

# Introduction to the Classical Educational Plan of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart Academy



An independent classical academy in the Catholic tradition loyal to the Magisterium

3445 Elmwood Road, Rockford, IL

Anno Domini 2020

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“The very fact that it is the flesh of the Word become man that ultimately defines the limits of Christian humanism contains the possibility of almost explosively extending those limits to what is really a limitless degree. Now we may dare—indeed dare we must—to take up with an all-embracing gesture into this pattern of the Christian man whatever in the long perspectives of history or in the depths of his soul is true and noble in thought and deed. All that is good and true has proceeded from the Word and has its homing point in the incarnate God, even though this be hidden from us, even though human thought and human good-will may not have perceived it... For the humanist Christian there is only one possible attitude that he can take towards the world: he must love. Yet one can only love a person, and that is why the Christian humanist loves the human in every shape and form but only in him of whom St. Paul says “all things were created in Him.” Here is the meaning of those words written by an ancient Christian... “Christ is the Word, in Whom the whole human race has a portion, and all who have lived according to this Word are Christians, even though, like Socrates and Heraclitus among the Greeks, they are accounted godless.”

- Hugo Rahner, S.J.,  
citing Saint Justin Martyr

“Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is gracious, if there is any excellence and if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things.”

- Saint Paul

### Patrons and Patronesses



Our Lady of the Sacred Heart, ora pro nobis!

St. Jerome  
St. Thomas Aquinas  
St. Rita of Cascia  
St. Thérèse of Lisieux

Blessed Karl of Austria  
Servant of God, Fr. John Hardon, S.J.  
Warren Carroll  
G. K. Chesterton

## Table of Contents

### Part I: Blueprint

Building Our Lady of the Sacred Heart Academy: A Blueprint for the Vision	5
Vision Statement	6

### Part II: Tools

An Integrated Curriculum: The Building Blocks of Learning and the Shape of the Soul	9
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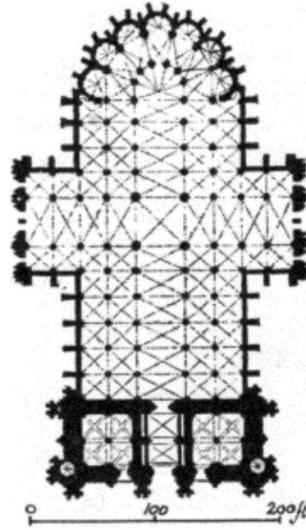
### Part III: Laying the Foundation

Pedagogy	12
Curriculum: Developmental and Historical Segments	15

### Part V: Picking Out Colors

Beauty in the Life of the School	17
Classical Education and Our Surroundings	17
Classical Education and School Culture	19
Liturgy	20
Multicultural Connections Related to Time Periods	22
Suggestions for Further Reading	23

# Part I: Blueprint

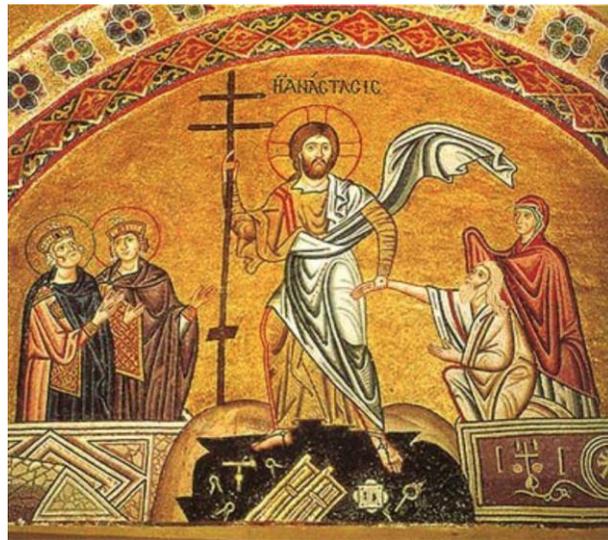


*Cologne Cathedral Floor Plan*

## Building Our Lady of the Sacred Heart Academy: A Blueprint for the Vision

With every building and every work of art, there is a sense in which the finished product or the completed work *comes first*. The builder or the artist starts with a blueprint, a plan, or a picture of the finished work in mind. Sometimes the builder modifies the plan in the course of the work, but he cannot modify it entirely without creating something entirely different or destroying the work altogether. By keeping this picture firmly in view, the builder can ensure that each step in construction occurs for the sake of the next, and he can see how all the steps combine to build up the whole. If this blueprint does not guide his work, then the end result of his labors is not a building, but a heap of stones. Education is like this. Without a clear sense of what education is and the end it serves, we may expend a great deal of effort “piling up stones” instead of truly educating.

This outline is like a blueprint. It begins with the end product: the sort of person we hope will emerge after fourteen years at Our Lady of the Sacred Heart Academy. The actual content of the various subjects within the curriculum are like the foundation stones of the educated person. The skills, aptitudes, and habits we hope to cultivate through pedagogy and through the culture of the school are like the tools of learning. And of course, the teachers are the builders who bring their art and experience to bear on the construction of the building. We proceed from the vision, first through the core subjects that comprise Our Lady of the Sacred Heart Academy’s curriculum, and then with increasing detail through the specific stages in the teaching of each subject to show how each stage builds upon the previous ones, and these combine with the labors of the academy’s teachers to contribute to the building up of the whole.



*Christ Leading Adam and Eve Out of Hades, Hosios Lukas Monastery*

## Vision Statement

Our Lady of the Sacred Heart Academy educates children in the truest and fullest sense by giving them the necessary tools of learning and by fostering wonder and love for all that is genuinely true, good, and beautiful. We emphasize classical learning because we want our students to read well, speak well, and think well, and ultimately because truth and beauty are good in themselves and desirable for their own sake. We seek to incorporate our students into the wisdom of two thousand years of Catholic thought, history, culture, and arts so that they may understand themselves and their world in the light of the truth and acquire the character to live happy and integrated lives in the service of God and others. Education in this deep and comprehensive sense extends beyond the classroom and is more than just the acquisition of skills. It encompasses the whole of one's life. For this reason, Our Lady of the Sacred Heart Academy seeks to involve families ever more deeply in the life of the school and in the education of their children.

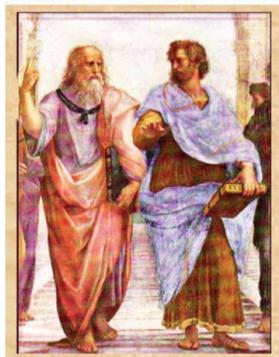
True education has always rested on two presuppositions. The first is that truth is desirable for its own sake. It is good not for what it *does*, but for what it *is*. The second is that knowledge consists not in bending the truth to ourselves, but in conforming ourselves to truth. We can conform ourselves to truth only by freely embracing and loving it, and we can love truth only if we are enticed by its beauty. Love of beauty has therefore always been integral to the discovery of truth, and true education has always sought to form the heart and mind, reason and will, desire and knowledge. In short, education forms the whole *person* in light of truth, beauty, and goodness.

The vision seeks to root a comprehensive understanding of education in a compelling and beautiful understanding of reality worthy of students' love. This vision is intended to govern every facet of the school's life. Its aim is twofold: first, to communicate a certain body of knowledge; and second, to cultivate a certain kind of person, *to develop as far as possible what is uniquely human in him*, and so to equip him with the skills, habits, and aptitudes necessary to embrace truth and to become the person he was truly created to be. Immediately it becomes clear that no aspect of a school's life is truly "extra-curricular," or falls outside its core mission of education, because every aspect of its life—from the way the school prays, to the dress code of students and staff, the arrangement of furniture in the classroom, the paint and posters on the walls, the activities during recess, the way technology is used, and the songs the children sing—reflects the school's judgments and priorities about the meaning of its educational mission. *Everything a school does teaches something. Everything a school does is education of some sort.* The important thing is to be sure that it is good and coherent education and that policies, procedures, pedagogical methods, and the culture of the school are not at cross purposes with the vision.

Curriculum, pedagogical methods, and all the details of the school's life should therefore be constantly assessed both in light of the conviction that knowledge and love of truth, beauty, and goodness are ends in themselves and in light of the twofold goal of the Vision Statement. Every activity, program, policy, method, or proposal should be tested by the following criteria, which

follow from this vision, though not all are equally applicable to each of these facets of the school's life.

1. Is it beautiful?
2. Are we doing this because it is inherently good, or as a means to an end? If the latter, what end?
3. Does it encourage the student to think of education itself as a high and noble enterprise, or does it cheapen education?
4. Is it excellent? Does it demand the best students and teachers have to offer, and hold them to the highest standard they are capable of achieving? Or does it give in to the gravitational pull of mediocrity? Is excellence the highest standard, or is excellence subordinate to lower standards such as convenience, popularity, or marketing considerations (i.e., consumer appeal)?
5. Does it encourage reverence for the mystery of God and the splendor of his creation?
6. Does it encourage reverence for the mystery of the human person and respect for the student's own human dignity?
7. Does it encourage him to desire truth, to understand such virtues as courage, modesty, prudence, and moderation and to cultivate these within himself?
8. Does it help the student to see what difference God makes to all the facets of the world, or does it make God's existence seem irrelevant, trivial, small or private?
9. Does it assist in passing on the received wisdom of the Christian tradition, or does it create obstacles to reception of the tradition?
10. Does it encourage real searching and thinking? Does it provoke the student to ask "why?" Does it stir up a desire for understanding?
11. Does it encourage conversation between and across generations or does it hinder it?
12. Does it help to develop to the fullest extent what is uniquely human in the student: the powers of attending, deliberating, questioning, calculating, remembering, and loving?
13. Does it encourage the student to become patient, to take time, and if necessary, to start over in order to achieve excellence, or does it subordinate excellence to speed, ease, and efficiency?
14. Does it encourage the student to value rigor and discipline?
15. Does it deepen the role of the family in the life of the school and the role of education in the life of the family, or does it erect a barrier between family and school?



*Plato and Aristotle from School of Athens, Raphael*

# Part II: Tools



*God as Architect of World*  
Paris Bible, c. 1220

## **Integrated Curriculum: The Building Blocks of Learning and the Shape of the Soul**

As the Vision states, the goal of education is the student himself, to form his mind and his character in such a way that he can live his whole life, so far as possible, in a way that is consistent with the truth about himself as a human being created in the image and likeness of God. We often say that we aim to achieve this through an integrated curriculum. But what does this mean? And how is the curriculum integrated?

Just as there were two complementary dimensions to our vision of education—conveying a definite body of knowledge and forming certain aptitudes, qualities of character, and habits of mind in the student—so too is the curriculum integrated in a twofold way.

The first is through *the content of a historically based curriculum*, rooted in an understanding of the human person as a creature, created in the image and likeness of God. From this starting point, the curriculum presents history as a coherent story propelled by the human desire for God and by God’s coming to meet, inflame, and satisfy that desire in Christ. This is what the Vision Statement means by “incorporating our students into the wisdom of two thousand years of Catholic thought, history, culture, and arts.” This means placing special emphasis on the Greek, Roman, and Jewish cultures that make up the Western tradition. This understanding of the person as a creature provides a basis for exploring and appreciating these and other pre-Christian cultures, for seeking to understand them as they understood themselves.

But rooting history in the understanding of the human person as a *creature* with a natural desire for God also orients those cultures toward the coming of Christ, after which they are taken up, transformed, into a new Christian culture in which the deepest of human longings and the highest of human aspirations are met by a gift from God which surpasses all these. Other subjects such as literature, art, and music, and even math and nature studies, complement this understanding and deepen it. For instance, a class studying Greek culture in the Grammar stage might read and discuss stories from Greek mythology to think along with the Greeks “from the inside.” A class studying the Middle Ages in the Logic stage might learn Gregorian chant in music or consider the symbolism of Gothic architecture in art or the symbolism of shapes in medieval stained glass in conjunction with their introduction to geometry.

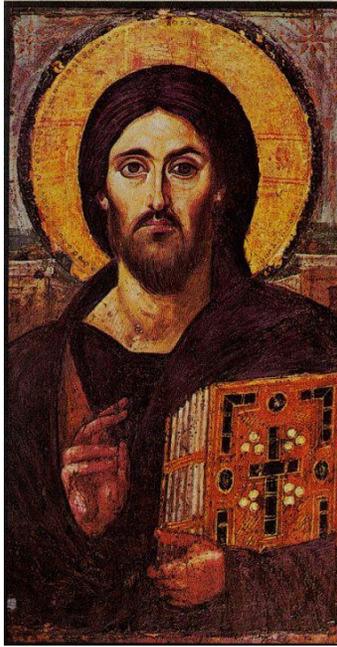
In pre-Kindergarten, students will experience a joyful, Catholic environment as they are exposed to a variety of historical figures and events while learning habits of discipline and gaining foundational knowledge. In grades K-2, students will be briefly introduced to each history cycle through living books and age-appropriate engaging activities and projects. In grades 3-6, students will cycle twice through Ancient/Medieval and Modern and American history. In grades 7-8, students in the logic stage will recapitulate this history by studying the ancient civilizations and Christendom, and end with the Modern Age and America. In grades 9-12, students in

the rhetoric stage will study each of four historical periods for a full year and gain a profound understanding of history's influence on the world we live in today. By completing these cycles, students will both reinforce what they have previously learned and also penetrate the meaning of history more deeply.

The second dimension integrates the curriculum *in the student himself*, by cultivating in the student aptitudes, habits, and qualities that shape his approach to all subjects, and bind them together into a unity in what the Vision Statement calls "wonder and love for all that is genuinely true, good, and beautiful." For instance, the curriculum emphasizes observation and rendering in subjects as varied as art, music, and nature studies. The purpose of this emphasis is also to cultivate within the students habits and powers of *looking, seeing, and noticing*, the development of which makes us most human and most alive. These, in turn, imply a capacity for concentration, whole-hearted attention, silence, and stillness of both body and soul. The study of music seeks to cultivate the same power of attention and understanding with the sense of hearing as observation does with the sense of sight. In this way, the qualities and habits needed to read beyond the surface level of a story, to notice mathematical patterns in nature, to distinguish one bird from another, to hear parts of a harmony in music, or to recognize how shadows are effected in a painting by lines, geometrical shapes, and gradations of color are not unlike the qualities needed to recognize the presence of God which, like light, always surrounds us.

Approached in this way, the study of nature, music, and art is a kind of preparation for contemplative prayer or adoration, and these in turn, prepare the student to study the world and to live in it in a fully human way. In these two ways this approach to education forms a unified whole. The core subjects studied at each stage of the curriculum have peculiar objectives which, taken together, combine for building up the whole.

# Part III: Laying the Foundation



*Christ the Teacher*  
St. Catherine Monastery on Mt. Sinai

## Laying the Foundation: Pedagogy

A Catholic classical education seeks both to incorporate students into the wisdom of the Catholic tradition and to form certain habits and dispositions in the souls of students. This endeavor requires a distinct pedagogical approach, though it will obviously take a more developed form in the higher grades. It will fall to teachers in their expertise to tailor this approach to particular subjects and situations in age-appropriate ways. The following guidelines will help to cultivate those habits and dispositions. By working creatively within their parameters, teachers in the lower grades will lay a solid foundation for future work in the upper grades, while teachers in the upper grades will build upon this solid foundation.

**What You Don't Know Won't Hurt You. (But What You Don't Want to Know Will.)** Very few people teaching today are the beneficiaries of a classical education, and nowadays even those with some classical training have holes in their knowledge of the tradition. So it is natural to feel overwhelmed or intimidated at the prospect of such a demanding and ambitious approach, so foreign to common experience. The nature studies program, for example, differs markedly from conventional introductions to science, and there are few resources in this area that are complete and readymade for this approach. Teachers in this as well as other areas will have to be thoughtful and creative in bending imperfect materials to fit this approach. But the most important ingredient in teaching a classical curriculum is not command of the tradition, though this is a worthy and desirable goal and should come with time. Rather the most important thing is that 'you become like this child' that teachers begin to think of themselves as students, that they fall in love with thinking and are gripped by the same fundamental human questions that animated our forebears in the tradition and created the greatness of Western and Christian culture. Regardless of what 'information' a student may acquire, classical education has only truly succeeded when this desire, having become contagious, is passed from teachers to students. When this happens, teachers and students are incorporated into the 'great conversation' together and bound by a common love and common desire to discover the truth and make it one's own.

**What They Don't Know Won't Hurt Them. (Yet.)** Remember that a classical education lays a foundation for future learning *both* by developing skills *and* by incorporating students into the great conversation of the tradition. The themes and texts introduced in the early years (e.g., Greek characters and themes) are foundational for the subsequent tradition. They will reappear frequently in later art and literature, and they will be covered again in the upper school. It is therefore vital to introduce these texts and themes in the early grades even if students do not fully comprehend them. In doing so you will be cultivating dispositions, contributing to the culture and atmosphere of the school, and a common knowledge base that will be developed further later on in the curriculum. This knowledge, in turn, will deepen and perfect what is sometimes only imperfectly grasped at earlier stages.

**Practice the Art of Memory.** To cultivate memory, confidence, and good speaking, heavy and regular emphasis should be placed on memorization and recitation of phonics rules, math facts, and the narration and dictation of short poems, stories, and even history lessons. These skills and facts are the foundation for later work.

**Homework: A Game the Whole Family Can Play.** Because in the early grades memorization and narration precede the child's ability to read, and because class sizes will not always allow children to perform their narrations and recitations in school, children will often have to practice narration at home with the help of a family member. Parents should be informed of this expectation in orientation prior to the start of classes, and teachers should remind parents of this responsibility at the onset of classes. This will help to achieve the additional goals of raising standards and expectations and involving parents more deeply in the education of their children.

**Stretching Minds by Stretching Language.** From a very early age we want to establish a standard of excellence and promote the command and love of language. We want to nurture the ability to think about and discuss stories. We want to foster a capacity to remember and sustain attention and cultivate a love for what is noble and high. A good deal of instruction in the early grades will therefore consist in teachers reading great works of literature (e.g., children's versions of Homer) to students over the course of a number of days. Often 'age appropriate' texts are less challenging (and inspiring) than great works which seem slightly out of reach. But when these texts are read slowly, with the teacher pausing to explain or discuss difficult phrases and ideas, children begin to discover the wonders of language, the power of big ideas, and to improve their own vocabulary. And they acquire a foundation for understanding most of the great Western art and literature they will encounter later in their studies and in life.

**What Would Plato Do?** 'Socratic' discussions should begin in the earliest grades and teach students to begin questioning and discussing stories, pictures, fables or proverbs according to four rules: 1. Read the text carefully. 2. Listen to what others say and don't interrupt. 3. Speak clearly. 4. Give others your respect.

**Thinking With the Mind of the Ancients.** As students advance in their ability, they should be encouraged to place themselves imaginatively within the historical period they are discussing in order to understand how that culture thought about the True, the Good, and the Beautiful, and the nature of God and man. The assignments included at the end of every chapter in Eva March Tappan's *The Story of the Greek People* provide a good example that could be adapted to oral or written work.

**Is There a Text in This Class?** The use of textbooks should be minimized. This is for several reasons: to provide students a coherent history, to produce a more integrated curriculum, to introduce them to 'primary sources', to develop memory and a capacity for sustained attention, and to prepare them for reading great works of literature in later grades. Teachers may choose to use textbooks or other reference books for themselves in order to develop a narrative of historical continuity tailored to the school's characteristic emphases, and some subjects (e.g., math) may require greater reliance on textbooks from students. Still teachers should strive so far as possible for 'textbook independence' and to devise an oral presentation of historical material in 'lecture' form, as a thread on which to hang more targeted readings in primary source material, ideally, whole books.

**History and the Restless Heart.** Teachers in the humanities should strive to integrate history, literature, religion and the arts so as to provide a comprehensive and coherent history which

addresses the basic human questions: Who is God? Who and what is man? What is true, good, and beautiful?

**Forming the Soul One Sense at a Time.** Developing what is peculiarly human in the souls of students means developing the art of noticing and the habit of attention. By definition this means developing one concentrated sense or capacity—seeing, listening, and reading— at a time. This allows students who excel at one particular ‘learning style’ to succeed, while also giving them opportunities to develop in weaker areas. Teachers should seek methods for cultivating these capacities one at a time, avoiding as far as possible multimedia presentations which dilute and diffuse attention. Instead, they should rely on a diverse range of activities (e.g., looking at artwork, listening to music, reading of *books*) that develop concentration in diverse ways, ‘one sense at a time’.

**Humanizing Technology.** Education develops what is most human in students: the capacity for wisdom and love which requires insightful reading, depth of thought, and the autonomy that comes from virtuous self-command. These, in turn, require disciplined habits of patience, attentiveness, memory and concentration and a desire for what is truly good and beautiful. The role of computers and information technologies should be critically assessed in light of these goals, and prudence should govern their use in instruction and the completion of assignments. These technologies are both a fact of contemporary life and a wonderful resource, providing access to sources of knowledge otherwise unavailable. They should be utilized when appropriate and students should be taught to use them responsibly. However, premature or excessive use of these technologies undermines the very qualities and skills education seeks to cultivate: it inhibits the development of reading comprehension, alters the very processes of composition and calculation, and creates dependence on the technologies themselves. It also hampers the transmission of tradition by isolating students from previous generations and instilling the prejudice that new equals better. Furthermore, it isolates students from one another. Real education therefore requires a space where children can experience a measure of freedom from these technologies and develop independently of them. Our pedagogy should help create this space by stressing personal interaction in instruction and ‘manual labor’ (e.g. handwriting) in the completion of assignments. We should encourage students to take time, attend patiently to detail, and correct mistakes. We should prioritize the insightful reading of books over the collection and manipulation of data and should use ‘instructional videos’ and other media sparingly after evaluating their quality and their effect on school culture. Lastly, we should promote communal activity over computer games or movies during leisure time. The truly liberating answer to the problem of children's immersion in technology is not just a more responsible use of technology; it is to give them something better to love.

## Laying the Foundation: Curriculum - Developmental and Historical Segments

Each of the core disciplines has its role to play in the building up of the whole and each has its own more specific set of objectives for the different stages at which it is being taught. Quite simply, at each stage there are things we want children to know, things they ought to be able to do, and habits, dispositions, or aptitudes they ought to have acquired or be acquiring. Considering these in detail and in light of the general objectives of each subject, and considering each subject in light of the overall end, teachers in specific subjects and at specific stages can see how each stage builds upon the previous stage, how their work contributes to the ‘finished product’, and how they can tailor specific classes and methods to serve these ideals more effectively. The curriculum is divided into the following developmental and historical segments:

### *Foundations*

**Pre-Kindergarten:** Little Saints - Classical Disciplines

### *Lower Grammar Stage*

**Kindergarten:** In the Beginning  
**Grade 1:** The Cradle of Civilization Part I  
**Grade 2:** The Cradle of Civilization Part II

### *Upper Grammar Stage*

**Third Grade:** American/Modern Year  
**Fourth Grade:** Ancient/Medieval Year  
**Fifth Grade:** American/Modern Year  
**Sixth Grade:** Western Heritage/World Cultures

### *Logic Stage*

**Seventh Grade:** The Christendom Year  
**Eighth Grade:** The New World Year

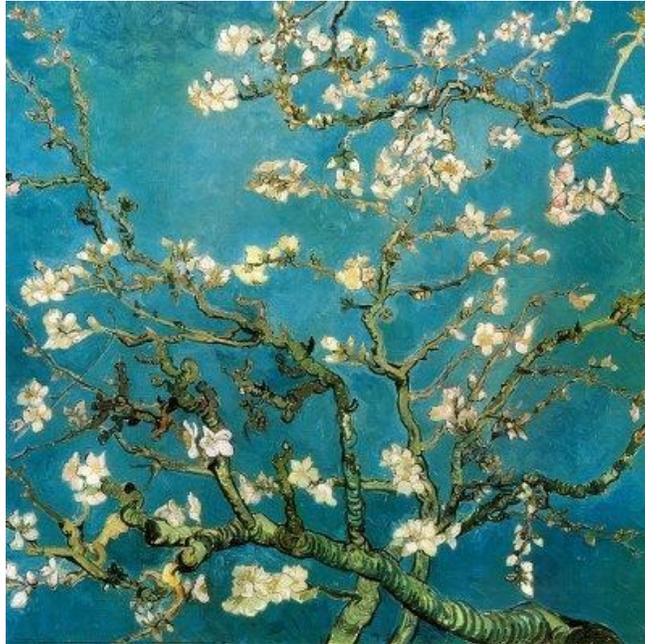
### *Rhetoric Stage*

**Ninth Grade:** Ancient Year  
**Tenth Grade:** Medieval Year  
**Eleventh Grade:** Renaissance & Early Modern  
**Twelfth Grade:** Modern/American History



*The Death of Socrates*

# Part V: Picking Out Colors



*Almond Tree in Blossom*, Vincent Van Gogh

## Beauty in the Life of the School

Beauty is praiseworthy and desirable for what it *is*, not merely for what it *does*. In this way it is like truth; indeed beauty is the very splendor of truth (*veritatis splendor*) that makes knowledge desirable for its own sake. This is why there can be no desire for truth without beauty, without the love of what is good in itself and not merely good for us (useful). It is precisely this objective quality of beauty that makes it a source of real joy and delight. And it is why education that culminates in wisdom culminates in worship.

Education, like wisdom, is comprehensive. Everything a school does is education of some sort. Every detail of its life speaks to its own view of education and to what it regards as good and true. A school that seeks beauty in its pursuit of truth should strive at the same time to *be* beautiful and to reflect the best, noblest, and highest—what is good in itself and desirable for its own sake—in all aspects of its life. “Beauty in all things” thus testifies to the splendor and the ordered unity of God’s creation, making it possible for a student to live a wiser and more integrated life.

### Classical Education and Our Surroundings

Classical philosophy teaches that beauty has unity, harmony, proportion, wholeness, and radiance. In considering how a classical classroom should look, one should keep in mind these principles. As a Catholic classical school, we should recognize the supreme beauty of the Church and incorporate her rich tradition into the daily lives of our students, regardless of what subject area we teach. Thus, our classrooms should contain images and objects that, first of all, meet the criteria of the beautiful, but also reveal the Catholic faith.

It is also important to recognize that in creating us in his image, God implanted in us a natural desire for beauty. Dolores Flessner, in her *Creating a Catholic Culture in Your Home*, points out that “History and archeology have shown us that the making of things, and the attempt to make them beautiful, has characterized human activity from the beginning. Man not only created the pot that he needs to eat from; he decorated it and made it lovely.”

Bearing in mind that everything a school does is education of some sort, we should carefully consider the aesthetic components of the school building and our classrooms. Here are some areas of consideration followed by some ideas on how to implement them:

**The Spiritual:** In *The Holy See’s Teaching on Catholic Schools*, Archbishop Michael Miller says, “The Incarnation, which emphasizes the bodily coming of God’s Son into the world, leaves its seal on every aspect of Christian life. The very fact of the Incarnation tells us that the created world is the means chosen by God through which He communicates His life to us. What is human and visible can bear the divine. If Catholic schools are to be true to their identity, they should try to suffuse their environment with this delight in the sacramental.” With a little effort, our classrooms can celebrate the sacramental. Here are some thoughts on how to do so:

- Crucifixes and statues should be beautiful and realistic, not cheap-looking.

- Icons are windows into the divine and are a simple, traditional way to invite young people to contemplate God.
- Copies of high-quality paintings or drawings of Catholic edifices (such as St. Peter's) are readily available and inexpensive; they serve to acquaint students with the Church's cultural treasury.
- Religious objects particular to the Church calendar, such as an Advent wreath or Nativity scene, are traditional and beautiful ways of teaching the faith.

**The Beautiful:** Joseph Pieper has said that in its original sense beauty is “the glow of the true and good irradiating from every ordered state of being.” Flessner elaborates on this thought: “Our longing for beauty, and our deep joy in the moments we encounter beauty, is because it is a vestige of paradise and a foretaste of heaven.” It is important that the school display religious art because it represents the cultural treasury of the Church and the highest aspirations of human art and because it is important for children’s understanding of the faith. But because God is the Creator and because he embraces the whole of his creation in the Incarnation, art that is truly beautiful need not be ‘religious’ in order to be Catholic. In fact, it is essential that beautiful non-religious’ art be present if students are to appreciate that all creation and all beauty come from God, which is essential for seeing the relevance of faith to life.

- Beautiful art, both religious and non-religious, can be purchased and framed at low cost. Art beautifies the classroom and reflects God’s goodness and truth. It can also serve as an explicit teaching tool.
- For younger children, choose simple scenes that they would be naturally interested in; hang artwork at their eye level.
- Consider choosing art related to the themes for the year.
- God is the first and best Artist! Incorporate God’s creation into the classroom in organic and tasteful ways. For example:
  - Plants help create a more peaceful and attractive environment. Orchids, for example, are surprisingly easy to care for and the blooms last a long time.
  - Animals, such as hamsters, tortoises, and fish provide delight and fun for children.
  - The remains of animals, such as taxidermist-stuffed birds, bones, or fossils, provide an opportunity for wonder and inquiry.
  - Seashells and interesting rocks can be creatively incorporated into decorating the classroom, and also serve as learning tools.

**A Warm and Inviting Atmosphere:** Archbishop Miller suggests that —since the school is rightly considered an extension of the home, it ought to have some of the amenities which can create a pleasant and family atmosphere.¶ Students spend almost half their waking hours in school; it behooves us to make our classrooms as welcoming and comfortable as possible.

- Aim to create an overall homey atmosphere
- Arrange the furniture in such a way as to create open spaces for gathering and corners for “going on retreat.”
- Paint walls a warm-tinted color. Avoid industrial or overly stimulating colors.

- While plenty of natural light is ideal, adding some accent lighting can help create a more intimate feeling in the classroom.

### **Questions to Consider:**

- Is this a warm and inviting atmosphere?
- Does the room evoke peace? Does it inspire?
- What does the arrangement of the furniture say about the classroom?
- Are the walls decorated thoughtfully? Are they crowded or too sparse?
- Are the objects and pictures on display ones that I would enjoy gazing at? Are they beautiful? Do they have unity, harmony, and proportion? Are they radiant? Are works from master artists included?
- Have I brought elements of the natural world into my classroom?
- Are there images of the Catholic faith? A crucifix that is centrally placed? Images of the Church, Mary, and the saints?
- Is the room neat, orderly, and clean? Do I make an effort to keep it tidy and clutter-free?
- Is there student work on display? Is it presented in an organized and professional manner? Is it a selection of superior work?

## **Classical Education and School Culture**

The same spirit that informs the organization of the classroom should animate the entire culture of the school. This is important because beauty and truth are good in themselves and are the principles that bind things together in a natural order. Only by revering truth for its own sake can students discover this order, conform themselves to it, and truly understand their own inherent dignity.

- The same concern for beauty that animates the organization of the classroom should govern the arrangement and decoration of common areas such as hallways, the cafeteria, and the library. The criteria of unity, harmony, proportion, wholeness, and radiance should prevail, and these areas should feature a tasteful combination of religious and “non-religious” art, as well as beautiful natural objects.
- Great care should be taken to see that events usually thought of as “extra-curricular” are in keeping with the ideals and mission of the school, and the school should strive for excellence in these areas as well. Such events should be planned with an eye toward both the liturgical season and the historical emphasis of the curriculum.
- Because education is formation in both knowledge *and* love, one of these goals is to make the school more of an extension of the family and to involve families more deeply in education and the life of the school. To that end, the school should strive as much as possible to include families in its festive and liturgical life. It should sponsor intergenerational events such as lectures, reading groups, and discussion groups to involve the entire family more deeply in the educational process.
- The school should seek to hold a number of formal events such as banquets and balls. These encourage interaction between families and generations and provide a supervised,

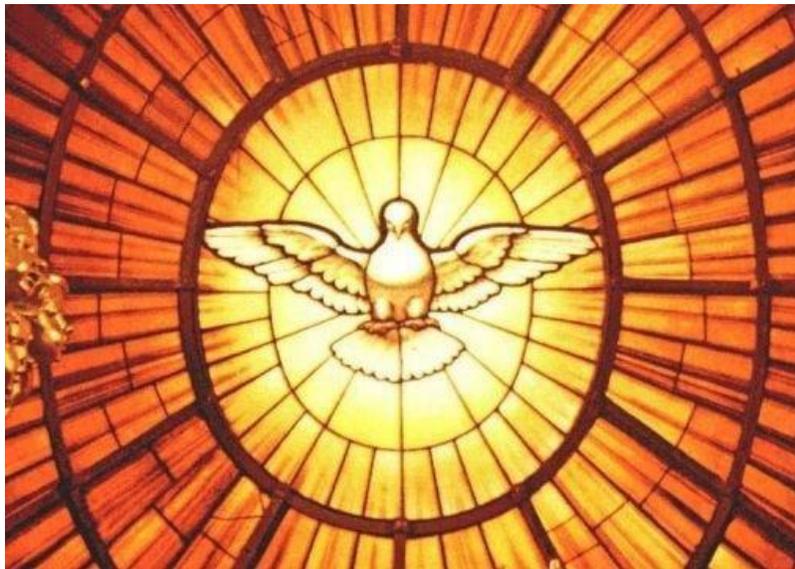
fun, and wholesome context for boys and girls to mingle outside of the structure of the classroom. Such events encourage a love of beauty. They encourage the modesty that belongs to dignity and self-regard and the beauty of modesty which is elegance.

- There should be a clear dress code for students, faculty, and staff. A dress code teaches students that their bodies matter. It encourages self-respect, respect for the educational enterprise and reverence for God by teaching that God and the truth deserve the best they have to offer. A dress code for faculty and staff communicates this common vision to the students and elevates the overall culture of the school.
- Charity and respect should prevail between students, teachers, and other staff as they address each other. The school should consider using formal titles or forms of address (Mr., Ms., etc.) for teachers *and* students. This exhibits self-respect, mutual respect, and respect for the common endeavor of education. Sarcasm and belittlement are to be avoided always.
- A code of conduct that emphasizes charity, honor, nobility, and dignity should be operative for all school events such as extra-curricular festivals, assemblies, liturgical celebrations, and sporting events.

### **Liturgy**

- The Sacred Liturgy is the heart of the school's life and its most solemn activity. The Sacred Liturgy is not a means to an end, even a worthy end such as moral instruction, but is itself the end to which all true education is ordered. For in worship we acknowledge the goodness of truth by surrendering to it, offering ourselves in Christ to the Father. And it is in worship, by God's gracious initiative, that our longing for beauty and truth finds its rest in the mystery of God who *is* beauty and truth. Contemplation and adoration, prayer and praise are therefore the highest form of knowledge and are foreshadowed by all others, even if this knowledge adores a mystery that is beyond our comprehension. Sacred Liturgy should thus be central to the life of the school, and this understanding should be made incarnate and explicit.
- Beauty in liturgy is important *because* it is "pointless" and extravagant, like the costly perfume with which Mary Magdalene anointed the head of Jesus. Liturgy should be beautiful because without "pointless" beauty, we forget that the worship of God is its own end—indeed the highest end—and that the Church is His mystical body. Other goals, such as building up the community, moral formation, and social action, all follow from the liturgy, but the liturgy itself must be ordered to the worship of God who both transcends and dwells among us.
- Liturgy is beautiful and reveals the mystery of God when it is celebrated with solemnity and reverence. Silence and stillness should be observed before, during, and after the liturgy. The lectors should be competent and well prepared. The movements of the servers should be solemn, graceful, and deliberate. Musical selections should be beautiful and appropriate to the occasion. And the church itself should be beautifully and tastefully adorned in ways appropriate to the liturgical season. (Graduating classes could emphasize this by making a modest gift to the parish, e.g., crucifixes, icons, vestments, thuribles, etc.). The school should thus seek to "worship the Lord in the beauty of Holiness," and to understand that holiness is beautiful.

- Because the worship of God is its own end, because it is the gift of God's own life and the highest expression of our humanity, it should evoke a sense of wonder and gratitude and call forth the very best we have to offer—which is everything, ourselves, our souls and bodies. This means that students should present themselves at their best, appearing groomed and well-dressed. They should seek to love God with the whole of their being, soul *and* body. Children should have the intricacies of the Mass explained to them and learn a proper posture for prayer as well as to perform bodily gestures such as genuflecting, bowing, and crossing themselves. They should also understand *why* these are appropriate at certain moments in the Mass. Not only does this allow for a fuller and more comprehending participation in the Mass, it allows children to worship God with their bodies and their souls and reinforces that they themselves are persons who are a unity of body and soul.
- Masses for children should be child-like without being childish. They should be full of wonder, awe, and mystery, but Mass should never be sentimental or 'cute', even when the occasion is a defining moment in the children's lives. When Mass is cute the children themselves become the focus of our adoration, whereas the true purpose of these occasions is to induct the children into the adoration of Christ. Therefore when Mass is arranged to 'feature' the children, the true meaning of both the occasion and the Mass is lost. Children should be taught to participate in a spirit of wonder, love, and praise and they should be fully involved in as lectors, altar servers, and members of the *schola*.



*Holy Spirit Above the Chair of Peter, St. Peter's Basilica*

## Multicultural Connections Related to Time Periods

The Incarnation is the center of history. Thus, it touches on every world culture and provides a distinct vantage point from which to study them. Insofar as all cultures are animated by a natural desire for God, we are obliged to appreciate them on their own terms, seeking to discover their inherent beauty and goodness and to understand them as they understood themselves. Insofar as this natural desire finds its fulfillment in Christ, we are obliged to study these cultures in reference to him and their (sometimes tragic) historical encounter with Christian culture. Below are suggested topics for organically and effectively integrating the study of pre-Christian, non-Christian, and non-Western cultures into the history curriculum.

### **Ancient Greece** – Archaic Period, Classical Greece, Hellenistic Greece, Roman Greece

- *Persia* – Greco-Persian wars; Hellenistic expansion
- *Judea* – The Maccabean rebellion; Hellenistic expansion
- *Egypt* – Hellenistic expansion
- *India* – Hellenistic expansion; Indo-Greek kingdom

### **Ancient Rome** – Founding and Roman Kingdom, Republic, Empire

- *Greece* – Rome inherited the Hellenistic Empire
- *Near-East and Asia Minor* – Judaism and Christianity
- *North Africa* – Expansion of empire; importance of North African Christianity, especially Sts. Augustine and Monica; Ethiopia and Coptic Christianity (cf. Acts of the Apostles)
- *Europe and Slavic Europe* – Gaul (France), Britain, Hispania (Spain); Barbarian invasions, Huns, Visigoths

### **Middle Ages** – Early Middle Ages, High Middle Ages, Late Middle Ages

- *Byzantium* – Asia Minor and Near East
- *Islam* – Crusades

### **Early Modern** – Renaissance, Exploration and Colonization, Reformations, Revolutions

- *China* – the journeys of Marco Polo; missionary activity
- *Peru* – Incas; Spanish colonization; missionary activity
- *Mexico* – Mayans and Aztecs; Spanish colonization; missionary activity
- *India* – British colonization; East India Company
- *North America* – Native Americans; French/Spanish/English colonies; missionaries
- *Africa* – Slave trade; colonization of New World

### **Modern and American History**

- *French and Spanish Colonies* – Catholic missionaries in America; Louisiana Purchase; California and the Southwest
- *Mexico* – Mexican-American War; Texas
- *African-Americans* – Slavery in America; Abolition & Civil War; Segregation and Civil Rights Movement
- *Globalization and Decolonization* – Middle East and Israel; Africa; India and Pakistan; China (Cultural Revolution)

## Suggestions for Further Reading

### What is Catholic Education?

*The Holy See's Teaching on Catholic Schools* by Archbishop J. Michael Miller. Archbishop Miller summarizes the magisterial writings directed to Catholic schools from the time of Vatican II. Also see his lecture, –A Summary of Holy See's Teaching on Catholic Education. || <http://www.catholiceducation.org/articles/education/ed0269.html>

“Toward a Distinctively Catholic School” by Stratford Caldecott. A concise and compelling vision of Catholic education with important suggestions for how classical education should be modified to cope with the problems presented by modern culture. <http://www.secondspring.co.uk/articles/scaldecott17.htm>

*The Spirit of the Liturgy* by Joseph Ratzinger. If liturgy is central and not extracurricular to the life of the school, and if the whole curriculum is directed toward the cultivation of prayer and adoration, then this is indispensable.

“The Teaching Role of the Sacred Liturgy,” Vancouver Synod Study Commission on Teaching the Faith. The Synod offers six recommendations for how to think about and cultivate the liturgy in Catholic schools. <http://catholiceducation.org/articles/education/ed0137.html>

*Called to Love: Approaching John Paul II's Theology of the Body* by Carl Anderson and José Granados. This book is about much more than the Theology of the Body. It is about wonder, love, and fundamental human questions which are the foundation of education both classical *and* Catholic. Readers will recognize our approach to education mirrored and deepened in this book.

*The Beauty of Faith: Using Christian Art to Spread the Good News* by Jem Sullivan. Sullivan urges us to recover Christian art as an integral way of evangelizing our image-saturated culture.

*Recovering a Catholic Philosophy of Elementary Education* by Curtis Hancock. Dr. Hancock presents the goals of elementary education grounded in a Catholic view of the human person and his powers.

*The Crisis of Western Education* by Christopher Dawson. Dawson analyzes the crisis facing contemporary education at all levels and shows why classical education must be accompanied by a historical approach to the story of Christian culture.

*Beauty for Truth's Sake: On the Re-enchantment of Education* by Stratford Caldecott. A powerful meditation on the form, content, and goal of Catholic education in the midst of secular culture that provides rich and clear explanations of the importance of beauty in education and the role it plays in Christian culture. Caldecott emphasizes math and science as a way of recreating a sense of beauty and wonder.

“The Lost Tools of Learning” by Dorothy Sayers. The essay that launched the classical school movement in the twentieth century. Sayers charmingly discusses the need for classical education, what it is, and how well it accords with the natural development of young people. <http://www.gbt.org/text/sayers.html>

*Trivium* by Sr. Miriam Joseph. This is an incredibly lucid account of grammar, logic, and rhetoric.

*An Introduction to Classical Education: A Guide for Parents* by Christopher Perrin. A handy introduction to classical education written by a school master of a Protestant classical school. It is not perfect and entirely suitable to Our Lady of the Sacred Heart Academy’s vision, but it does offer a brief and clear explanation of and justification for classical education.

### ***The Classical Education You Never Had***

*A Students Guide to the Core Curriculum* and *A Students Guide to the Liberal Arts* by Mark Henrie and James Schall (respectively). These two books come in one volume. Henrie shows college students (and us!) how to construct a traditional core curriculum with minimal resources, while Fr. Schall discusses what an authentic liberal arts education looks like and surveys some of the major ideas and books from the tradition.

“On the Reading of Old Books” by C.S. Lewis. In this delightful little essay, Lewis tells us why we should not leave the reading of ‘old books’ to the experts. If we try, we can understand much more than we think we can.

[http://jollyblogger.typepad.com/jollyblogger/2005/10/c\\_s\\_lewis\\_on\\_th.html](http://jollyblogger.typepad.com/jollyblogger/2005/10/c_s_lewis_on_th.html)

*The Well-educated Mind: A Guide to the Classical Education You Never Had* by Susan Wise Bauer. If one is interested in how to ‘train her own mind’ and get an insider’s view, this is a good introduction.

*Socrates Meets Jesus* by Peter Kreeft. Western civilization is the result of the Christian appropriation of Greek and Roman culture. In this fun Socratic dialogue, Kreeft has Socrates come back to life in the twentieth century to seek the truth about this fellow Jesus. A great introduction to philosophical questioning, Christianity, and the modern problems we face.

*Aristotle for Everyone* by Mortimer Adler. Adler argues that “philosophy is everybody’s business.” It is not the special concern of a few University professors, but is the very stuff of our humanity. All people ask fundamental questions and seek answers to them. Adler introduces us to Aristotle, another human who asked fundamental questions and offered some pretty good answers.

*A Father Who Keeps His Promises: God’s Covenant Love in Scripture*, by Scott Hahn. In times past, Christians were educated not only in grammar, logic, and rhetoric, but also in the Scriptures. This book presents a very accessible entryway into understanding the Bible.

*Greek Myths and Christian Mystery* by Hugo Rahner (preface, Part 1: chs. 1-3, Part 3: introduction, chs. 6-7). A beautiful book written in a profound spirit of Christian humanism which is indispensable for understanding the world significance of Greek culture and the relationship of Greek and Christian culture in the light of Christ. The chapters on Holy Homer are particularly illuminating.

*How to Read a Book* by Mortimer Adler. The title says it all.

*A Student's Guide to Philosophy* by Ralph McInerny. A good introduction to the major thinkers and ideas in the history of philosophy.

*The Pocket Guide to the Meaning of Life* by Peter Kreeft. If you cannot answer the question, "What is the meaning of life?" then you might want to pick up this handy little book which walks us step by step (question by question) to the answer of this most fundamental question.

### ***What Does Classical Education Look Like?***

*Everyone a Teacher* by Mark Schwehn. This anthology contains readings from Plato, Augustine, Mark Twain, the Bible, Pericles, Abraham Lincoln, Vivian Paley, and Miss Manners. The book takes up the question, "What is teaching?" and offers a variety of images and examples which involve us in the process of learning about teaching by thinking through what these images and examples mean for us.

*Spitwad Sutras: Classroom Teaching as Sublime Vocation*, by Robert Inchausti. This book is one of the most insightful accounts of what it means to say that teaching is a vocation. It is an honest, funny, and penetrating account of the mysterious experience of teaching day to day.

*White Teacher* by Vivian Paley. Vivian Paley is the Socrates of kindergarten teachers. In this, her first book, she probes the dynamics of being a white teacher in an all-black school.

*Wally's Stories* by Vivian Paley. Paley, as Socrates, questions the kids and herself about how to deal with the problem child, Wally, who has an extraordinary imagination.

*The Marva Collins Way* by Marva Collins. This is the story of how Marva Collins used classical education to transform inner-city schools.

### ***Why Do We Need Classical Education Anyway?***

Pope Benedict's University of Regensburg Lecture. Benedict traces the consequences of the modern rejection of the Hellenistic (Greek) basis of Western civilization.

(<http://cwnews.com/news/viewstory.cfm?recnum=46474>)

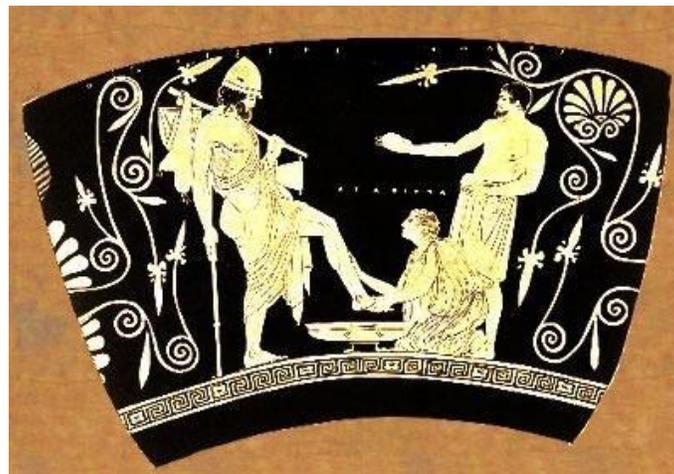
*The Abolition of Man* by C.S. Lewis. Lewis discusses how notions of relativism have slipped into our common thought (as revealed in a child's language arts textbook!) and attempts to show the reality and importance of universal values, such as courage and honor.

*Relationships* by Allan Bloom in Kass and Kass (eds.), *Wing to Wing, Oar to Oar: Readings on Courting and Marrying* (pp. 45-76). While the relevance of this may not be immediately obvious, Bloom discusses the relationship between the demise and sorry state of education, the decline of the family, and the demise of courtship. He argues that all this results from the loss of beauty and nobility in education and a diminution of the desire or yearning for transcendence. It testifies to the importance of the classical tradition and beauty in education.

### ***Classical Multimedia***

*The Teaching Company*. This company provides lectures by college professors on various subjects, including philosophy and history. The library has many of these for checkout, but you can also buy them at [www.teach12.com](http://www.teach12.com). One that comes particularly recommended is Thomas Noble's *The Foundations of Western Civilization*.

Movie: *The Emperor's Club*. Kevin Klein stars as a classics teacher in a boy's Catholic prep school. The movie beautifully portrays the enduring value of a classical education in the life of a teacher and his students. It also provides a nice contrast to *Dead Poets Society*, a movie depicting the Romantic ideal of education which burns brightly but does not last.



*The Homecoming of Odysseus, Greek Vase*