



The Catholic Tradition of Classical Education with Dr. Andrew Seeley

Lesson 9: The Magisterial Documents of the Church on Education

Outline:

Problem with Catholic teacher formation today

- We are not only unaware of the traditions and wisdom of catholic education, but also the magisterial documents from the last century, which provide directions that we can refer to in modern times on how to run catholic education.
- Notable figure: Sister Elizabeth Ann Allen.
 - She has combined documents from Rome, from Vatican and other places pertaining to education, all available and organized in a structure for schools to access
 - One of the dominicans of the Congregation of St. Cecelia.
 - Director of the center of catholic education
- The Church magisterium (the authoritative teaching of the church from the Roman bishop) didn't really address educational issues until the late 19th century, under Leo the 13th. This is because the catholic education was running smoothly.
- But modern, secular society was developing (i.e French revolution and growing sense of the state).
- The state had to have complete oversight of the lives of its citizens, so there were circulating criticisms on Catholic Education

Divini Illius Magistri (1929) - encyclical by Pope Pius XI

- It's often in response to these attacks that the Pope writes addresses and documents to reaffirm the core and essence of Catholic education
 - Pius XI's rebuttals against the State
 - Pius XI's advocations

Pius' rebuttals against the State

- **The State is the primary educator**
 - Pius XI contested that the family and the Church hold the primary rights to education. The state can only play a supporting role.
- **State-suggested idea of 'neutral schools' where there is only one religion class**
 - Pius XI said only the Church keeps the emphasis on the supernatural and on man, providing holistic education on the whole man. It is an



error to think that it is possible to educate on religion from a neutral level.

- **The church promotes ignorance because it lacks teaching on practical and societal disciplines**
 - Pius XI denies this. While the catholic church orients the whole man towards their heavenly end, it has also fostered learning in every regard, including creativity and the sciences. The Jesuits have this system of appointing priests as heads and experts of various educational fields. Catholic education has always been excellent.

Pius XI's advocations

- Pius XI argues for maintaining the older classical ways of educating i.e Latin, even while making room for new developments of education. If we wrest control of education from the Church, we would only be able to create new educational routes to gaining earthly happiness. Pius describes it as petty confidence in progressively 'knowing' how to structure schools in the modern age.
- Pius XI urges us not to forget the end of education, a Christian is to operate with divine grace in emulating Christ himself after regeneration by baptism. Sanctification must always be our foremost goal.
- Christian education not only offers the knowledge of salvation but the gift of faith. Christians learn how to:
 - worship the Father in spirit and in truth
 - conform in their personal life according to the new man, in justice and holiness of truth
 - develop into perfect adulthood, to the mature measure of the fullness of Christ
- Classical tradition is accomplished by learning to read the great works of the Fathers and authors of the church, i.e St. Augustine, St. Thomas Aquinas. Modern day counterparts are C.S.Lewis and Tolkien.
- In addition to becoming more committed to their faith, they also learn how to worship God liturgically. One of the richness of Catholic faith is the liturgical tradition. They are so full of symbolism. Your experience of the worship deepens with the more attention you pay to Mass or the more studying you put into the liturgies of baptism.
- Scriptural training also intimates one in God's goodness, through inspiration from the promises in the Bible. It even helps them become more imaginative, open to poetry and symbolism, able to luxuriate in rich traditions like Gregorian chants and hymns.
- Let teachers recognize the importance of their role in this mission. Let them be fully trained in secular and religious knowledge to be suitably qualified and also with the pedagogical skill that is in keeping with the findings of the contemporary world.