

Prospectus

Holy Spirit Academy's Educational Mission and its Institutional Culture

What is the purpose of education? – What can reasonably be expected to be taught at the high school level? How does esteem for the classical educational tradition and fidelity to the divine revelation found in the Catholic Church impact these questions? This text proposes to give the essential features of Holy Spirit Academy and therein explain its mission, namely, “Holy Spirit Academy is a private high school in the Catholic intellectual tradition offering an integrated college preparatory curriculum. The school's Christ-centered approach to education fosters an environment grounded in the Truth, which prepares students for a life at the service of others. Holy Spirit Academy strives to help students realize their purpose, instilling in them confidence to enrich the current culture.”

What is the primary good of the education provided by Holy Spirit Academy?: “All men are nurtured, first and foremost, by the truth, not only those who search for knowledge...everybody who yearns to live as a true human being depends on this nourishment.” – Joseph Pieper By “primary good,” we denote the principle fruit of education, the end for which we work--following Aristotle's idea that the good is that which men seek in any sphere of action. To begin, we must note that high school education has manifold goods which it provides. Nevertheless, there ought to be understood a proper and proximate end of the Academy, which sets it apart from trainings of other sorts and other stages of learning. Hence, we identify our education providing an intrinsic good, which has as its primary and proximate end to be the imparting of truth. Truth, i.e. understanding in conformity with reality, is worth knowing for its own sake. In other words, our education is an end worth pursuing per se as a good, vis. the good of knowing what is true. Since true education is proper to man and his rational nature consists fundamentally in two powers, the intellect and will, the end of education lies in cultivating intellectual and moral goods. The former of these is the direct concern of our educational institution. This is because on the one hand, the moral virtues should be formed first in the home and ought to permeate the whole academic experience. Secondly, human flourishing as found especially in a virtuous life is itself dependent on a proper education in the truth. Furthermore, a student hones and develops many of the moral virtues while pursuing the intellectual virtues and academic excellence. Thus, the primary goal of our education is to seek and love the truth and thereby be formed by it. While indeed truth is worthily pursued and possessed for its own sake, it is a corollary that possessing the truth by nature will better prepare man for life and to operate competently in a world that is subject to the demands of truth. The presupposition is that reality is indeed real and proper formation will “free” man to flourish in that reality. Therefore, to operate in a way that is indicative of human flourishing in the world requires a conformity to the truth, which is indeed the truth of the world. Building a culture which cultivates this flourishing is an important further question to be later explored.

Why is Holy Spirit Academy a fittingly named High School?: Hence it is fitting that our Academy was founded in the spirit of that Divine Person whose name we bear. The Holy Spirit is indeed the Spirit of Truth which leads mankind to all truth (Jn. 16-13). “In our own age, then, we are called anew by the ever ancient and ever new faith of the Church, to draw near to the Holy Spirit as the giver of life,” states St. John Paul II in *Dominum et Vivicantem*. The Holy Spirit vivifies our mission by ordering us to the truth and by inspiring the entire life of the school. Such a mission oriented to the truth is best fulfilled in an Academy properly understood. The notion of Academy goes back to Plato in the foundation of the Platonic Academy (Akademos) in ancient Greece. In ancient Greece, Socrates was killed for his commitment to the truth. His pupil, Plato, founded the first Academy. The term “Academy” therefore denotes a fundamentally protected institution of society where, according to Joseph Pieper, “there is

expressly reserved an area for truth...for the autonomous study of reality, where it is possible to, without restrictions, to examine, investigate, discuss, and express what is true about anything...where hidden agendas have no place." Hence, today's high school academy, to be true to its origins, must be committed to the truth in its fullness in spite of any cultural threats to the objective study of truth.

"Classical" "Liberal" and "Catholicism" and their relation to our academic program: There are certain terms and concepts so vital to our academic program it is the prerogative of the entire community to understand in what sense they are employed. Classical denotes an enduring and time-honored tradition of teaching and a central canon of literature which present unchanging concepts about reality and humanity. In the classical tradition of learning there are certain canonical texts, "Great Books," which are the original writings of the greatest minds (e.g. Homer, Euclid, Herodotus, Aquinas, Dante, Shakespeare, Chesterton, and others). These are not read merely for cultural or historical reasons, but because they represent our best efforts to understanding reality itself. Moreover, these texts propose certain fundamental questions and answers which are fittingly first studied at the high-school level. An example is St. Augustine's *Confessions*, which vividly describes the state of sinful man, the nature of conversion, and the designs of Divine Providence—all matters which inevitably confront young adults. Liberal education does not have a political connotation. Rather, in the etymological sense of the word, it denotes the freedom specifically found in working towards the true good: "Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free. (Jn. 8:32)" This education is also liberal in the sense that it is done freely and meaningfully for its own sake. The seven "Liberal Arts" (The Trivium: Grammar, Logic, and Rhetoric; The Quadrivium: Arithmetic, Geometry, Astronomy, and Music) are those arts whereby man is equipped to understand those ideas intrinsically worth knowing. Our education in the Liberal Arts is not merely a narrow scholastic preparation but a truly humane experience whereby the liberally educated high schooler begins to achieve certain fundamental competencies for life itself. Hence such an education truly leaves its graduates "prepared for life." Catholicism perfects ideas found in classical and liberal ideas of education and elevates them in Christ. The value of truth, the dignity of the human person, and the purpose of life are all profoundly elevated by life in Christ. A recognition of the world outside oneself and a sense of wonder at that world is the starting place for any authentic education. This recognition leads the student to seek an understanding of things (i.e., the world, its creatures, man himself, existence and, ultimately, God). This desire to know is in our very nature and is the restlessness of our heart of which St. Augustine famously speaks: "Thou hast formed us for Thyself, and our hearts are restless till they find rest in Thee." This is the desire to know the good, the true, and the beautiful. Man, liberally educated in the truth, is free to achieve true goods in life. Catholicism enriches this idea vis-a-vis the revelation in Jesus Christ and in magisterial teachings of the Catholic Church which he founded. Religiosity is therefore imbued to the purpose of education. Indeed, a "Catholic worldview" is pervasive in our structure and programs such that, in the words of Dana Gioia, our Academy aims to be "shimmering with signs of sacramental things... mysteriously charged with the invisible presence of God." This pervasive Catholic perspective does not require a sacred subject nor is it confined to a Theology class. The Catholic intellectual tradition is replete with great authors, Catholic or otherwise, who understood this in their writings and ideas in all subjects. By reading and discussing great works and considering the marvels of nature, a "moral imagination" is formed. The concept of "moral imagination," developed by Russel Kirk, shows that all the powers of the soul are formed unitedly and sacramentally in classical Catholic education. The faith impacts how we engage the world's struggles and mysteries. Such is the Catholic intellectual tradition to which Holy Spirit Academy espouses. While recognizing the principles and methods properly found in each subject, the degree Catholicism impacts the academic program cannot be overstated.

How is Holy Spirit Academy “Integrated?”: High school culturally is a period of youth emerging into adulthood. A fundamental need of these young people in transition is formation in the Truth and the moral enculturation which follows such a formation. Hence our Academy at the high school level adopts an academic program with an integrated course of studies, exposing the student to perennial questions and fundamental truths which will prepare them for a human and supernaturally flourishing adulthood. Moreover, it adapts a complimentary disciplinary model dedicated to imparting a conviction of vocation and responsibility to students. Integration includes showing the cross-disciplinary nature of learning between subjects and furthermore understanding that there is a hierarchy in the order of learning, with Theology in pride of place. Students will be challenged to see how it all “fits together.” Peter Kreeft comments accordingly: “The medieval formula ‘philosophy the handmaid of theology’ and the associated idea of theology as ‘the queen of the sciences’ are seldom taken seriously today...Yet neither philosophy nor science have ever refuted the claim during the past seven hundred years. It has been dismissed by fashion, not by reason. If God is, and is our ultimate end, then the science of God must indeed be the queen of the sciences.” Such an academic program and disciplinary expectations are preparatory by design, since it will cultivate a student and will leave them prepared to continue their quest for truth. These truths ought to be further pursued alongside professional goals in post-secondary education and indeed throughout life. Our integrated education demands discipline and results in exceptional competence in collegiate and post-secondary studies, because in such an education the entire person receives formation.

The pedagogy of Holy Spirit Academy: Because of the interpersonal and discursive process of learning intrinsic to classical education, seminar-style discussions in the Socratic method are commonplace. Such an approach to teaching fosters open discussions directed by the teacher to a better understanding of the text being considered and the ideas which arise. Small class sizes ensure that every student is engaged in the learning process. All of the modes of teaching are employed at Holy Spirit Academy, as is fitting their subject. Math and science classes also employ interactive exercises and labs which are fitting to the subject matter and deepen a sense of wonder for the natural world. Beyond the work of the classroom, regular homework provides students the opportunity to independently develop their understanding and study habits. As the perennial ideas, original text, and hands-on labs are often the focus of the classroom, technology at Holy Spirit plays a secondary role. While a certain amount of technological proficiency and competency is important for the student, the danger of technology becoming a distraction is quite serious in our present age. Hence Holy Spirit Academy students check in their cell phones in the morning and only use laptops when working on specific reading or research assignments. Since a well-trained mind is put to the test through writing, composition is a feature of all our classes. Holy Spirit Academy recognize the need for practice to develop good habits of writing which will prepare the student for academic and professional success. Tied with the ability to write well is the ability to do independent research and documentation. The efforts to cultivate good writing skills culminate in the senior Capstone paper, which is an opportunity for deep reflection on perennial questions which arise during the students’ course of studies and argues logically on a question of importance.

Holy Spirit Academy’s culture: Holy Spirit Academy's culture is decisively Catholic with a goal of building a vibrant Catholic intellectual community. The Faculty of Holy Spirit Academy make an oath of fidelity to the Magisterium and understand their roles as extending beyond the classroom to forming the students in faith and virtue. The Academy has a rich devotional life: regular Holy Mass, daily adoration, daily classroom prayer, praying Divine Office in community, participating in special devotions during holy seasons, regular access to the sacrament of confession, and opportunities for retreat and service for

students at various times throughout the year. A Catholic intellectual life means unity to the Magisterium of the Church in its teachings and practice. We are creating an environment which invites students to engage in a perennial intellectual tradition in discussions and debates both in and out of class. Engaging in the needs and ministries of the Church are also a priority for the Academy. Stewardship of Holy Spirit Academy, a private institution, is the responsibility of the entire community and all are asked to participate in fundraisers and development initiatives. Because the Catholic intellectual life is only achieved in a well-rounded environment, Holy Spirit Academy also inculcates the appreciation of the Arts and encourages students to participate in its extracurriculars. Students participate in Fine Arts classes each year which imparts classical technique and an eye for beauty. They deepen their appreciation of the Church's patrimony of sacred music and experience the joy of singing through a four-year all-school choral program. Extracurriculars such as the drama program and sports are designed to complement the academic program. A love of the Culture of Life is also a priority for Holy Spirit Academy. The dignity of the human person is a pervasive theme that presents itself in many classes. The Student Playbook, which encourages student wellness, compliments the rules and expectations established by the Parent-Student Handbook. Parents are strongly encouraged to participate in manifold ways throughout the year, especially in intellectual events such as faculty lectures. Most of Holy Spirit Academy's events are family-friendly. Opportunities to engage in further education are made available to the entire community throughout the year both through various publications and in special events such as the faculty lecture series.

Venerable Fulton J. Sheen: Patron of Holy Spirit Academy – Archbishop Fulton J. Sheen exemplified a life that is studious, prayerful, and devoted to preaching the Truth to the modern world. His humble Midwestern beginnings encourage students to be confident that sainthood can be achieved by anyone. Bishop Sheen's dedication to a relationship with the Lord and commitment to authentic, classical, Christ-centered education exemplify the mission of Holy Spirit Academy. At Holy Spirit Academy we attempt to embody the words of Archbishop Sheen regarding the task of education: "The Christ-mind, looking at the field of education, insists not only on training for the intellect but also demands training of the will. It adds to the purely worldly end of educating (training for citizenship and service) the Divine goal (training for Christ's sake and for the salvation of souls)."

Parents and Teachers: A shared Responsibility: The role of parents in education is of such importance that it is almost impossible to provide an adequate substitute. The right and duty of parents to educate their children are primordial and inalienable. —Catechism of the Catholic Church, no. 2221 In conformity with the teaching of the Church, Holy Spirit Academy exists to assist parents as the primary educators of their children. The posture of the Administration and Faculty is to see itself as an extension of the parents, acting in loco parentis ("in the place of the parent"). As parents want the very best for their children, it is Holy Spirit Academy's conviction that the very best faculty is required to execute the solemn duty of educating our pupils as their parents would wish. While having no pretense to perfection, the words of Pope Pius XI are relevant here: Perfect schools are the result not so much of good methods as of good teachers, teachers who are thoroughly prepared and well-grounded in the matter they have to teach; who possess the intellectual and moral qualifications required by their important office; who cherish a pure and holy love for the youths confided to them, because they love Jesus Christ and His Church, of which these are the children of predilection; and who have therefore sincerely at heart the true good of family and country.

Non-discrimination Policy: Holy Spirit Academy has adopted the following racially nondiscriminatory policy: Holy Spirit Academy admits student of any race, color, national and ethnic origin to all the rights,

privileges, programs, and activities generally accorded or made available to students at the school. It does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, nationality, or ethnic origin in administration of its educational policies, admissions policies, scholarships and loan programs, athletic programs, and other school-administered programs. A student need not be Catholic to attend Holy Spirit Academy, however, all students are required to participate in the established curriculum and programs offered during the school day. This policy does not prohibit giving Catholic students priority for admission. Holy Spirit Academy has the right and duty to conduct its programs and activities in a manner that is consistent with its adherence to the Roman Catholic Church. Accordingly, nothing in our handbook precludes the ability of the school to act in conformity with its Catholic beliefs and identity, including undertaking appropriate actions with respect to students who advocate on school property or at school functions any practices or doctrines which are inconsistent with the religious tenets of the Catholic faith. Please contact Headmaster Lang with your thoughts and questions at alang@holyspiritacademy.org