

“Beauty Will Save the World”



by Andrée-Anne CARON

In his *Letter to Artists* in 1999, Saint John Paul II wrote: “The theme of beauty is decisive for a discourse on art. It was already present when I stressed God’s delighted gaze upon creation. In perceiving that all he had created was good, God saw that it was beautiful as well.... Not all are called to be artists in the specific sense of the term. Yet, as Genesis has it, all men and women are entrusted with the task of crafting their own life: in a certain sense, they are to make of it a work of art, a masterpiece.” (*Letter to Artists*, nos. 2 and 3)

It is not necessary to spend much time considering the state of our world in order to realize that a multitude of things deter the human being from this natural attraction to beauty written in his heart. Evil is displayed everywhere with its horrors: corruption, wars, crimes, all kinds of vices, pollution and so forth. Is it surprising that it should be so, given that, Satan, incarnate ugliness, cannot do anything else but attempt to destroy God’s magnificent work in all its aspects – physical, psychic and spiritual – and spread everywhere his infernal stench?

The destruction is so complete that even art, yet destined to express the ineffable beauty of God in our world, has become a debasing source for souls. Our Mother’s thinking in this regard is fraught with meaning: “*Literature and art are now but one huge expression of the decomposition of a world that takes pleasure in its orgies rather than being appalled by them.*” (*Marie*, no. 16, March 1978, p. 4)

One of the most striking realities of this reversal is found among the youth. Little children naturally marvel over everything and have an instinctive repugnance for all that is ugly. However, for a few years now, we have been forced to realize that the eyes of beauty of young people are greatly frustrated. In schools alone, we notice how the repugnance children instinctively had, has declined and been replaced by a marked attrac-

tion for zombies, macabre video games, books with scary stories and television programs in which the illustrations are not at all inspiring – the sad continuation of Halloween which has become the celebration of horror under all its forms.

Without forgetting, either, the levelling out of education at the base, creating increasingly greater havoc, being harmful, among other things, to the protection of our French language; and then there is the implementing of an advanced program for the teaching of sexuality which will only worsen the level of vulgarity in which the young generation is already immersed.

SOWERS OF BEAUTY

Fortunately, thanks to the Work accomplished by God in Marie-Paule, we have the firm hope that, upon the ruins of this world, the Kingdom will flourish, a land of beauty, harmony and peace. While waiting for everything to be rebuilt, we can be sowers of beauty in our small measure among those around us, especially among the children, by uplifting their eyes to the source of all beauty which is God.

To the spreading of hatred rampant everywhere, let us respond with love that gives and forgives; to the loss of the real meaning of life and the most lofty values, let us oppose an unwavering faith and an edifying fervor; to the provocative sensuality which, everywhere, ravishes the innocence of our children, let us be heralds of faithfulness in love and of the true greatness of sexuality, for it is so noble that God raised marriage to the level of a sacrament.

Before the unprecedented straying of humanity which has reached the point of denying the very foundations of its origins – “*male and female he created them*” (Gen 1:27) –, let us always be more “*man*” or more “*woman*” in the image of Jesus and Marie-Paule, bedazzled by instead of at war against the differences in our natures which are so perfectly complementary.

In order to slow down the deterioration of the environment caused by an

excessive consumerism and the appetite for pleasures in our societies, let us do what we can, according to our means, to protect the goods, property or possessions God gave us in His goodness, and cherish what we already have instead of longing for what we seem to be lacking.

Thus, in forming our children from an early age to look at the world through “*glasses of beauty*” without being blind to the ever-present evil, they will be able to look beyond the decadence, in the same way that we do not despair over the continued greyness of the sky because we are certain that the sun always shines after the rain.

Is that not the heritage Mama Laura left her children, to the point that they never gave a thought to what was bad? From this good mother, our Mother learned “*to appreciate all the good things in life: nature, dignity, simplicity, charity, kindness, piety, religion, music and truth.*” (*Life of Love I*, p. 31)

MATERNAL FORMATION

As for us, Sons or Daughters of Mary, what a privilege we have had to be able to benefit from Mother Paul-Marie’s thinking while she was still living! This was particularly so during the summer camps when, with her usual thoughtfulness, she would draw our attention to specific points which pleased her, especially braided hairstyles for young girls whose bare forehead then allowed purity to be radiant, as well as distinction in the simplicity of one’s manner of dressing. This formation passed on by our Mother has its source in Mama Laura’s example to her children. “*Mama always dresses modestly and unostentatiously, and yet she attracts attention by her simplicity and the holiness written on her countenance. She is quite untouched by that pet vice of following the caprices of changing fashions.*” (*Id.*, p. 59)

In her visions, Maria Valtorta also emphasized to what extent this same dignity was present in the members of the Holy Family. “*And this is a remark I wish to make: in all the visions concerning the human life of Jesus, I have noticed that both He and Mary, as well as Joseph and John, are always tidy and clean both in their garments and their bodies. They*

wear modest and simple garments, but they are so clean that they look like gentlemen in them.” (Maria Valtorta, *The Poem of the Man-God*, vol. 1, p. 190)

On many occasions, our Mother also mentioned the importance of uplifting the souls of our young people with music, the harmony of which, both soft and rich at the same time, is very different from the wild and frenzied rhythms which exacerbate passions and irritate the spirit. And what about all her upsurges of gratitude towards the good God before the splendors of nature?

Whether it was the colors in a magnificent sunset or a bouquet of flowers, or again, the pictures of little babies she would look at on her desk, our Mother always drew us along with her in her amazement, thus arousing an expression of thanksgiving to such a good God whose love for humanity is sung by the entire universe.

In the writings of Maria Valtorta, Jesus looked at beauty in the same way when He invited the Pharisee, Gamaliel, to contemplate Creation. This latter noticed Jesus’ interest in nature and remarked to him:

“You love plants and animals very much, do you not?”

– “Yes, very much. They are my living book. Man always has the foundations of faith in front of him. Genesis lives in nature. Now, one who knows how to see, knows also how to believe. This flower, so sweet in its scent and in the substance of its perdulous corollas, and in such a contrast with this thorny juniper and with that furze, how could it have made itself by itself? And look: that robin red-breast, could it have made itself with that dried bloodstain on its soft throat? And those two doves, where and how have they been able to paint those onyx collars on the veil of their grey feathers? And over there, those two butterflies: a black one with large gold and ruby rings, while the other, white with blue stripes, where have they found the gems and ribbons for their wings? And this stream? It is water. Agreed. But where did it come from? Which is the first source of the water-element? Oh! To look means to believe, if one knows how to look.”

– “To look means to believe. We look too little at the living Genesis that is in front of us.”

– “Too much science, Gamaliel. And too little love, and too little humility.” (*Id.*, vol. 2, pp. 76-77)



Everything in nature speaks to us of God!

BEAUTY LEADS TO GOD

In all things, Mother Paul-Marie’s example of life indicates the path leading to this beauty which will soon be re-established in our world. Whether it was by her manner of dressing, her hairstyle, her attitude, her language or her gestures, Marie-Paule always radiated a great dignity marked by simplicity. The order present at Spiri-Maria reflects that same spirit in the sacred liturgy, the music and the beauty of the premises. We have heard so many comments from visitors concerning precisely this beauty which attracts and silently uplifts one to God.

This apostolate through beauty reminds us of the comment a renowned conductor made one day to his students who asked him if he believed in God. He declared having regained his faith during his studies in sacred music because he realized that the greatest masterpieces had all been written by geniuses, for God: Bach, Mozart, Haendel, etc. And he went on to say, “How could these famous musicians have composed such sublime melodies for someone who does not exist?” An eloquent and promising testimonial for the humanity to come, once the exhalations of beauty of the True Holy Spirit will have enkindled the earth in order to regenerate everything!

In closing, it is worth quoting in full Saint John Paul II’s conclusion to his *Letter to Artists*, his appeal being of a nature to echo in the hearts of every

man, whatever his vocation.

“On the threshold of the Third Millennium, my hope for all of you who are artists is that you will have an especially intense experience of creative inspiration. May the beauty which you pass on to generations still to come be such that it will stir them to wonder! Faced with the sacredness of life and of the human person, and before the marvels of the universe, wonder is the only appropriate attitude.

From this wonder there can come that enthusiasm of which Norwid spoke in the poem to which I referred earlier. People of today and tomorrow need this enthusiasm if they are to meet and master the crucial challenges which stand before us. Thanks to this enthusiasm, humanity, every time it loses its way, will be able to lift itself up and set out again on the right path. In this sense it has been said with profound insight that ‘beauty will save the world’.

“Beauty is a key to the mystery and a call to transcendence. It is an invitation to savour life and to dream of the future. That is why the beauty of created things can never fully satisfy. It stirs that hidden nostalgia for God which a lover of beauty like Saint Augustine could express in incomparable terms: ‘Late have I loved you, beauty so old and so new: late have I loved you!’” (*Letter to Artists*, no. 16)

Yes, beauty will save the world because Beauty... is God!

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