



God is Good. God is Love. God is Truth. God is Life. All these attributes of God can be summarized in one word: God is Beautiful – in fact, God is infinite Beauty. In this week's Gospel, Mark 4:26-34, Jesus compares the growth of the Church to the growth of a tiny mustard seed, the "smallest of all seeds," which "springs up and becomes the largest of plants and puts forth large branches, so that the birds of the sky can dwell in its shade." This parable accurately foretells the rise of Christendom through the ages which has brought to this world the truth about who God is, the truth about the moral law and the dignity of the human person – what it means to be good, loving, and beautiful; what it means to be human.

Hand in hand with the spreading of Christianity we find the creation of beautiful works of art: lovely poetry, song, heavenly sacred music, inspired paintings, sculptures, icons, stunning magnificent architecture. Under the inspiration of Jesus – God incarnate – all the creative juices of the human spirit seem to be set free to spring up and produce awesome, inspiring, beautiful things. This is only fitting because we have been created in the image of God with a vocation to ultimately see God who is awesome, inspiring and beautiful. The Catechism of the Catholic Church teaches us (CCC 2502-3):

Sacred art is true and beautiful when its form corresponds to its particular vocation: evoking and glorifying, in faith and adoration, the transcendent mystery of God—the surpassing invisible beauty of truth and love visible in Christ ... This spiritual beauty of God is reflected in the most holy Virgin Mother of God, the angels, and saints. **Genuine sacred art draws man to adoration, to prayer, and to the love of God**, Creator and Savior, the Holy One and Sanctifier. For this reason bishops, personally or through delegates, should see to the promotion of sacred art, old and new, in all its forms.

Melinda Selmys is a brilliant woman who has chronicled in a most intimate candid way her conversion from atheism and lesbianism to Catholicism, heterosexual marriage, and motherhood – the mother of four. Her amazing story is portrayed in her book: *Sexual Authenticity: An Intimate Reflection on Homosexuality and Catholicism*. The final chapter of this book is entitled "Beauty." She explains how beauty led her to God. Here are some excerpts:

"The purpose of Church art is to bring people into the presence of God, to point toward a higher and more beautiful reality than the one that we tread through day upon day throughout our lives. When Catholics create beautiful works of art, hearts, minds, and imaginations are baptized. . . . Beauty had everything to do with my own conversion."

Melinda recalls with some detail her experience visiting a beautiful Church in New York as a 14-year-old "blooming atheist." She concludes in retrospect, "I was confronted with a faith and a hope that had sustained generations of humanity, through sufferings, and through triumphs, and that all of this beauty was a monument to that tradition. . . . The encounter with beauty remained the guiding light in my long and tortuous journey toward Christ." (p. 230)

"Beauty is not a largely irrelevant addendum to the life of the soul. **It is through beauty that we come to understand the appeal of heaven.** The atheist can't get excited about sitting around forever with the big man on the throne. The sexual sinner can't imagine an eternity without sex. Almost everyone, at least on some level, thinks that this world is more appealing than the world to come. It is because **we do not spend enough time contemplating beauty**, because we do not take into our hearts the realization that all of the wonders and marvels, all of the joys and triumphs, of this world are only a tiny spark thrown from the fire of Beauty that burns in the mind of God." (p.231)

"Christianity is the promise of something better. . . . Eternal communion. . . . Heaven is the wedding of the human soul to the divine . . . It is communion. And the magnetic force that binds all of the particular souls, that orders and aligns all those human stars burning together in the radiance of Beauty and Truth, is love. . . . It was for this that I gave up homosexuality. . . . It was the end of a relationship that had lasted nearly seven years. It was the beginning of a life more beautiful than I could have asked for or imagined." (p. 233-235)

What Melinda says is absolutely true! For those who have the eyes to see and the ears to hear, sacred art, in all its forms, sprinkle this world with "tiny spark(s) thrown from the fire of Beauty that burns in the mind of God." "Beauty is not a largely irrelevant addendum to the life of the soul. It is through beauty that we come to understand the appeal of heaven." God is Good. God is Love. God is Truth. God is Life. God is infinite Beauty.

Your Servant in Christ, Fr. Terry Staples