



*Three Hierarchs Academy is an Orthodox Christian Classical school in Florence, Arizona serving Kindergarten-12th Grade. We exist to partner with parents in order to provide an education that equips students to know, love, and commune with the Truth Incarnate, embracing in word and deed what is true, virtuous, and beautiful.*

**ORTHODOX CHRISTIAN AND CLASSICAL EDUCATION:**

**THE TWO ARE INEXTRICABLY LINKED.**

**AT ITS CORE, CLASSICAL ORTHODOX CHRISTIAN EDUCATION ACCOMPLISHES THREE THINGS:**

1. It cultivates wisdom and virtue by bringing students into *communion* with Truth, Beauty and Wisdom Incarnate, Who is Christ.
2. It walks students through the Τριῦς or Trivium, the process of *learning how to learn*, equipping them to critically discern and creatively express themselves.
3. It imparts knowledge as an integrated whole, revealing great depths of meaning to the heart through exceptionally inspired discourse.

**WHAT MAKES THREE HIERARCHS UNIQUE**

- We are the only *Orthodox* Christian Classical School in Arizona
- In everything Christ is our Α & Ω, His Body our *all in all*
- We form the *whole* child according to The Image & Likeness of God
- Our Great Books program is broader, deeper and more rigorous
- We offer Greek language instruction (both modern and Koine) which develops into a Greek immersion program by high school
- We are a family-like community, with a 6:1 student-teacher ratio
- We exist to serve the parents in their God-giving responsibility of raising their children “in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.”

## THE ACADEMIC CORE OF A CLASSICAL EDUCATION: THE “ΤΡΙΤΥΣ” or “TRIVIUM”

### GRAMMAR (γρᾶμματικός)

The Grammar stage answers the question of the *who, what, where and when* of a subject. It is the art of using and combining symbols to express thought. Students learn the mechanics of language and fundamentals of each subject.

### DIALECTIC or LOGIC (διᾶλεκτικός)

Dialectic is the art of thinking and of formal and material reasoning. It answers the *why* of a subject. Students learn the mechanics of thought and analysis, becoming able to identify fallacious statements and contradictions.

### RHETORIC (ρήτορικός)

Rhetoric is the art of expression and the application of language in order to instruct and persuade. Students develop thoughtful, mature ideas based on their knowledge and learn to express them in compelling and beautiful ways.

## THE SPIRITUAL CORE OF A CLASSICAL EDUCATION: THE SPIRITUAL “ΤΡΙΤΥΣ” OF PURIFICATION, ILLUMINATION & THEOSIS

Together with the three-fold academic program of the Trivium, there is an essential three-fold program of spiritual formation, without which the Trivium is rendered vanity. The three stages of the spiritual life - purification, illumination and theosis - is the Τριτύς of the nous' therapy and restoration. If the academic Trivium is meant to bring the rational intellect to a knowledge of creation, the spiritual Trivium is essential for the nous of spirit of man to come to an experiential knowledge of God.

### PURIFICATION (κάθαρσις)

The “grammar” or fundamental stage of purification lays the foundation for all spiritual knowledge and is a pre-requisite for illumination. Purification is the προπαίδεια of the spiritual life, a *sin quo non* of communion with God. It is a purging of all that would obstruct the coming of the Spirit of Truth, accomplished by repentance, prayer, fasting, obedience, communion

of the Holy Mysteries, all under the guidance of an experienced spiritual guide.

#### ILLUMINATION (φωτισμός)

The next stage of illumination comes to those who have cleansed the “manger” of their soul’s habitation. It brings with it discernment of spirits.

#### THEOSIS (θέωση)

The next stage is that of theosis and it is a gift of God to those who have been purified from sin of soul and body and illumined by the Spirit of God. Its state is akin to that received by the Apostles on Pentecost. This gift of God is the end of the Incarnation, making man a “god by grace,” restoring in him the “likeness” of God.

When the ultimate goal of salvation in Christ is purposefully sought in the spiritual τριτύς of purification, illumination and theosis then the academic Τριτύς comes as a firm support and itself finds its fulfillment.

### MORE ABOUT AN ORTHODOX CLASSICAL EDUCATION

Orthodox Christian Classical Education is both a new development and an ancient tradition. Many of the most enlightened people since the Incarnation of Christ coupled their life in Christ with a classical education: Saints Basil the Great, Gregory the Theologian and John Chrysostom, Photios the Great, Maximos the Confessor and Gregory Palamas — just to name a few.

Today’s Orthodox Christian Classical Education, rooted in the *enkuklios paideia* of Hellenistic Greece, know as the *Liberating Arts* in the Roman Empire, is distinguished for richness of content—grammar, logic, rhetoric, Greek, Latin, history, science—and spiritual and intellectual breadth and depth. This time-tested methodology is grounded in the Orthodox Faith and Church, the continuation of the Incarnation and Body of Him *that filleth all in all*.

The three-fold process of learning known as the “Τριτύς” or Trivium is the way in which the human mind orders itself for effective thinking. In the **grammar phase** (roughly K-4), students learn the fundamentals of each subject. We know that children at this age enjoy memorization, so in these early years of their education, they learn facts: poetry; Greek and Latin

vocabulary; the stories of Holy Scripture and sacred history; math facts; descriptions and functions of the human body, plants, and animals; the rules of English grammar. In short, students in these ages are eager to absorb the grammar—or foundational knowledge—for the next stage of their education.

The second stage is **dialectic or logic** (roughly 5-8). As students become more analytical in their thinking—exploring cause and effect, relationships among disparate topics, and the ways facts relate in a logical framework—instruction in the art of thinking, or logic, expands. For example, in writing, students learn to support a thesis; in reading, they learn to analyze texts for truth and fallacy; in science, they learn to use the scientific method.

The last stage of a classical education, during the high school years (9-12), is **rhetoric**, which builds on the first two stages. Students learn to apply the rules of logic to the knowledge they've built during their classical education and express their ideas in clear, expressive, persuasive language.

## THE AIM OF A LIBERATING EDUCATION

Learning in a classical educational setting gives context and structure to knowledge. The student, having passed through the three stages of a Liberal Education, is able to discern the interconnectedness of all knowledge. Moreover, he is now in a position to teach himself how to learn any established subject he will encounter in life. He is able to fully grasp any topic upon which he decides to focus, such as scientific hypotheses, philosophical or religious claims, and historical and literary analyses. Through the process of *learning how to learn*, he learns how to critically and creatively think for himself.

Within the Orthodox fullness and freedom of Christ, a critical and creative thinker is in a position to decipher the *zeitgeist* and throw off the shackles of his age, to embark in earnest on the path of the Faith of the Church, to assimilate the Truth with his whole mind, heart and soul.

## A WORD ABOUT OUR PATRONS: THE THREE HIERARCHS

We are especially blessed to have as intercessors before the throne of God the Great Enlighteners of the Universe, the Great Hierarchs and Ecumenical Teachers, Basil the Great, Gregory the Theologian and John

Chrysostom. The Three Great Hierarchs present to us examples for imitation. They were shepherds of their rational flocks and the entire Church at a time of great change, straddling, as it were, the outgoing Pagan world and the rising Christian empire. Their task was to speak of heavenly truths to earth-bound wise-men in terms and a language which they understood. Their employment (and transformation) of philosophical terms and ideas was not an end itself but a means by which to bring men to "*the full knowledge of the truth* (2 Tim. 3:7).

The Great Hierarchs' primary task, then, as shepherds and catechists was not simply to teach, much less to inform, but rather to initiate a proud and rationalist pagan world into the Mystery of the Gospel. This is the heart of the work of the catechist: to initiate his disciple into the event of Pentecost. In fact, the Greek word for catechism, **κατήχησις**, is formed from the event of Pentecost, when a sound (**ἦχος**) came down (**κάτω**) from heaven.

The aim of the Great Hierarchs' pastoral work was not mainly one of moral improvement or philosophical enlightenment but of communion with the Holy Trinity, which presupposes repentance, purification and initiation. To paraphrase the Apostle of Love, "that which they had seen and heard from the beginning," that of which they had **ἐπίγνωσις**, or first-hand, experiential knowledge, that they declared unto the 4th century pagan world, "that they may also have communion" with them and the Holy Trinity.

The Holy Fathers did not believe that salvation was simply a matter of obtaining **γνώσις** (knowledge), but, rather, **ἐπίγνωσις**, experiential knowledge of God Himself, of His uncreated energies, which meant first of all entry into the Church and initiation into the life in Christ. This initiation was a process of purification and illumination, of divesting oneself of the passions and heretical ideas of the rationalists and investing oneself with the mind of Christ and Orthodox *phronema* or mindset; of putting off the old man and putting on Christ.

Enlightenment for the Three Hierarchs did not mean the acquiring of knowledge ABOUT God, ABOUT the truth in terms of ideas - although this is often helpful and an important preparatory step - but rather all learning was meant to lead to *personal, experiential knowledge* of **the Truth Incarnate**.