those who want to paint icons should copy lots of icons, and those who want to paint in the baroque style should copy many examples of 17th-century baroque art.

Second is the study of the mathematics of beauty. This is the traditional mathematical system of visual harmony and proportion that informed art and architecture for centuries prior to the 20th century. It comes from the study of musical harmony, the beauty of the cosmos, and the numerical patterns and symmetries that exist within the isolated world of mathematics itself. The figures most commonly given credit for Christianizing this field of study are St. Augustine and Boethius.

And third is a general Christian inculturation and spiritual formation. This would involve not only the study of the Faith and Christian culture, but for the greatest effect, a living of the Christian life according to this pattern. It would not have been so necessary to teach this in the classroom in the past. Artists would have been immersed in a Christian culture in which the very pattern of Christian living impressed itself onto the hearts of the faithful. Even those who rejected the Faith could not but help reflect unconsciously aspects of Christian culture in what they did. Today we are not so fortunate, and are at a point where even Catholic artists require such a formation.

Someone who went through such training would immediately understand why this 9th-century crucifixion, the San Damiano Crucifixion in Assisi, looks as it does. Every aspect of this style is carefully worked out to portray someone suffering as man, but immune to suffering as God.

If we look at mainstream art schools at our modern universities, I cannot name one that offers such training. In fact, most have abandoned every single element described above. If the skills of drawing and painting are taught at all, then it is highly unusual that it is to the level that one would have expected 200 years ago. Most do not even acknowledge beauty as a property of being, and consequently most faculty at such schools would not even be aware that mathematics of beauty even exists.

Finally, most not only do not offer a Christian inculturation, but they also enforce an anti-Christian inculturation. This will be either a modern twist on the Romantic worldview that emphasizes any subjectivity and emotion, provided that it does not coincide with a Christian worldview, which is generally forbidden. Or more commonly nowadays, it will emphasize an explicitly anti-Christian, anti-Western formation. Art departments, next to perhaps the English literature departments in our modern universities, are the most aggressive in pushing this propaganda and excluding people who dissent from their orthodoxy.

One thing is certain: I would not send Catholic children to any of our modern universities to study art. They will almost certainly be expelled for failing to conform, or will emerge as radical revolutionary Marxists.

The Origins of Education in America

Fr. Daniel Muscha, SSPX

Colonial Times

America has always been seen as a land of opportunity; a land that allowed a new way of life and a freedom from the institutions and restrictions of England and Europe. This is proven by the fact that Harvard, the first American college, founded in 1636, granted its first degree in 1642 without receiving authority of any kind! This might pass unnoticed except for the fact that in England the Bachelor of Arts degree could be awarded only by Oxford and Cambridge and only for law, medicine, theology and the traditional seven liberal Arts. Thus, Harvard granting degrees was as Samuel Elliot Morrison explains, "almost a declaration of independence from King Charles."[1]

America never had any distinction between college and university as Europe did, where a college was a place to receive instruction, was largely self-governing and had no power to grant degrees, and where a university was a degree-granting institution having received this special authority in the form of a papal bull or a Royal or Parliamentary charter. With Harvard granting its first degree independently of any authority, the precedent had been set and by the time of the American Revolution there were at least nine institutions granting degrees.

The universities of Europe date back to medieval times, and so received a medieval heritage of being run by clerics. They were largely independent of government control and consequently removed from politics. They possessed rich tracts of lands, large endowments, and buildings for support. Free from government control, they were given to free academic pursuits and learning.

In America the college or university depended directly upon the support of the local government and people around them. Lay boards oversaw their welfare and ensured they remained in touch with the community upon whom they were directly dependent. Nor did the American

college have any pool of well-educated men to draw from in forming the staff for the colleges and universities. Thus, the staff was often young and inexperienced and could not expect the deference and respect that would protect them from lay control. This is why the President and faculty ruling the institution but subject to veto by an outside body became the pattern for the American college and university and continues to this day. This meant that the American colleges and universities were not going to be self-governing institutions for the learned, but rather centers for the diffusion of learning.

It is not hard to see that this outside control of the American university made it prone to ideology, pressure, and politics. The American educational system was more concerned with the diffusion of learning to all rather than the advancement and perpetuation of learning. University education for all practical purposes became "under-graduate learning." The purpose of education was to supply each region with knowledgeable ministers, doctors, lawyers, merchants, *etc.*, and so the American College was at the center of each colony's affairs.

The early universities were run by religious sects and as each religious sect opened a college, it was a good reason for other opposing sects to open their own college to save the youth from the untruths of their competitors. This largely religious nature of the college necessarily caused the secularists to open their own institutions free from any religious affiliation. The competition among institutions caused the number of institutions to increase exponentially. From 1746-1769, twice as many colleges were founded than in the previous 100 years, and from 1769-1789 twice as many again than in the previous 20 years!

This competition among institutions, coupled with the sparse population, necessarily led to the faculty of these institutions being composed of rivaling sects with often only the president being from the sect of the institution. However, such competitiveness also led to the recruitment of students, and no religious institution imposed a religious test as a condition for entry. All of this had a liberalizing effect and practically "unity in diversity" was the spirit of the American university.

By the end of the colonial era, nearly every type of recruitment of students other than the sports scholarship was used. Fancy brochures and alumni, acting as recruiting agents, were common. This recruiting necessarily led to the lowering of standards for admission and graduation and the adding of popular courses. John Trumbull complained in 1773, "Except in one neighboring province, ignorance wanders unmolested at our colleges, examinations are dwindled to mere form and ceremony, and after four years dozing there, no one is ever refused the honors of a degree, on account of dullness and insufficiency."[2] America was not just offering education to all—it was offering an inflated intellectual currency! The purpose of American education had been set, and it was to make good citizens. American education was concerned with diffusing, not deepening, learning, and so education was becoming more and more subservient to economics.

Another factor in education was the need for men to perform a variety of tasks which in Europe were reserved to specialists. The shortage of personnel and the frontier character of America, as well as poorly defined roles, caused citizens to be jacks-of-all-trades. A successful New England clergyman was likely to be something of physician, politician, teacher and other roles as well. An American businessman's skills needed to be broad and fluid rather than specialized.

This blurring of roles also included women. For example, in frontier America the need for women's help in trade and on the plantation was crucial. Scarcity of help removed social prejudices. Thomas Jefferson admitted that with his own daughter, Patsy, her education needed to be "considerably different from what I think would be most proper for her sex in any other country other than America."[3]

The Democracy of America needed lawyers, since every colony needed law, and most especially while the colonies were being founded and established. However, the need and the looseness of education in America did not lend itself to specialized lawyers as in England. A lawyer in America could even be handicapped if he was "too systematized," and so American legal knowledge became simplified and popular.

The same need also led to a certain simplicity and lack of refinement in medicine, farming, and science. Men were not specialized in their craft and so practicality, and often crudeness, in craft was the norm in early colonial America.

There was more emphasis on "popular science" or things that could be understood by everyone rather than refinement of craft.

When Abbé Raynal said in 1774, "America has not yet produced one good poet, one able mathematician, one man of genius in a single art or science,"[4] Thomas Jefferson was annoyed but could only say that the colonies had not had time yet to produce a Homer or Shakespeare, but then pointed to George Washington as a great military leader.

Post-Colonial Years

In the years after the Revolution, America was lost in the struggle to establish a national identity. Having broken from England, she wanted to throw off her English habits and develop a culture of her own. This is what drove Noah Webster to publish his "American Spelling Book" in 1789 and his first dictionary in 1806. He wanted to establish the "purity of the English language" which he thought had been destroyed in England by writers of the 18th century.

With his spelling book and use of the spelling bee, Webster sought to change the spelling and pronunciation of the English Language to an American language. The American pronunciation of the language became what the word "ought to sound like" rather than by custom. This is clear when he says in the preface to his dictionary "those people spell the best, who do not know how to spell."[5]

With the influx of people to America, the great melting pot, there were in the 19th century many words from other language which became part of daily speech. Slang became so commonplace that truly the American language is one of slanging.

The opportunity for the common person to own land was arguably the single most important factor in drawing people to America. This was impossible in England as the land was owned by a few. America was seen as a land of opportunity, and following the Revolution the American businessman was born. Often coming from lowly roots, men in the 19th century had an irresistible urge to "improve themselves." This improving, though, most often meant making money and lots of it. Thus, Alexander de Toqueville says of Americans that they were taken with the pursuit of money. This desire for money led to the over-emphasis on the practical and useful in America. Even education suffered more and more from this.

In the 19th century the expansion of America grew at an exponential rate. With the founding of each town, county, territory, and state there was an overwhelming need for politicians. Thus, there was a great emphasis on politicians in America; this need even began to affect the primary schools. American politicians were not men of great learning but practical men who often possessed little education; they became self-taught orators as politicians. Thus, even in

***A Dame's School*, Thomas George Webster (1800-1886). Dame schools were small, privately run schools for young children that emerged in the British Isles and its colonies during the early modern period.**

Elementary school class on Native American Culture. Photo: Frances Benjamin Johnston, ca. 1900.

the primary schools, increasing importance was placed on rhetoric and debating.

The McGuffey Readers, published in 1836, made reading a "rhetorical exercise" and listed twelve rules regarding articulation, inflection, accent emphasis, modulation and poetic pauses. Children in primary school were often promoted by grade according to their ability to read aloud, while in secondary schools there were public ceremonies held to demonstrate this ability. In the university, rhetoric, elocution and oratory were essential subjects.

The McGuffey Readers presented the great speeches, often of politicians, which were memorized until history became almost just a series of great speeches for children. From the Revolution to the Civil War, history seems almost to have been enacted by great speeches. John Adams in 1816 wished to collect the great orations and "then write the history of the last forty-five years in commentaries upon them."[6] Indeed the history of many a politician such as Daniel Webster or Abraham Lincoln could be followed by his great speeches.

America was seized by the spoken word and a religious leader not uncommonly held his post purely because of his ability to preach captivating sermons. Davy Crockett was largely uneducated and had contempt for book learning. Yet, by his speeches which were uncouth and full of slang, he appealed to the common man and was elected to Congress.

The use of the McGuffey Reader directly led to a decline in the reading of the great classic works and was replaced by short phrases, speeches, and anecdotes of great literature. The same began to be true of history, which became the study of the exploits of the great men of history, especially American history, rather than a uniform study of events.

America following the Revolution was in need of heroes. Popular literature used both information and disinformation to form legends around popular figures such as Daniel Boone, Davy Crockett, Mike Fink, Kit Carson… This literature combined humor with fantasy and was crude and lowbrow, but popular. True literature requires an audience with sufficient education and free time that was often absent in early America.

By the time of the Civil War, the Federal Government possessed vast tracts of land and used these lands to finance the expansion of the railroad. Justin S. Morrill succeeded in getting the Morrill Act passed in 1862, which gave the state federal lands—30,000 acres for every senator and representative—to be used in establishing a college or university. This gave rise to the

state-sponsored college and university and reinvigorated many an institution with land to use for farming and the teaching of other mechanical improvements; so began the "agricultural and mechanical colleges." However, many an institution began to change its curriculum and offer popular degrees and subjects in an effort to gain some of this public land.

Uniting the Nation

By the beginning of the 20th century, the expansion of America was largely complete. Now came an age of uniting America and establishing her firmly in the democratic tradition. This is reflected in the reform of education at the beginning of the 20th century.

By the end of the 19th century, it became firmly established that every man and woman had a "right" to receive an education. It was then clear that to prepare the majority of minds for this education in the college and university, a new free public school must be available to all and especially new secondary schools. Thus, the public high school was born. There was debate about whether the high school should be for a few privileged individuals who would make up an aristocracy and so help the majority by their privilege, or if it should be completely free and available to all.

Samuel T. Eliot, one of the most influential proponents of a public high school, saw it as allowing the poor child the chance to have the same education as the rich. John Dewey was also a big proponent of the free public high school that would be available to all. Dewey had a natural abhorrence to an aristocracy, but sought to change the entire educational system. Indeed his ideas are responsible for the making of the public school system which we have today.

Dewey is widely considered to be *the* American philosopher. Although one may deny that he is truly a philosopher, his ideas had far-reaching consequences in education. The underlying theme of Dewey's philosophy of education is that the teacher must be sure to respect and prepare the educational experience of the child. He saw that children learn in a variety of ways, and so rather than inflicting a traditional classroom of learning on the child, the teacher should prepare an environment and various activities where the child is able to participate and learn as he chooses. The teacher's role is to guide the child's education by providing these activities and ensuring that there is a healthy educational experience.

Through this emphasis on activity as the essential means for the educational experience, Dewey dissolved not only the old discipline of education but also subject matter and even curricula. "Growth" became the end of education and "activity" the means, yet growth for growth's sake as Dewey proposed is not a satisfactory end. As this New Education was applied, Americans became increasingly confused about the ends and goals of education.

So the American Public High School was born, and it became the institution which was to embody the new ideas of education. It is here more than in the public primary schools that children were given the new education and prepared for college and university. The high school became the largest and best building in town; really, it became the heart of every town and so also the heart of America. In 1918 the National Education Association reported and adopted the Seven Cardinal Principles of Secondary Education, which became the credo of the New American High School. These objectives are listed (without priority) as: (1) Health, (2) Command of Fundamental Processes, (3) Worthy home-membership, (4) Vocation, (5) Citizenship, (6) Worthy uses of leisure, (7) Ethical character.

America set out to form a land of opportunity free from the constraints of the Old World and indeed she liberated herself from them. In liberating herself in education, she liberated herself from the traditional values of a liberal arts education, which led to a system of education serving democracy. It became increasingly a tool forming public ideology rather than a place of pure academic pursuit.

Endnotes

[1] Daniel J. Boorstin, *The Americans, The Colonial Experience* (New York: Vintage Books, 1958) p. 175.

[2] Boorstin. p. 182

[3] Boorstin, p. 187

[4] Boorstin, p. 244.

[5] Boorstin, p. 288.

[6] Boorstin, p. 310.

God and Modern War

A Review of Phil Klay's Missionaries

Review by William Gonch

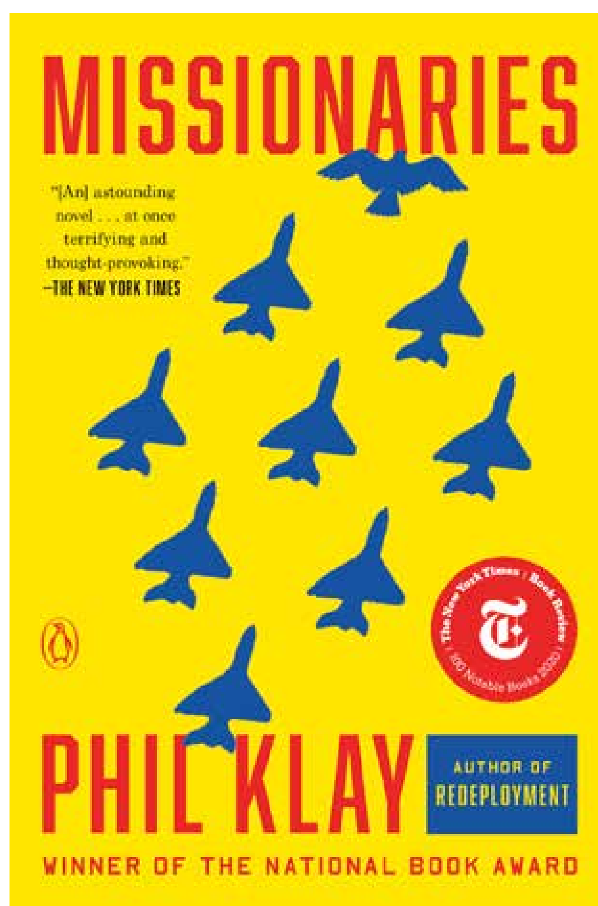
Evelyn Waugh's *Brideshead Revisited* pulls a fast one on its protagonist, its audience, and maybe even its author. Its narrator is Charles Ryder, an agnostic English boy raised by an emotionally distant father, who has been starved of art, culture, and human connection. At Oxford in the 1920s, Charles befriends Sebastian Flyte, the charismatic, troubled, and fantastically wealthy son of one of England's great Catholic families. Sebastian introduces Charles to his family and, through them, to everything that Charles has been denied: history, emotional connection, the great European tradition of art and high culture, and the Catholic Church. Charles falls utterly in love—with the family, with Sebastian's sister Julia, with the great English country seat of Brideshead Castle. Just as Waugh draws Charles into Sebastian's orbit, he invites his readers into their world through the elegance and beauty of British aristocratic life between the world wars. The novel's style reflects Waugh's longing for the same world. He wrote *Brideshead* while recovering from an injury during World War II, indulging in its lush prose to escape from wartime drabness and scarcity.

By the novel's end, the family is scattered, their cultural world has vanished, and Brideshead Castle has been turned into an army supply depot. The second world war and the characters' own flaws destroy the world that Ryder, and many readers, found so appealing. But the characters find their salvation in and through destruction, and the novel's theme is the quiet action of Grace drawing each character to a salvation that looks like worldly loss. Take, for instance, Charles and Julia: after numerous missteps, they finally enjoy a truly happy and fulfilling romance. The second half of the novel drives toward their marriage. But both are divorced, and Julia is Catholic. Charles wishes to marry her, but she realizes that to claim earthly happiness by marrying Charles would be to finally reject the God who loves her, and she refuses to do it. She does not, by making this rejection, become a holy woman. But she trusts that "if I give up this one thing I want so much, however bad I am, [God] won't quite despair of me in the end."

Julia's rejection of Charles shows how Waugh tells two stories at once. The "outer story" is a catastrophe: Sebastian's family is scattered and their cultured aristocratic world vanishes. The suffering caused by this catastrophe is real. But in the "inner story," God's Love saves the characters in and through that same catastrophe. The inner story transforms those same events into signs and means of Grace. Julia is not a saint, but she—and every other character who receives the inner-story treatment—is on her way to salvation.

Phil Klay's recent novel *Missionaries* is very different from *Brideshead*—fast-paced and thrilling where Waugh's novel is meditative. Klay writes about war, and his work is sometimes gruesomely violent, as befits its subject matter. Nevertheless, Klay is one of the best Catholic writers since Waugh's death, and he is working in Waugh's mode: here, too, an "outer" story attracts most of the attention, but an unnoticed "inner" story draws characters toward God. The title's ambiguity refers to both stories. Its protagonists in the American and Colombian military are missionaries for order, freedom, and democracy, and ultimately their missions come to naught. But underneath we can see glimpses of a Divine grace pursuing these lost missionaries of a secular world order. In this way the title is reminiscent of the Gospel's irony: when Roman soldiers mocked Christ with the crown of thorns, they did not realize they were crowning the true King.

Klay has a powerful gift for depicting war's mixture of violence and normality. One soldier-character in *Missionaries* recounts a raid on an Iraqi insurgency leader by declaring, "Al-Zawba'i's house was the nicest I ever raided. Not the wealthiest—we raided plenty of pimped-out palaces across Iraq—but it was classy. More books than I've ever seen in any house, American or Iraqi or otherwise. Some were in English. Mostly history books but also a worn old *Huckleberry Finn.* I won't forget seeing that." It is unsettling to think of U.S. special forces blasting down the door of a house full of books, unsettling also to think of Al-Zawba'i, an officer in Saddam Hussein's security apparatus, as a cultured man of letters. A moment later there is another shock: an ungainly teenager charges down the room at the soldiers, and the captured ex-Ba'athist hurls himself in front of the boy, begging the soldiers not to hurt him.



The boy is Al-Zawba'i's son; he had been tortured by Shi'ite militiamen, and is now frail and unstable. You don't think of Saddam's henchmen having special-needs children.

Klay knows his subject: he served in the U.S. Marines from 2005-2009, including more than a year in Anbar Province, Iraq during the Surge. His first book, *Redeployment*, is a collection of stories about soldiers and veterans during the global war on terror; the book was widely praised and won the National Book Award in 2014. He has a gift for finding the poetry in military lingo and soldiers' slang: an evening gathering is "zero dark and cold," and a platoon has two Mormons, "the sober Mormon" and "the drunk Mormon." There is a lot of profanity but none of it is gratuitous; it is an attempt to be faithful to the way that soldiers talk. Much more shocking than profanity is his soldiers' blunt narration of the war's strange moments. One story from *Redeployment* opens, "We shot dogs. Not by accident. We did it on purpose, and we called it Operation Scooby. I'm a dog person, so I thought about that a lot."

War attracts people, and *Missionaries* shows its attractions. In one scene, a soldier in the U.S. special forces reflects on the anticipation of combat, which gives his men a feeling that is part purpose, part connection with their buddies, and part adrenaline rush. "Before you hit a target," he says, "there's a sharpening to every second, eyes and ears tensed, the vibration of your heart beating, drumming through your chest. Your mind stays calm, detached, registering the fear, the excitement, the small movements of the men you've trained with, each in their positions, as trained and executed time after time so you don't have to see but feel Diego, Ocho, Jason, and the rest… as part of a larger organism capable of covering every bloody angle of approach." But when his "predator instincts" reach out to the enemy, there is a moment at which they change, taking on "the alertness of prey." The soldier realizes that "the men you hunt are meat eaters too"—that the enemy experiences the same heightened awareness, that you and they are equals as you prepare for combat, which "lends an aura of the sacred to the profane work to come." Most of the characters who volunteer for Klay's front line are drawn to this "sacred" blend of adrenaline and meaning. For all its horror, war gives you something to love.

Missionaries paints on a wide canvas. The novel follows four storylines that begin far apart—in Pennsylvania; in Helmand Province, Afghanistan; in a small village in Colombia; and among Colombia's military leadership. The stories converge during negotiations to end one of the world's longest-running wars. The Colombian civil war began as a Communist insurgency in the 1960s; by the 2000s, it had devolved into a many-sided quagmire in which left-wing guerrillas, right-wing paramilitaries, private militias, and the Colombian state fought shifting battles against one another. By the 21st Century the war has lost its ideological coloring; right-wing and left-wing groups have become drug-smuggling operations. Nevertheless, their conflicts are as deadly as ever: it's the Thirty Years' War, but with cocaine.

The U.S. backs the Colombian state with money and military equipment in order to suppress the drug trade, and by the novel's start it is putting pressure on the Colombians to conclude peace. The war and the peace process draw characters toward the war-ravaged town of La Vigia, where the fog of war leads them to a crisis that none of them expected. By following the convergence among characters who do not know one another, Klay transforms war itself into a character. The war follows its own logic, and decision-makers lack crucial information. For example, the crisis kicks off when Colombian guerrillas kidnap Lisette, an American journalist in her thirties. The American and Colombian militaries believe her kidnapping to be the work of Jefferson Lopez, a paramilitary leader who is the novel's main villain. They decide to move against him.

But Jefferson wanted nothing to do with her kidnapping. Instead, through a series of misunderstandings, Colombian farmers in the region became convinced that Lisette was working with Jefferson. Some two-bit guerrillas have beef with Jefferson; they kidnap her to get back at him, and he sets out frantically to try to recover her to avoid becoming the target of the U.S. or Colombian military. Meanwhile, the militaries moving against Jefferson are fumbling in the dark.

In short, no one truly chooses the conflict between the military and Jefferson's organization. It is initiated by accident and follows its own logic. In this way, the logic of war appears as a superhuman and inscrutable force, one in which human beings are caught up by accident or chance. By depicting soldiers within the grip of a system larger than any of them can understand, Klay invokes a literary tradition that you might call the "Vietnam Theory of War." Novels such as Joseph Heller's *Catch-22* (1961) and Kurt Vonnegut's *Slaughterhouse-Five* (1969) depict war, bureaucracy, and the state as inscrutable, impersonal forces that shape our lives but that sit beyond any individual's direct control. Such novels are full of events like Lisette's kidnapping, in which crucial, life-and-death decisions are made by people with no clear picture of what is going on. Often, too, they feature circular narrative structures: characters make choices and go on wild adventures but end up back where they started. The lack of progress or resolution asks readers, "What is the point of all this war?"

Klay's account is different. For him, the "sacredness" of war gives dignity to its participants, but it can be a trap if it competes with the God Who is the true source of sacredness. Characters who make an idol of war can find

themselves caught in the circle that Heller and Vonnegut imagined. One character, Juan Pablo, an officer in the Colombian military, embraces the war as a choice between sources of the sacred. He chooses the Colombian state over God repeatedly until he becomes an agnostic. He makes a god of Colombia's attempts to bring order to the war-torn country but eventually loses faith even in that. He ends up working as a mercenary in Yemen, fighting alongside an international cadre of soldiers-for-hire. He has no ideological stake in the Yemeni war, but he aligns himself with modern warfighting as a form of "progress." "It does not matter," he decides, "if you stirred the passions of the people by demonizing the government or the capitalists or the Liberals or the Conservatives or the Catholics or the Protestants or the Muslims or the Jews." He has seen the world as a conflict between high-tech, faceless "civilization" and "primitive," specific human relationships, and chosen the former.

Unlike characters in Vonnegut or Heller, Juan Pablo chooses to make himself a cog in the machine of war. And Klay offers us an alternative, hidden story that makes even the logic of war into an opportunity for God's Grace. Juan Pablo's daughter Valencia plays a crucial role in the story's climax and her actions, well-intentioned but foolish, cause the death of an innocent woman. When her father learns what she has done he is proud of his daughter, whatever the consequences, because she took "bold action" amid danger. Their conversation is painful because Juan Pablo praises her for actions of which she is ashamed. The scene ends with father and daughter looking out over the evening skyline of Bogotá, her father "pointing to the shifting colors over the mountains, over the white modern high-rise apartments, the old colonial buildings of the Candelaria." Both see the same city, but while her father marvels at its beauty, Valencia looks at it as an exile, marked by her guilt.

Valencia set off toward La Vigia out of "simple faith" and a desire to do good, and she learns how complicated and broken the world is. But she learns something greater, too. At the end of their dinner her father takes her hand and "his love for her felt painful and cruel, and she wondered, if there was a God, if that was what His love actually felt like." She has learned that she is a sinner and that if she is to know God's love she will need to reach it through suffering. Don't be deceived by the language, "if there was a God." Although Valencia has not reached a mature faith, she, like Julia in *Brideshead Revisited*, is on the road to it. Unlike her father, earthly disappointment does not make her cynical, and she does not see suffering as something to be minimized through force. She sees it as the road to hope, and like Waugh, Klay leaves her as she takes the first step down that road.

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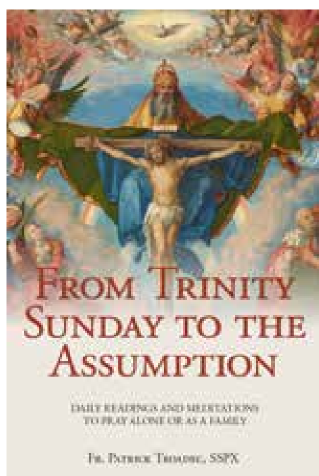

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Dear Reverend Fathers, Sisters, Colleagues, Parents, Friends, and Students–

It is an honor to be here today. It is an honor to be able to address you, soon to be graduates, in this special capacity. I am happy to have the chance to teach you one last time, and to offer you a bit of advice.

Graduates, you are soon to become part of a very select group of men, of which I am a member. I speak to you today, not only as your teacher, but as an alumnus of ICA. Twenty years ago, I too graduated from this school. I sat in a folding chair next to the stage in the church basement. Petrified with nervousness, I gave a speech, woodenly delivered.

When I graduated I did not expect to stand here before you today, in this capacity. I had other plans. But divine providence has brought me here. And I am happy it has. Of course, thinking about the past twenty years while wondering what to say today, I was led to reflect on divine providence.

What do we think of when we hear "divine providence"? Most likely, we think of, well, God providing, especially in the context of our earthly lives. And, indeed, this is a part of divine providence. Christ Himself tells us this. In a very poignant passage in the Gospel of St. Matthew, when Christ is sending His Apostles out to preach, and they are, no doubt, anxious about what will happen to them in His absence; He reminds them of God's solicitude, saying "Are not sparrows sold two for a penny? And yet it is impossible for one of them to fall to the ground without your heavenly Father's will… Do not be afraid, therefore. You are more valuable than many sparrows." More valuable than many sparrows! I always liked that line–it would seem condescending, even sarcastic, if it were not said in such a fatherly way. The tone of the line reminds me very much of the tone that I, as a father, must use with a very small child who is worried about Mama, who is not home. I know the child's fear is irrational, and even silly, but I also know that the child's pain is real, and so I have to remind him, very gently, that Mama has gone to the store, and has not, in fact, been eaten by a bear. In the same tone Christ reminds me that I am more valuable than many sparrows.

And this is a comfort! In a bad day, or week, or month, when the principal is grumpy and the students are restive

demy Commencement Address

ce and Silence

June 5, 2021

Dr. John Tardiff

and things seem broken and the bank account is low, I do take comfort in the fact that I am worth a lot of birds. In fact, because I have delved deeply into the writings of the Angelic Doctor, I know that I am worth *all* the birds. No, I am worth *more* than all the birds. In fact, I am more valuable than the stars in the heavens. And so are you. Thus God, who through the love that is His very nature, made us in His image and likeness, and holds us *ut pupillam oculi*, will never let us slip through His fingers, provided we do not wriggle out of them on our own.

But divine providence is so much more than that. Divine providence is His creating, and directing, the entire order of the universe according to His wisdom and knowledge. Divine providence holds all things in their natures and directs them to their end. By divine providence, the stars shine; by divine providence, the oceans heave; by divine providence, whales are whales. By divine providence Christ was born, Mary is our mother, ICA is here, and I stand before you today. And by divine providence you are graduating. It really is worthwhile to meditate on divine providence. Such a meditation, quite literally, puts all things in their proper context.

Divine providence has placed ICA here for a purpose–to educate you, dear graduates. And what does that mean, to educate you? If I was to fully unpack that, this would be a very long talk indeed. So I will put it in a nutshell–ICA aims to produce *prudent* men. If you are prudent, you will have responded well to our teaching. ICA also aims to produce *contemplative* men. If you delight in, and rest in, the truth, you will have responded well to our teaching.

These might seem rather jarring statements. Prudent? We must understand what that means. It does *not* mean careful. It does not mean slow to act. In current parlance "prudent" even has connotations of shiftiness and pragmatism. But that is just because the world is deeply evil. Prudence, in fact, is the queen of the moral virtues, it is that which makes the other virtues, such as justice, temperance, and courage, virtues at all. Prudence, briefly stated, is right reason in human action. It is acting in accordance with *reality*.

But what does this look like, in practice? As Josef Pieper puts it, "The Christian is prudent; namely, he does not allow his view on reality to be controlled by the Yes or No of his will, but rather he makes this Yes or No of the will dependent upon the truth of real things." Thus, the prudent man conforms his will with the truth: he does not act against the truth of reality, he does not act in such a way as to attempt to change the truth to fit his own liking.

Still, this needs clarification. And St. Thomas clarifies. At one point he rather dryly explains that three things are required for prudence: knowledge of principles, knowledge of particulars, and the cleverness to choose the means to the end. This simple enumeration actually reveals truths of tremendous depth. What does "knowledge of principles" mean? On a basic level, knowledge of right and wrong. But also, knowledge of what is noble, knowledge of what the true value of a things is, knowledge of the goodness of things. All of these types of knowledge come to bear in the virtue of prudence. Knowledge of particulars is exactly what it sounds like: knowledge of the circumstances surrounding concrete actions.

Prudence, then, very much requires a clear perception of reality. So, too, does contemplation. For what is contemplation but the knowledge of the truth for its own sake, the quiet vision of truth wherein we delight in and affirm it as both true and good. In contemplation we receive a little fulfillment of our intellectual nature, which desires all truth. This is what ICA intends you to be–both prudent and contem-

plative. Prudent, to direct your actions well, in accordance with reality, and contemplative, to rest in the truth, to know and love God.

Both prudence and contemplation require knowledge of reality. And it is this knowledge that we have striven to give you year after year. In all your classes, but especially in English, Philosophy, and Religion, we have pointed you towards the truth and coaxed, cajoled, prodded, and guided you so that you might look, see, understand, and affirm. Now that you are graduating, we will not be there for you anymore, or at least not in the same way, and certainly not with such frequency. Now it will be up to you to act in accordance with reality, to direct yourself with prudence. Now it will be up to you to recognize what you are, and to feed the limitless desire for truth that is so deeply rooted in your very nature as intellectual creatures. To do these things, you must know, and to know, you must see and hear.

Christ in the Gospels often repeats some version of an exhortation to seeing and hearing in the form of "he who has eyes to see, let him see," or "he who has ears to hear, let him hear." And this is a bit odd for a couple of reasons. One reason is that no one who followed Christ lacked working eyes and ears–because if someone did, Christ fixed them. Christ cured the blind and the deaf quickly, with a word or a touch. So, obviously, everyone listening and seeing should have eyes to see, and ears to hear. Another reason is, of course, that Christ implies that one may see but not see, and hear but not hear. In fact, he states this explicitly, and in an almost impassioned manner, in the Gospel of St. Matthew. When asked by the apostles why He speaks in parables, Christ responds:

> If I talk to them in parables, it is because, though they have eyes, they cannot see, and though they have ears, they cannot hear or understand. Indeed, in them the prophecy of Isaias is fulfilled, You will listen and listen, but for you there is no understanding; you will watch and watch, but for you there is no perceiving. The heart of this people has become dull, their ears are slow to listen, and they keep their eyes shut, so that they may never see with those eyes, or hear with those ears, or understand with that heart, and turn back to me, and win healing from me.

And what did Christ want them to see and to hear? Why, Himself, of course, and the truth that He was speaking to them. And it is that truth that we, too, must see and hear. He is not here to speak to us with his corporeal body, but the Church still is. Yet, it is not just the Church that speaks of God, that speaks truth. As King David says in Psalm 19,

> See how the skies proclaim God's glory, how the vault of heaven betrays his craftsmanship! Each day echoes its secret to the next, each night passes on to the next its revelation of knowledge; no word, no accent of theirs that does not make itself heard, till their utterance fills every land, till their message reaches the ends of the world.

The entire world, all of creation, quietly shouts the glory of God and proclaims the truth, if only we can see and hear.

So, how do we see and hear? Well, here is my advice to you, in a form so simple and so familiar that I hope you remember it: Be Quiet!

God speaks to us in silence, and reality speaks to us in silence: *our* silence. God spoke to Elias not in the storm, or the earthquake, or the fire, but in the gentle breeze. And Elias, who was waiting quietly, listening quietly, heard him. Be quiet. But when I say "be quiet" I do not mean that you should simply "shut up." The fruitful silence is not simply an absence of noise. Rather, it is a humble attentiveness. It is a hopeful openness to perception. As Josef Pieper puts it,

> One who is truly listening is not deadening himself into an unnatural and unintellectual dumbness. His silence is also by no means an empty and dead soundlessness. In this silence there is not only listening but also answering… Thus, the world reveals itself to the silent listener and only to him; the more silently he listens, the more purely he is able to perceive reality.

Silence is important because it is a prerequisite for seeing and hearing; seeing and hearing lead to knowing, and knowing is what we were made to do. We are made in God's image and likeness, to know the truth, and to love the good, and ultimately, to see Him face to face. Yet seeing Him is not something that we should, at all, put off doing. We should be silent *now*, so that we can know Him *now*. And we know Him through knowing the reality of His creation. As St. Thomas says, all of creation exists to imitate the perfection of God. We can know His perfection through knowing His creation.

Yet, the world is full of noise, more now than at any time. The devil loves noise. Hell is full of noise. The devil loves noise because he hates truth, and noise fills the ears, and yes, the eyes, and prevents knowledge of the truth. Noise derails prudence, and shatters contemplation. Noise obscures the good, and glorifies vice. And there is something in our fallen nature that loves noise. Noise is sight and hearing that we enjoy not because by means of them we know, but purely for their own sake. It is what St. Augustine calls the *concupiscentia oculis*, the concupiscence of the eyes, and it leads to a corruption of the very faculties that make us human.

And noise leads to despair. It leads to the capital vice of *acedia*, which St. Thomas describes as a form of sorrow–sorrow in the face of spiritual good. A person infected with this vice *fears* God, and not in a good way. He flees from truth, from spiritual good, as from something that will do him harm. It is terrifying. Reality itself causes him sorrow. Distraction, more noise, is the only way such a one can protect his fragile, stunted self. He distracts himself with work, because work makes him feel important, and when working he does not have to think about terrifying things like God. He distracts himself with entertainment, because he can feel shallowly happy, and not notice the gaping chasm in his being.

A man with acedia cannot be alone with himself. He cannot bear self-reflection. He cannot bear to reflect on reality. He hates to think. He must be constantly distracted. *He must either hear noise, or see noise, or make noise.*

And the man with acedia is a mocker. He mocks because he fears. He mocks truth because he hates it. He mocks God because, horribly, God causes him sorrow. He mocks so as to triumph over what threatens him. But his triumph is false, and hollow, and profits him nothing, for it only moves him further from his true purpose.

The man with acedia falls into despair, because he is, in reality, *not enough for himself*, and because the world of noise, work, distraction, and entertainment cannot feed him.

Be quiet.

Be quiet so that you can be the opposite of the man with acedia. Be quiet so that you can reflect upon yourself, and know yourself, and guide yourself. Be quiet so that, if you get married, you can *see* your wife, and hear your children. Be quiet so that you can be prudent. Be quiet so that you can see the perfection of God in His creation, and rejoice in the goodness and truth of Being.

You are about to graduate, and go off into the "real world," a term wherein "real" does not denote being, as it does in philosophy, but rather seems to refer to getting and spending. The "real" world is not real. The world as God made it and guides it, *is* real. The conception of the "real" world is a Protestant notion, not a Catholic one. A Catholic is in the actual real world from the moment of his birth and deeper in it from the moment of his baptism. Under the false conception of the "real" world, our purpose, once we are adults, is apparently to go out and work hard and earn a living. Yes, we go to Mass and say the rosary, but we kind of let God take care of our salvation. Our purpose is to work. How Protestant can you get?

Gentlemen, we must earn our bread by the sweat of our brows as a consequence of the sin of our forefather. *Let us not mistake the punishment due to sin with our purpose in life.*

It is a good time, at graduation, to reflect on your real purpose. Yes, you will have to work, and sanctify that work, but you were not designed by God to be fulfilled by mere work. Recall, quietly, humbly, and attentively, what you learned as little children from the Baltimore Catechism. "Why did God make you? He made me to know, love, and serve Him in this world, and to be happy with him in the next." We are made to know, and to love. *That* is our purpose.

So, be quiet, that you might fulfill this purpose. Have the *courage* to be quiet. And it does take courage: you *will* be mocked. Turn off the noise–why do we need music all the time? (If it is music.) Avoid inane talk. Don't freak out about the news. Turn off the screen. Seek silence, for your soul needs it as your body needs water. Take a walk. Sit and think. Look and listen. *Read.* Read literature, history, philosophy, and spirituality. Pray, pray, and pray, in silence. Be signs of contradiction to our perverse and noisy age.

And remember, in the trials that you will no doubt find in the filth of the false world, in the noise the devil throws at you, that you are more valuable than many sparrows.

God bless you.

The Restoration of Catholic Civilization

in SSPX Schools

Fr. Gerard Beck, SSPX

Fr. Beck, since 2005 you have been the superintendent of schools for the US District of the Society of St. Pius X. In all those years of working with education, what has been your central aim? How would you express the purpose of the schools of the Society of St. Pius X?

The aim of our schools is no different than the motto of our patron, Saint Pius X, as set forth in his first encyclical: *the restoration of all things in Christ.* We hear this phrase so often it can sound like a cliché and we do not think about what it means, so it is good to refresh our understanding. The Archbishop explained that these words of St. Paul, in Greek, mean to put everything back in order under the Kingship of Christ: literally to *recapitulate* all things, to put all human reality under Christ as its head.

The goal of our schools is to work in close union with Catholic families to help each child become the saint God created him to be. A saint is a person whose entire life is Christ-dependent, every detail in order at the service of Christ the King. Through the children, with the families, our schools are meant to help recreate a Catholic civilization, and give back to society the Catholic spirit, the sense of God, that St. Pius X spoke of in his encyclicals.

Father, I imagine most parents who send their children to our schools are more thinking about protecting their children from our current civilization than hoping to change it. What would you say is the biggest threat or obstacle that the modern world poses to the education of our children?

Modern society is essentially in revolt against God's order. Any attempt to give Christ back His rightful place in human lives, to order

human life under the rule of Christ, is going to be met with opposition.

We see this opposition on every level, toward individuals and toward institutions. We have twenty-two schools across the United States, and each one is struggling valiantly to accomplish its mission. Large or small, each of our schools has to swim upstream. Thankfully, we do not yet face some of the legal obstacles that Catholic schools in other countries are obliged to contend with—I am thinking of certain European countries, or our neighbor to the north.

The greatest obstacle to our schools right now is not official persecution but the ambient culture of revolt and rejection of order. Twenty years ago, children drank in the spirit of the world through television and video games. Today, television has been replaced by the internet, available literally everywhere to children who have their own cell phones, and video games have reached a sophistication that really overwhelms the minds and emotions of the children who play them. Not to mention social media, which exercises an enormous pull, and lets young people live alternate, unreal lives outside the control of educators. It is a nightmare when these influences come into the lives of our young people.

This culture of revolt threatens differently the various members of society: children, parents, teachers—all of us. We have to be on our guard against attitudes in ourselves that actually reflect the spirit of the world and the spirit of revolt against God.

Father, isn't the phrase "the spirit of the world" a bit of a cliché as well? What is this spirit of the world we are so often warned against?

One of the difficulties that we Catholics and educators deal with daily is that words have lost their impact, we are so disconnected from what is real.

The spirit of the world rejects the spirit of Christ—ultimately, the Holy Spirit, the Holy Ghost, who makes us cry to God, "Abba, Father," as His children, coheirs with Christ. The spirit of the world is the *Non serviam* of Satan, an attitude of independence from God. Concretely, for us, the spirit of the world comes whenever we separate the details of our daily life from the principles of our Faith.

Our schools have to struggle, because our work is not flashy or exciting or a work of quick domination. It is a work of gradual submission of each individual student to God's order, in nature and grace.

Father, how do our schools go about giving a Catholic education in this context of universal revolt?

As Archbishop Lefebvre said of the Society, our work is not primarily *against* the crisis, but *for* the Mass and the Catholic faith. In our schools, we strengthen children against the world by a strong, deliberate, faithful attachment to the traditions of Catholic education.

First of all, the education which we offer in our schools is Thomistic. St. Thomas Aquinas is the patron of Catholic schools, and his solid principles of philosophy and theology are at the basis of our curriculum and our teaching methods. These principles tell us about God and His creation, and especially about human nature and grace: how grace builds on nature, how nature grows, how nature is wounded by original sin. These principles tell us about what is *real*, about the world around us and about ourselves and the truths of our supernatural destiny. St. Thomas is very realistic, and if we respect these principles that he presents to us so clearly, our smallest practical decisions will

be grounded in common sense. Our efforts will be realistic and united toward the same goal, never random.

So I would say that the first aspect of the Catholic education that we give is that it is *realistic* and *ordered.* This education takes into account what *is*, and aims to bring the students to live in God's reality, not in a false, imaginary world of revolt and "me, me, me."

Simply by focusing on these solid, Catholic principles, we are already defending children against the world that surrounds them. The world is suffering from a kind of insanity, a fever of hatred for anything that comes from God the Creator, the Father of our souls. It prefers the worst disorder, completely reinventing the universe, rather than live in an order that comes from God.

Theology and philosophy seem a little remote from "reading, writing and 'rithmatic," Father. Could you give us some examples of how these principles turn into practice, in our schools?

Yes, I understand—"philosophy" and "kindergarten" are not usually words we would put together! But your question is important. We can take any subject—religion, English, history, science, math—to see how theology and philosophy really do trickle down to every detail.

Maybe the easiest to start with is science: human nature develops gradually, and a small child has to see and hear and touch and smell and even taste in order to form his first ideas. So science class in the younger grades is focused on nature study and bringing children into contact with what *is*, by their senses. Children cannot learn too many ideas at a time, so in the first years of school science class will be simple, concentrating on one real thing. A lesson might focus on leaves, for example, and noticing with the children all of the different trees that grow around their school or home and collecting a few samples, observing the different parts of the leaves, the way the veins of the different leaves spread out from the center. The teacher helps the students to observe the differences between real things, and the class can discuss the reasons why different leaves are shaped in different ways. So simple, but the child's intellect is learning to distinguish between objects and process ideas and come to realistic conclusions.

The information that the teacher gives, and the way the teacher gives that information, follow other principles of Thomistic philosophy. For example, the human mind, child or adult, loves to discover for itself, and ideas are only really solid when the child is able to draw conclusions on his own. At the same time, the teacher knows more than the child does, and has to point to what the child should notice and help the child reason about what he sees.

Then in middle school and high school, science becomes more complex. When high school students study physics, complicated truths of mathematics are involved in the discovery of nature. Yet, the same principles apply: the teacher tries to show the students how *real things* act and move, and concrete examples and experiments keep the mathematical formulae realistic for the students. Even though science seems to become very abstract, in a Catholic, realistic education, it will still be tied to God's Creation and what *is.* It is very important that children keep a sense of wonder and awe in front of nature and its laws, because nature comes directly from the hand of God and always obeys Him, in a really beautiful order.

Throughout the grades, this respect of the stages of development of a child are a major part of our curriculum: a respect for the way God created man's intellect, for example—children form ideas slowly, and if we rush them to learn faster than their minds can absorb, or tell them things that aren't at all connected to experience, we are not really teaching them. We are not making a foundation for later years, for adulthood.

That realism is clear when you speak of science, but what about a subject like literature? Isn't English class full of imagination and fiction?

Excellent question. Literature is an extremely important tool in education because it shows children the principles of human nature in a way that is concrete and very "absorbable." God made man in such a way that he loves stories; stories reach him, and can shape the way he thinks and acts. So, a skillful author, a true artist, puts us in contact with moral beauty and truths of human nature, even if he is creating characters who never actually existed.

The books that we study in English class show in a delightful way the order that God created and the destiny of man. Well-crafted, well-written stories give joy and cause admiration, and when a soul is open in this way, much learning can happen. We know how damaging bad literature can be—think of the vampire novels or the grim fantasy which are poison to the young reader, because he soaks in ideas of disorder as he follows the adventures of the characters. Good books are powerful to convey truth, in a way that sinks deeply into the students because they are open and delighted by a good story.

Do you mean our schools use literature to teach students about virtue?

Yes, although indirectly. English class receives a great deal of time in our curriculum because of all the human qualities it teaches to the students. A good book—like any work of art—awakens the child's powers in a way that is ordered, inviting to admire and imitate. His emotions and intellect and will all become attentive to receive. The joy of discovery makes him want to obtain that moral beauty for himself, and he freely draws conclusions about his own action.

In class, the teacher fosters this effect of a good book by helping the students read faithfully, reflectively, noticing detail and appreciating the beauty of a work. Class discussion, with good questions from the teacher, helps the students identify with characters and their actions and think about why they do what they do, what actions are good and what are bad, what kind of choices are noble and admirable. When students write paragraphs or essays, this intellectual process continues. From literature and through the different ways literature is used in the classroom, students are gradually drawing conclusions about what is real and what is good, absorbing principles and thinking naturally about how those principles apply in their life.

So, yes, literature teaches virtue, always in a Thomistic, realistic way, and according to the different stages of maturity. Genuine, ordered literature makes virtue desirable, by the way it causes delight and admiration. It makes the students think about reality and strive toward heroism.

Father, we have spoken of Catholic education and not yet said anything about the study of Catholic doctrine. Isn't religion class the most important subject in a Catholic school?

Absolutely. In fact, all of the other subjects prepare the students to receive Catholic truth in religion class, the way nature is prepared for grace. In every class, the student is taught to see the subject in its place in God's order: science gives admiration for God's creation, mathematics give a sense of order by training the logic and objectivity of the child—something which grammar does, as well. In history class, our teachers help the students see the events of the past as the unfolding of God's Providence and also as the results of man's fidelity and courage, or his injustice and fear.

No subject prepares for religion class as closely as English class, though, because of the sense of admiration and receptivity proper to our English program. This class instills a sense of the sacredness of creation and of human life, the sacredness of anything that touches the soul. When the student comes to religion class, the words used to apply to natural realities have meaning when applied to supernatural realities.

Could you give us an example of nature preparing for grace, in that way, Father?

Certainly. One of the major themes in literature—whether children's books or classical literature—is the idea that a father is sacred, and that a son receives his own honor and nobility from the qualities of his father and from his loyalty to what his father has transmitted to him. In our world, clearly this notion is attacked, and the strength of a father is caricatured and vilified as "toxic masculinity." But when children from the earliest grades receive from literature beautiful, *real* examples of paternal love and kindness and guidance, this word "father" is full of strong meaning. This word helps children see their own father more clearly, as someone sacred, by nature. It also helps prepare children for the Gospel, because the Gospel is nothing other than Christ coming to tell us that God is our Father, and dying so that we would become truly His sons.

You can see how English class in our schools can be a very direct preparation for the child's interior life, his spiritual life, as he learns to look at God as a father and speak to Him with real filial piety, with awe and affection.

English class also prepares the child very directly to receive from the Church, his Mother. Cardinal Wiseman said that the Catholic liturgy is made up almost entirely of poetry, in one form or another. Look at the preface of the Blessed Virgin, for example—this prayer of the Mass uses poetic images, calling Christ the light, which the Blessed Virgin shone out upon the world, *effudit.* So when a child is familiar with the analogous way words can be used, and when he is made very attentive to language and detail, it is obvious that he is going to be more affected by the words of Mother Church.

Father, you speak of the liturgy. How many of our schools have daily Mass available to the students?

Some of our smaller schools, located around mission chapels, only have Mass occasionally, often on a Monday or a First Friday when the priest from the closest priory is able to spend time at the school. However, sometimes when Mass is only available infrequently, students have an even greater desire to attend, and it is this desire that is most important.

One of our projects as we continually improve our religion program is to help the students appreciate and sing Gregorian chant, so that they can receive all the beauty of the liturgy on the days when Mass is available. Gregorian chant is the song of the Church to Her Spouse, and when we are able to join our voices to this song, it deepens our own spiritual life.

Archbishop Lefebvre taught that the liturgy is the source of Christian civilization because of how strongly it unites all the powers of man toward the adoration of God. Of all the sources of grace, and all the sources of defense and strengthening against the spirit of revolt and the corruption of this world, the liturgy is the most direct and the most powerful.

As educators, we keep this always in mind: the Church is the source of order and sanctity in individuals and families and nations. Every aspect of the school day should prepare the students, directly or indirectly, to receive from the Church. So religion class has that purpose, to prepare the children to pray and to be attentive to the Holy Ghost who wants to make brand new saints out of each one of them. And all the other classes in our school day have this goal in mind: to prepare nature for grace.

Father, parents probably dread the day their children step out of the protected environment of home and school and enter the world for themselves. Among all these details, is there one key or a secret that you can give us, for a Catholic education that stays strong and solid?

The secret is in the interior life of the child, a life of prayer and openness to grace which has to build from the very beginning. It is absolutely essential that our young people come to love their faith so genuinely that when they leave home and leave school they will not be tempted by the false, flashy attractions of the world. If we do not give students a deep spiritual life, a life of *sursum corda*, and we only expect them to repeat catechism questions back to us and behave externally according to the rules we give them, certainly, we are building on sand. But if we help students love the Gospel and the liturgy and help them receive from it, we are building on the rock of God's grace. We are preparing a new generation of heroes of the faith, who will reclaim and renew civilization, instruments of the Holy Ghost.

Father, you said in the beginning of this interview that schools have to work in close union with Catholic families. What is the relationship that should exist between parents and schools?

Parents can give their children no greater gift than the witness of unity among the authorities whom God has established over His faithful. In the plan of God, parents and the Church work together, like nature and grace. The schools of the Society of St. Pius X are part of the Church, a work of the Church. So parents and school authorities have graces of state to work together for the same goal of educating children. This is a very consoling doctrine, because it means God wants to guarantee the unity of education by promising His grace to each educator. These

questions are treated very clearly in *Divini Illius Magistri*, Pius XI's encyclical on Catholic education.

A Catholic sense of trust, based on supernatural motives, needs to be the basis of any relationship between home and school. In God's plan, a stable, loving home is absolutely necessary to a child; this education in the home is primary in the sense of fundamental. Parents are irreplaceable, and the school can only do a limited good if the child is not receiving deep, ordered affection at home, in a genuinely Catholic atmosphere. When children receive the same Catholic principles at home and at school, from the family and from the Church, they realize that what their parents tell them is *real* and universal and eternal—not just "what mom and dad say."

One of our most important tasks in the District is training our teachers, so that they are able to correspond to their own grace of state as Catholic educators. Every summer we host Catholic Teacher Seminars, in a cycle that lasts two years, uniting practice and principle. The deeper the Catholic formation of teachers and parents, the more we will be united.

Do you have concrete advice to parents on deepening their formation and helping their children receive?

The source of all formation is always the Church. Go to the liturgy, go to our Mother and learn to receive from Her. Learn to love Gregorian chant and attend the High Mass with your children if at all possible. Read *The Liturgical Year* of Dom Guéranger. And cultivate the grace of state which you possess by your marriage; for example, listen to the conferences or read the book by Fr. Grün on the *Wine of Cana*. Angelus Press has other good resources as well, the *Art of Parenting* conference series, for example. Take advantage of any formation that is offered by your priory or mission.

Communication is hugely important. Speak to the principal of your school, ask about what is taught in the classroom and how you can help your children receive. In most of our schools, children do their work in beautiful permanent notebooks; look at what your child brings home, discuss it with him. Show your children that what they are learning is important. That kind of parental attention increases a hundredfold a child's desire to learn.

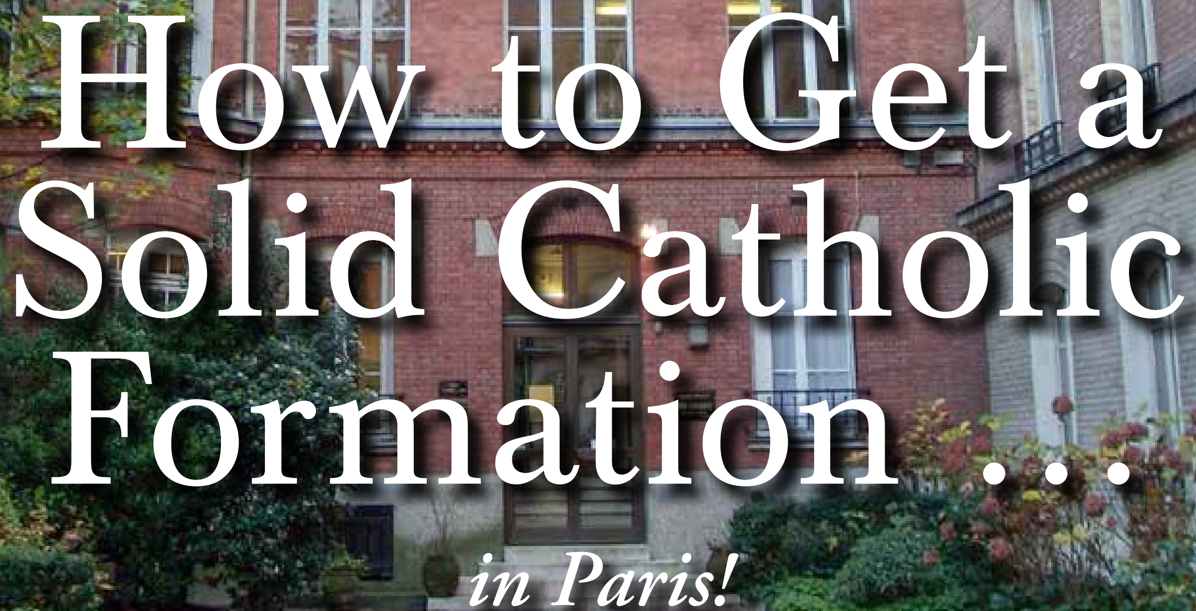
Be aware of the things that undermine Catholic principles by disordering the emotions of the children so that the truth is less welcome. Sentimental or violent movies, sensual, rhythmic music—these sterilize the soul of the students and keep them from desiring what the school tries to give.

Father, do you have any final words to summarize the situation of our schools?

We have to be souls of hope. Supernatural hope is realistic, because it is based on the almighty power of God and His love for us. We are doing His work. Providence has brought us very far. We do see some beautiful results in our graduates—solid vocations to the priesthood and the religious life, and young Catholic families starting a new generation—children and even grandchildren of students enrolled in our schools. Archbishop Lefebvre hoped our priories and missions would be like miniature Christendoms, seeds of Catholic civilization.

But supernatural hope is also realistic in that we cannot count on ourselves. The situation of the world today is humanly hopeless, and the task before us is gigantic. We have the principles, we have the teaching methods, we have many good teachers, we have parents with strong faith who support our schools, and we have students ready and eager to receive. But we are still very, very fragile in ourselves. Many of our schools cannot afford to hire teachers at a living wage that would allow stability of staff, so we are continually training new teachers. And all of us need to be more completely penetrated by the Catholic principles which we are trying to transmit to the students. If we are souls of hope, we will not be impatient and discouraged, first of all with ourselves. The task is immense. But if we are souls of hope, we will see each moment and each trial as a way to anchor ourselves more firmly in God, who loves nothing more than to show Himself a Father. He is able to surprise us with graces and victories beyond what we can imagine.

How to Get a Solid Catholic Formation ... *in Paris!*



Fr. François-Marie Chautard, Rector of the Institut Universitaire Saint-Pie X

Could you tell us a little about the IUSPX?

The Institut Universitaire Saint-Pie X, or IUSPX, is located in the heart of Paris, near the Rue du Bac and Saint-Nicolas-du-Chardonnet, in a land which was part of Christendom for centuries and whose history is full of memories of St. Thomas, St. Louis, St. Francis de Sales, as well as Abelard, La Fayette, and Napoleon.

The IUSPX was founded in 1980 by university professors desirous of founding a truly Catholic university, one that would guarantee reliable teaching free of modern errors. After the riots of May 1968 (in France but also elsewhere), they wished to create a college where they could pass on the cultural, intellectual, and spiritual heritage of our Greco-Roman and Christian civilization to the young people who desired to receive it.

From the outset the Institut was entrusted to the Society of St. Pius X at the request of its founders, who went to Archbishop Lefebvre in February 1980.

What degrees does the IUSPX offer?

Classical Literature (now officially known as Humanities), History, and Philosophy.

Why these three majors?

Because they are particularly conducive to ennobling the minds of our students, and what we seek first and foremost is to form the minds and souls of our youth before they set out into the practical and often utilitarian universe of professional life.

Jacqueline de Romilly, a great French Hellenist and member of the Académie Française, once said, “It is a mistake to imagine that the more important thing to think about is career opportunities, without necessarily considering what will be truly useful for the formation of the youth..”[1]

And no one can deny that history, philosophy, and literature are excellent means for uplifting minds.

Furthermore, they truly deserve to be known as Humanities, not in the pagan sense of an elevation of a man without original sin or grace, but in the classical sense of the *Humaniores Litterae*, the formation of the highest human faculties through the study of literary subjects; these studies ennoble the loftiest part of man: his intelligence, his will, his memory, his sensitivity.

"Indeed," wrote Monsignor Dupanloup, "when we say a child is doing his Humanities or that he has to do his Humanities, it is a very commonplace expression, but it has a very profound meaning and expresses something admirable. What does it mean? That he has to become a man… Where do a nation's schools get their dignity and sovereign importance? From the fact that they are where the Humanities are studied, where men are made…

Who preserved European society from barbarianism in the Middle Ages? The popes, Charlemagne, the bishops and monks, by means of the Humanities.

Who raised modern Europe up to be the greatest civilization? Who made the 16th century in Italy and Spain? Who made the 17th century in France and Europe? Again, it was the Church, the teaching religious congregations and the Catholic universities, by means of the strongest, most brilliant and most religious Humanities ever."[2]

"They are not only a country's inner need," added Guizot, minister to the French king Louis-Philippe in the 19th century, "they are its dignity, its credit in the world. Without the cultivation of greatness of mind, there can be no lasting depth, and minds only become great by being formed in classic masterworks from childhood so that they can glean the treasures of the past."[3]

The same spirit is expressed in Archbishop Lefebvre's charter for the schools of the Society of St. Pius X: "These schools… respect the hierarchy of the sciences, attributing the priority to realist philosophy, the Humanities and history, in order to form an upright judgment with a classical formation of the mind" (§5).

More precisely, these subject matters accomplish the *cultura animi* (culture of the mind) spoken of by Cicero. They form both its contents and its form.

First of all, they nourish the mind by transmitting to it the best and most profound part of what the past has bequeathed to us. Entering into history, literature or philosophy means coming into contact with the great men of the past and their heritage.

The study of these monuments of the past offers a true school of truth, goodness, and beauty, and the teachings of the past shed light on the present.

When Tocqueville wrote about American democracy, he developed an extremely subtle analysis that enlightens us as to the current development of the Western countries.

When one opens Plato's dialogues that relate Socrates' debates with the Sophists, one sees how infected our society is with the gangrene of their same intellectual diseases.

As for literature, it plunges one into the heart of the timeless man, it gives an understanding of human psychology and its intricacies, allowing for exceptionally lofty perspective.

These subject matters also refine the moral sense. Forming a conscience is a long, delicate, and difficult undertaking. It requires intelligence, moral virtue, and sensitivity, all qualities that are excellently formed by the Humanities. Mathematics enrich the mind, but not the heart, and certainly not moral virtue, which is completely foreign to mathematics.

"I have seen classes laugh at Socratic irony," remarks Jacqueline de Romilly. "They were for Socrates and against his ignorant or conceited

Fr. François-Marie Chautard.

adversary. That means that they were for the desire for truth, for intelligence, for patience, for courtesy… Perhaps only for as long as it took to read the passage; but in a young person, that spontaneously builds a lasting taste for truth, intelligence, patience, courtesy. Do you not desire that for your children?" "I have also seen classes moved at Socrates' death—filled with admiration, indignation, wonder. For a moment, these classes were possessed by a horror for injustice, in love with strength of soul, tempted to share a certain faith in the afterlife. Do not worry, it was not about teaching them to die well. But a certain taste for ideals can also help in living life; and through those ancient arguments, that taste passed through them and left its mark."[4]

In a word, what the Humanities progressively develop is wisdom, a wisdom that leads straight to God.

For how can one reflect upon the causes of historical events or the causes of realities without going back to the first cause? How can one scrutinize the human heart and the boundary between good and evil that runs through it without thinking of the Sovereign Good, the source of all good and without reflecting upon the mystery of iniquity? How can one search for the truth in all things without recognizing the Truth? The heights of knowledge are like mountain trails: they all lead to the same summit.

When the Faith is there, too, to shed light on the human heart with the concepts of grace and original sin, on the world with the idea of creation and on history with the sense of the Cross, then the intelligence attains unsuspected heights and depths. We must not forget that the worst enemies of the Humanities are often God's worst enemies! "I do not like books," Rousseau used to say.

As for the form, these subject matters teach students to read, think, speak, and write.

To read, for they teach the art of reading a text in depth. When a student studies a historical document, he learns to place the extract in its context, to see what is left unsaid; he has to draw from it the essential and the major points of the argument, all qualities that avoid the all too common and modern tendency to superficial reading.

To think, for they cultivate a spirit of precision and subtlety. Philosophy expresses itself with arguments and distinctions, that is to say, with logic and nuances, the sovereign virtues of the intellect.

To speak, for the Institut requires regular oral exercises. For the past six years, we have been organizing for the feast of St. Thomas a *disputatio* between two teams of students who debate in front of their classmates and a jury of professors on a chosen question. This year they had to decide which of the two subjects was better, history or literature. Naturally, this helps them practice the art of public speaking.

To write, for all these subjects require essays, commentaries, and short theses that offer the student the opportunity to develop his personal reflection and work on his style. Naturally, literature students have the advantage of studying the great literary authors.

Could you briefly present these three majors?

Our **Humanities** degree has two options: Classical Literature, and Literature, Culture and Heritage. The first offers courses in French language and literature, Greek and Latin, along with courses on cultural history, *etc.*

The second is an advanced option, including philosophy and art history or geography courses along with the Classical Literature courses.

Our **History** degree offers courses on the four major historical periods (ancient, medieval, modern and contemporary). This degree offers four options: art history, philosophy, geography and political sciences.

Our **Philosophy** degree forms students in the different philosophy subjects according to St. Thomas Aquinas (logic, metaphysics, moral philosophy and political philosophy, *etc.*) along

with courses on the history of philosophy and the great philosophers.

The **Teaching Formation** involves four class hours a week for two years, and aims to give future elementary or high school teachers a theoretical and practical knowledge of teaching.

What benefits does the IUSPX offer in this work of forming Catholic youth?

The IUSPX offers truly Catholic teaching, free from liberal or progressivist spirit. As its charter declares, the IUSPX particularly decries the modern errors of naturalism, secularism, and liberalism, and defends the Church's past as well as her beneficial action on society.

The IUSPX recalls that the keystone to all knowledge and to all things is God, the first cause, Jesus Christ. A teaching that concretely ignores Jesus Christ and His doctrine in history, philosophy, or the study of literature is a mutilated teaching that tends to disperse knowledge due to the lack of a principle of unity.

Every year, students who have spent a year or two at other universities are delighted and astonished at the depth and quality of the courses delivered by the Institut. Two former students wrote to me that "what undeniably constitutes the superiority of the Institut… is the possibility of taking courses in Thomistic philosophy no matter what your major, as a minor, or just to sit in on the class. It is the only university where the teaching is entirely and uncompromisingly Thomistic… What we learn at the Institut through philosophy are strong and immutable principles that are worth far more than a degree or the official prestige of a renowned school."

Could you describe the atmosphere in your Institut?

This is a very relevant question, for it is not enough to nourish the mind; the entire man needs to be formed. And a student should certainly not become a walking encyclopedia!

As I often tell the students, their three years at the Institut should be an intellectual ascent, yes, but also a spiritual and human one.

On the supernatural level, a truly Catholic atmosphere, a realistic and Catholic college formation, contact with other young people who share the same essential ideas and the same way of life, and the presence of priests are powerful means of protection, perseverance, and above all progress in the Christian life. Every year we see young men and women mature, progress, and blossom in their studies and in the Catholic atmosphere of the IUSPX.

On the human level, the Christian spirit, the common principles, a human-sized structure, and a personal accompaniment for each student create a familial, convivial, and Christian atmosphere, as can be seen from the solid friendships formed, the meals shared, the outings together to museums or trips to Pontmain, Venice or Rome.

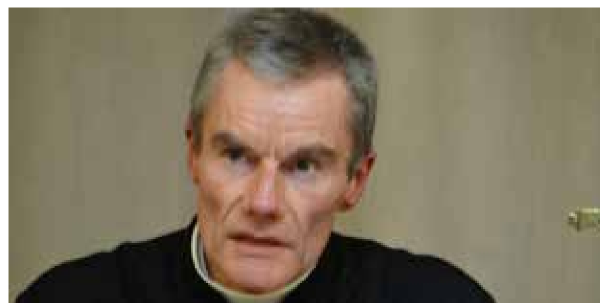
Studying at the Institut also means having Saint-Nicolas-du-Chardonnet nearby, 15 minutes from the IUSPX, with its youth groups, spiritual assistance, and all the Traditional youth among whom one can find good friends and mutual assistance. A student at the IUSPX, even an American student, is not alone—far from it!

What are the professional prospects coming out of the IUSPX?

Horace said, "*Primum vivere, deinde philosophari.*" This is true, but we prefer the Gospel's "Seek first the kingdom of God and the rest will be given to you."

It is exactly the same for our students. Their apparently useless studies actually open up innumerable opportunities for them. In France, with a "licence" degree, a student can go on to

Colloquium of April 6 and 7, 2019.



Father Thierry Gaudray, SSPX, giving a conference.

many different professional Masters degrees, or enter business schools or many other grad schools. There is a very wide variety of choices, including teaching, journalism, communications, human resources, marketing, management, finance, or publishing.

In management, for example, there are hard skills and soft skills, and the most important are the latter.

Someone who knows how to analyze a situation, put things into perspective, summarize an issue, coherently present a project, find the right words in a tense situation, and be subtle, has major assets for success. And these are qualities developed by these literary majors.

What is more, these virtues enable a Catholic to have an impact on society, as Pius XII said, "The students of a Catholic institution should never consider their future career as a simple social function, necessary for themselves and for those around them, but without any immediate relation to their condition as baptized souls. Let them rather always consider it as a responsibility in the work of saving the world through which, by committing themselves seriously as Christians on the temporal level, they realize their highest spiritual destiny."[5]

Does your Institut offer other activities?

Yes, there are conferences on Monday evenings, an annual congress, and evening classes (Biblical exegesis, Hebrew).

Why would an American student be interested in the IUSPX?

First of all, for the quality of our teaching and our professors, the specificity of our teachings, the attention given to our students, and the great variety of professional opportunities that are offered.

When it comes to intellectual formation, it is important to go with the surest option. In order to be real and fruitful, intellectual freedom has to be grounded in a rich and solid formation. And that is precisely the role of the formation we give: to provide indispensable knowledge and form a grounded judgment. What is more, ever since 2001, the Institut offers both its own diplomas and State diplomas for its History and Humanities degrees, and possibly for its Philosophy degrees as well beginning in 2023.

For an American, a Catholic and intellectual formation in Europe is a unique experience. It is a discovery of the best of what old Europe has to offer. And the IUSPX is delighted to have students from the New World!

How to enroll?

An American has to apply to the IUSPX and go through Campus France. The process must be started the year before entering the IUSPX.

The IUSPX does not have student lodging, but it does have a network that often helps to find a place to live. We currently have three Americans at the IUSPX. So it is possible!

A word to conclude?

Youth is a unique and extraordinary period in life that determines so many things; it is so important for our natural and supernatural life to aim for the best. Why wait until the end of life to strive for wisdom? "*Quæ in juventute tua non congregasti, quomodo in senectute tua invenies?*" "The things that thou hast not gathered in thy youth, how shalt thou find them in thy old age?" (Ecclus. 25:5)

Endnotes

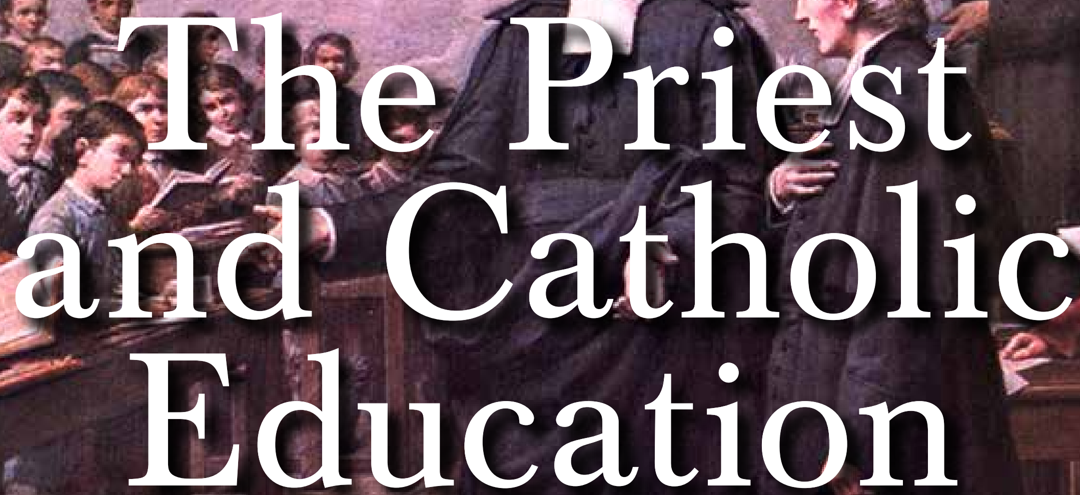
1 Jacqueline de Romilly, *Lettre aux parents sur les choix scolaires*, Editions de Fallois, 1994, p. 14.

2 Dupanloup, *De la haute éducation intellectuelle*, p. 10-12.

3 Guizot quoted by Dupanloup, p. 12-13.

4 Jacqueline de Romilly, *Lettre aux parents sur les choix scolaires*, Editions de Fallois, 1994, p. 108.

5 Pius XII, Speech to the members of Catholic Teaching, Sept. 14, 1958. Les enseignements pontificaux, *Consignes aux militants*, Desclée, 1958, p. 303.



The Priest and Catholic Education

Fr. John M. McFarland, SSPX

Catholic education is a work of the Catholic priesthood. In the order established by God, priests are not only the instruments of Jesus Christ in administering the sacraments, but also in imparting knowledge of the truth to all Catholics. They have a special duty to watch over the formation of the young. Deliberate separation of the intellectual and moral formation of children and adolescents from the influence of the priests of Jesus Christ can severely handicap or even entirely vitiate that formation. It is certainly true that special circumstances exist, particularly during the present crisis in the Church. Nevertheless, as a general principle, the fundamental connection between the priesthood and Catholic education cannot be denied.

"The priest is another Christ." This aphorism is commonplace in nearly every serious Catholic milieu, and traditional Catholics are especially fond of the saying. They believe wholeheartedly that the priestly character is necessary for a man to act *in persona Christi* and so to be able to offer the holy Sacrifice of the Mass and to absolve sins in the sacrament of penance. Likewise, they know that it is only the priest who distributes communion, anoints the dying, officiates at marriages, blesses their rosaries, and confers countless other blessings and graces coming from Our Lord Jesus Christ. Further, they acknowledge that this claim of being another Christ means that the priest must be held to a higher standard than the laity; it imposes upon him the duty of striving for Christ-like holiness. On the other hand, one almost never hears the maxim applied to the priest's position of teacher.

Surely the faithful expect to hear the teaching of the Church from the priest's mouth in the Sunday sermon. But is this the extent of his teaching power? True, the Church often names the priest's act of teaching "preaching." However, it would be a serious error to imagine this role as being confined to the pulpit. Bishop John Cuthbert Hedley (d. 1915), writing about St. Gregory, tells us that the holy doctor's word of

choice in speaking of a pastor's duty to impart the faith was not *praedicare* (to preach) but *docere* (to teach).[1] Sermons are an important part of the teaching of the priest, but fifteen minutes once a week hardly suffices for an office of such paramount importance.

Already in the Old Testament, the Aaronic priesthood was a divinely instituted teaching authority. "For the lips of the priest shall keep knowledge, and they shall seek the law at his mouth: because he is the angel of the Lord of hosts."[2] The New Testament priesthood, that which makes a man share in the power of Jesus Christ, far surpasses its Old Testament counterpart. We cannot insist too much: it is this character of the priesthood that imposes the role of teacher upon the Catholic priest. During His three years of public ministry, Our Lord Jesus Christ gave Himself principally to teaching. Even the miracles He worked were intended, more than anything else, to confirm the truth of what He taught.[3] Our Lord taught in synagogues; He taught in the courtyards of the Temple; He taught in the open air. He preached sermons to large crowds; He gave intimate discourses to His chosen Apostles; He held conversations with and answered questions from individuals or small groups. Our Lord bequeathed this teaching ministry to His Church in the person of the Apostles, already ordained priests, when He commanded them on the day of His Ascension, "teach ye all nations; baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost."[4] Thus, the priest is teacher by the explicit command of the Savior Himself.

Moreover, the teaching office is evident in the very nature of the priesthood. As mentioned, the priest acts in the person of Christ in the confecting of the sacraments. It stands to reason that he would be the one to speak in Christ's name in the instruction of the faithful. Further, the duty of administering the sacraments brings with it the duty to prepare the faithful to receive these sacraments. This preparation consists principally in the instruction required for the recipients to understand the nature of the sacraments and to order their lives so that the sacraments will be fruitful for their souls. Finally, the priest is a teacher because he is a father. Indeed, it is by this very name that the faithful address him, and this reality, more than a mere title, gives him the power of teaching. Speaking to a congress of high school teachers, Pope Pius XII said, "Now the father, by the very fact of his fatherhood, is a teacher, since, as the Angelic Doctor explains so clearly, 'the primordial right to teach is based on no other title than that of paternity.' "[5]

That education is tightly bound to the priestly office has been the constant teaching of the Church. The Apostles were the principal teachers of the early Church. St. Paul went so far as to write to the Corinthians, "Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the gospel."[6] His teaching office took precedence even over administering the sacrament of baptism. The reason is obvious. Without a thorough understanding of the doctrines of Jesus Christ and the principles of Christian living, baptism would avail nothing. St. Gregory the Great wrote a book called *Regula Pastoralis* (*Pastoral Rule*), addressed to priests about how to fulfill their pastoral duties. Bishop Hedley says of this work, "The whole treatise… has for its purpose to make a pastor speak effectively to his flock."[7] It is, therefore, a work addressed to the priest as educator. And this tradition has continued down to modern times. Brother Philip, a superior general of the Brothers of the Christian Schools in the 19th century, wrote of the Church, "Wherever she erects a church, there too, at the same time, she builds a school,"[8] indicating how closely the ministry of education is tied to the ministry of the altar. And in the address already mentioned, Pius XII said, "…in great part, the office of the priest consists in teaching and educating."[9]

If then, the priest is an educator by divine command, by the nature of his office, and by the constant will of the Church, what is he to teach? Firstly and obviously, he must teach the dogmas of the Catholic faith. No Catholic would dispute that it is the priest's role to preach the Gospel, imparting knowledge of the truths necessary for salvation from the pulpit and in the catechism class. At the same time, Catholics generally recognize that the priest must teach the principles of Catholic morality to turn the faithful away from vice and encourage them to the accomplishment of good works.

However, it is not the mind of Our Lord Jesus Christ and His Church that priestly teaching should occupy itself with abstract truths to be granted purely intellectual assent. The Christian life is just that, a life, and the priest is the instructor in Christian living. It is not enough to know the truth, but the faithful must put that knowledge into daily practice. Consequently, the priest is obliged to spell out the profound

significance of Catholic dogmas for everyday life and to apply the principles of Catholic morality to the real conditions and circumstances of his faithful. As already pointed out, this duty is especially important in regard to the young. "A young man according to his way, even when he is old, he will not depart from it."[10] The young must form habits, and those habits will be either helpful or detrimental to living as Catholics and attaining eternal life. Brother Philip has rightly asserted that, "A good education is a fund of riches to which no created good is comparable."[11] No education can be called good which does not equip a child to attain the goal of his existence, and no one can reach his eternal objective outside the influence of Jesus Christ's priesthood.

The Church has spent incalculable energy and resources on founding and running schools for just this reason. Catholic school is not just secular school with the addition of a religion class and the subtraction of noxious influences. Rather, the Catholic school exists to be an educational environment saturated with the influence of Jesus Christ Himself. The priest is the principal minister of this divine influence. Brother Philip was keenly aware of this when he exhorted his fellow religious to inspire their students "with love, respect, and confidence towards priests, by whom, above all, they can be preserved in good."[12]

Furthermore, all branches of instruction should come under the influence of the Church and her priests, even if these subject matters do not deal directly with the faith. Much damage has been done to education by confining the Catholic faith to the chapel and the religion class. Can history be taught accurately without reference to God's action in the world or to the most important events: Original Sin, the Incarnation, the Redemption, the founding of the Church? Can a purely mechanistic conception of the universe that disregards the Creator be taught in the empirical sciences without distorting reality and promoting unbelief? Can literature be taught indiscriminately, without reference to its moral value? Can godless teachers, even those who may be experts in their fields, be permitted to form the minds of Catholic children? The priest has the competence to exercise the necessary vigilance in these and other matters. Yet his influence is not purely negative. He is meant to move among students and teachers as another Christ, teaching classes, yes, but also correcting, encouraging, and exhorting in sermons, conferences, private conversations, and giving clear practical examples in the conduct of his own life. Further, his mission includes imparting to all those charged with the education of Catholic youth a truly supernatural vision that sees the working of Divine Providence in every academic discipline and prioritizes the supernatural destiny of the students.

Consequently, other Catholic teachers, including religious belonging to congregations explicitly dedicated to education, are the auxiliaries of priests in the formation of the young. This is not to say that they are not critically important and often strictly necessary. Pius XII speaks of lay teachers as "direct collaborators in this work of God and of the Church."[13] Brother Philip says of religious teachers that God "has established us as cooperators with the Church in the care she gives to infancy and youth," but he adds significantly, "as precursors of her pastors, charging us to prepare the way for them."[14] Any autonomy from the priesthood in matters of education must arise from force of circumstances and never be freely chosen. Unfortunately, such situations arise far too frequently today, as the fewness of priests and the doctrinal corruption rampant among many of them pushes numerous parents and educators to a state of abnormal independence. Such situations must be regretted and never imagined to be the ideal. Voluntary separation of education from the priestly ministry severs the work from the life-giving sources of grace. Such education ceases to be truly Catholic, rejecting as it does the divinely established order. Where the priest has been cast out, or relegated to the position of merely dispensing sacraments, one cannot expect the benedictions of the divine Master.

Thus far, nothing has been said about the role of the family in Catholic education. It is beyond the scope of the present article to treat such a vast subject in any detail. However, we can point out that, in the divine plan, there is never any opposition between the true educational rights of the family and those of the Church. On the contrary, God intends these two authorities to work in perfect harmony. The teaching of priests is required to elevate and perfect the teaching given by parents, but this priestly ministry usually avails little if the ground has not been well-prepared by the education given in a profoundly Catholic home.

At the present time, the priest's role in education has been almost eclipsed. Fundamentally, the blame lies at the feet of the priests and bishops themselves; many have neglected, abandoned, or perverted their divinely established teaching power. Independent schools, homeschooling, laymen with theology degrees, and similar phenomena have arisen to fill the void. Nevertheless, the divine commission remains, "Going therefore, teach ye all nations." For the good of souls, priests must reclaim their mission. In turn, the faithful must love and respect this priestly office and cooperate in promoting it everywhere to the greatest extent possible.

TITLE IMAGE: St. Jean-Baptiste de la Salle (1651-1719), founder of the Institute of the Brothers of the Christians Schools, educational reformer, and father of modern pedagogy.

Endnotes

1 John Cuthbert Hedley, *Lex Levitarum* (New York, 1905) p. 119.

2 Malachias 2:7.

3 *Cf.* St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, III. Q.43, a.3.

4 Matthew 28:19.

5 Pius XII, "Address to the Italian Catholic Union of Secondary School Teachers," in Yzermans, Vincent A. *Pope Pius XII and Catholic Education* (St. Meinrad: Indiana, 1957), p. 28.

6 I Corinthians 1:17.

7 Hedley, *op. cit.*

8 Brother Philip, *Considerations for Catholic Teachers* (1921), p. 3.

9 Pius XII, *op. cit.*

10 Proverbs 22:6.

11 Br. Philip, *op. cit.,* p. 23.

12 *Ibid.*, p. 53.

13 Pius XII, *op. cit.*

14 Brother Philip, *op cit.* p. 2.

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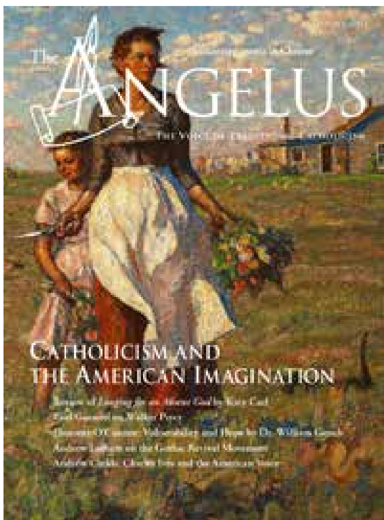

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The Last Word

Fr. David Sherry
District Superior of Canada

Dear Reader,

It was not unknown at our school that, when I was within earshot, a boy would try to get a reaction. "This school sucks," he would say, or "we're living in a prison" and sometimes, strangely, "smartphones are the devil." The first two were easily explained: to certain boys, anywhere you have discipline "sucks"; any place that has rules is a prison; but the smartphone?

I had a theory on that one. The devil not only tries to get you to sin by saying that bad things are good; he also tempts by saying good things are bad. For example, "revenge is sweet" is a fairly straightforward instance of the first kind; "marriage is bad" is an example of the second. The devilish thinking is that if something good or at least obviously indifferent is said by authority to be bad, then the would-be sinner has a good excuse to ignore rules on that thing and then throw out all the other rules of authority as unreasonable. "My parents or school have rules about smartphones because they say that they are evil. That is clearly untrue, therefore I don't need to listen to them about anything." As such, if I acknowledged "smartphones are the devil" as true, he has caught me out in untruth and can ignore me. So, dutifully and invariably, I would say "smartphones are indifferent; it's their use that makes them good or bad, *etc.*" You get the picture.

Now it is unlikely (I blush to admit) that any of my former students read *The Angelus*. It is even less likely that one has persevered until this final page. Therefore, gentle reader, I will now tell you what I never told them.

In the end, all smartphones show a cloven hoof. The teenager with his own smartphone has got a limitless supply of high-quality drugs which he can and will imbibe daily. For boys, it is a grave occasion of sin against purity (even if the phone has a filter) and try as he might, he cannot resist the temptation to use it as a timewasting toy. For girls it is a grave temptation to vanity: who's noticing my selfies, calling, texting, liking me? And if they're not, why do they hate me? And for all, it is vanity and distraction and worldliness at a time that forms habits for life.

The solution—damn all smartphones to hell? A Puritan would love nothing better. But then, so would the devil. If the thing is a necessity, explain to your teenager that just as he is not allowed to drive until he is old enough to bear the responsibility, so neither should he have a smartphone. Then, perhaps, at age 17 or 18, train him how to use a smartphone—with a filter, and as a tool. And with fear and trembling.

Fr. David Sherry

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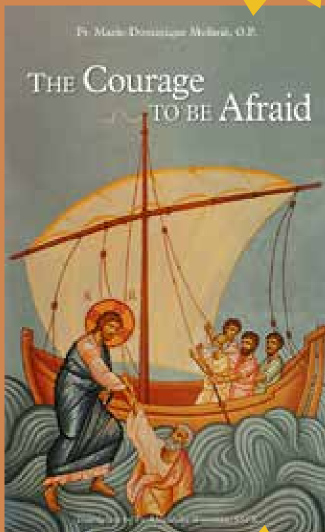

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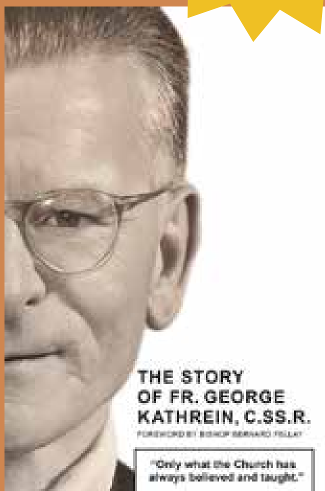

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