

Light FROM THE Light

“OF ALL THE HOLY WORKS, THE
EDUCATION OF CHILDREN IS MOST HOLY.”
— ST. THEOPHAN

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ORTHODOX CLASSICAL SCHOOL
News & Views

The Sign of the Cross

by Fr. Paul O'Callaghan

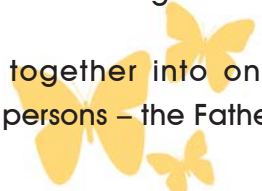
Making the sign of the cross – what could be more familiar to Orthodox Christians? Many of us have done it regularly since early childhood and we hardly give it a second thought.

Let's take a minute and think more closely about it, particularly, about how we hold our fingers when we make the cross.

You know how it's done. The thumb, index finger and middle finger are pressed together at the tip. The ring finger and pinkie are pressed together and folded down. But what is the meaning of this arrangement?

The three fingers pressed together into one represent the One God in three persons – the Father

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Issue II



In Defense of Memorization

by Stan Cox



Not long ago, I heard a contemporary educational guru state, “Kids don’t need to remember anything anymore; they have Google.” He wasn’t joking. He argued that students no longer needed to have knowledge of a subject; they only needed to know how to find information. This is yet another example of how modern education philosophies have abandoned the time-tested classical methods of education.

In the Classical model, memory is as important to education as eating is to staying alive. Students begin with great quantities of oral rote memorization. Because we have de-emphasized memory in modern educational models, many of us believe that the ability to remember is a static quality. In fact, memory is like a muscle: The more it is exercised, the greater its strength and capacity. The daily exercise of memory, especially with young students, develops and increases a student’s ability to remember in much the same way as calisthenics develop physical strength and balance. In addition, memory exercise enhances a learner’s ability to distinguish fine shades of similarity and contrast - one of the most important elements of intelligence growth.

The information that a classical school imparts to its students through memorization is like

nourishing food, which is to be digested and assimilated over the course of a student’s life. As learners reach the maturity to think more analytically and even to connect and apply what has been learned to new situations, the years of familiarity with the material memorized makes integrating it into living situations much more organic and efficient. Adults can all attest to the fact that certain knowledge becomes more enriching and useful the longer it has been retained, digested and integrated.

Memory work also helps develop focus, personal discipline and mastery in much the same way as repetitive drills in athletics or music. One of the great tragedies of contemporary educational models is the shift toward entertaining students, usually justified by references to “engagement” or “relevance”, rather than educating them. The Trivium of the Liberal Arts establishes the natural sequence of learning. This sequence is frequently reversed with unsatisfactory outcomes in elementary classrooms; Teachers are often required to try to produce rhetorical results in the minds of students who have not been properly prepared by establishing the necessary grammatical knowledge through rote memory. The result is that what passes for education at the elementary level often resembles entertainment, which accommodates and reinforces short

attention spans. Then, when students should be ready for more logical and rhetorical development, extensive remediation is frequently required to make up for the lack of basic grammatical knowledge that should have been established in earlier grades.



“In the Classical Model, memory is as important to education as eating is to staying alive.”

One of the most significant benefits of memory development in the classical model is the resulting immersion in oral language development. Numerous studies have demonstrated that there is a direct relationship between literacy standards and the number of words heard and spoken by individual students throughout the course of his or her life. Oral rote memory “greases the wheels” of oral language development. Poetry and song memorization connects young minds with complex vocabulary long before they are ready to understand the meaning. Early oral facility naturally and automatically instructs students in the principals of phonics, which is the basis of much contemporary remedial literacy strategies. Students who have strong backgrounds in oral rote memory tend to have fewer identifiable learning disabilities as oral language development naturally remediates or, in some cases, prevents them altogether.

So, while Google may be able to find the immediate answer, it cannot supply the discipline, oral language development and intelligence growth of good, old-fashioned memorization. 🦋

The Classical Model Explained:

The Classical model, time-tested since ancient Greek, Roman, and medieval times, is known as the Trivium (triple way). It recognizes three stages of mental/physiological development in children with corresponding stages of learning:

Grammar Stage (Grades 1-4)

- Learns the facts of language, math, history and science
- Emphasis on memorization
- Not much critical thinking

Logic Stage (Grades 5-8)

- Builds on facts learned in grammar stage
- Makes truthful connections & deductions from those facts

Rhetoric Stage (Grades 9-12)

- Truthful expression
- Meaningful discourse
- Skillful persuasion

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*THE DIRECTION IN WHICH
EDUCATION STARTS
A MAN WILL DETERMINE
HIS FUTURE LIFE.*

— PLATO

with his Co-Eternal Son and All-Holy Spirit. The other two fingers pressed together and folded represent the one person of Jesus Christ in two natures – divine and human.

The doctrine of God as Holy Trinity has a distinct and highly specific formulation worked out by the Fathers and ratified by Ecumenical Councils. In the Greek language of their day, the Fathers described the divine persons of the Trinity as being one in essence (ousia) and distinct in person (hypostasis). Similarly, the definition of the person of Jesus Christ affirms that he is one person (hypostasis) in two natures (physis) – divine and human.

These terms were taken from Greek philosophy and pressed into use by the Fathers to articulate precise theological definitions

against the distortions of heresies. How did the Fathers become familiar with such terminology? Through classical education. They were trained in classical Greek and learned the great philosophers such as Plato, Aristotle, and the Stoics. Their in-depth classical formation gave them the linguistic tools that enabled them to give precise formulation to the essential tenets of the Christian faith.

We can thus see that classical education is inextricably tied to Christian Orthodoxy. Without the tools provided by classical learning, the Fathers would have been hobbled in their attempt to respond to heresy. Without it, there would be no Orthodoxy as we know it.



CLASSICAL EDUCATION AND ORTHODOXY CHRISTIANITY. THE TWO ARE LINKED TOGETHER AND HAVE A LONG COMMON HISTORY. WITHOUT BEING AWARE OF IT, WE AFFIRM THAT LINK EVERY TIME WE MAKE THE SIGN OF THE CROSS.

Steering Committee Draws Vision for School: Preparing Children for Kingdom of God




It may have been Labor Day weekend, but the 18 members of the steering committee didn't put aside their work. They spent their holiday weekend drafting the vision and mission statements for an Orthodox Classical School and dividing the work necessary to turn that vision into reality.

Dr. Tony Woodlief, the Vice President for Academic Programs at the Market Based Management Institute, who has developed numerous educational organizations throughout the country, facilitated the discussion for the vision and mission statements.

The vision statement, he explained, is the mountain top, the ethos the school would like to fulfill. The mission statement is the path the school will take to get to the top of that mountain.

After reviewing nearly a dozen other vision and mission statements of local schools and Orthodox classical schools throughout the country, analyzing the feedback from families who had filled out the school survey, and examining the committee's own ideals for the school, it was decided that what set the

future Orthodox classical school apart from other local schools was four distinctive aspects: the education of the whole child: mind, soul and body; the focus on unchanging truth; a preparation for inheriting the kingdom of God; and a classical approach.

Once the mission and vision statements were created, the steering committee was divided into seven subcommittees and assigned tasks and deadlines necessary for the completion of the strategic plan by January 2011. 

Vision Statement:
"Educating mind, soul and body to embrace the kingdom of God."

Mission Statement:
"The Mission of the [Orthodox classical school] is to train the mind of the student to recognize unchanging truth and form the soul in virtuous character, by immersion in a classical curriculum and historic orthodox Christian spirituality. Our students will enjoy superior preparation for higher education, future vocation, virtuous living, and eternity."

**ORTHODOX CLASSICAL SCHOOL
SUBCOMMITTEES:**

Finance: Tom Jacob, Dr. George Farha, Gayle Malone, Roger Henre

Facility: Craig Ablah, Fr. Paul O'Callaghan, Stan Cox, Tom Jacob, Anthony Jacobs

Marketing: Jennifer Sebits, Craig Ablah, Gigi Shadid, Justine Nightingale, Tony Woodlief

Fundraising: Gayle Malone, Jennifer Sebits, Fr. Paul O'Callaghan

Staff Structure: Elena Somerhalder, Gigi Shadid, Stan Cox, Tony Woodlief

Curriculum: Stan Cox, Sub-deacon Joshua Armitage, Warren Farha, Anthony Jacobs, Myrna Rezcallah

Governance: Gayle Malone, Stan Cox, Fr. Aaron Warwick, Fr. John Flora



SURVEY FINDS ORTHODOX EDUCATION #1 CHOICE FOR RESPONDENTS

They have yet to see a school curriculum. They do not know the headmaster or who their child’s teacher may be. And still, an Orthodox classical school is the number one preference, surpassing public schools and other private schools, for 78-percent of families who filled out the recent on-line survey.

“HAVING ATTENDED AN ORTHODOX SCHOOL FOR 14 YEARS, I BELIEVE IT CAN PROVIDE THE BEST EDUCATION FOR MY CHILD,” ONE SURVEY RESPONDENT WROTE.

The survey was sent via email to all members of St. George, St. Mary and St. Michael Orthodox parishes in Wichita in August. To date, 41 families have completed the questionnaire.

The survey results form a more complete picture for the steering committee about who the core demographic for the future school at the Cathedral might be. What do the most interested families look like? They have multiple children - on average, three; they largely attend public schools; they are concerned about the costs of private tuition, and they are primarily interested in a traditional day school for their children.

The families most interested in an Orthodox classical school placed developing character and a well-formed soul of equal importance to academic excellence.

“I would like my children to be surrounded by the church as much as possible,” one survey respondent wrote.

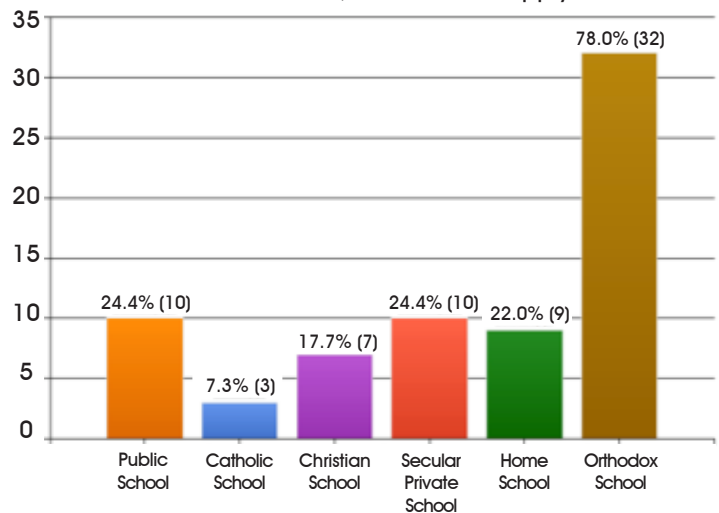
The survey also revealed that most families are eager to volunteer for the school. Eighty-seven percent said they would like to offer their skills. The talent pool of those people include backgrounds in architecture, education, music, art, economics, science, health, math and political science.

Ninety-four percent of the respondents said they wanted more information about the school. Through efforts such as this newsletter and future forums, the steering committee plans to communicate such information.

If you have not filled out the survey, it is not too late. The survey can be found by clicking on the following link: <http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/CathedralClassicalSchoolSurvey>.



Ideally, what is your educational preference for your children?
If more than one, check all that apply.



SUPPORT THE SCHOOL:

- Tax-free contributions can be made to the St. George Cathedral Endowment Foundation. Please note it is for the Orthodox Classical School. (Funds will be used to financially assist the research and development phase through the end of the year.)
- If you have children, please take time to fill out a short survey about the school. Please click on the link below.

www.surveymonkey.com/s/CathedralClassicalSchoolSurvey



LIGHT
FROM THE
LIGHT

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