



## The Catholic Tradition of Classical Education with Dr. Andrew Seeley

### Lesson 11: The Magisterial Documents of the Church Continued

#### Outline:

Document from the Sacred Congregation that was published in 1988

- Focus again on the religious dimension of education.
- Each document pays attention to the anxiety around the young people and educators at the time
  - They lack cultural guidance, very limited sense of intellectual edification for human beings.
  - They acquire much knowledge from a variety of sources (technology and media) but still incapable of prioritizing which one is the most important.
  - Not yet acquired critical ability to distinguish what's positive and healthy from what is not.
- Dr Seeley once watched a commercial which had the theme of judging nobody - total inclusivity. Cultural rejection causes young people to have no direction, no stance to hold.
- Concepts of truth, beauty and goodness have become so intangible today. There is no capacity to apply these values to their way of life. All too inclined to go their own way, accepting whatever is popular at the moment.

#### The school

- If the school doesn't see that learning is about acquiring worthwhile knowledge, then students don't have a fundamental standard of spiritual and moral goodness.
- Document's main emphasis is that religion is how the catholic school merges subject areas and school life to provide a wholesome experience.
- It directs us teachers to be aware of the religious dimensions of our interactions with our students. This presents a new atmosphere where the faith is very central.
- When Seeley visited a catholic classical school, he is impressed by the joy that he sees, the care that teachers put into their students, the artwork on the walls.
- It is so significant for every teacher to pay attention to details such as class decor and syllabus textbooks. When students' attention wander, you want to have some surrounding artwork that display a reminder of truth and beauty. It creates a physical environment that is learning conducive and deeply impacts the sensibility of students.



- Also got to pay attention to students' curriculum outside of classes - shadow curriculum. How is the school using their spontaneous activities to help the students develop outside of school?
  - Puzzles, crotchets, dances (fosters creativity, grace and courtesy)
  - In one of the schools that Seeley visited, the principal cooked meals from time to time for his students, whom he would involve in the artistic preparation.
- It demonstrates a joyous, harmonious life informed by the faith.

## A school's intellectual work - history, art and religion

- Students and educators should learn to approach history with:
  - the lens of watching a drama
  - an image of good and evil (moralistic instinct), instead of simply viewing it as a boring display of dates and places.
- We see history as the failure and progress of human civilization, which should educate our students.
- The document also points to literature and art, and the important way in which religion ties into these disciplines.
- Simplest way to uncover religious dimension of the artistic and literary world is to start with its concrete expressions. In every culture, art and literature had been closely linked to religious beliefs. A large part of this structure is to see how drama unfolds in the activities of god(s) and how man reacts to that.
- During one of Seeley's conferences, Laurel Burke, who was the founder of Divine Grace, commented on the importance of teaching our students to read stories as stories, not to dissect them (yet), but to enjoy them first, to see the meaning and connect to the characters.
- Striking how literature and history have succumbed to the Cartesian way of achieving knowledge. Let's reduce our story to what we can treat as facts.
- Let's look at the first person narrative or third person narrative.
- What's the setting here?
- Analysis is something we teach and it's helpful, but it can help us lose sight of the beauty of the story.
- Classical education introduces great works to students while they are younger (i.e a painting of Caravaggio). It allows them to put a name to it before moving on, but they can come back later. The more initial familiarity you have, the more details your mind can add to it.
- Higher level teachers can add another layer of appreciation to art by showing its tangible reflection of divine beauty in tangible form.
  - Both the fathers and the masters of the Christian philosophy teach in their writings on aesthetics.
  - St Augustine invites us to transcend the intention of the artist to find the eternal order of God in art.
- Religion itself has to be a pretty impressive discipline to study.



- It is the primary reason for parents to choose catholic schools, for the body of knowledge that it is, allowing the human mind to learn and understand in the most complete way they can.
- It has its own consistency and development. It should be as challenging to the students as any of their sciences. Religion demands the respect of students.