

From The Pastor

Where do you notice and appreciate beauty in your life? Beauty is certainly not an everyday topic, nor one often thought about in the fast paced routine of our daily lives. Yet, beauty is as necessary to the soul as daily prayer, heart felt gratitude, or the divine food we receive in the Eucharist at Mass.

Perhaps we relegate beauty to our vacations when we have the time to notice a beautiful sunset, see the wide expanse of a deserted beach, or the awe inspiring vista of a mountain range. This is one of the deepest, yet often unspoken values of a good vacation. In a time of rest and restorative leisure we tend to notice and attend to things that are beautiful. Most poignantly that beauty may be seen and felt in ourselves, or what we see in the goodness of creation.

Why is this valuable? More than extra sleep, quiet reading, visiting a favorite fishing hole or hiking trail (or whatever), a vacation can feed the soul in the beauty that we don't take time to notice in the routine of life. Beauty is of great value to the soul because it opens the soul to God. Beauty is a reflection of God, and when beauty is seen with the eye of the soul something restorative happens; something healing and holy.

The appreciation of beauty is simply the openness to be moved and inspired by things that stir the soul. The soul knows it is alive and being nourished when it is fed with beauty. Now don't get nervous if you are not the art gallery, or opera type. As the saying goes, 'beauty is in the eye of the beholder'. This is why things of beauty, soul, and God are all related. In early philosophy, beauty was the doorway to the divine in its mystery and ability to stir the soul. Why does the soul register certain things as beautiful?

Although beauty surrounds us daily it can be very hard to see. When the soul grows dim and inattentive we lose the ability to notice the beauty around us. And the fact is, there is a great deal around us that is ugly. Perhaps we have allowed ourselves to be satisfied with so much ugliness that the eyes of the heart have lost an appreciation for what is beautiful.

You can well imagine that we all have our own list of what is beautiful and what is ugly. Some things are universally beautiful, like a crimson red sunset highlighted across a lightly clouded sky. Conversely, some things are universally ugly like a once prosperous city turned to blight by poverty, abandoned houses, and littered streets. It has been suggested that this very ugliness is a great pain to urban dwellers who must endure endless ugliness. A soul not fed on beauty is more likely to be dulled into unawareness and apathy, or stirred to violence and aggression. The soul hungers for beauty; it needs and desires it because beauty is of God.

We settle for so little. Our times of rest often lead us to the same routine of television. Although good can be found on TV, you will undoubtedly agree that there is an ever increasing rudeness, grossness, and crudeness only for the sake of shock value. Are we restored or rested after such an evening of viewing? Hardly. It becomes the mindless acceptance of the mundane, and the diminishing acceptance of 'that's the way life is'. That may be the way life is if we have made it to be that way, and accepted it as normal and acceptable, but the human person is capable and called to so much more.

Beauty is so evident and so near to all of us, and not only when we are on vacation. Where do you see beauty? Make a list; get in the habit of noticing: a smile on a pretty face, a puppy gleefully playing, a new born child, a fine tuned and well running machine, a brand new car, or simply a quiet moment with a cup of coffee and your favorite donut. It may be your favorite tool, song, picture, or the ordinary view out your kitchen window turned glorious by grace. The examples are endless, and expansive. Sometimes the things that are most distasteful to us can in another time be a thing of beauty. Think of your desk at work piled high, and then completely cleared and in perfect order. There are times I have looked at my desk with dread, and resistance. At other times it has caused me to ponder with gratitude the work I have accomplished, the problems I've solved, or the grace that has passed over that desk through me for the good of others.

Things sacred also convey beauty; like a crucifix or a host. Food is sacred when served with love around a table prepared for those who will receive its abundance. Jesus is beauty: in his person, his work, and in his self-giving. The beauty of goodness that we see in Jesus is in all of us. That is why we are stirred by it. When do you see it in others, or yourself?

Jesus is food for the soul as the Bread of Life. This can be a distant and elusive reality, but it also has the capacity to inspire, heal, and restore a soul. When you receive communion this weekend think of beauty and truth as you take the host into yourself. Jesus is the beauty and truth that fills creation, especially you and I. Open your eyes to the beauty around you.

Thank you for supporting the raffle. Please join us for our picnic on September 13.

Father John Esper