



In addition to Truth and Goodness, Beauty is one of the three fundamental attributes of God. One definition of Beauty is "a combination of qualities that pleases the intellect or moral sense." We can ponder the beauty of a mountain, a sunrise, a baby's smile, a classic novel, a Michelangelo painting and observe there some combination of perfection of form,

balance, color, purpose and truth. Someone or something is beautiful, not only because of physical perfection, but more profoundly when a person or thing reflects the fingerprints of God's purpose and design. In that context, the most beautiful reality in the history of the whole world is the resurrection of Christ from the dead, for in that event, God shows his love and mercy to the entire human race in the offer of salvation and forgiveness.

The human heart and eye are naturally drawn to beauty. We are instinctively attracted to experiences of reality which satisfy our intellect, emotions, desire, and will. We know that God has placed this homing device within us, luring us through the beauty of what he has created, in order to draw us into the ultimate Beauty which is God himself who offers us an eternal, saving relationship with him. True beauty then is not simply an external physicality, but is deeply linked to Truth and Goodness. Mother Teresa was profoundly beautiful, but it was the radiance of Christ within her that illuminated her face and life with the glory of God. Ponder the beautiful in your life and see how it ultimately draws us to praise, glorify, thank and love God.

A NOTE FROM BISHOP HYING

BEAUTY

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**...TO ME ART AND
THE SAINTS ARE THE
GREATEST APOLOGETIC
FOR OUR FAITH.
- POPE BENEDICT XVI**

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YEARLY FORMATION NEWSLETTER TOPICS

EASTER 2020

The Paschal Mystery

JUNE 2020

Evangelization

JULY 2020

Discipleship

AUGUST 2020

Baptism and Confirmation

SEPTEMBER 2020

Reclaiming Sunday

OCTOBER 2020

Interior Life: Prayer

NOVEMBER 2020

Interior Life: Mortification

DECEMBER 2020

Confession

JANUARY 2021

Goodness

FEBRUARY 2021

Beauty

MARCH 2021

Truth

APRIL 2021

New Methods

DEFINING OUR TERMS

BEAUTY

St. Thomas Aquinas defines beauty as "that which, when seen, pleases." That may sound pretty abstract, but it makes sense. We call sunsets, oceans, stars, paintings, people, etc., "beautiful" when we experience a sense of pleasure just from looking at them with a sense wonder and appreciation. It's much the same with music. When we hear something that really moves us, raises our spirits, or fills us with a sense of delight or peace, we tend to describe it as "beautiful."

Now there is certainly some truth in the old saying that "beauty is in the eye of the beholder," but we shouldn't fall into the trap of thinking that beauty is totally subjective. There is room for legitimate diversity of tastes, but there's also the objective fact that Michelangelo's paintings are more beautiful than my scribbles; or that Allegri's *Miserere* is vastly more beautiful than my tone-deaf singing.

Beauty is a qualitative not a quantitative aspect of things; that means "how beautiful something is" can't be weighed in a scale or measured in inches. But it's still something real, just as the moral goodness of a person's character is something real. According to St. Thomas, beauty consists in "integrity, proportion, and clarity." What does that mean? It means in beautiful things of all kinds there is a certain wholeness (integrity), balance or harmony (proportion), and a radiance or splendor (clarity). The smiling face of a child is a great illustration of all three.

SUGGESTIONS ON HOW TO MAKE SPACE FOR BEAUTY

- With your family and friends, spend less time picking up your phone or in front of screens so you can appreciate the beauty of those around you.
- Spend time in nature disconnected from devices.
- Create a space for prayer in your home with beautiful, sacred images.
- Make a pilgrimage to local shrines or beautiful churches.
- Look for the most beautiful thing in your church and spend some time praying there.
- Challenge yourself to sit still and listen (without doing anything else) to a piece of sacred music (Gregorian Chant, Palestrina, Handel, Mozart, Sunday Service Choir - Emmanuel, etc.).

THE WAY OF BEAUTY

MARIE LINS

The way of beauty is a path leading to God. In the words of Pope Paul VI: “This world in which we live needs beauty in order not to sink into despair. It is beauty, like truth, which brings joy to the heart of man and is that precious fruit which resists the wear and tear of time, which unites generations and makes them share things in admiration.”[1]

I experienced the truth of these words in the past year as I made a daily pilgrimage up St. Anne’s Hill in Plain to the chapel built by parishioners in the 1920s. During the chaos and discord of the year, each morning I experienced the beauty of God’s creation—each day a new sunrise, the magnificence of morning dew on a spider web, frost on a fence post in the morning fog, the created artwork of the chapel—carefully designed and built with local stones, statues of saints, magnificent stained glass windows that have stood the test of time, and finally the beauty of faith—time of prayer and union with God in the stillness. I thought of those who built the chapel, who had survived a devastating tornado in May 1918 (which destroyed their parish church) and the Spanish Flu, but out of those trials they created a place of beauty to celebrate their faith and draw others to God.

We are created in the image and likeness of God who is Beauty and our hearts ache for union with him. As Pope Benedict XVI said: “Authentic beauty unlocks the yearning of the human heart, the profound desire to know, to love, to go towards the Other, to reach for the Beyond. If we acknowledge that beauty touches us intimately, that it wounds us, that it opens our eyes, then we rediscover the joy of seeing, of being able to grasp the profound meaning of our existence, the Mystery of which we are part; from this Mystery we can draw fullness, happiness, the passion to engage with it every day.”[2]

As we consider the mission of evangelization, let us recall the words of Pope Francis, who has encouraged us “to attend to the ‘way of beauty’ (*via pulchritudinis*). Proclaiming Christ means showing that to believe in and to follow him is not only something right and true, but also something beautiful, capable of filling life with new splendor and profound joy, even in the midst of difficulties.”[3]

As we reach out to others, do we seek to draw them to the ultimate beauty and happiness of God that their hearts are yearning for?

1 Pope Paul VI, Address to Artists (Dec. 8, 1965).

2 Pope Benedict XVI, Address to Artists (Nov. 21, 2009).

3 Pope Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium*, The Joy of the Gospel, 167

FURTHER STUDY RECOMMENDATIONS

TO VIEW

- [Hubble Space Telescope Images](#)

TO READ

- Pope John Paul II, [Letter to Artists](#)
- Fr. Thomas Dubay, [The Evidential Power of Beauty](#)

TO WATCH

- [14 Most Beautiful Churches in the World](#) (YouTube)
- Bishop Barron, [Catholicism and Beauty](#) (YouTube)

TO LISTEN

- Allegri, [Miserere](#)
- Abiding Together Podcast, [Seized by Beauty](#)

THOUGHTS FOR PARISH LEADERSHIP

Take some time to share about your experiences making more room for beauty in your lives. Did any of the suggestions on page 2 resonate with you? Have you tried any?

As we move through these newsletters on the transcendentals (goodness, beauty, and truth), take note of ideas you have around using them to draw others into a relationship with Jesus Christ and his Church.

In team meetings, make time for checking in and staying accountable to the holy habits included in GMD. Be honest with one another; ask for help and accountability when needed.

Don't forget about the great resources offered on [Revive Parishes](#). We'd recommend many of them, but if you haven't yet, check out the one on Leadership Teams with Pat Lencioni.

FORMATION IN THE PARISH

QUESTIONS FOR PERSONAL REFLECTION

- How has God drawn you closer to him through encounters with beauty? Have you shared about them with others?
- How are you doing with the spiritual habits we are focusing on in Go Make Disciples: 15 minutes of daily prayer, reclaiming Sunday as the Lord's Day, mortification, and regular Confession? What is going well? Which one will you commit to making progress in next?

REFLECTION QUESTIONS FOR LEADERSHIP MEETINGS

- How can we attend to the way of beauty as a way to encounter the Lord in Go Make Disciples?
- What are the most beautiful aspects of your Church? What can you do to highlight those aspects as a way to deepen faith or draw others in?
- What could we do as a team together to commit to making room for more beauty in our lives?



THE PENITENT MAGDALEN, 1640

GEORGES DE LA TOUR

The “Penitent Magdalen” is a painting which exemplifies the moment of supernatural faith entering the soul. The viewer first notices the evocative and silent dark atmosphere and solitude of the room, except for a candle reflected in the mirror. A seated Magdalen is gazing away from the viewer who represents the world. She gazes into a mirror, the symbol of her previous vanity, which becomes a source of her contemplation. Her pearls have been set aside on the table as she renounces the pleasures of the world. The skull resting on her lap is a symbol of death, but it is no longer the foe; rather, it is a reminder of her mortality as her hands are serenely folded, in prayer, on the skull.

Her long hair, a symbol of her history of sin, is brushed over the side of her head, neck, and shoulder, as if cast away from the light of Christ in the candle. The viewer cannot see her face as she gazes into the flame of Christ, nor see her reflection in the mirror. We only see the profile of her face; her attentive gaze on the candle amidst her reflected self. Her profile captures the moment of conversion to Christ as she turns from the world.

The mirror of vanity becomes the mirror of grace, and we no longer see the sinful Magdalen, but only the light of Christ reflected in her soul. The candle’s flame has the whispering simplicity of God. The candle casts a glow on Magdalen’s face in newness of life; a gentleness that slays and perfects. There is now an innocent beauty to Magdalen, a spiritual purity in the soft complexion of her skin in the light of the candle that leaves her hair in the dark, thus gesturing forgiveness of her sins. She has consented; it is beautiful; she is his.

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