

The Role of Art in Promoting Our Catholic Faith

Some of the most recognizable works of art have been inspired by our Christian faith. Such names as Michelangelo's Pieta, Saint Peter's Basilica, Handel's Messiah, and so many more works of painting, sculpture, music and architecture have greatly enriched the world and fostered awe for God and reverence for the Catholic faith.

Art is not extraneous, but is central to the Christian experience, for it mirrors God's mode of interacting with us and can lift our minds and hearts beyond earthly affairs, to the consideration of that which is beyond this temporal world.

God uses material things to communicate his love for us. God, the Great Artist, created the world and saw it was good and blessed it. Art, and its beauty, serves to inspire us and to assist us in realizing that there is more to this world and to life than just ourselves. Art grounds us in the reality of God's love and power and inspires us to go beyond our tendency to define life according to our personal self-concept and ego.

When we experience art, we often feel strong emotions. The word emotion *comes* from the Latin phrase, *ex movere*, which means "to move out" or to be taken out of oneself. Isn't this what we often feel whenever we listen to a thrilling hymn, gaze upon an exquisite icon, or walk through a towering cathedral? Good art has the ability to make us look outside of ourselves, to take our gaze off of our own lives, thoughts and concerns and to ponder greater things—beyond our own version of the world.

This is necessary in order for us to live a life that is truly human: we must go out of ourselves, toward God and toward others. Fine art can help us in this important movement. This is the reason we refer to art, and artists, as a gift to the world and movers of the soul.

Pope Saint John Paul II, in his letter to artists, offered these words: *“Artists of the world, may your many different paths all lead to that infinite Ocean of beauty where wonder becomes awe, exhilaration, unspeakable joy. May you be guided and inspired by the mystery of the Risen Christ... (Letter to Artists, 1999).*

It is my honor today to bless the *Catholic ArtWay*. It reminds us that art is spiritually edifying and a way of entering into God’s truth, beauty and goodness. To the artists responsible for this creation, thank you for your work. We are most grateful to you for offering us another way to enter into the beauty of God.

Bishop Gary Janak
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Reflection for Blessing of St. Mary’s
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