



BEAUTY and INCARNATION RE-SOURCE #1 — February 2, 2023

The Catholic Church has long been a great patron of the arts for profound reasons. Pope after pope has told artists that their service of beauty is essential to the good of the world.

Pope Paul VI — to the world's artists — December 8, 1965

“We now address you, artists, who are taken up with beauty and work for it: poets and literary men and women, painters, sculptors, architects, musicians, men and women devoted to the theatre and the cinema. To all of you, the Church of the council declares to you through our voice: if you are friends of genuine art, you are our friends ... **This world in which we live needs beauty in order not to sink into despair.** It is beauty, like truth, which brings joy to the heart of humankind and is that precious fruit which resists the wear and tear of time, which unites generations and makes them share things in admiration. And all of this is through your hands.”

Pope John Paul II — Letter to artists, 1999

“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.... **From [artistic creativity] has come a flowering of beauty which has drawn its sap precisely from the mystery of the Incarnation**.... From the Nativity to Golgotha, from the Transfiguration to the Resurrection, from the miracles to the teachings of Christ, and on to the events recounted in the Acts of the Apostles or foreseen by the Apocalypse in an eschatological key, on countless occasions the biblical word has become image, music and poetry, evoking the mystery of “the Word made flesh” in the language of art.”

Pope Benedict XVI — to clergy and artists in the Sistine Chapel, December 26, 2012

“Dear artists ... You are the custodians of beauty. And indeed, **an essential function of genuine beauty is that it gives humanity a healthy shock!** It draws us out of ourselves, wrenches us away from resignation and from being content with the humdrum — it even makes us suffer, piercing us like a dart, but in so doing it ‘reawakens’ us, opening afresh the eyes of the heart and mind, giving us wings, carrying us aloft. Thanks to your talent, you have the opportunity to speak to the heart of humanity, to touch individual and collective sensibilities, to call forth dreams and hopes”

Pope Francis — at an audience attended by the Diakonia of Beauty, February 17, 2022

“Beauty, said the Pope, can create communion even through the years, since art is not limited to a certain time period. “The artist is not even limited in space, because **beauty can touch in each person that which is universal—especially the thirst for God**—overcoming the frontiers of language and culture.’ Authentic art, he added, can speak eloquently of the beauty and goodness of God.”

Recalling Pope Benedict's "healthy shock of beauty," Richard Rohr, OFM had this to say about art, beauty and Incarnation — December 2018:

“Pope Benedict XVI, who addressed 250 artists in the Sistine Chapel before Michelangelo's half naked, and often grotesque, images, said quite brilliantly: ‘An essential function of genuine beauty is that it gives humanity a healthy shock!’ And then he went on to quote Simone Weil who said that **‘Beauty is the experimental proof that incarnation is in fact possible.’**”

If there is one moment of beauty, then beauty can indeed exist on this earth; if there is one true moment of Incarnation, then why not incarnation everywhere? The beauty of Christmas is enough healthy shock for a lifetime, and it leaves the shocked ones dumbly struggling for utterance. Once the Eternal Word has become human flesh it is very hard to put it back into words—only music, poetry, and art can begin to suffice.”