The Mission and Vision of Mary Seat of Wisdom Academy

Albrecht Dürer, *The Adoration of the Trinity*

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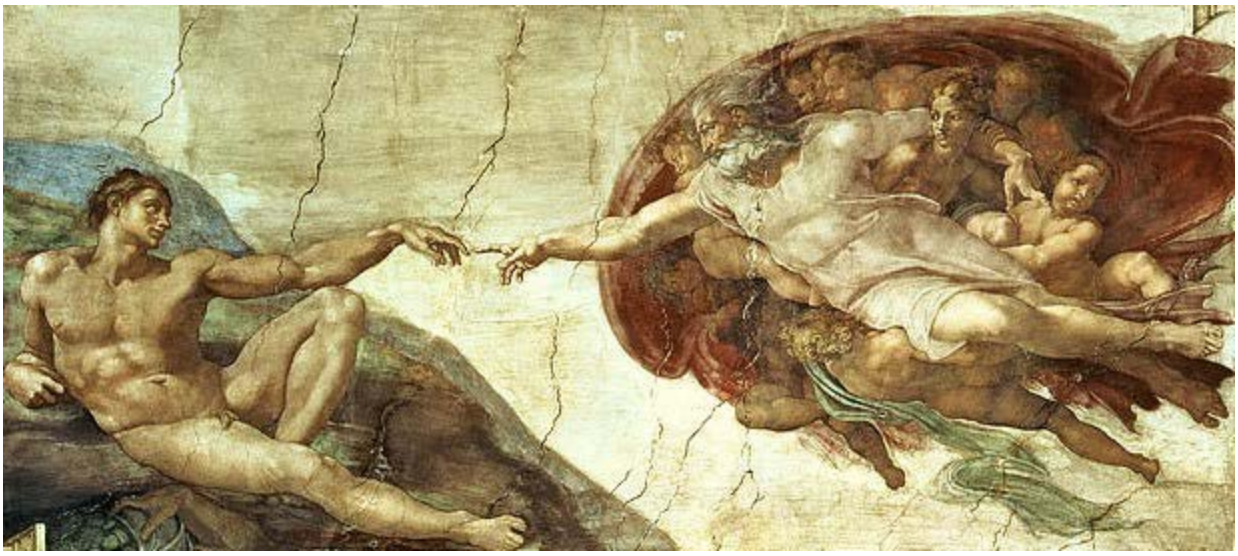

Michelangelo, *The Creation of Adam*

1. Introduction & Vision

This document outlines the purpose, structure, curricular content, and communal origins of a Catholic classical education, for the sake of defining the vision of Mary Seat of Wisdom Academy, a Catholic classical high school dedicated to such an education in the Diocese of Wichita (Kansas). It discusses both the general principles of Catholic classical education as well as some particular points regarding that School. We begin by explaining the purpose and educational vision of the School (Sections 1.1–1.2), then consider the reasons for the order and structure of its curriculum (Section 2), before discussing each class in the curriculum (Section 3). Lastly, we describe the community required to achieve the goals of Catholic classical education (Section 4).

1.1. Man and His Purpose

> *In reality it is only in the mystery of the Word made flesh that the mystery of man truly becomes clear. . . . Christ the new Adam . . . fully reveals man to himself and brings to light his most high calling.*[1]

Who am I? Where have I come from? Where am I going? What does it mean to be human? These questions are asked by every human being. Each of us longs to know their answers, for our happiness is bound up with them. The ancient Greeks understood "Know thyself" to be a command of divine origin, but the questions such an imperative inspires can only be answered fully by the One who made us. And so we turn to our Creator and to the Church, who, inspired by the Holy Spirit, dispenses the wisdom and grace revealed to her by her Bridegroom.

[1] *Gaudium et Spes*, n. 22.

To understand ourselves, or any created thing, we must study human nature and know its purpose or end-goal (*telos*). Man is "a creature composed of body and soul,"[2] and the distinctive human capacities of this soul-body union are the intellect (or mind), the will (or heart), and human desires and emotions. God created man "to know Him, to love Him, and to serve Him in this world, and to be happy with Him forever in the next."[3] Human nature is formed to fulfill perfectly that purpose—to know God with the intellect, to love Him with the will and desires, and to serve Him with the actions of the body. This is true human happiness. Furthermore, such an end-goal is not limited to a temporal or natural happiness, but is found most of all in beatitude, the supernatural happiness of union with God forever.[4]

1.2. Education

Due to the disorder of his nature and the wounds caused by the Fall, man is born unable to fulfill his purpose.[5] Therefore, just like any other living thing, man must grow and develop so as to acquire certain excellences that allow him to achieve his end.

The human person stands in need of excellences both infused by grace and acquired by training and moral formation. These excellences are called virtues, whether natural or supernatural, physical, moral or intellectual. Generally speaking, virtues perfect a thing with regards to its purpose, enabling it to carry out that purpose well.[6] For example, a knife is made for the sake of cutting, and so it is given a sharp edge. Sharpness is the excellence or virtue of a knife.[7] Man is made to know, love, and serve God. Therefore, the virtues are simply those excellences in his intellect, will, desires, and body that allow him to know, love, and serve God.

To cultivate these virtues, the Church has not only the liturgy and the sacraments, but a time-tested tradition of education—Catholic classical education. Catholic classical education seeks to cultivate virtue in the entire person so that one is better able to know, love, and serve God through Christ and His Church. This form of education was discovered and developed by the Greeks, adopted and expanded by the Romans, purified by the Church Fathers, and brought to a certain perfection by the medieval scholastics. It continues in use to this day. It is how many of the saints were educated—saints as varied as St. Patrick, St. Boniface, St. Hildegard of Bingen, St. Thomas Aquinas, St. Anthony of Padua, St. Ignatius of Loyola, St. Vincent de Paul, St. John Henry Newman, and Pope St. John Paul II. Simply put, it is the education of the Church.

The adjective "Catholic," then, is not merely an accidental or descriptive feature of classical education, but signifies what is essential to such an education. Since the end in this case is the formation of a young Catholic adult, the means instituted in the curriculum and School community carry forward at each stage a distinctive form and order, even if these are in some

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[2] Answer to q. 3, *Baltimore Catechism I*, Baronius Press Classics, 2013.

[3] Ibid., answer to q. 6.

[4] St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae (ST)*, Ia-IIae, q. 3, a. 8.

[5] See St. Thomas, *ST*, Ia-IIae, q. 109.

[6] St. Thomas, *ST*, Ia-IIae, q. 55; see also Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, II.5–6 and Plato, *Republic*, Book I, 352d–353e.

[7] This is an older usage of the English word "virtue," which nowadays typically has a more limited, moralistic sense. Compare "the virtue of an herb," which more clearly uses the older meaning. The Greeks simply used the word *aretê*, or "excellence."

respects similar to non-Catholic classical educational programs or other schools' curricula. As discussed below, the freedom found in such a Catholic education encompasses the tradition of *liberal education*. For simplicity, and not to the exclusion of this liberal aim, this document will use the term "Catholic classical education."

2. The Order of Catholic Classical Education

As man is designed to be able to fulfill his purpose, Catholic classical education is designed to fulfill its purpose—to progressively cultivate virtue in the entire person. Each stage, each class, each step is directed in appropriately diverse ways, as required by human nature, towards knowing, loving, and serving God. The order of the curriculum, then, is adapted to human nature itself, its capacities and potential virtues, all in view of our final end.[8] Its foundation is the cultivation of virtue in the body and disposing students to love the good, which is the basis for moral virtue (Section 2.1). It continues with learning the tools needed to nourish intellectual virtue, namely, the liberal arts (Section 2.2). Its completion is the cultivation of the intellectual virtues and the contemplation of God (Section 2.3).

2.1. A Pious and Musical Foundation

Catholic classical education requires certain foundational preparations. These are piety and a musical education in a broad sense, meaning education in harmony and order of both body and soul. This foundational preparation was recognized even in ancient and pre-Christian cultures, which indicates some natural basis that grace presupposes and can elevate. First we discuss piety, and second musical education in the broad sense being used here. Piety rightly orders our intellect and will to common goods such as the family, society, and communion with God. In a musical education, gymnastic trains the body, while other formative activities dispose the soul towards what is good and beautiful.

Piety is the virtue by which one renders what is owed to one's causes or origins, those responsible for one's existence, birth, and education.[9] Consequently, forming students in piety teaches them who they are in light of their causes, what they owe these causes, and how to honor them—God and the Church, parents, family, and civil society. Through this formation, students learn to look outside themselves and to see themselves as part of a greater whole. Piety also disposes them to a proper love of Catholic tradition, to both receive it and pass it on. In this way, piety prepares for all subsequent education. If fear of God is the beginning of wisdom (Prov. 9:10), piety aims at completing that good beginning.[10]

Due to our fallen nature, man is not naturally able to see the goodness and beauty in all of creation. Our loves and emotions are not congruous with the good reality that God has made.[11] These capacities must be cultivated and ordered rightly. Musical education in the broad sense

[8] See Plato, *Republic*, Book VII; Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, I.7–8, I.13, and Books VI and X; Hugh of St. Victor, *Didascalicon*, Book I, ch. 5; St. Thomas Aquinas, *Commentary on Aristotle's Nicomachean Ethics*, proœm., and his *Super Boetium de Trinitate*, q. 5, a. 1.

[9] See St. Thomas, *ST*, IIa-IIae, q. 101, a. 3.

[10] St. Thomas, *ST*, Ia-IIae, q. 68, a. 7; IIa-IIae, q. 19, a. 7.

[11] This is expressed well by C. S. Lewis in *The Abolition of Man*.

meant here is not learning to sing or play instruments, but the cultivation of the capacity to love the good and be moved by the beautiful in reality. These are the sources of order and harmony that instrumental music seeks to imitate.[12] Thus, musical education develops moral virtue by cultivating right loves and desires.

Musical education in this broad sense aims to "introduce the young to reality through delight."[13] This was the role of the Greek Muses in the ancient conception of becoming educated. This "Musical" education seeks to draw the beginner with the wonder and mystery of reality that only beginners are apt to experience as something new. Thus, the "muses" of such an education

> *address the beginner not only in their presentation of elementary things, but also in their mode of representation. They do not address the intellect primarily; they do not descant in dialectic. They are not rhetoricians who aim to persuade. They do not pretend to "prove" anything.*[14]

To begin truly at the beginning, one cannot jump to the dissection of reality, but must learn to marvel at it whole and entire, where the harmony of its truth is still intact. For instance, consider the wonder one feels when first seeing the stars. Star-gazing and wondering about the order and phenomena of the heavens as the beginner encounters together constitute a different mode of education than diving into modern astronomy or astrophysics.[15] In this way, a musical education in this broad sense prepares for and sustains the student's education in the liberal arts, for wonder and not doubt is the root of learning. Students must be allowed to be "born in wonder."[16]

Gymnastic, or various forms of physical exercise and training, are part of a musical education in this general sense. This part of Catholic classical education is devoted to the development of virtue in the body, or physical virtue, for three reasons. First, it is good to have physical excellence of this sort. Second, physical virtue is the easiest type of virtue to cultivate and is needed for subsequent growth (such as controlling one's body and holding one's mind attentively on a task). It also begins the development of virtue in the will and desires, or moral virtue—for example, perseverance and courage are constantly required on the field of play. This is accomplished not merely through sports or exercise, but also through activities that approach music itself, e.g., learning to dance.

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[12] Our contemporary use of the term "music" is very restricted. Boethius distinguishes between *musica instrumentalis*, *musica mundana*, and *musica humana*, or the music and harmony produced instrumentally by skill (which is closer to what we typically mean by "music"), the music of the world (the harmonies and order in natural things), and human music in the order and proportion in the human person and human societies. See Kevin Clark and Ravi Scott Jain, *The Liberal Arts Tradition: A Philosophy of Classical Christian Education*, 2nd ed. (Camp Hill, PA: Classical Academic Press, 2020), 88–99. While the liberal art of music incorporates aspects of all three senses of "music," the sense of "musical education" here is broader still.

[13] Dennis Quinn, "Education by the Muses," available at www.angelicum.net.

[14] Dennis Quinn, "The Muses as Pedagogues of the Liberal Arts," available at www.angelicum.net.

[15] See Quinn, ibid.: "Musical astronomy is simply what used to be called observational astronomy, although in the Integrated Humanities we simply called it star-gazing. Some twenty years ago the University of Kansas taught an extremely popular course in observational astronomy. When the Professor who taught it retired, it was replaced by astrophysics. This happens widely, and it is paradigmatic of the fatal tendency to dispense with the elementary and plunge at once into the advanced, which because it is always more specialized, divides, separates, and fragments."

[16] See Quinn, ibid.

The other part of musical education in this broad sense is more fully "Musical" in the sense mentioned above—that is, it takes place through listening to and telling traditional stories and poetry, recounting and wondering about historic deeds, looking at good and beautiful works of art, singing songs and hymns, and star-gazing. Students should partake of these activities in a receptive, attentive, and uncritical way, so that such encounters are full of wonder and awe as one realizes their goodness and beauty. This leads students to delight and admiration, as well as gratitude toward the One who made them all. With the heart thus developed and nourished, students are ready and eager to know more fully the things with which they have fallen in love. They are disposed physically, emotionally, and morally by their formation in the harmony of things—the "music" of reality.

Students are in this way prepared to know intellectually the goodness of order and harmony that characterizes truths about the created order and God.[17] They have been prepared by acquiring a love of learning. They are ready for the liberal arts.

2.2. The Liberal Arts

Before things can be known in a philosophical way, one must develop the skills of thinking well and discerning the truth. These skills are the seven liberal arts, the necessary precursors to the intellectual virtues. They are called arts because they are a knowledge about how to make or produce a certain result, which they have in common with other arts or technical skills. However, unlike the more physical or mechanical arts, these are called liberal or free because their work is a product of reason itself, an accomplishment or flourishing of the intellectual soul by which we are free.[18] The liberal arts are split into two groups: the Trivium—grammar, logic, and rhetoric—and the Quadrivium—arithmetic, geometry, astronomy, and music. The arts of the Trivium are about human language, while the arts of the Quadrivium concern the human measurement of quantity.

Grammar is the art concerned with language as a tool of meaning. That is, the emphasis is not upon the form of thinking (as in logic) or speaking well for the sake of ends of action or persuasion (as in rhetoric), but upon language itself. Just as the violin-maker's art aids the violinist's art, so also the art of grammar aids the novelist, poet, logician, and rhetorician. So the good it seeks is an instrumental good, that of well-ordered speech.

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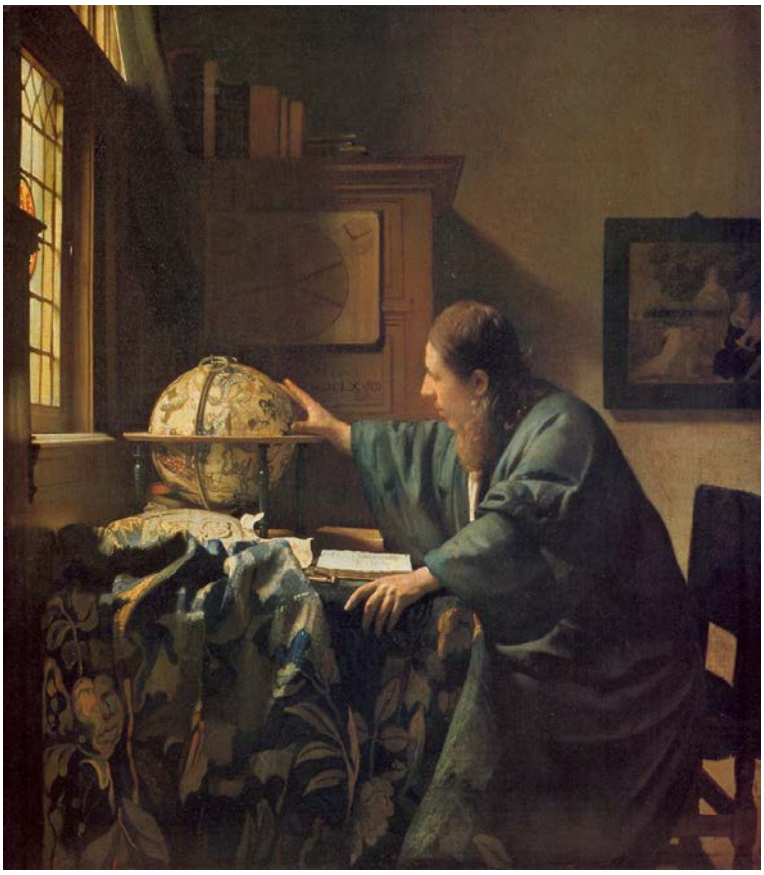
[17] Plato, *Republic*, Book III, 401e: "[H]e who has received this true education of the inner being will most shrewdly perceive omissions or faults in art and nature, and with a true taste, while he praises and rejoices over and receives into his soul the good, and becomes noble and good, he will justly blame and hate the bad, now in the days of his youth, even before he is able to know the reason why; and when reason comes he will recognize and salute the friend with whom his education has made him long familiar."

[18] See St. Thomas, *Super Boetium de Trinitate*, q. 5, a. 1, ad 3: "These among the other sciences are called arts because they not only consist in inquiry but have a certain work that is immediate to reason itself: such as the construction of a syllogism or composing a speech, numbering, measuring, forming melodies, or reckoning the course of the stars. However, the other sciences either do not have a work (but knowledge alone, as divine and natural science). Thus, they cannot take the name 'art,' since an art is 'making reason,' as *Metaphysics*, Book VI, says [1025b22]. Or they have a corporeal work, as medicine, alchemy, and others of the sort. Whence they are unable to be called liberal arts, because they are human actions on the part of that by which he is not free, namely on the part of the body."

Logic is the art of right reasoning, the art by which we can determine the truth of what is said or written. Its emphasis is upon the universal forms of thought insofar as these are manifested in human language. As an art, it aims at the making of true definitions, statements, and sound arguments. This art thus trains the mind in its noblest good, knowing the truth.

Rhetoric is the art concerned with human language as a means of persuading one of the truth, especially with an eye towards action insofar as this involves ordering our will and emotions to action. Its product, speech of various sorts, is a good we pursue as a useful good. Poetry or literature shares in some of these aspects, but the products of the poetic and literary arts seem principally to be aimed at what is pleasant and beautiful, not merely useful.



Johannes Vermeer, *The Astronomer*

The arts of the Quadrivium are arts insofar as they aim at teaching a knowledge of making or producing—in this case, the various ways of measuring and thus knowing quantity. The Greeks were inspired to devise these arts because of the harmonies observed in the natural order of things, and the medievals carried on this tradition, knowing as well that "thou hast ordered all things in measure, and number, and weight" (Wisdom 11:21). Arithmetic is the art of number, or discrete quantity, and geometry is the art of magnitude, or continuous quantity. These two aim at knowing quantity in itself, and the arts are thus preparatory for the theoretical study of the mathematical disciplines. For the ancients, quantity as known in the things of nature, especially in things that move or change, was exemplified in astronomy and music. Astronomy is the art of

observing the heavens, measuring and thereby knowing the geometric order in the cosmos. Music is the art of harmony, measuring and thereby knowing number in things.[19]

Once a student possesses these seven liberal arts, he is able to discern the truth and is free to seek knowledge and wisdom. As St. Thomas states, "by these as if by certain ways the mind is prepared for the other philosophical disciplines."[20] These arts so "excel all the rest in usefulness that anyone who had been thoroughly schooled in them might afterward come to a knowledge of the others by his own inquiry and effort rather than by listening to a teacher."[21]

2.3. A Complete Beginning: Philosophy and Theology

The liberal arts are meant to lead to the cultivation of the other intellectual virtues corresponding to the disciplines of human and divine knowledge—philosophy and theology broadly conceived. This stage of classical education thereby still retains its order to the contemplation of God. This distinguishes it from classical education conceived according to the vision of a misconceived humanism, or contemporary philosophies of education that limit themselves to college and career readiness or the production of well-formed citizens. Nonetheless, in virtue of the order flowing from its higher end, Catholic classical education can non-competitively incorporate these other ends into its own vision. The curriculum still teaches students about the dignity of the human person and prepares them for participation in economic and political society.

Philosophy is the pursuit of wisdom, the intellectual virtue that most perfects the human mind in the natural order. This is not philosophy in an academic sense, or an abstract consideration of hypothetical concept-games, but philosophy as it was for Plato, Aristotle, St. Augustine, Boethius, or St. Thomas Aquinas, namely, the unified knowledge of creation in light of its Creator. In what follows, this fuller meaning will be explained.

Philosophy is traditionally divided into two parts: speculative (or theoretical) philosophy and practical (or moral) philosophy. The first studies truth for its own sake, while the second studies truth for the sake of acting well.

Speculative philosophy is in turn divided into three parts: mathematics, natural philosophy, and metaphysics. Mathematics as a part of philosophy is to be distinguished from the arts of the Quadrivium. The former is a deeper study of mathematical truths for their own sake, rising from the technical skills of the liberal arts to the pure theory of the mathematician.[22] The Quadrivium is also preparatory for natural philosophy. This inquiry, which the ancients and medievals called "natural science," is the knowledge of the natural world for its own sake. It includes what we think of as science today—biology, chemistry, physics, etc.—but contains much more by beginning with our immediate and common experience of things before asking the detailed questions of the modern disciplines. One ponders questions such as "What does it mean for

[19] Below, we discuss the difference between these liberal arts and the contemporary sciences so as to clarify how the liberal arts are preparatory for the intellectual virtues like those involved in higher mathematics or the natural sciences.

[20] St. Thomas, *Super Boetium de Trinitate*, q. 5, a. 1, ad 3. See also Hugh of St. Victor, *Didascalicon*, Book III, ch. 3.

[21] Hugh of St. Victor, *Didascalicon*, Book III, ch. 3.

[22] Mathematics as a liberal art and as a theoretical pursuit are both taught in the School's mathematics courses.

something to be alive?" or "Why does a beaver want to chew down trees and make a dam?"[23] Knowledge of creation is sought first because it leads one to and prepares one for knowledge of the Creator. Such knowledge of God takes place in metaphysics or natural theology, which contemplates creation in light of its Creator. It is the last part of philosophy to be learned.

Practical philosophy presupposes many of the truths taught by natural philosophy and metaphysics, and itself has distinct parts. It includes the study of ethics or moral philosophy—how man should act—and political philosophy—how he should live in community to achieve the common good. While young students lack the experience to fully understand moral and political philosophy, many of its topics and subjects can be included in the history and literature classes. There, concrete examples of political ideas in history or dramatic portrayals of virtuous and vicious characters are more readily seen and understood.

The work of Catholic classical education is completed by theology, which seeks knowledge of God insofar as He has revealed Himself to man.[24] Theology, or sacred wisdom, is at once both the highest intellectual virtue as well as the highest practical virtue.[25] Theology, according to St. Thomas Aquinas, is *sacra doctrina*, holy teaching, which strives to know God through revelation (for example, in His nature as Trinity in unity). As the culmination of Catholic classical education, theology is ordered beyond itself, beyond the end of this life. It is surpassed in Heaven, where we will have fullness of life forever, for we will see God as He is (1 Cor. 13:12).

Philosophy is best studied when older. Nonetheless, the education of younger students ought to be ordered towards the various parts of philosophy and the complementary disciplines that prepare for it. Students ought to take such philosophical first steps—wondering about the natural world, man, and creation's order to the Creator—to begin the cultivation of intellectual virtue. Likewise, the rigorous study of theology is somewhat beyond the capacity of the young, but preparations for it can be made. Catholic classical education in high school cannot perfect their education at the highest level, but it can and ought to provide students with as complete a beginning as possible. As the ancients said, "Well begun, half done."[26] These will be noted when discussing the different classes of the curriculum in the next section.

3. The Classes

In what follows, we will discuss each class as it unfolds over the students's entire career at the school. For each class, we will discuss its place in the curriculum in light of the overall form and order of a Catholic classical education and then describe its structure and content over the student's career.

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[23] For a helpful literary analogy of how natural philosophy—and metaphysics even more so—is to be distinguished from our modern natural sciences, see *The Voyage of the Dawn Treader* by C. S. Lewis. While traveling, they meet a man, Ramandu, who says he is a "retired star." Eustace replies, "In our world, . . . a star is a huge ball of flaming gas." The star responds, "Even in your world, . . . that is not what a star is but only what it is made of."

[24] In the order of the curriculum itself, theology is subsequent to religion class (prayers, catechism, Church history, and the like).

[25] See St. Thomas, *ST*, Ia, q. 1, a. 4.

[26] See Plato, *The Laws*, 753e: "For the beginning is called half of the whole work in the proverbs, and all praise beginning well on each occasion. But it seems to me that it is more than the half and no one has ever praised it enough when it has come to be well."

3.1. Scripture & Catechesis

Scripture and Catechesis classes at the School serve the end of inculcating the virtue of piety and as preparation for later study of sacred theology. The classes generally include study of Sacred Scripture, the lives of the saints, and instruction in the tenets of the faith. Catechesis itself will arise principally from what can be drawn from the Bible and the lives of the saints, but will also include necessary instruction based on the writings of the Fathers and Doctors of the Church as well as appropriate catechetical books.

The Dome of the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception Depicting the Four Evangelists

Instruction in the faith begins with an overview of the story of our salvation. In grades 9 and 10, the students will read from the Old Testament and New Testament. This overview, or *narratio* as St. Augustine calls it[27], is intended to reveal and dwell upon those remarkable moments in Scripture, so that those instructed may come to understand and admire these works of the Lord. Grades 11 and 12 will revisit Scripture and learn to understand Scripture in its

[27] See St. Augustine of Hippo, *De Catechizandis Rudibus*, III.5.

senses, both literal and spiritual, and their various species (for instance, the historical or allegorical, among others). They will also study the catechism. Both courses of study will be guided by appropriate excerpts from the Fathers and Doctors of the Church. Since the Scripture & Catechesis class overall is a preparation for theological studies properly speaking, certain elements of sacred theology will be introduced as well.

The study of the lives of the saints will emphasize stories about the saints that inspire students, not merely reporting factual information about their lives. Such readings will also include artwork depicting the saints or—if applicable—liturgical music either about or composed by them. In this way, it becomes clearer how the study of the Bible and the lives of the saints is to be considered *musica humana*—"human music"—since they are the stories of our heroes and teach the heart to delight in the good.[28] The study of the ways in which words bear signification and meaning in the different senses of Scripture is an element of the liberal art of grammar. Elements of rhetoric and even logic can be taught as appropriate (for instance, when studying the Letters of St. Paul).

Lastly, it is important to note that the School will not inculcate piety through instruction alone. The various intellectual virtues and the elements of the liberal arts will be grounded and sustained throughout the students' careers by the common life of the School, especially through the Liturgy of the Hours and assisting at Holy Mass.

3.2. Gymnastic

Gymnastic is included in classical education in order to habituate various physical virtues. Throughout the course of students' time at the School, this will occur in various ways. Students will enjoy intramural sports and various outdoor excursions and field trips. As time permits, they will also be instructed in the rudiments of various technical skills (e.g., shop class or carpentry).

Ballroom and other formal dances will also be taught. This instruction will include in-class lessons and communal dances for families several times throughout the year. While such instruction can complement instruction in the Music class, it also promotes various moral virtues by habituating students in the fitting enjoyment of the sensible delight of music and dance.

3.3. Latin

The study of Latin, while not a liberal art as such, is nonetheless an integral element of a Catholic classical education for various reasons. First and foremost, this is because Latin is the language of the Church and the Catholic tradition.[29] Thus, an initiation into the knowledge of Latin is one of the necessary conditions for accessing the otherwise inaccessible sources of the Catholic and Western traditions, and the wisdom of the Church, in their original tongue. Second, the vocabularies of both English and the Romance languages are heavily influenced by Latin,

[28] See fn. 12, above.

[29] See Pope St. John XXIII, *Veterum Sapientia*, February 22, 1962. The document quotes Pope Pius XI in his Apostolic Letter on the importance of Latin, *Officiorum Omnium*: "For the Church, precisely because it embraces all nations and is destined to endure to the end of time … of its very nature requires a language which is universal, immutable, and non-vernacular."

and so Latin leads to a sort of self-knowledge by revealing the roots of one's own tongue. Facility in Latin also serves as a strong foundation for learning other modern Romance languages.

While not a liberal art itself, Latin includes elements of the liberal arts. Latin orators exemplify the various canons of rhetoric, as do its poets in regard to figures of speech. Even logical tools such as definition, classification, division, or types of logical connectives—for instance, conditional clauses—can be discussed and inculcated informally in the study of Latin. Of course, Latin especially provides formation in the liberal art of grammar, beyond what is studied in English classes. The students will focus formally on the nature and function of grammatical principles like the parts of speech, the nature of noun cases, the tense structure or voice of verbs, etc. Seeing these grammatical principles at work in another language besides their own assists students to see more universally how human languages possess common grammatical principles.

The students will learn Latin by going *ad fontes*, to the original sources as much as possible, and by a method of *viva voce* instruction, or learning the language by actually hearing it and speaking it. Besides studying Latin grammar more formally, they will read from more difficult original sources of Latin history and literature.

3.4. Great Books

The Great Books course is devoted to the study of the great works of literature and history.

The literature read will focus on the great and good works that have stood the test of time, and will introduce students to and exemplify the breadth and depth of the literature of our culture and civilization. When studied deeply, these works lead students to grapple with and understand what it means to be human. This encounter profoundly forms the human heart and directs its desire towards true goods and beauty, those things that lead to human flourishing.

The study of history not only makes students knowledgeable of their place within their own culture and the Catholic tradition, but it also expands their experience by considering famous lives well or poorly lived. This formation in history aids the formation of their moral insights.

History, insofar as it is only a study of particular and contingent events, is not a liberal art. However, it can be studied in a way that is liberal or formative of the mind. This is the case when history is studied not only for the sake of what it shows of the universal features of human nature but also when the mind informed by faith can see the providential order of history, especially salvation history.[30]

Indeed, history is a certain kind of music, *musica humana*, the story of humanity and of how God's providence has guided it. Such an approach is warranted not only from within Scripture itself but also with St. Augustine's theological-historical vision of the two Cities, the City of God and the City of Man. When studied in this way, history is preparatory for ethics, politics, and theology.

The sequence will be organized thematically by year, cycling through Greek and Roman, Christendom, Renaissance and early modern, and modern and American. History will turn to primary sources when possible (for instance, by reading Herodotus and Plutarch). The thematic

[30] See Michael J. Letteney, "History and Catholic Liberal Education," a lecture given at Thomas Aquinas College, August 24, 2012; available at www.thomasaquinas.edu.

years will also provide a basis for integrative connections with Latin, Music, and even Science and Religion.

3.5. Trivium

The Trivium class inculcates the liberal arts of the Trivium – grammar, logic, and rhetoric. These arts free the mind for truth by developing the skills needed to understand, discern, and convey truth in language. Students will begin with a review of English grammar and usage. Once complete, they turn to logic and rhetoric in a more explicit way, in both spoken and written form. For logic, students will study the forms and structures of logical arguments, analyze such arguments, and then imitate them by constructing their own. They will also read selections of Socratic dialogues, St. Thomas, and other authors to see the art of logic in practice. Students will progress through the *progymnasmata*, the traditional series of exercises for developing the art of rhetoric. They will also read and analyze great works of rhetoric from past masters (for instance, Cicero or St. Augustine), learn from their methods, and produce their own speeches in imitation. Once such structures of logical argumentation and canons of rhetorical presentation become familiar by use, they are studied in a more formal way.

3.6. Music

The Music class aims to instill in students the habits of the liberal art of music. It focuses especially upon *musica instrumentalis* and the theory, history, and practice of music. Goals of this course of study include a grasp of the historical development and traditions of different types of music, as well as listening to and understanding good music. This course is also important for the general musical foundation of education in the broad sense, insofar as excellent music promotes the moral life of students. The class throughout a student's career includes learning to sing, as well as learning about and listening to the entire tradition of music (from chant through classical to folk music).

In particular, students will learn to sing across the range of the Church's liturgical tradition, especially in Holy Mass. In Grades 9 and 10, students will receive instruction in Gregorian chant, learning Latin hymns and the parts of the Mass, both the Ordinary and the various Propers. This instruction will be completed by more advanced instruction in chant and by participation in a polyphonic choir in Grades 11 and 12. The Music class in the latter grades will also feature instruction in the study of musical harmony and music theory. It is in these classes especially where elements of the Quadrivium (arithmetic and music) find their proper place in the School's curriculum.

3.7. Mathematics

The courses in Mathematics during a student's career at the School are especially focused upon training in the liberal arts of mathematics, as well as beginning the student's deeper understanding of mathematics as a theoretical or philosophical discipline. Mathematics is both an art and a science in this way, for the art of producing proofs, geometric constructions, or arithmetic calculations is learned so that the student can see the truth for its own sake. To learn mathematics as a liberal art and a science requires going beyond a method that focuses solely

upon the inculcation of formal rules. Paul Lockhart expresses well what the School's curriculum aims to avoid, namely,

> *the perpetuation of this "pseudo-mathematics," this emphasis on the accurate yet mindless manipulation of symbols, [which] creates its own culture and its own set of values. Those who have become adept at it derive a great deal of self-esteem from their success. The last thing they want to hear is that math is really about raw creativity and aesthetic sensitivity. Many a graduate student has come to grief when they discover, after a decade of being told they were "good at math," that in fact they have no real mathematical talent and are just very good at following directions.*[31]

The order of the School's mathematics curriculum, while externally very similar to a typical order, must be animated by the "liberal" spirit that Lockhart describes. The ancient Greek mathematicians recognized a distinction between *arithmētikē*, or the theory of number pursued for its own sake, and *logistikē*, the art of calculation that is good because it is useful.[32] The true form of mathematics was not for the sake of problem solving, but for the sake of seeing and contemplating mathematical truths. The challenge, then, is to raise student's minds from mathematics as rote application of rules for solving problems to mathematics as revealing the existence of a whole realm of universal truths, which are worthy of exploration in their own right. Indeed, it is precisely for this reason that mathematics is a prerequisite to higher philosophical studies.

The students will study geometry (in particular, Euclid's *Elements*), followed by one year of algebra, then more advanced geometry (trigonometry and conic sections), and conclude with a one-year study of Calculus. A cross-curricular aspect of the mathematics courses will be their reference to and coordination with the courses in the natural sciences, especially physics.

3.8. Sciences

A problem similar to the one Lockhart describes in mathematics can arise in the study of the natural sciences.[33] That is, in the natural sciences too there are counterparts to the Greeks' distinction between *arithmētikē* and *logistikē*. The one is pure, disinterested love of the truth; the other, a skilled application of true ideas.

In the natural sciences, love and skill can be at odds. Curricula that overemphasize technical competence or STEM-readiness train students in the specific techniques of a given field (i.e., various "parts" of science) without educating them to love knowledge as a whole. Such students are trained to love a game of memorized, empty concepts—empty because students have not been taught to find those concepts instantiated in the complex natural world around them. They are also disconnected from a broader vision of the natural world as a whole. Thus, students run

[31] Paul Lockhart, "A Mathematician's Lament," available online and in a book-length version.

[32] See Jacob Klein, *Greek Mathematical Thought and the Origin of Algebra* (Mineola, NY: Dover Publications, 1992).

[33] This section borrows from a separate essay by one of the participating authors; see John G. Brungardt, "A Natural Philosopher's Lament," *Public Discourse* (April 25, 2019).

the risk of developing an intellectual hatred of natural science and even of philosophy as its broader whole. They may grow disillusioned with Aristotle's wonder or Feynman's pleasure of finding things out.

As mentioned in Section 2.3, the natural sciences are related as parts of natural philosophy. We need natural philosophy because it provides a coherent overview of things. It leads us to nature whole and entire, before we head off into the details of the sciences. The desire of natural philosophy is to behold and to understand the order and goodness of the cosmos for their own sakes. This desire stands in contrast to the reductionism and materialism latent in the natural sciences and their pedagogy, which combine a mathematical-mechanical method of causal analysis with a pragmatic, technological end-goal. The ancients paired the natural sciences with wisdom, but moderns pair them with technology.

The science classes, therefore, will aim not only at instruction of a robust knowledge of the particulars of the various natural sciences, but a broader and sounder philosophical grasp of their place in the whole that does not simply give a free pass to a reductionistic or materialistic view of the world. Robust natural science and sound natural philosophy are allies here. The first year will emphasize observation, natural history, and wondering and asking questions about what is observed. The writings and methods of J. Henri Fabre are exemplary here. Grades 10–12 will follow a course of study in astronomy, biology and chemistry, and physics. In addition, the students will follow the history of science throughout the track.

These courses will not only permit a deeper grasp of the liberal arts of the Quadrivium, which are beginnings in the study of natural philosophy. They are also ordered to understanding how the natural world is a cosmos, a single, harmonious unity that was ordered by God and glorifies Him. This is not just *musica mundana*, a study of the harmonious proportions that God has woven in nature, but a preparation for natural and revealed theology, tracing the signs in creation back to their Creator.

4. Catholic Classical Education: Whose Job Is It?

The above curriculum aims at fulfilling to the degree possible the end, or *telos*, of Catholic classical education—to cultivate virtue in the entire person so that one is better able to know, love, and serve God through Christ and His Church. To reach this end, the curriculum outlined above not only forms students in a pious and musical education (broadly conceived), but in the liberal arts as well as in the beginnings of philosophy and theology.

It should also be noted that its subjects are, in some ways, comparable to contemporary, non-classical schools. One can therefore see how Catholic classical education can non-competitively achieve its own ends alongside different ends found in other curricula, college preparation, or state and federal requirements. However, the curriculum described above is only externally similar to those of non-classical schools. The substance of an education does not consist in, nor is it adequately reflected by, externally verifiable parts or the metrics used in student assessment. The good of education is intrinsic, something that inheres in the soul.

This intrinsic character is the final element of our discussion, and it includes those who will carry out the education proposed by this curriculum, both the teachers and the community of the school itself. The common good of the School—the end of Catholic education and the means to seek it—is not perfectly possessed by the students. Rather, achieving this end requires the various stewards of the School community. Thus, in this final section, we shift our focus from the curricular elements to the School teachers and its broader community.

The community supporting such a School, including the teachers and staff that help to bring about its aims, must be of a certain unanimity. The teachers must live out and embody the curriculum not only when in class with students but also as members of a faculty. The integral nature of the curriculum itself calls for collegiality among the faculty at the School. Otherwise, the students hear and read words about the harmony and unity of truth but never see it lived out—or worse, contradicted—in the relationships between their teachers.

Raphael, *The School of Athens*

For instance, it is one thing to speak highly of the notion that the modern sciences and the Catholic faith are not in conflict. Yet if teachers of Religion and Science never understand this harmony for themselves and attempt to lead students to its truth, or if students hear contradictory things from their teachers in various classes over the years, then the curriculum would be fatally undermined. By contrast, the ideal is a collegial faculty where teachers are fully competent in more than one area of the proposed curriculum. If teachers are not themselves able to teach across the curriculum, then they must at a minimum exemplify the wonder and disposition towards learning that students can imitate as they are formed by the curriculum as a whole.

The reason for this requirement is that the form of a liberal education must be possessed in order to be imparted. A cause cannot give what it does not in some way already possess. The teachers at such a school are called to imitate in their relationships the same virtuous pursuit of and participation in the whole of truth that is asked of the students. The plans and vision of the School depend upon finding such capable teachers.

Nonetheless, the School's teachers are not the sole educators of its students. Parents are the primary educators of their children. Now, "primary" or "first" can be meant in different senses. Here, it means that parents bear the primary responsibility of providing an education for their children and thus have the authority to make decisions about that education on their behalf. Parents are also first in time, since from the youngest ages they teach their children truths about the world, about right and wrong, and about the Catholic faith. However, this principle does not mean that parents are the best educators in all subjects or at all times and places.

Thus, parents generally seek out others to help educate their children, because, while the family is the fundamental unit of society, it is not a *complete* community. It needs other families, associations, and civil society at large not only in order to achieve its own ends but a flourishing

life as well. That is, more complete forms of community are required for achieving the good life and not just a life that only meets daily needs.[34] In this hierarchy of communities the principles of subsidiarity and solidarity are at work. [35] Subsidiarity directs the broader community or higher levels of organization to aid the activities of the more local level when the latter cannot achieve its own end-goals. Solidarity directs individuals and smaller communities to contribute to the common good, that is, to the just order and peaceful flourishing of the community as a whole. In subsidiarity, a higher whole aids a lower whole to achieve its good; in solidarity, the parts of a common whole contribute to a good of a whole.

The solidarity of the parents with the School and the subsidiarity of the School towards the parents integrate the two as a community ordered to the end of Catholic education. As a smaller association within civil society and serving the Church, the School aims to complete—and not merely supplement—the parents's role as primary educators. Since the School does not replace the life of the family, the School's schedule must reflect this. The day-to-day operations of the School must be structured so that the good of family life is not harmed—for instance, by long school hours, after-school or Sunday activities, or undue amounts of homework.

The School can also help the parents themselves become better primary educators (for instance, through parent outreach nights or other school-sponsored educational events for parents). The School ought also to participate in and contribute to the life of its local parish. In this nomadic age of ours, it should help to build up that community by its dedication to the common end of formation in the Catholic faith and its promotion of various activities at the parish. At the same time, family involvement in the School is essential. Just as students will be harmed—malformed in their education—if they are taught conflicting things in different classes, so too are they harmed if they are taught opposing things at home and at school. Indeed, the complementary role the School plays in educating its students would fail without their parents's involvement.

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[34] See Aristotle, *Politics*, I.2. Traditionally, the forms of complete community are one's city or state, at a natural level, and the Catholic Church, as a supernatural community, the Mystical Body of Christ.

[35] See Pope St. John Paul II, *Gratissimam Sane*, Letter to Families, February 2, 1994. In particular, consider the following paragraph from n. 16: "*Parents are the first and most important educators* of their own children, and they also possess a *fundamental competence* in this area: they are *educators because they are parents*. They share their educational mission with other individuals or institutions, such as the Church and the State. But the mission of education must always be carried out in accordance with a proper application of the *principle of subsidiarity*. This implies the legitimacy and indeed the need of giving assistance to the parents, but finds its intrinsic and absolute limit in their prevailing right and their actual capabilities. The principle of subsidiarity is thus at the service of parental love, meeting the good of the family unit. For parents by themselves are not capable of satisfying every requirement of the whole process of raising children, especially in matters concerning their schooling and the entire gamut of socialization. Subsidiarity thus complements paternal and maternal love and confirms its fundamental nature, inasmuch as all other participants in the process of education are only able to carry out their responsibilities *in the name of the parents, with their consent* and, to a certain degree, *with their authorization*." (Emphases in original)

5. Conclusion

This document presents the end, form, content, and communal sources of a Catholic classical education, as offered in a high school. Catholic classical education seeks to cultivate virtue in the entire person so that one is better able to know, love, and serve God through Christ and His Church. Its lineage began with the Greeks and was furthered by the Romans, elevated by the Church Fathers, and brought to a certain perfection by the Doctors of the Middle Ages. This long tradition of the Catholic Church can and must be handed on today, as it proposes an education arising from the needs of human nature itself, seeking its ultimate end in God. Its execution, no less than its nature, depends upon Divine Providence. May God who has thus far disposed the beginning of this project also rightly order its progress and bring it to a perfect end.

Mary, Seat of Wisdom, pray for us!
St. Thomas Aquinas, pray for us!

Detail from Fra Angelico, *The Virgin and Child with Saints Dominic and Thomas Aquinas*

Curriculum

Subject	9th Grade	10th Grade	11th Grade	12th Grade
Sacraments				
Great Books	Greek & Roman Literature & History	History & Literature of Christendom	Renaissance & Early Modern Literature & History	Modern & American Literature & History
	musica humana	*musica humana*	*musica humana*	*musica humana*
Gymnastic	Intramurals Excursions	Intramurals Excursions	Intramurals Excursions	Intramurals Excursions
	Dances	Dances	Dances	Dances
	Technical Arts	Technical Arts	Technical Arts	Technical Arts
Latin	Formal grammar History Literature	Formal grammar History Literature	Formal grammar History Literature	Formal grammar History Literature
Mathematics	Geometry	Algebra	Advanced Geometry & Trigonometry	Calculus
Music	Gregorian chant choir Latin hymns Mass Ordinary & Propers	Gregorian chant choir Latin hymns Mass Ordinary & Propers	Polyphony choir Music theory	Polyphony choir Music theory
	Divine Office	Divine Office	Divine Office	Divine Office
	musica instrumentalis	*musica instrumentalis*	*musica instrumentalis* *musica humana*	*musica instrumentalis* *musica humana*
Science	Natural History	Astronomy	Biology & Chemistry	Physics
	musica mundana	*musica mundana*	*musica mundana*	*musica mundana*
Scripture & Catechesis	Old Testament Lives of the Saints	New Testament Lives of the Saints	Scripture & Catechesis with Fathers & Doctors Lives of the Saints	Scripture & Catechesis with Fathers & Doctors Lives of the Saints
	musica humana	*musica humana*	*musica humana*	*musica humana*
Trivium	Grammar Review Logic Rhetoric	Logic Rhetoric	Logic Rhetoric	Logic Rhetoric

Piety	**Gymnastic**	**Music**	**Trivium**	**Quadrivium**	**Philosophy**	**Theology**
Piety	Gymnastic	Music	Grammar	Arithmetic	Natural	
			Logic	Geometry	Moral - ethics, politics	
			Rhetoric	Astronomy	Divine - metaphysics	
				Music - *instrumentalis* , *humana* , *mundana*		

Scripture & Catechesis			
9th	**10th**	**11th**	**12th**
Old Testament	New Testament	Wisdom & Prophetic Books	Epistles & Revelation)
Lives of the Saints			
		Catechesis	
musica humana			

Gymnastic
9th-12th
Intramurals Excursions
Technical Arts

Latin
9th-12th
Formal grammar History Literature

Great Books			
9th	**10th**	**11th**	**12th**
Greek & Roman	Christendom	Renaissance & Early Modern	Modern & American

Trivium	
9th	**9th-12th**
Grammar Logic Rhetoric	Logic Rhetoric

Music	
9th-10th	**11th-12th**
Gregorian chant choir Latin hymns Mass Ordinary & Propers	Polyphony choir Music theory
Divine Office	
musica instrumentalis	

Mathematics			
9th	**10th**	**11th**	**12th**
Geometry	Algebra	Advanced Geometry & Trigonometry	Calculus
	musica mundana		

Sciences			
9th	**10th**	**11th**	**12th**
Natural History	Astronomy	Biology & Chemistry	Physics
musica mundana			