

An Explanation and Defense Of Catholic Classical Education

All men of every race, condition and age, since they enjoy the dignity of a human being, have an inalienable right to an education that is in keeping with their ultimate goal... For a true education aims at the formation of the human person in the pursuit of his ultimate end and of the good of the societies of which, as man, he is a member, and in whose obligations, as an adult, he will share.

- Declaration on Education, Second Vatican Council

Whenever the Church has spoken about education, whether in her published documents or through the homilies and pastoral letters of the Pope, two points have always been emphasized: First, that the parents are the primary educators and first examples of faith in the lives of their children. Second, that it is the duty of the Church to support parents in their efforts to form the intellect and conscience of each child entrusted to their care. Bl. John Paul II tells us that the family is “called to announce the Gospel” and to ultimately bring their children to “full human and Christian maturity.”¹ This process of formation, begun by the parents, is supported by “cooperation between parents and Christian communities,” particularly in the educational and evangelical ministry of the parochial school. Ultimately, the Bl. John Paul II tells us, “the renewal of the Catholic school must give special attention both to the parents of the pupils and to the formation of a perfect educating community.”

In order to fulfill our responsibility to both the parents and students of the parish and community, our parish school has begun a renovation of our curriculum and philosophy of education. This renewal of the spiritual and intellectual life of the school, under the new name of Sacred Heart Academy, will allow us to better fulfill our role and responsibility to the minds and hearts we are privileged to care for. While for many the benefits of spiritual renewal in a parish school will be obvious, the choice of a classical curriculum may not be – and the connection between that Catholic identity and our new classical identity may be even less so. To that end we have created this explanation and defense of the value of a classical education as a starting point for

¹ Pope John Paul II, *Consortio Familiaris*

parents and parishioners who wish to know more about the current revival of a traditional educational philosophy at Sacred Heart Academy.

Toward a Definition of Classical Education

Together with the need to love, the desire for truth is inherent in the human being's very nature... Therefore, in the education of the new generations, the question of the truth can certainly not be avoided: on the contrary, it must have a central position... By asking the question about the truth, we are in fact broadening the horizon of our rationality, we are beginning to free reason from those excessively narrow boundaries that confine it when we consider as rational only what can be the object of experimentation or calculation.

- Pope Benedict XVI²

The tradition of classical education is one of the few living systems or institutions older than the Church itself. Despite this antiquity the term “classical” does not mean simply “old” or even “time-tested,” but refers specifically to the language and philosophy of ancient Greece and Rome. This specific brand of education given to students by Plato at his Academy and Aristotle at his Lyceum is part of a unified tradition with the schools of rhetoric of the Roman Republic, the medieval schools and colleges founded and staffed by saints, and the modern movements for the revivification of Latin and Greek in charter, parochial, and home schools. Such diverse personalities as Cicero, St. Augustine, and Thomas Jefferson were recipients of and advocates for this tradition, and it is with this tradition that Sacred Heart Academy claims an inheritance today.

While some may feel that the Catholic, guided by the Magisterium of the Church and sustained by her sacraments, would have little in common with the Greco-Roman philosopher or rhetorician, the fact of the matter is that wherever the classical conception of education was upheld, the goal of the ancients was much the same as ours: To see and embrace truth, goodness, and beauty. Again, the Bl. John Paul II has told us that “[t]he greatest challenge to Catholic education in the United States today” is “to restore...the conviction that human beings can grasp the truth of things, and in

² *Address of His Holiness Benedict XVI to The Participants at The Ecclesial Convention of The Diocese of Rome*

grasping truth can know their duties to God, to themselves and their neighbors.”³ The great philosophers of Greece, Plato and Aristotle, believed that truth was both real and knowable and that human happiness depended upon acting in accordance with our understanding of the moral and physical framework of reality. They believed, in a sort of temporal solidarity with the teachings of the Catholic Church and in contrast to many of their own contemporaries as well as ours, that man could come to know moral and philosophical truths in addition to what modern skeptics would call “scientific” truths – facts proved by calculation and experimentation.

This understanding, inherited from the Greeks, that truth is knowable and unchanging is enriched by the revelation of the life and words of Christ. It is by no mistake that Christ was born into a time and place where the three most powerful influences on his first followers were the Jewish religion of their forbearers, the Roman political establishment, and the Greek language and culture.⁴ John highlights the intersection of these cultures at the outset of his account of Christ’s life in the prologue of his gospel: “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.”⁵ Here John consciously employs both the seminal words of the Jewish scriptures (“In the beginning...”) as well as the distinctly Greek concept of *Logos*, translated here as “Word,” and previously used by Plato and Aristotle to mean not only “word,” “account,” and “reason,” but also as something like “the idea of order in things.” As Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI tells us, speaking about this unity of Greek thought and Christian revelation, “Logos means both reason and word – a reason which is creative and capable of self-communication, precisely as reason.”⁶ John is telling us that in Christian revelation Greek reason meets its perfection: “And the Word [Logos] was made flesh, and dwelt among us... ..full of grace and truth.”⁷

³ Bl. John Paul II, *Address to the Bishops of the Ecclesiastical Regions of Chicago, Indianapolis and Milwaukee (U.S.A.) on their Ad Limina Visit*, May 1998

⁴ In addition to the excerpt from John which follows, attention could be drawn to an explicit reference to the intersection of these three great cultures in Luke’s account of the Crucifixion. Luke 23:38 specifies that the inscription on the cross reading “THIS IS THE KING OF THE JEWS” was written “in letters of Greek, and Latin, and Hebrew”.

⁵ John 1:1, *Douay-Rheims Bible*

⁶ Benedict XVI, *Speech at the University of Regensburg*

⁷ John 1:14, *Douay-Rheims Bible*

It has become common in our culture today to ignore both the search for truth and the acquisition of discipline to live according to its dictates. Nowhere does this ignorance cause greater damage than in the realm of faith and education. Classical education rejects the encroachments of reformers who claim that truth is unknowable or has no real existence. This belief, which Benedict XVI calls the “tyranny of relativism,” is viewed by the Pope Emeritus as “the central problem for the faith at the present time.”⁸ Whereas relativists suggest that the rejection of the idea of truth itself is the basis of liberty (or even democracy), the Church and the classical educator know that true liberty is found when we live in accordance with the truth. Again, Bl. John Paul II tells us that “the school and education in general have a decisive and irreplaceable task as ways of authentic liberation from the *slavery* of ignorance.”⁹

Many modern voices in education recommend a departure from the classical tradition in the name of providing a utilitarian or a progressive education. Advocates of the former claim that the best service we can do for the next generation is to prepare them to function as economic units. Advocates of the latter view education as a tool of the state – a means of socializing individuals and cultivating ideal citizens on a pattern determined by a bureaucrat or bureau. These opponents of classical education again offer liberation – from economic want and social unrest, respectively – if only we will reject truth as the principal focus of education. However, the words of Christ prevail: “You shall know the truth, and the *truth* shall make you free.”¹⁰

Therefore, a classical education is, to a significant degree, a matter of orientation to the truth. We believe that truth is real and knowable and we seek it – and desire to help young people to seek it – not because it is useful to us for some economic or social purpose, but because it is freeing and because it is in our nature to do so. Moreover, as Catholics, we seek it out of love for Christ who said “I am the way, and the *truth*, and the life. No man cometh to the Father, but by me.”¹¹

⁸ Benedict XVI, then Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, *Address at a Meeting of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith*, given in Guadalajara, Mexico, May 1996

⁹ Bl. John Paul II, *Address to Students, Teachers, and Administrators of Rome’s Schools*, February 1999, emphasis added.

¹⁰ John 8:32, *Douay-Rheims Bible*, emphasis added.

¹¹ John 14:6, *Douay-Rheims Bible*, emphasis added.

The unique relationship between antiquity and Christendom at that hinge of history we know as the Incarnation also affects the substance of a classical education, leading us to identify three repositories of accumulated truth which serve as the primary curricular content of a classical education: 1) The Judeo-Christian faith contained in the Old and New Testaments together with the writings of the saints and Magisterium of the Catholic Church 2) The great literary and philosophical works of Greco-Roman antiquity, and 3) Both literary and scientific works of the Christian and modern age which provide fitting moral examples or rigorous academic material.

The Immortal Tools of Learning

In these days, and in the present condition of the world, when the tender age of childhood is threatened on every side by so many and such various dangers, hardly anything can be imagined more fitting than the union with literary instruction of sound teaching in faith and morals.

- Pope Leo XIII¹²

In essence we believe a classical education is primarily an orientation toward the truth – a belief that truth is unchanging and knowable because it is rooted in the person of Christ, the eternal and incarnate Word. While this core has remained fundamentally unchanged over the centuries since the process of a classical education was first documented by Plato and Aristotle, our understanding of its essence has been enriched by the words of philosophers and saints in each generation. Similarly, the substance – the content and curriculum – of classical education has been developed and refined, though this has been a far greater source of contention among its practitioners. Teachers and administrators must therefore take care to identify the practices and materials which best serve the cultivation of moral and intellectual virtue in students. This is an arduous process, but one which is well worth our time. As St. John Chrysostom asks us: “What greater work is there than training the mind and forming the habits of the young?”¹³

¹² Pope Leo XII, *Spectata Fides*

¹³ St. John Chrysostom, Hom. 60, in c. 18 Matth.: “*Quid maius quam animis moderari, quam adolescentulorum fingere mores?*”, quoted by Pope Pius XI in *Divini Illius Magistri*

The time-tested tools of classical education are most conveniently laid out in the traditional list of the Seven Liberal Arts: grammar, logic, rhetoric, arithmetic, geometry, astronomy, and music. The first three are traditionally designated as the Trivium (Latin for “a meeting of three roads”), the final four as the Quadrivium (“a meeting of four roads, a crossroads”). The Quadrivium is delineated by Plato himself in his *Republic*, but it is the Trivium and its focus on foundational skills with which we are most concerned at the present.¹⁴ St. Augustine orders and defines the disciplines of the Trivium well in his *De Doctrina Christiana*. First, he discusses grammar, the elementary understanding of words (and symbols) and their meanings:

All instruction is either about things or about signs; but things are learnt by means of signs... No one uses words except as signs of something else; and hence may be understood what I call signs: those things, to wit, which are used to indicate something else.¹⁵

The mastery of signs is the beginning of all education, hence a “grammar” school is one in which children learn to read, write, and cipher. This idea of grammar as the interpretation of signs allows us to think of “grammar” as a stage of education for each individual student as well as a phase to be encountered whenever a new subject is introduced. The elementary use of numbers (counting, addition, multiplication, division, etc.) constitutes the grammar stage of mathematics as surely as the memorization of cases, parts of speech, and vocabulary constitute the grammar stage of any ancient or modern language.

Equipped with knowledge of signs (words) and their meanings, a student can proceed to the logic (sometimes called dialectic) stage of inquiry in which the skill of reasoning – proceeding from premises to conclusions – is developed. Just as the grammar stage is concerned with discovering the true meaning present in signs, the logic stage seeks to discover the inherent rules of a discipline which relate its disparate facts. This is the time for geometrical proofs, assigning plants and animals to taxonomic divisions, or properly labeling a poetic device. Again, St. Augustine tells us, our focus remains on truth: “...the validity of logical sequences is not a thing devised by men... ...for it

¹⁴ “Arithmetic, then, studies quantities as such, music the relations between quantities, geometry magnitude at rest, spherics [astronomy] magnitude inherently moving.”

¹⁵ St. Augustine, *De Doctrina Christiana*, I.2

exists eternally in the reason (*ratio*) of things, and has its origin in God.”¹⁶ Once a student has mastered the principles of right reasoning, they progress naturally to a study “not...so much used for ascertaining the meaning as for setting forth the meaning when it is ascertained.”¹⁷ This science of speaking and writing in order to teach, delight, and persuade is known as rhetoric and it represents mastery-level understanding of a subject.

We see in the Trivium studies – grammar, logic, and rhetoric – the same unifying idea of *logos* which so fittingly joins the Greco-Roman and Judeo-Christian traditions. The fact that *logos* was variously translated as “word,” “reason,” and “speech” – the principal objects of the Trivium disciplines – connects the uniquely human occupation of transforming ideas into spoken and written words to God’s creation through his authoritative Word of the things which our words symbolize. While our utilitarian colleagues in modern education have sought to undermine what are dismissively called “language arts” in recent years, the classical educator sees that words, rightly used, are an unparalleled means of handling, discovering, and communicating truth.

Intellectual strength, or virtue, is a natural fruit of a rigorous education in the use of language and it is traditionally the languages and literatures of Greece and Rome which formed the primary material on which students of the Trivium worked. While Greek was favored by the teachers of the Roman Republic over the *lingua franca* of the growing empire, scholars of the medieval period preferred to work with Latin, which was then the language of both Church and state. Until relatively recently, the regional spoken (“vulgar”) language has typically occupied the second or third position in the hierarchy of educational materials in a classical curriculum. However, we have neither the wish nor the ability to make Latin the primary language of our classrooms. Nonetheless it is important to note the reasons why the ancient tongues play such a significant role even after falling out of use as the preferred languages of religion, law, and science.

¹⁶ Ibid. II.32. St. Augustine continues: “For as the man who narrates the order of events does not create that order; and as he who describes the situations of places, or the natures of animals, or roots, or minerals, does not describe arrangements of man... ..in the same way, he who says, ‘When the consequent is false, the antecedent must also be false,’ says what is most true; but he does not himself make it so, he only points out that it is so.”

¹⁷ Ibid. II.55

Such varied voices of the secular world as philosopher Arthur Schopenhauer,¹⁸ statesman Winston Churchill,¹⁹ and utilitarian philosopher John Stuart Mill have sung the praises of a Latin-based education as a means of developing intellectual virtue.²⁰ The complex act of translation, even of straightforward prose, engages every intellectual faculty of the translator. Greek and Latin are also those tongues which the Church “values especially” because in them “wisdom itself is cloaked, as it were, in the venture of gold.”²¹

The value of Latin in particular has been repeatedly asserted by the Holy See in the 20th century. Pope Pius XII commands us that “diligent care must be used in concentrating on the study and use of Latin both because of its power in training minds and also because it is the language of the Church.”²² This assertion is echoed by his successor John XXIII:

There can be no doubt as to the formative and educational value either of the language of the Romans or of great literature generally. It is a most effective training for the pliant minds of youth. It exercises, matures and perfects the principal faculties of mind and spirit. It sharpens the wits and gives keenness of judgment. It helps the young mind to grasp things accurately and develop a true sense of values. It is also a means for teaching highly intelligent thought and speech.²³

We have then adequate grounds derived both from reason and authority to devote special energy to introducing a systematic study of Latin throughout our curriculum.

¹⁸ “...in translating into Latin, recourse must be had to quite other turns of phrase than are used in the original. The thought that is to be translated has to be melted down and recast; in other words, it must be analyzed and then recomposed. It is just this process which makes the study of the ancient languages contribute so much to the education of the mind.” From *Parerga und Paralipomena*.

¹⁹ “Naturally I am biased in favor of boys learning English. I would make them all learn English: and then I would let the clever ones learn Latin as an honour, and Greek as a treat.” From *My Early Life: A Roving Commission*.

²⁰ “Even as mere languages, no modern European language is so valuable a discipline to the intellect as those of Greece and Rome, on account of their regular and complicated structure.” *Inaugural Address Delivered to the University of St. Andrews*, 1867.

²¹ Pope John XXIII, *Veterum Sapientia*

²² Pope Pius XII, *Sedes Sapientiae*

²³ *Ibid.*

This insistence on the necessity of incorporating classical languages rather than just classical literature is one of the most significant points of departure between our educational philosophy and that of the proponents of a “Great Books” curriculum. Whereas the advocates of “Great Books” or “Great Ideas” programs consider an acquaintance with the words, in translation, of a wide variety of thinkers a sufficient education, the classical educator contends that the languages themselves are of fundamental importance to the formation of intellectual virtue. As proponents of Catholic classical education, we also assert that we must be discerning as to which authors our students, especially young students, read. Authors of philosophies confirmed by the Church to be erroneous or morally harmful ought to be read only by those students whose intellects and consciences are well-formed enough to combat ideological error.

The Quadrivium, considered the advanced course of study for the Greco-Roman or medieval student, consists of mathematics (arithmetic and geometry), natural science (astronomy), as well as music, and represents an indispensable part of a classical curriculum. While the Trivium forms the core of how we approach elementary education, it is also essential that we take care to lay a firm foundation in the higher mathematics and the natural sciences. Unlike contemporary educators, we embrace these subjects not for their utilitarian value, but because “the phenomena of nature, gifted with grandeur and beauty, are the works of an artist, through which, by analogy, we can know the Author of Creation.”²⁴ Music and art, though frequently slighted in modern educational reform, are acknowledged by the classical educator to be of a kind with the study of mathematics and science. Though like the Trivium disciplines they incorporate signs in the form of artistic symbols and musical notation, these subjects fundamentally focus on the artistry of nature and the inherent structure of sound and color, of proportion and melody, of harmony and scale.

Viewed in light of the disciplines of the Trivium, the divisions between the academic subjects begin to blur. We see that grammar, logic, and rhetoric are the tools we work with regardless of the material we work on. The focus of classical education on truth and its author also blur the distinction between academic subjects and catechesis, the instruction of children in the faith of “the church of the living God, the pillar and

²⁴ Pope Benedict XVI, *Weekly Audience*, March 24th, 2010.

ground of the truth.”²⁵ Bl. John Henry Newman, combating the increasing division between the natural sciences, known “by means of our natural powers,” and theology, known by “superadded and direct communication from Him,” instructs us that they are in fact two pieces of a whole:

These two great circles of knowledge...intersect; first, as far as supernatural knowledge includes truths and facts of the natural world, and secondly, as far as truths and facts of the natural world are on the other hand data for inferences about the supernatural.²⁶

Knowledge of the grammar, the historical and theological facts, of our faith combined with skill in logic and rhetoric will aid in the evangelistic efforts of Sacred Heart Academy and prepare its students for the “dialogue between faith and reason” which, when conducted with “sincerity and exactness... ...offers a possibility of perceiving more effectively and more convincingly the reasonableness of faith in God.”²⁷

The Benefits of a Classical Education

In the ordinary course of study, I came upon a book by a certain Cicero... This work changed my affections. It turned my prayers to you, oh Lord, and caused me to have different purposes and desires. All my vain hopes forthwith became worthless to me, and with incredible ardor of heart I desired undying wisdom. I began to rise up, so that I might return to you. I did not use that book to sharpen my tongue...nor did it impress me by its way of speaking but rather by what it spoke.

- St. Augustine²⁸

Despite the accusations of its opponents, a classical education is accessible to all students regardless of their background or perceived aptitude. Instructors are free to employ all methods appropriate to the age and ability of their students and experience

²⁵ 1 Timothy 3:15, *Douay-Rheims Bible*

²⁶ Bl. John Henry Newman, *Idea of a University*, 430.

²⁷ Pope Benedict XVI, *Address to The Participants at The Ecclesial Convention of The Diocese of Rome*

²⁸ St. Augustine, *Confessions*. The “book by a certain Cicero” referred to here is a lost dialogue known as *Hortensius* or *On Philosophy*.

proves the progression from grammar to logic and then on to rhetoric is well suited to the developing abilities of the elementary-aged student. The key to success in a classical education is rigor on the part of the instructors and discipline on the part of the students. When these two meet, excellence – what the Greeks called *arête* – is the result.

While the virtue developed by hard work at a difficult task may be its own reward, a classical education also answers a deep need in all people. Pope Pius XI, speaking on the restlessness and alienation of modern man, tells us that “men, created by God to His image and likeness and destined for Him Who is infinite perfection realize today more than ever...the insufficiency of earthly goods to produce true happiness.” Finding worldly success insufficient to fill this need, “they feel more keenly in themselves the impulse towards a perfection that is higher” and follow the “impulse planted in their rational nature” and seek that perfection “by means of education.”²⁹ However, those who seek the balm to their restlessness in an education which does not find its center and summit in Truth will always be ultimately disappointed. Indeed,

...their restlessness will never cease till they direct their attention and their efforts to God, the goal of all perfection, according to the profound saying of Saint Augustine: ‘Thou didst create us, O Lord, for Thyself, and our heart is restless till it rest in Thee.’³⁰

It is the purpose of Sacred Heart Academy to provide a true education which will satisfy this universal hunger in our youth for purpose, identity, and a firm grounding in faith. We choose a classical education as the most fitting tool for this timeless labor of forming the minds and hearts of the next generation of saints. We believe that by exposing children to the best stories, books, languages, music, art, to the most perfect examples of faith in the life of the saints, and to the revealed truth of scripture, we can awaken in them the ability to recognize and the desire to embrace the true, the good, and beautiful.

²⁹ Pope Pius XI, *Divini Illius Magistri*

³⁰ *Ibid.*

Furthermore, we believe that while truth ought to be pursued for its own sake, there are a number of benefits which are naturally conferred upon the recipient of a classical education. Not the least of which is a heightened ability to engage with the increasingly hostile and secular mainstream culture in the Western world. Torn by empty philosophies preaching the death of God, the ascent of relativism, and the simultaneous denial and glorification of sin, our world languishes for want of a clear understanding and articulation of truth, “that fundamental value without which freedom, justice and human dignity are extinguished.”³¹

In such times as ours, education must train and arm youth for their role in the Church Militant, providing the intellectual instruction to help them walk “circumspectly: not as unwise, but as wise: redeeming the time, because the days are evil,” as well as admonishing them in their faith, impelling them to put on the “whole armor of God” that they might contend “against principalities and power, against the rulers of the world of this darkness, against the spirits of wickedness in the high places.”³² To this end, we view daily mass, constant prayer, Eucharistic adoration, and ongoing religious instruction as indispensable aids to our mission.

Though dwarfed by the consideration of these intellectual and spiritual benefits, there are a number of material benefits associated with Catholic classical education which should be mentioned. In the short twenty years in which homeschooling has once again become legal in all fifty states, we have seen a mass exodus from American public schools. As of 2010, over two million students were home schooled, many of them because their parents desired a more intellectually rigorous or morally grounded education for their children. Charter schools have allowed at least another two million students to pursue an alternative education in the twenty years since the first charter school law took effect in Minnesota in 1991. Home school students consistently outperform their peers in general, but those home or charter school students who take Latin consistently lead the nation in verbal and quantitative reasoning. This is true on the elementary, high school, and college level.³³

³¹ Pope John Paul II, *Veritatis Splendor*

³² Ephesians 5:15-16, *Douay-Rheims Bible*

³³ Not to mention that parents are able to provide this education at 1/20th and schools like Sacred Heart Academy at 1/4th of the average yearly cost of a public school education:
<http://www.topmastersineducation.com/homeschooled/>

Test scores aside, it is verbal and logical alacrity that makes classical education a worthwhile pursuit for any student wishing to have an edge in the college or employment application process. We hear all too often that when it comes to technical training our colleges can only provide an increasingly obsolete education at increasingly high cost. The fact of the matter is that technology changes too rapidly for colleges to keep up. What employers need is not technicians, but learners. Students who are prepared to discover the logic of systems, who have the mental alacrity to learn a new subject themselves and the verbal mastery to teach it to their peers on the job. A young adult can do this only if he has experienced a systematic education rising from the factual basis (grammar) through the internal reasoning (logic) to the articulation (rhetoric) of his master of a subject.

The acquisition of mental discipline and a firm grounding in the skills and concepts which make up an education in the liberal arts and sciences are fine and rare things; however, these are not the final aims of a Catholic classical education. Nor do we believe that it is enough to simply “socialize” children or to make them good citizens, though the latter is a lofty aim and involves a more complete understanding of the human person than is generally found in public or parochial education. While clarity of thought and expression, kindness and understanding, and a sense of civic responsibility are the natural results of the kind of education we advocate, the true end and essence of an education grounded in the beliefs, moral teachings, and liturgy of the Catholic Church is far greater. Our goal is not merely to prepare children to be citizens of the Republic or even of the world, but to be citizens of the City of God.

Concrete Changes This Year at Sacred Heart Academy

This same sacred synod, while professing its gratitude to...the laity who by their evangelical self-dedication are devoted to the noble work of education and of schools of every type and level, exhorts them to persevere generously in the work they have undertaken and, imbuing their students with the spirit of Christ, to strive to excel in pedagogy and the pursuit of knowledge in such a way that they not merely advance the internal renewal of the Church but preserve and enhance its beneficent influence upon today's world...

- Declaration on Education, Second Vatican Council

As the 2013-14 school year progresses, we are undertaking a number of projects to make this vision a reality. This list is never quite current, but it will give you a vision for what we are doing and perhaps in it you will see an opportunity to lend spiritual or material assistance to our efforts.

New This Semester:

- Daily Mass – 7:45am each morning, attended by all students 1st-8th.
- Weekly Adoration – From the close of daily Mass to Vespers at 5pm
- Family Night – An opportunity for the families of Sacred Heart Academy and Sacred Heart of Jesus Parish to share food and fellowship. After the meal, nursery care is provided as well as religious education for children and adults.
- Regular Reconciliation – All students have the opportunity to receive the sacrament of Reconciliation once a month during the school day.
- Addition of the Dean of Students and Provost positions
 - Tim Walsh has taken on the responsibilities of Dean of Students and is handling disciplinary issues as well as providing a primary point of contact for parents on the day-to-day operations of the academy.
 - Zachary Good is acting as Provost and overseeing the transition to a classical curriculum. He is available to meet with current and prospective parents on Tuesdays and Thursdays from 11am to 3pm, and can be reached at zgood@sacredheartgr.org or by phone: 616-350-2537

- Classical Enrichment Courses
 - These courses are offered by Sacred Heart Academy to full time student of the appropriate age as well as area families wishing to add classical content to their homeschool curricula.
 - We currently offer Latin I to high school and middle school students and Logic & Rhetoric to 9-12th graders
 - Iconography, Sacred Music, Poetry, and Apologetics will be offered in the Spring 2014 semester, with many more additions coming next fall.
- Community Resource Area
 - Open from the end of daily mass to noon on Tuesday and Thursday
 - One area provided where mothers with young children can have a cup of coffee and a snack. Children can play with toys, attend a story time on Thursdays, and play in the school gym.
 - Another space is set aside as a quiet study room for independent work.
- New Website – We have a new website (www.SacredHeartAcademyGR.org) where current and prospective parents can access news, vision documents, and other helpful resources.
- New Logo – Our school’s new coat of arms and motto has been revealed! You can check it out on our website and the cover of our new Family Directories.

Efforts Currently Underway

- Audit of Current Curriculum
 - Our Provost is currently examining all of the content currently taught at Sacred Heart Academy with an eye toward making significant, cost-efficient improvements in the coming semester and formulating a long-term plan for continually improving curriculum in the coming years.
 - Classical authors and works will be added to the curriculum throughout the year, so that improvements are steady, but gradual.
- Curriculum Updates
 - The formal Latin curriculum now enjoyed by our 8th graders will be expanded next year to include both full time and part time students in 5th through 12th grades.

- Our religion curriculum is being completely updated. We have already acquired the *Faith in Life* series published by Ignatius Press and will begin using it at all grade levels when the second semester begins.
- We have found an instructor and are working on plans to open a Catechesis of the Good Shepherd atrium next fall. A reading group focusing on Sophia Caveletti's *The Religious Potential of the Child* will soon be forming to prepare parents of 3 to 6-year-olds for this new catechetical program.
- The focus of classical education on language means that writing and recitation will have an increasing role in the curriculum this spring.
- Professional Development
 - After receiving a historical and practical introduction to classical education over the summer our teachers have continued to meet regularly to discuss Stratford Caldecott's *Beauty in the Word*.
 - Ongoing professional development plans include work in Latin and logic.
- Extracurricular Activities
 - Catholic Science Investigators – Learn more about this new opportunity for students to get hands on experience with collecting and analyzing scientific data on our website.
 - Young Voices of Sacred Heart – A group of young men and women from Sacred Heart Academy have begun a program of vocal training under the direction of Dr. Saunders and will soon be lending their voices to our Tuesday evening Vespers service.

Planned for the Near Future:

- Expanded Latin Curriculum
 - Currently our 8th graders are all taking Latin through the Classical Enrichment Courses program.
 - Next year all SHA students (K-8th) will be exposed to a formal Latin curriculum. This spring we will be designing a K-2nd grade curriculum which will expose students to Latin through songs, prayers, useful phrases, and parts of the Mass. An introduction to grammar and vocabulary will begin in 3rd and 4th grades.

- We will be hiring a dedicated Latin teacher to instruct both full time students in 5-8th grade and Latin students in 5-12th grade enrolled in the Classical Enrichment Courses program.
- Expansion of Our Classics Lending Library
 - Located in the silent workspace of the Community Resource Area, our lending library has had modest beginnings, but is slowly expanding.
 - The library contains both books which defend classical education and books which are part of a classical education.
- Parent & Parishioner Education
 - To promote a greater understanding of our new programs and reinvigorated curriculum among parents and parishioners, we look forward to providing a number of opportunities in the coming semester to engage in conversations about classical education.
 - Look for information coming soon on a lectures, information nights, a redesigned newsletter, and reading groups.