

Auburn Classical Academy (ACA) Grandparents Day - April 2019

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Address by Mrs. Paula Deist, Board of Governors Chair

Cathedrals have been top of mind for me lately, especially with news of the devastating fire at Notre Dame de Paris; it has been decades since I visited there. The day after the fire, I was fortunate enough to have been on a trip to Europe and was able to visit a great 14th century Gothic beauty, St. Vitus Cathedral in Prague. I had forgotten the sheer magnitude of fine detail and craftsmanship in every inch of the Gothic European cathedrals, both inside and out. Then just a few days ago, a fellow ACA parent shared with me a post on social media. The post was written by a simple mother and housewife who was more acquainted with cleaning up spilled milk, running errands, checking homework and various other trials and tribulations that come along with motherhood. She'd been out to dinner with a group of friends. Together they were celebrating the return of one of them from travels abroad. To the housewife and mom, the rest of the group seemed polished and poised in a way that she remembered living earlier in her life. In short, she was feeling sorry for herself and dubbed herself an "invisible mother", until her friend presented her with a gift.

Her post continued as follows:

*"It was a book on the great cathedrals of Europe. I wasn't exactly sure why she'd given it to me until I read her inscription: '**With admiration for the greatness of what you are building when no one sees.**'"*

In the days ahead I would read - no, devour - the book. And I would discover what would become for me, four life-changing truths, after which I could pattern my work:

- 1) No one can say who built the great cathedrals - we have no record of their names.*
- 2) These builders gave their whole lives for a work they would never see finished.*
- 3) They made great sacrifices and expected no credit.*
- 4) The passion of their building was fueled by their faith that the eyes of God saw everything.*

A story of legend in the book told of a rich man who came to visit the cathedral while it was being built, and he saw a workman carving a tiny bird on the inside of a beam. He was puzzled and asked the man, 'Why are you spending so much time carving that bird into a beam that will be covered by the roof. No one will ever see it'

And the workman replied, 'Because God sees.'

I closed the book, almost as if I heard God whispering to me, 'I see you. I see the sacrifices you make every day, even when no one around you does.'

No act of kindness you've done, no sequin you've sewn on, no cupcake you've baked, no Cub Scout meeting, no last minute errand is too small for me to notice and smile over. You are building a great cathedral, but you can't see right now what it will become.'

I keep the right perspective when I see myself as a great builder. As one of the people who show up at a job that they will never see finished, to work on something that their name will never be on. The writer of the book went so far as to say that no cathedrals could ever be built in our lifetime because there are so few people willing to sacrifice to that degree."

She concluded her post with the following:

"As mothers, we are building great cathedrals. We cannot be seen if we're doing it right. And one day, it is very possible that the world will marvel not only at what we have built, but at the beauty that has been added to the world by the sacrifices of invisible mothers."

As I reflected on this post I thought that it was a touching analogy, *however it is incomplete* - For no one person could build a cathedral. It led me to think about its glaring omission of fathers that are also an integral part of the upbringing of our children. Were it not for my terrific husband and his hard work and support, I would not have the privilege to stand here before you today. Reflecting further, it also falls short in acknowledging our own parents, grandparents and all the great grandparents of generations past. None of us would have the life we have today, were it not for the sacrifices of the generations before us. So I ask you all today to be mindful of this, and take a few moments this week to appreciate and give thanks to your families for leading you to where you are, even though things most certainly have not been perfect along the way on this bumpy road of life.

I'd like to shift your attention a bit, as I have my own book on Cathedral construction, by David Macaulay (if you are not familiar with it, I highly recommend you read it with your children). I'd like to take this same analogy in another direction, applying it to this little school which partners with us, and supports us in building our own budding "cathedrals".

Just inside the cover of my book is the following excerpt:

*The Gothic Cathedral IS one of man's most magnificent expressions as well as one of his grandest architectural achievements. Built to the glory of God, each cathedral was created by the ingenuity, skill and hard work of **GENERATIONS** of dedicated people.*

Auburn Classical Academy is finishing its 11th year this semester and it is still very much in its infancy. When applying the metaphor of a cathedral to the school, our version is only partially complete. However, one could liken ACA as it stands today with several of the elements and resources required to construct a cathedral:

- First, the Cornerstone - I'd like to acknowledge the founders and early supporters of our school: Angie Copetillo, Hilary Tucker, the Aldridge Family, the Davidson Family, the Roarke Family and Dr. Tippett for having the perseverance and fortitude to lay the "cornerstones" of Auburn Classical Academy.
- Master Craftsmen and their Apprentices – Each master craftsman such as the quarryman, stone cutter, sculptor, mortar maker, mason, carpenter, blacksmith, roofer, or glassmaker ran a workshop that required specific tools for his own particular trade, much like our teachers and students do, in pursuit of mastery of a particular subject, or completion of their grade each year.

- Walls and Flying Buttresses offer exterior support and in turn support one another. These might represent the support our school provides to families, or conversely, the wide variety of familial support given to ACA.
- Piers and Columns offer internal support for the vault, roof, and space in between them for windows, just as the five “ACA pillars” support our school’s character and code of conduct:
 - *Have reverence for God and obey His commandments. (Ecclesiastes 12:13)*
 - *Honor others above yourself. (Romans 12:10)*
 - *Do your work as unto the Lord. (Colossians 3:23-24)*
 - *Do everything without complaining or grumbling. (Philippians 2:14-15)*
 - *Encourage one another and build each other up. (1 Thessalonians 5:11)*
- Several Chapels also exist within cathedrals, each with its own special purpose for a dedicated use akin to the different classrooms in our school, which bring about new awareness and learning in an Auburn Classical Academy education.

In a cathedral, all of these elements are built on a solid foundation, by master craftsmen to eventually house the beautiful stained glass windows, and support the glorious vaulted ceilings high above, which in turn raise our sights and orient our hearts and minds toward the heavens. They motivate us to glorify God through our words and deeds and deepen our knowledge of His presence in our lives, not because anyone around us will see, *but because HE sees*, reminiscent of the workman chipping away at the tiny bird in a wooden beam no person could possibly see from afar.

Similarly, ACA aims to educate to a higher standard so that the whole person may grow in knowledge, wisdom, and virtue, centered on the love of Christ and His Holy Church. We seek to provide young men and women a distinctively Christ-centered and classical education whereby students learn to know, love and practice what is true, worthy and excellent. As Christ is the Truth (“Veritas” in Latin), all education rightly leads to knowledge of Him. God, the Creator of heaven and earth, cannot be separated from history, literature, mathematics, science, or any other academic discipline. Rather, every subject is taught as part of an integrated whole, as seen through the prism of Christ.

All of us at ACA are a part of something that has the potential to be so much greater than what it is today. Our second generation of leaders currently at the reigns, continues to lay the foundation for this school with the mindset that it could someday, in its own way, be as great as a cathedral. This year the Board of Governors introduced a 5-year strategic plan to help guide us to our next level of growth. We have many dedicated craftsmen at ACA, but that alone cannot complete a cathedral. It will also require external financial resources, so that we may someday set our sights on land and new buildings of our own. Will any of us here ever see the completion of the ACA development project? Probably not. But we know we cannot achieve greatness without your investment. So as you spend this morning with us, enjoying the fruits of our students’ labor, I humbly ask - will you begin to consider how *you* might graciously [help support our future growth with your charitable donation](#), not just for the here and now, but for the many decades and generations to come?

Thank you.