Dr. Topping’s Popular Talks –
For Parishes, Homeschoolers, and Learned Societies

Titles and Descriptions:

On Revitalizing Catholic Education

1. Building Blocks for a Catholic Philosophy of Education
A talk especially designed for Homeschooling parents and other educators. What principles define a Catholic education? What are the right questions to ask as we go about refining our curricula, our pedagogy, and our aims? Dr. Topping draws upon both philosophers and magisterial teaching to help you think clearly about teaching and learning.

2. What is so Great about the Liberal Arts?
A talk especially for college-bound students and their parents. Drop-out rates among college students is endemic. And no wonder: hyper-specialized, fragmented, and godless, modern universities have long abandoned their traditional vocation of training students for a life of noble freedom. In this talk, Dr. Topping explains the classical vision for the liberal arts, and why you ought to settle for nothing less.

3. How to Write Great College Essays
A writing workshop especially for parents and teens. Drawing upon his experience as a teacher and a writer, Dr. Topping offers practical tips on preparing to write college-level essays.

4. The Elements of Rhetoric
A public-speaking workshop especially for parents and teens. What are the elements of a great presentation? How do you prepare to deliver a speech? Drawing upon classical and modern rhetoricians, as well as his own experience, Dr. Topping walks through the basics of crafting and delivering rhetorical presentations.

On Renewal in the Family

5. The Long War Against the Family
The modern attack against the family began long before the 1960s. Already in the 19th century Marxists called the family the “original cell of slavery.” Discover the three waves of attack against the family, and learn how to combat them.

Far from helping women and children, the movement toward sexual liberation has reduced our happiness, and threatens to undo the fabric of our society. Drawing upon both Catholic philosophy and extensive social-scientific research, Dr. Topping shows why the family remains the foundational building block to personal happiness and collective harmony.

7. John Paul II on the Mission of the Family
In the face of grave challenges to the family, how should Christians respond? What Pope Leo XIII did for workers in the 19th century, Blessed John Paul II did for family life in the 20th and 21st centuries. In this talk, Dr. Topping uncovers the four-fold blueprint for the mission of the family in the modern world.

On Catholic Culture and Apologetics

8. Rebuilding Catholic Culture
Drawing upon his popular book Rebuilding Catholic Culture, Dr. Topping is available to offer single lectures or workshops on the renewal of Catholic belief, liturgy, ethics, and marriage.

9. The Joy of Faith in an Age of Unbelief
How is faith rational? What distinguishes faith from dogmatism, and critical from corrupted thinking? With reference to the Catechism, the Council, and modern philosophers, in this popular lecture Professor Topping shows how faith serves as an extension of natural reason, and shows how skepticism, far from perfecting the intellect, is a sign of its failure.

10. Four Steps Toward Rebuilding Catholic Culture
Dr. Topping offers a sweeping narrative of the rejection of the West’s near rejection of its Christian roots since the French revolution, and proposes a practical program for cultural renewal in the service of the New Evangelization.
11. Apologetics 101: What Christians Should Know
Can we prove God’s existence? Are values relative? Is objective truth knowable? C.S. Lewis once quipped that believers need to learn philosophy if only to counter bad philosophy. In non-technical language, Dr. Topping introduces foundational concepts in Aristotle, St. Thomas, and C.S. Lewis that can help you explain your faith.

12. G.K. Chesterton as Theologian
One of the 20th century’s wittiest apologists – whose works include fiction, biography, poetry, and journalism – Dr. Topping offers a lively portrait of G.K. Chesterton’s life and contribution to Catholic culture.

13. Dante’s Divine Comedy and Four Lessons for the Moral Life
In this tour of the greatest of all Christian poems, Dr. Topping draws out four practical lessons on the nature of the moral life.

14. St. Augustine’s Confessions and the Liberal Arts Tradition
The battle for the mind begins with education. In this lecture, Dr. Topping contrasts – through the lens of the Confessions - the classical tradition of liberal arts education with contemporary views of the value of learning, as derived from Marx, Nietzsche, and other leading post-modern thinkers.

Speaker Biography:

Dr. Topping is Fellow at Thomas More College of Liberal Arts in New Hampshire. A native of Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, he earned an MA in Philosophy from the University of Manitoba as well as an M.Phil. and a Doctorate in Theology from the University of Oxford. He held the Pope John XXIII Chair of Studies in Catholic Theology at St. Thomas University in Canada, and has taught at the University of Oxford, St. Thomas More College (Saskatchewan), and at Walsh University (Ohio).

Dr. Topping has published on a variety of Catholic themes and figures, from St. Augustine, to Dante, to G.K. Chesterton in academic and popular journals such as Studia Patristica, International Philosophical Quarterly, The Chesterton Review, Homiletic and Pastoral Review, Catholic Insight, First Things, and Crisis Magazine. To date he has published four books, Two Concepts of the Soul in Plato’s Phaedo (University of America Press, 2007), St. Augustine (Continuum Press, 2010), Happiness and Wisdom: Augustine’s Early Theology of Education (Catholic University of America Press, 2012). Most recently he published Rebuilding Catholic Culture: How the Catechism Can Shape our Common Life (Sophia Institute Press). He has spoken widely on Catholic radio networks including EWTN and AVE MARIA Radio. Professor Topping and his wife have six young boys. Besides home-schooling their children, he and his wife have been teaching Natural Family Planning for a decade. They live in Nashua, New Hampshire.

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