



The Catholic Tradition of Classical Education with Dr. Andrew Seeley

Lesson 8: St. Basil Moreau and St. John Bosco

Outline:

Brief introduction

- St. Basil Moreau and St. John Bosco are two significant Catholic educators. Their presentation revolves around ‘Teaching and how to love your students’.
- Basil lived in France, during the French revolution in the 19th century. The French revolution was anti-Catholic and anti-church, which challenged his school objectives.

St. Basil Moreau

- Important statement on his view on teaching: *Teaching is a calling from the Lord, for service to needs of students.*
- St. Basil recognizes the difficulty of teaching. Teachers have limited free time but multiple many young students to cater to.
- So teachers may choose if they want to further pursue the struggles of teaching, but while they are teaching, it is a calling.
- Teachers represent Christ to the students. They need to care for their students without wanting inappropriate friendship with them. They also need to exercise authority in a non-oppressive measure.

9 virtues that teachers should develop themselves

Faithfulness
Knowledge
Zeal
Vigilance
Seriousness
Gentleness
Patience
Prudence
Firmness

- Developing virtue requires both understanding, imagination and the drive to live well and make good judgments. Basil also shows how people fail to act according to these virtues.

Faithfulness



- Teacher has to practice faithfulness to God and His call, by recognizing that all that is done for the students is an act of service to God. They serve God and their students by:
 - caring for their students
 - encouraging their students to pursue relationships with God
- Reverent teachers will try above all to bring their students to the completeness of a Christian life. Such teachers see their students' souls more than they see their students' bodies.
- The Jesuits suggest a daily examination of conscience. Teachers should do it frequently.
- **“Pinpoint aspects of character or behavior that falls short of God’s calling.”**
- In this examination, St. Basil and the Jesuit would say to the teacher: “Include your teaching, and be aware of what fallings you have within it. Ask God to help you compensate for those shortcomings. This will help you develop the virtues you need to have in your teaching.”

Knowledge

- Teachers need to know their subjects well and be committed to learning more about them.
- If teachers have successfully introduced their students to a life of learning, they [the students] will have so many questions, and then the teachers have to consciously examine their knowledge and realize how much they are lacking. They should take that as incentive to increase their knowledge.

Zeal

- Teachers should have a zeal for your students and their journeys, like a parent.

Vigilance

- Teachers should remember that students are very observant, and they hear and see all. Therefore they need to live inspiringly, conscious of their outward conduct (such as frustration or boredom).
- While teachers should watch over students and what they are doing, they should not be overly attentive and involved in a student's activity, to the point of being oppressive. Sometimes erroneous patterns will correct themselves without interference.

Gentleness

- St Basil acknowledges the frustration that teachers can feel sometimes.
- **“You need to be meek and humble.”**
- **“Blessed are the meek”**
- Gentleness is to negate anger from harm or insult with an inner spirit.



- Teachers often get disrespected, but controlling themselves by showing love under provocation, is gentleness. Then they will prove to their students that they can be devoted, tender friends.

Prudence

- Teachers must be conscious of how their actions and the way they present their teaching affects the larger picture (such as the school image).

Firmness

- Firmness is a complement to gentleness. Teachers must delineate to students that they demand only obedience to their expectations.
 - Seeley's aunt was always clear about her rules and the consequences of disobeying the rules.
- Teachers must think through the rules carefully to avoid emotion-based action, and follow up on them if they are broken.

St. John Bosco

- St John Bosco was also prevalent in the 19th century, as a North Italian. What brought him into education was the young 'latchkey kids' in the industrialized city who had no one to care for them.
- A lot of the schools have adopted 'the preventative system'.
- **Core objective:** How to make it so that in your work with the students, you are not resorting to punishment to develop virtue within the boys.
- The established system is oppressive. There are known laws that are enforced through intimidation, i.e through corporal punishment.
- Interestingly, a lot of boys said they got learning done even under the oppressive system. Still, there is the argument that misbehavior could be prevented without the oppressive system.
 - Example: Teachers could devise situations where students are not tempted to violate the rules.
- St John Bosco encouraged teachers to be friendly with their students and be intentional with them. Taking a part in their choices will build up comfortable connections and ultimately makes correction so much more effective.
- Teachers are coaxed to encourage students to take part in confession and mass, which strengthens their relationship with the Lord.
- **"Remember that education is a matter of the heart of which God alone is the master. We can achieve nothing unless God teaches us the art and hands us the key. Let us strive to make ourselves loved, to instill a sense of duty and a holy fear of God and we shall see hearts open to us with surprising ease."**