

# Encouragement Encouragement

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*Beauty and Creativity*

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We live in a culture that values innovation. We pay attention to the latest mechanical/electronic devices, anything indeed that makes things quicker, easier and increases productivity/output and takes away from our talents some of the innate and beautiful creativity that is part of who we are as children of God made in His image. He is the Creator, the ultimate Creator, whose dreams for us would lead us to be creative and continue His giftedness to us. There is nothing in the universe that does not bear His hallmark and is a thing of beauty and wonder – starting with mankind. The sheer beauty of every human life, however broken or imperfect in human terms, is still a work of art, still perfect, almost through its imperfections. We are all different, and this shows the infinite capacity of God to constantly enlarge His embrace and to challenge us to do the same.

Too often we have a very narrow definition of beauty or art. Long discussions are held about the definition of both and often hotly debated. The truth is that it is generally in the eyes of the beholder and how true this is of God Himself. Seeing the first sight of one's infant – nobody could tell the parents that theirs is not the most beautiful baby in the world. Love transforms the vision. True also of encounter and relationship. This however is also true of things made and nature itself. Who could ever doubt the sheer exhilaration and awe of a sunset, of a view over cornfields, lakes and the sheer diversity of nature, from the smallest insect to the greatest beast? My granddaughter recently said, with absolute candour, "Did you know Nana that no two tiger's stripes are ever the same?" We are born to create. Sadly, using our gifts such as painting, music, sculpture, poetry, photography, is all too often downgraded as 'a nice hobby', rather than the exploration of the God within, bursting to reveal Himself.

Nor can we deny the creative genius of somethings that are made for the betterment of man – who can

deny the importance of some of the aids used in exploring both the universe, but also in medicine, scans, keyhole surgery, lasers, of magnifying instruments etc., but all still require the hands and mind of the user.

The eyes of a child see differently, and in one sense, purely. A child evaluates on the basis of what he/she can grasp. A simple painting may look very basic, even comical to an adult – but to the child's mind it is a perfect reproduction of what was intended. It matters not that the legs are sticks, or the nose is missing, or that there is no head but just a body. I cannot help but think that God sees in the same way- Perfect, to Him.

We are God's work of art. He made us in diversity and to reflect His omnipotence.

Whatever lives and moves has its origin in God's Providence. If we could see with God's eyes we would be amazed at the beauty of



all things. Everything has a purpose and all things can be a cause for prayer and thanksgiving.

All things have the capacity to move us and teach us something. Some people have been drawn to believe simply by the beauty of what was around them. God knew that as human beings we have to feel, touch, see, hear. Indeed Jesus often used imagery to tell His Truth. How many times in parables do we have Jesus 'picture making' – sparrows, lilies, fields, fish, boats, rich and poor... all to explain the Kingdom.

Frederick Buechner said "*Beauty is to the Spirit what food is to the flesh. It fills an emptiness in you which nothing else can fill*" Yes, but I would add ... and so being filled it draws us into the Divine.

Seeing and making brings out in us the desire to reproduce what God has instilled in us. We are people made for community and out of Love. The Father could not contain the love He had and so He



sent Jesus to us. The love between them was to be replicated, reproduced, in us.

But there are so many ugly things in the world, you might say. People are maimed, deformed, ageing, ravaged by disease, but in the eyes of the Creator they are still beautiful. Somehow the more we allow God's creative love to invade our hearts, minds and talents love transforms what we see and we see it as beautiful. A quote from Christine Valters Paintner, who became a convert to Faith stated 'beauty exists in the cracks of our lives'. Attending a retreat, she discovered, in contemplation, the beauty of the world around her in a new way, and was awakened to truth.

I recall seeing that same beauty in the face of someone ravaged by cancer and the same in the sheer surrender of my own husband in his final hours.

Love transforms our vision and creates beauty.

If we take the time to stop and ponder, to reflect, a whole world opens up to us, which we see with different eyes, or hear with different ears.

At the Transfiguration the Apostles were in awe and wonder as they saw Jesus revealing His Divinity to them. They were both awestruck and blessed and at peace, and they wanted to stay there with Him. It was only when they heard the voice of the Father that they became fearful. One writer, Gregory Palamas, says that through Grace they saw who Jesus was. They were transformed by the encounter...

"Not by the addition of something He was not, but by the manifestation to His disciples of what He really was – He opened their eyes so that instead of being blind they would see."

Does this not echo the words of 'Amazing Grace' and the conversion of John Newton who wrote 'I was blind but now I see'. This is also true of the conversion of St. Paul when the scales were removed from his eyes and he was Baptised in Ananias' house (Acts 9 1-22).

An Icon, image, is often painted after much prayer, and with prayer, so that the 'true image' of God, through the vehicle of the artist's hand is translated into a picture which has the hallmark of God's presence. Great iconographers have often spent months in fasting and prayer. The earth is God's garden which He fashioned with perfect love and is a place of beauty if we but open our eyes. Saint Augustine refers to God as 'Beauty' and regrets not

having loved Him sooner. As St. Teresa of Avila says, the soul is like a wondrous jewel. The nearer we get to the centre, the more clearly we see things. Each section of the diamond has separate parts. As we grow spiritually, we enter deep into the centre and see how beautifully made we are. When we contemplate, pray, we let God do the work of transforming us and we begin to see with God's eyes. What we do, make, create, bears the signature 'God Made', and He becomes glorified.

We should look at the giftedness of others as a gift to all of us. We should look all around us and praise the Father for His wonderful, beautiful work.

Halina Holman

*"Pilgrims go into the woods, but they carry with them the beauty which they visit... never lose an opportunity of seeing anything that is beautiful, for beauty is God's handwriting – a wayside sacrament. Welcome it in every fair face, in every fair sky, in every fair flower and thank God for it as a cup of blessing".*

Ralph Waldo Emerson



## St. John Paul II

**To all who are passionately dedicated to the search for new "epiphanies" of beauty so that through their creative work as artists they may offer these as gifts to the world.** 1999



## Pope Francis I

"I invite you, therefore to cherish beauty, and beauty will heal the many wounds that mark the hearts and souls of the men and women of our day. But it isn't just grand works of architecture or other art which can bring beauty into the world. Even simple actions, small sparks of beauty and love shown to the environment in which people live can bring healing and provide an alternative to indifference and cynicism." 2016

## Feasts in August

1<sup>st</sup> St. Alphonsus Liguori, 2<sup>nd</sup> St. Peter Julian Eymard,  
4<sup>th</sup> St. John Vianney,

### 6<sup>th</sup> Transfiguration,

9<sup>th</sup> St. Teresa Benedicta, 11<sup>th</sup> St. Claire,  
12<sup>th</sup> St. Jane Francis de Chantal, 14<sup>th</sup> St. Max. Kolbe,

### 15<sup>th</sup> The Assumption,

21<sup>st</sup> St. Pius X, 22<sup>nd</sup> Queenship of Mary,  
23<sup>rd</sup> St. Rose of Lima, 24<sup>th</sup> St. Bartholomew Apost.,

26<sup>th</sup> Bl. Dominic Barberi,

28<sup>th</sup> St. Augustine (and St. Monica),

30<sup>th</sup> English Lady Martyrs, Clitheroe, Line, Ward

31<sup>st</sup> St. Aidan