



## Classical Learning for All Students

with Dr. Amy Richards

Lecture 1: Disability and the Relational Nature of Humanity (or Disability and the *Imago Dei*)

### Outline:

Underlying every vision of education is a picture of what it is to be human, an anthropology.

- In modern education, we've been educating ourselves for doing rather than being (an existentialist anthropology).
- Consider the myth of the American dream. The right kinds of hard work (doing) can lead to acquiring whatever kind of life we desire.
- Throughout the system we find the existentialist anthropology in the glorification of STEM fields.
- If we are not capable of the right kinds of action, it seems, we are not the right kind of thing.
- The underlying existentialist picture of the purpose of education, the nature of success, and the definition of human beings by their capacities and actions should give us pause.
  - Consider the troubling story this anthropology tells about those who are not and cannot be productive (the very young, the very old, and perhaps especially the severely disabled).
- An anthropology focused on doing rather than being will take a rather dim view of suffering.
- The so called "quality of life" is interpreted primarily as economic efficiency, inordinate consumerism, physical beauty, and pleasure.

What does the world look like when viewed through the lens of the mysteries of the incarnation and the Trinity?

- On the cross, Christ looks beyond what we do to who we are, and most centrally to Whose we are.
- We need to recover and understanding of ourselves in the light of God's love if we are to recognize each human being as sacred and keep the most vulnerable fully among us.
- We are made in the image of God who is relational. We image God fully only when we enter relationships, and when we enter relationships we become encumbered.



- Genuine relationships are possible not despite vulnerability and disability but because of it.
- We are born in extreme vulnerability. As we age, we begin to lose capacities. The necessity of dependent relationship is beauty not misfortune. This expanded vision helps us to realize the truth of the claim that, “Every man is his brother’s keeper.” (St. John Paul II)
- What persons with disabilities witness is that it is our being itself that is precious.
  - When we recognize this truth we focus our doing on connection rather than competition. We begin to inhabit an economy of grace rather than scarcity.

The Axes of Relationship rather than the Axes of Accomplishments.

- Look for which parts of it are not caused by disability itself but by societies’ rejection of persons with disabilities.
- See suffering and its acceptance as able to participate in the mystery of the incarnation completed in the death and resurrection of Christ.

We act in God’s eyes what in God’s eyes we are.