

---

# WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF EDUCATION?

*Dr. Patrick J. DiVietri, Ph.D.*

The goal of education in intimacy is happiness. Faith and reason tell us that intimate union with God is perfect happiness. It is intimacy to the point that we are lost in God and find ourselves only in His being. St. Paul states, "It is not I but Christ who lives in me." Institutions cannot teach this kind of intimacy. Though they can discuss it academically they cannot enter into the personal intimacy of an individual person. Parents educate in love while institutions teach intellectual knowledge. When teachers go home, parents remain with the child to love her. They are there at 3:00 AM when the child is sick or at 7:00 PM when the child does not want to do her chores.

If love is everything then intimacy is also everything for one cannot exist without the other. A person can share a certain amount of his intimacy with a stranger but this sharing should be guarded by the boundaries of propriety and modesty. Saying, "hello" to a stranger one passes on the street exposes a degree of intimacy in manner different from the manner in which one reveals himself when greeting a family member. There are no hugs or questions about the activities of the day.

Clearly there are degrees to intimacy. It is the boundaries that safeguard each successive degree that are unclear. One goes from greeting a stranger to greeting an acquaintance, a friend, a relative, a family member, a spouse and God, Himself. Each relationship is more intimate than the previous one and as the intimacy increases the guardianship must increase, also, to protect it. These boundaries are learned within the normal flow of family life. Parents guard the innocence of their children by keeping things from them and teaching them modesty. In turn they help their children to guard their own intimacy by recognizing what is appropriate to share and what is not in the various relationships they develop as they mature.

## PREPARING FOR HAPPINESS

The goal of education is happiness and therefore the purpose of education is to prepare one for happiness through the acquisition and/or development of qualities and knowledge which bring freedom. It must help the person understand what constitutes happiness (both conditional and permanent), what brings happiness, the difference between pleasure and happiness and the role of suffering in education for happiness. It is the freedom to acquire or be united with the good. Happiness is therefore a seeking of the good and if one ceases to seek happiness a great destruction takes place.

One must therefore come to understand what is good and what is true. There is there for knowledge of truth, which will set one free so that education is to present the truth to the person. The intellect that perceives the truth must be followed by the will which is also free to choose it and bring the whole person into union. Therefore the practice of moral virtues enables the person to develop the capacity for human freedom to do what is good especially since that good is arduous. This also disposes and necessitates the acquisition of theological virtues of faith, hope and charity which the ultimate union with happiness require. *(The Greeks rightly concluded that perfect happiness was not possible in this life but only in the next. They also concluded that this happiness was a union with God as this contemplation is the highest happiness. Thus, for all the purpose of education would be happiness. For the believer, this would be understood to be union with God.)* There would also be the knowledge of the cultural heritage which would include in our definition such things as the sciences, mathematics, language and grammar etc...

## IN SUMMARY

The purpose of education is to enable one to be free to love to good and to know the truth. In practical terms this freedom enables one to fall and land on their feet.