



The Institute for
**CATHOLIC LIBERAL
EDUCATION**
The Truth Shall Set You Free

Restoring the Unity of Faith and Reason

Superintendents Summit - February 2020



What is
Catholic liberal education?

How does it relate to
Catholic classical education?

Faith and reason are like two wings on which the human spirit rises to the contemplation of truth; and God has placed in the human heart a desire to know the truth—in a word, to know himself—so that, by knowing and loving God, men and women may also come to the fullness of truth about themselves.

St. John Paul II, *Fides et Ratio*



WHAT?

WHY?

History

Philosophy

Theology

HOW?

Content

Pedagogy



The Spreading Renewal

Catholic schools all over the country are being saved from closure and/or renewed by a rediscovery of the Church's long tradition in the classical liberal arts and sciences.

Flourishing in great diversity of settings:

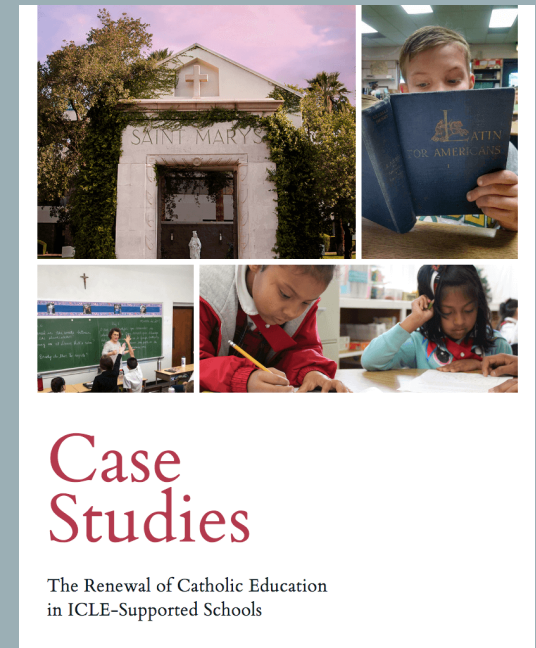
- urban and rural
- affluent and low-income
- ethnically diverse
- among different kinds of learners

Distinctive:

- engaging, rich in content, proven track record

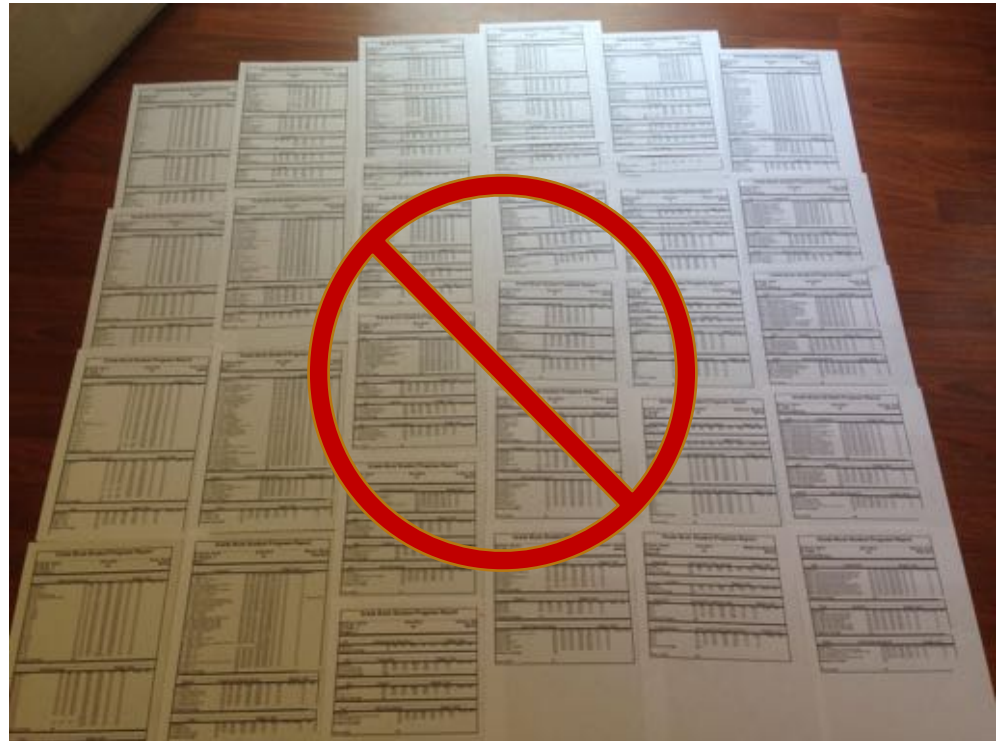
Results:

- increasing enrollment
 - drawing back Catholics and even non-Catholics
 - rising test scores despite the fact that teaching is not ordered to tests
 - graduates attracting attention for superior thinking, speaking, and writing
 - unparalleled faith formation
-
- JOY in learning; nurtures the mind, the heart, and the soul



One seventh
grader

904 grades
for one
academic year





Children are souls to be nurtured,
not products to be measured.

The Circe Institute

Comparison

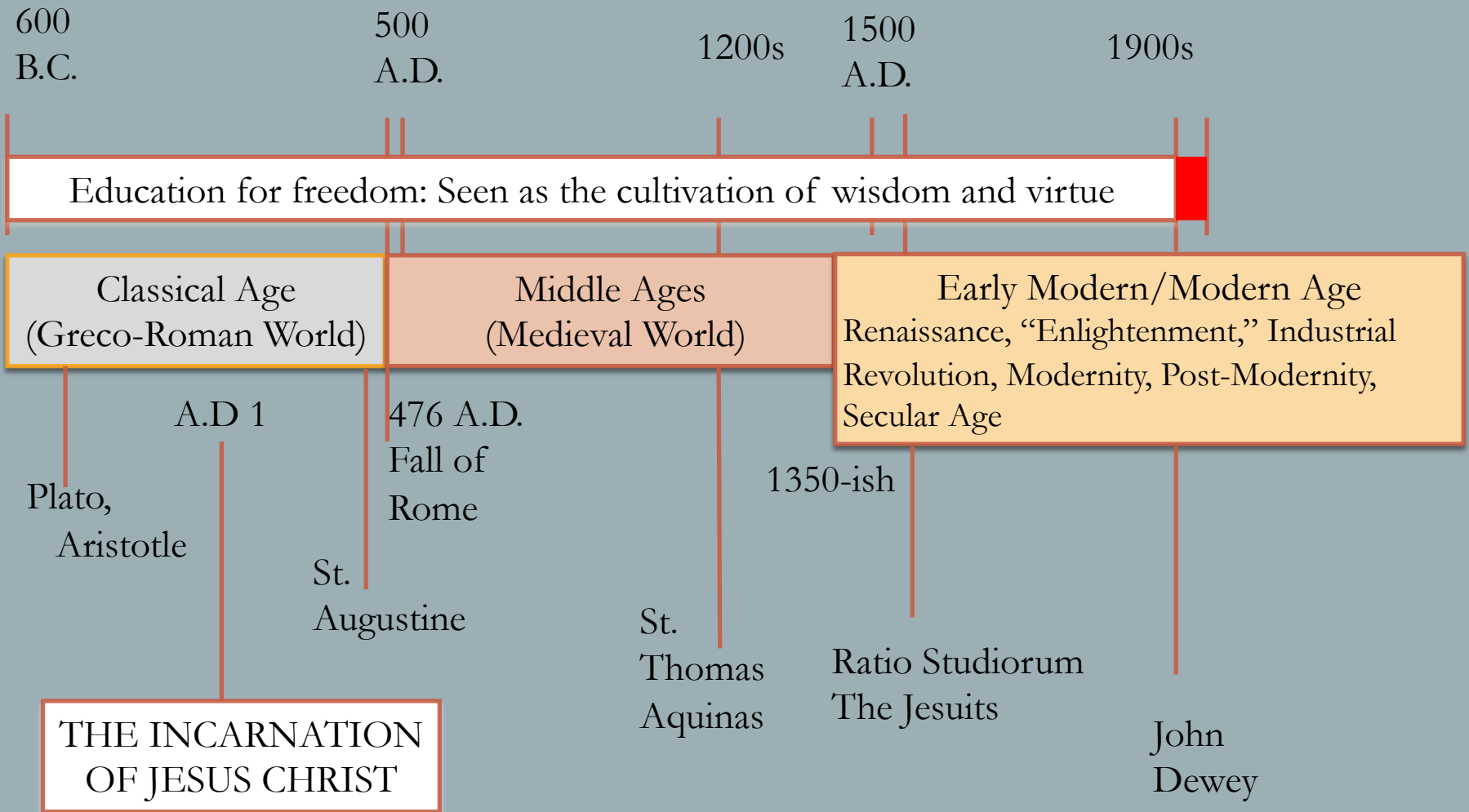
Secular Education:

- Ordered to material, temporal ends
- Fragmented, industrialized
- Focus on practical skills
- Emphasis on information
- One mile wide, one inch deep
- Lectures+testing = passive learning
- Susceptible to indoctrination

Catholic Liberal Education:

- Ordered to eternal happiness
- Integration of subjects, knowledge, faith
- Restores *meaning and purpose*
- Formation; awakens wonder
- Cultivates habits of deep thinking
- Constant discussion = active learning
- Develops intellectual freedom

Historical Perspective



Wisdom:

To know the truth

Virtue:

To imitate the truth

Intellectual
Virtue



Moral
Virtue

We know so that we know how to live.

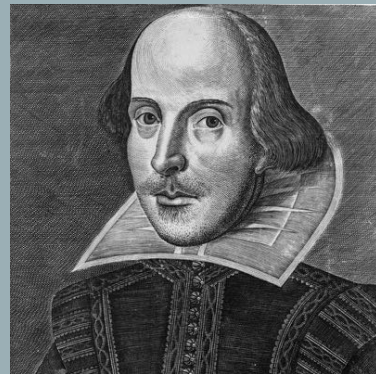
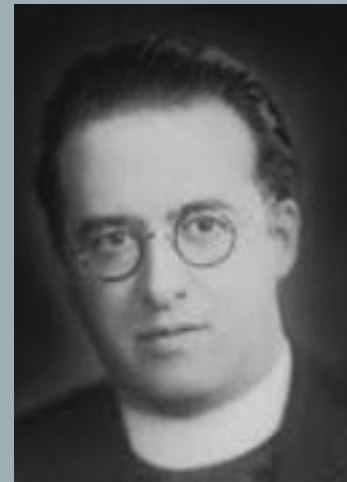
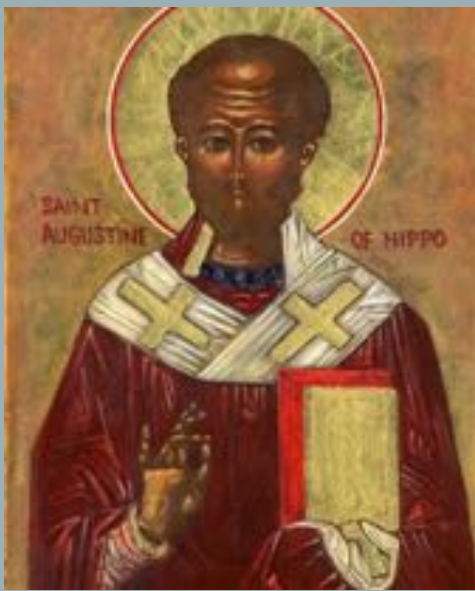
To discern, to judge what is true, what is good, and what is beautiful.

The Catholic Intellectual Tradition

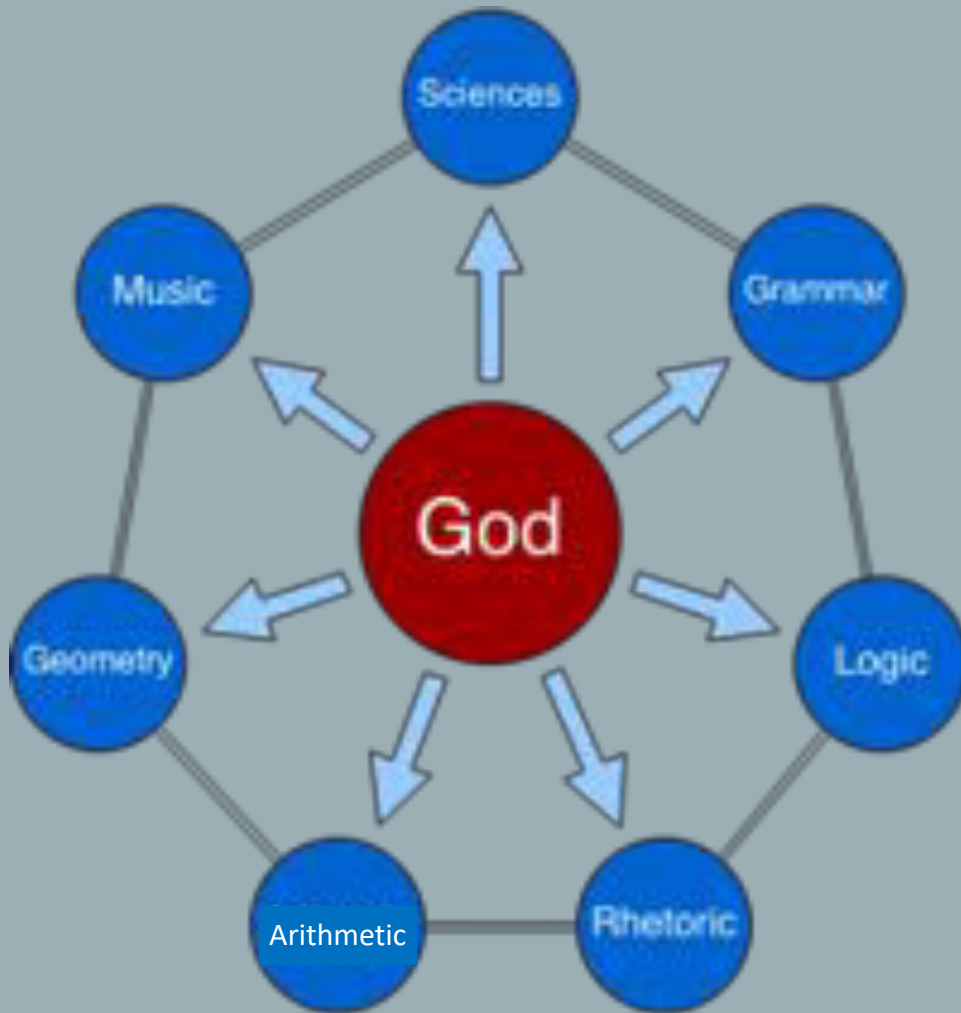


Took up two things from the ancient world:

1. **A spirit of inquiry** → the search for Goodness, Truth, Beauty, the LOGOS
2. **The seven liberal arts** → the tools of thinking and learning
 - the “liberating arts” that free us to perceive the truth of things



Philosophy of Christian Classical Liberal Arts Education



God is at the center of reality.

Truth is defined by God.

Knowledge of subjects or things (including Man himself) is unified, rational and consistent.

Source: sayersclassical.org

Philosophy of Public Education



Man is the center of reality.

Truth is relative to man.

Knowledge of subjects or things (including man himself) is random, detached and changing.

Source: sayersclassical.org

A lit candle is positioned in the lower center of the frame. A thick plume of white smoke rises from the flame, drifting upwards and outwards. The smoke is captured in a way that shows its wispy, ethereal texture. The background is dark and indistinct, with some lighter, blurry shapes that suggest a draped fabric or a similar textured surface. The overall lighting is soft, with the primary light source being the candle's flame.

Where there is no vision the people perish

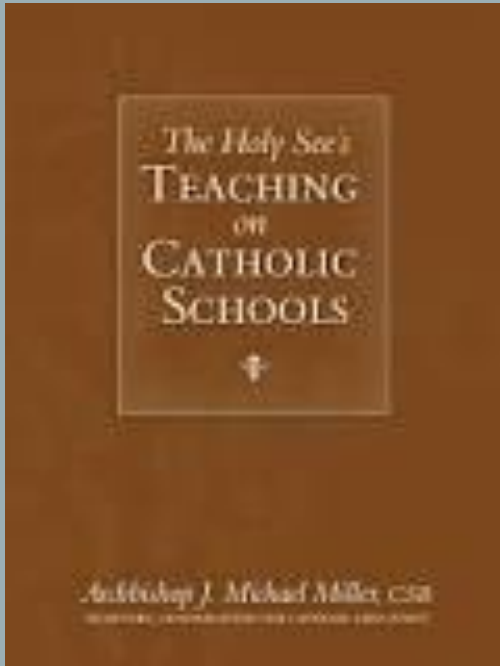
Proverbs 29:18



“Loyalty to the educational aims of the Catholic school demands constant self-criticism and return to basic principles, to the motives which inspire the Church’s involvement in education.”

~ Sacred Congregation for Education *The Catholic School*, n. 67

The Five Essential Marks of Catholic Schools



1. Inspired by a supernatural vision
2. Founded on a Christian anthropology
3. Animated by communion & community
4. Imbued with a Catholic worldview throughout its curriculum
5. Sustained by Gospel witness

❖ Calls for both “content and methodology (pedagogy) that is truly Catholic.”

Catholic Identity → Catholic Immersion → Catholic Culture

Ethos

- character, virtue, faith

Mythos

- story, narrative,
enculturation

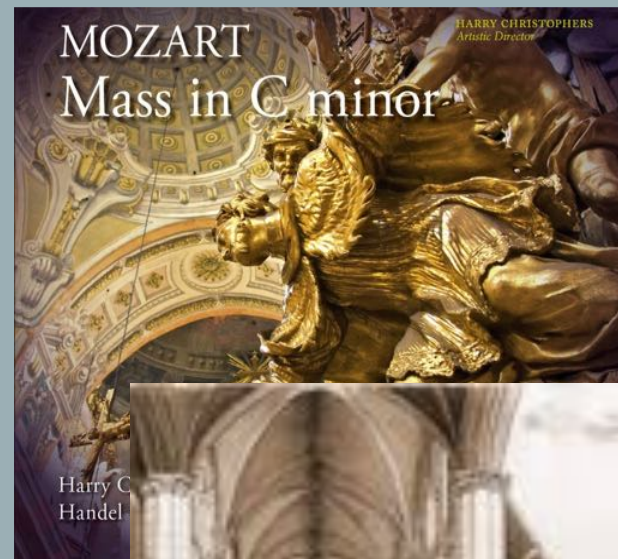
Logos

- the ordering principle of the universe;
the Divine wisdom manifest in creation



Mythos/ Our Story

The impact of
Christianity
and the role of the
Catholic Church



The greatest challenge to Catholic education in the United States today, and the greatest contribution that authentically Catholic education can make to American culture, is to restore to that culture the conviction that human beings can grasp the truth of things, and, in grasping that truth, can know their duties to God, to themselves and their neighbors.



— Pope St. John Paul II, Ad Limina visit of the Bishops of Chicago, Indianapolis, and Milwaukee, 1998 —

Logos

Truth is not an abstraction:

“Jesus Christ is the Personified Truth who attracts the world to Himself. ...

Every other truth is a fragment of the Truth that He is, and refers to Him.”

Pope Benedict XVI



“Heaven and earth are full of His Glory”

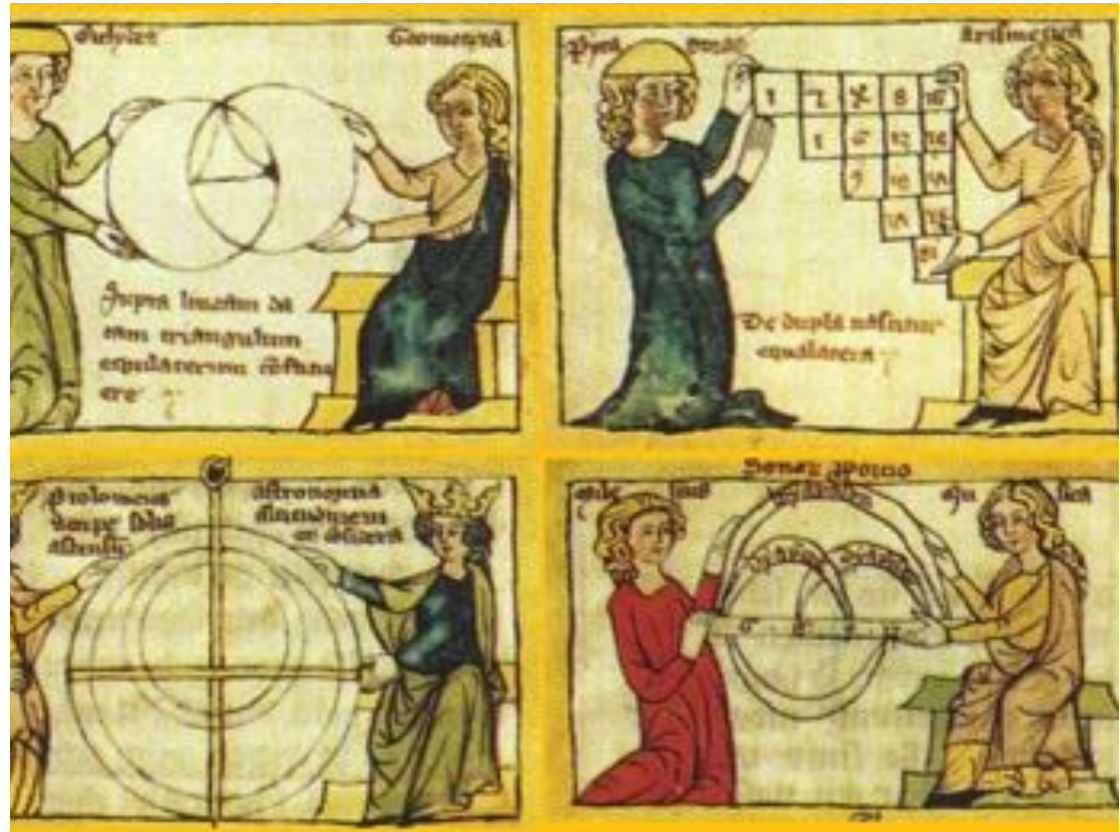
Content

- Discovery of the world God made
- Increasing understanding of the nature of reality, of man, of God
- Reality is both visible and invisible
- History as “His Story,” the dramatic, chronological tale of God’s plan for Salvation and our place in it



“The glory of God is man fully alive”
~St. Irenaeus

Pedagogy



The Art of Thinking

- attentive to the nature of the human person
- seek to cultivate all that is human in us

The Seven Liberal Arts

St. Thomas Aquinas said that the seven liberal arts produce the works of reason.



The Arts of Language

Grammar
Logic/Dialectic
Rhetoric

The Arts of Number

Arithmetic (Numeracy)
Geometry
Music
Astronomy (Physics)

CLASSICAL EDUCATION

Stages of Learning & Growth



← Rhetoric

- ~ bearing fruit in **wisdom**
- ~ applying and integrating knowledge
- ~ perfecting expression of truth with clarity and joy

Logic (Dialectic)

- ~ growing in **understanding**
- ~ asking "why" and "how"
- ~ identifying connections and distinctions between ideas

Grammar

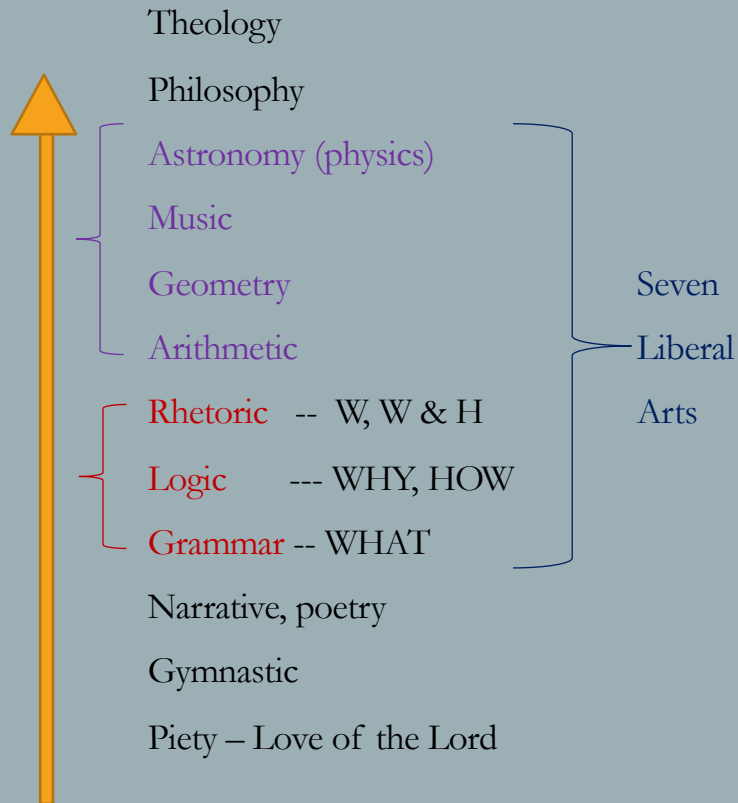
- ~ soaking in **knowledge**
- ~ acquiring foundational tools of learning
- ~ building a mental inventory



Dig Deeper. Learn More!

ambroseacademy.org/classical-education

The Ladder of Learning



Knowledge

SCIENCES
from the Latin, *scientia*; knowledge

Moral Philosophy
- ethics, political science,
economics

Natural Philosophy
- “love of wisdom about
the natural world”

The Trivium

The “Three Ways”

The Pathway to all Learning

~400 BC to the present

Rhetoric

Logic

Grammar



Bloom's Taxonomy

Cognitive Skills

1956

Evaluation

Synthesis

Analysis

Apply

Understand

Remember

What changes can we expect to see in our schools?

What is their purpose?



- richer content
- engaging teaching methods that awaken wonder
- emphasis on the mastery of language and the mastery of number
- highly ordered ladder of learning
- stories from history and literature that form the moral imagination
- attention to the Divine presence that form a “sacramental imagination”

Dispelling the Myths



- Elitist?
- Too rigorous for many students?
- Backward-looking, close-minded?
- Outdated?
- Will not prepare students for college and career?
- Too focused on humanities; will not prepare students for STEM?

Catholic Liberal Education



Drawing from The Holy See's Teaching on Catholic Schools and the Church's historical philosophy and practice:

- An education wholly ordered toward freedom in the Truth of Jesus Christ
- Content - rich, deep, historical; enculturation; understanding reality
- Pedagogy - respects the nature and purpose of a human being,
 - cultivates human faculties, the tools of thinking/ladder of learning
- Assessments - respect the dignity of the human person; formative
- *Restores an understanding of the meaning and purpose of things*

Steps Toward Renewal

Reorient our vision in Christ as Logos

- Goal is holiness; life in Him
- Curriculum, Content, Pedagogy
- Not limited to, or constrained by, secular state standards
- Freedom to go above and beyond



Formation of school leaders and faculty is perpetual

- “Paradigm shift” – but natural!
- Enduring investment, building toward mastery of teaching in the Light of Christ
- Emphasis on pedagogy – how to spark wonder; to give a template for lifelong learning

Gradual – not a new “program” to be implemented but a philosophy to infuse

- Two- or three-year adoption plan
- Begin by reclaiming “story” → Catholic identity and moral imagination
- Mastery of language, mastery of number – the seven liberal arts as ladder of learning
- Seeking integration, not fragmentation

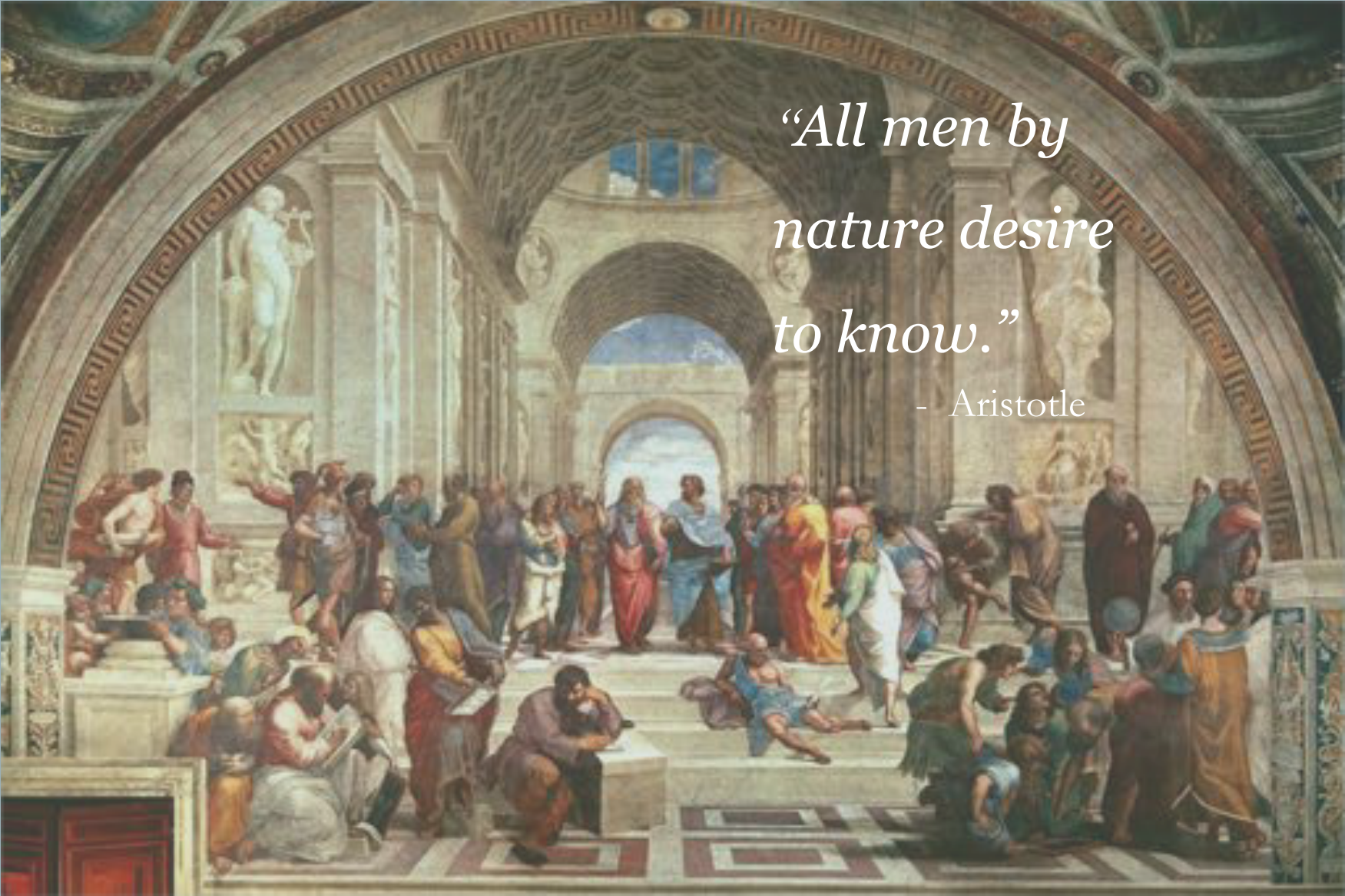
Faith and Reason



“In Him we live and move and have our being.”

Acts: 17:28

Authentic Catholic education cultivates “eyes to see and ears to hear”
the connectedness and the unity of all things in Christ.

The image is a reproduction of Raphael's fresco 'The School of Athens'. It depicts a large group of ancient Greek philosophers gathered in a grand, vaulted hall. The architecture features high arches, statues in niches, and a checkered floor. Philosophers are shown in various poses: some standing and gesturing, others sitting and writing. The central figures are Plato and Aristotle. The overall scene is a celebration of classical knowledge and philosophy.

*“All men by
nature desire
to know.”*

- Aristotle

The School of Athens, Raphael, 1510-1512



The Disputation of the Holy Sacrament, Raphael, 1510-1512 Apostolic Palace, Vatican