St. Augustine Academy

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In Memoriam
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† 2018
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October 23, 2026 *St. John of Capistrano*

Dear Families,

I wanted to return to the theme of prudence, the right ordering of principles. I was looking for some inspiration, when I stumbled across an article from Steven Rummelsburg, a Catholic educator. In the portions of the article that follow here, Rummelsburg is talking about a famous essay from C.S. Lewis called "Men Without Chests" in which Lewis warns modern culture that stripping objective principles allows appetite to reign free, which leads to a populus that is easy to manipulate. For this Blue Letter, I just want you to read the article. In next week's letter, I want to provide some commentary on it. Rummelsburg writes:

"Mind" and "intellect" are words that point to realities that are immaterial in nature. Consistently eradicating all immaterial things from educational theory leaves these concepts especially vulnerable to abuse. Ask any school faculty to explain "intelligence," and you will likely hear modifiers like multiple, emotional, and artificial. The noun they modify has become an organ donor.

The word "intellect" comes from the Latin intus legere – to read the interior. Our senses perceive outward qualities; the intellect grasps what things are, conceptually. A man sees and recognizes a particular dog, but his intellect grasps the nature it shares with all dogs. Unlike sight, it is not tied to a bodily organ; schools should cultivate its use and proper end. Aquinas teaches that the intellect's end is truth, the conformity of mind to reality, and thus our intellectual nature bears the image of God, a likeness that finds its fulfillment in Christ the Logos who is Truth Himself.

Intellect is a power of the soul with two operations Aquinas calls intellectus and ratio. Josef Pieper, in Leisure, the Basis of Culture, describes intellectus as "simply looking," the mind at rest receiving reality. The student who grasps the structure of a fugue, a proof, or a proverb is doing more than perceiving: he is apprehending what the thing is. Ratio, or reasoning, is the active capacity to move from what is known by first principles to what was previously unknown.

Reasoning becomes rootless when it is not preceded by the intellect's apprehension of the first principles. Yet we still demand "higher-order thinking" after we have banished the receptive mode of intellectus. By this removal, we produce an army of men without minds, well trained to criticize but rendered incapable of begetting higher culture.

Severed from the truth it exists to know, intelligence becomes simply technical skill, leaving no room for true erudition. St. Paul described a generation such as ours as "ever learning, and never attaining to the knowledge of the truth." (2 Timothy 3:7)

Three modern notions illustrate St. Paul's words, and each takes the name of the mind and gives it to something lesser. Howard Gardner's "multiple intelligences" splits the unity of intellect into eight or more capacities, such as mathematical, kinesthetic, and musical; the intellect exercises these abilities, but they are not the intellect itself. "Emotional intelligence," the premise of the social-emotional learning programs, inverts the order of intellect and passions. Artificial intelligence is no more like intelligence than fake flowers are like flowers; it simulates its effects, not the thing itself. Only the habit of judging by appearances lets us confuse the two.

Dante, passing through the gate of Hell in Canto III of the Inferno, learns from Virgil that he will see the sorrowful who have "lost the good of the intellect," not the power to think, but its object, the truth that is God – the Good. The first souls he encounters "lived without disgrace and without praise," rejected by both Heaven and Hell. He sees a massive horde wailing and chasing a whirling banner, being stung by wasps, their blood and tears gathered at their feet by worms. They are "the

indifferent," sad souls who never made up their minds to choose good and avoid evil. Their restless pursuit is the image of reason cut off from the intellect's contemplative rest.

Our schools now chase the same banner whirling in the Inferno. Outcomes-based rubrics and standardized testing have produced generations of graduates with useless skills and mountains of data for mindless experts to mine. We have removed the immaterial and still bid students be fruitful.

The remedy is simple. In my classes, we put everything away and sit in silence together until I begin to introduce first principles, such as the whole being greater than its parts. I intentionally ask them to receive what is put before them in a state of leisure, rest, and passive receptivity. When we ground our educational methods in rest, receptivity, and the direct grasp of first principles, children not only learn to reason well through the liberal arts, but in the end become unfoolable.

Lewis is clear: the heart "can, and should, obey" the head – provided the head is formed to grasp reality. His geldings were commanded to be fruitful. Our graduates are commanded to think critically. Both demands are futile. Recovery begins at home, where parents, trusting in grace, must restore leisure and truth before we ask children to reason. Before we give modern education another year, we must rediscover what the mind is and what it is for, lest we turn our own children into men without minds.

God Bless, Timothy Moore

ANNOUNCEMENTS

PARENT/TEACHER CONFERENCES- Conferences will be held on October 30th! I sent out a request form for 5th-12th grade conferences last week. If you would like a conference, please return the form ASAP or contact the office with the request.

40 DAYS FOR LIFE- From Mrs. Seeley: Please join the pro-life club outside Planned Parenthood on Mondays and Wednesdays at 3:15. We'll wrap up the campaign with a candlelight Rosary on Sunday, Nov. 1. Kudos to these students and parents who came out in full force last Monday -- and didn't let the rain stop them on Wednesday! See Winston Seeley for more info: winstonjseeley@gmail.com.

CALENDAR UPDATE- The High School Winter Play- *The Importance of Being Earnest*- is now slated for Friday, December 4 at 5 pm at St. Thomas Aquinas Hall in Ojai. Note: This is not the college, but the parish in Ojai.

UPCOMING SPORTS GAMES
High School Baseball-
Saturday, Oct 24 @ Montalvo Little League- 12pm, Sunday, Oct 25 @ Oxnard High- 2pm
Middle School Boy's Flag Football-
Mon, Oct 26 @ St. Sebastian, 3:30 pm, Wed, Oct 28 at OLA, 3:30 pm
Middle School Girl's Volleyball-
Tues, Oct 27 @ OLG- 3:30 pm, Thursday, Oct 29 @ OLG- 3:30 pm

UPCOMING DATES TO REMEMBER

Oct 23- Report Cards
Oct 25- Oktoberfest (see flyer)
Oct 26- No School- Teacher In-Service
Oct 30- SAA All Saints Day Celebration! Early Dismissal @ 12 pm
Oct 30- 5-12 Parent Teacher Conferences
Nov 6- All School Mass/Early Dismissal

ORA PRO NOBIS – *We continue to keep all our friends and family in our prayers! For the repose of the soul of Ed Wurts, Donna Steichen, David Schulz, Teresa Woodward, and Paul Scamperle. For a successful and joy-filled school year at St. Augustine Academy. For the health of Elizabeth Galloway, Sister Francis Mary, Fr. Paul Donlan, Kevin Kolbeck, and Linda Kern. For a special intention. We pray for our Pope, our Archbishop, all of our priests and religious,* ***and we pray especially for each other!***