



The Catholic Tradition of Classical Education

with Dr. Andrew Seeley

Lesson 3: St. Augustine

Outline:

St. Augustine

- The “Modern Attitude”: we have nothing to learn from the past
- The “Classical Attitude”: if you want to have wisdom and inspiration, you need to look to the past; we do not reduplicate the past, but we draw from it. Learning from the past helps open our imagination.
- St. Augustine (early Christian theologian and philosopher) was educated in the classical tradition: read works like Virgil’s *Aeneid* and Cicero’s *An Exhortation to the Life of Wisdom*. Through his study of the Neo-Platonic philosophers, St. Augustine cultivated his thought of a world beyond matter and the immortality of the soul. He even witnessed in their writings intimations of the Trinity. One of his main ideas was that we can approach God through learning. He understood Christ as the fulfillment of Plato. He was one of the main proponents, in early Christianity, of the Liberal Arts tradition, seeing in it the pathway to the attainment of happiness, by cultivating in us vision – through the faculties of the mind – of spiritual realities.
- The Liberal Arts tradition consists of two main divisions: the Trivium and the Quadrivium.
 - The Trivium consists of the arts of language: Grammar, Logic, and Rhetoric.
 - The Quadrivium consists of the arts of mathematics: Geometry, Arithmetic, Astronomy, and Music.
- The Classical approach to reading the Holy Scriptures affirms the authoritative and revelatory nature of the text as well as its purpose as being grounded in the community of love, (the Church). We also need to approach the Scriptures with humility, before which we are judged rather than are the judges. We need to learn from God as our Divine Teacher.