

Consecrated Space: people and place

Jeff LeFever

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note

I once had an experience with beauty. No body was there. No body met me. It was beauty created by men's hands.

BUT : the Spirit of God, revealed to me, was present.

Beauty, since, has... *shaped* me... and now I share my experience *by* Beauty, with others.

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note

In December [2009], 500 of the leading artists from all professions of the arts around the world were invited to the Sistine Chapel. In his speech, Pope Benedict called upon artists around the globe to step up as “custodians of beauty” and I would like to say we are as well, “ambassadors of Beauty”.

The Beauty in which Pope Benedict called us to serve is the Divine Beauty – The Beau Dio (Beautiful God):

“Beauty” understood since Medieval Theology as one of the three main characteristics of God:

Truth, Beauty, and Goodness.

What better place to display such Beauty than in the Consecrated Space, a place that resonates with the consecrated heart?

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note

The consecrated space is an important consideration. It is a topic that has driven my interest and questions since 2003.

I have traveled and photographed the Gothic of France, the Baroque of Czech, churches and Cathedrals of every tradition in the United States.

But Lessons in the consecrated came from the people I encountered in the Holy City of Jerusalem.

First though... WHY?
Why beauty in the arts
Why ... consecrated space?

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Note

The visual arts have established and influenced cultures throughout history – The Visual Arts are ABLE in beauty to telling the story of a people and their belief – inspiring their hearts and imaginations – galvanizing identity – reaching to the core of our humanity.

Our Father is the Creator of the visual.
We, are made in His Image
We speak a visual language
And in His Character, I dare ask, are we not also capable of truth, beauty, and goodness to glorify Him?

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Some things about beauty and the order found in visual art that transmits expression to our very spirits:

visual art...

- promotes focus
- describes intention
- establishes identity
- inspires consideration
 - o imagination
 - o contemplation
 - o makes tangible the intangible beyond words

80% of what we take in is through our eyes

We respond to beauty

paintings, architecture, sculpture, design, masonry, carvings...

... and because of this, that is why, art and architecture is important to church service in the form of consecrated space and community identity.

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silence / contemplation / meaning

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Identity

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Note

Art and architecture is a visual language that can minister to us in tangible ways, the “great abstract”, which is beyond us, and can ‘re-mem-ber’ us beyond our individual and practical concerns to another larger reality – larger than we would daily experience otherwise: “Sacredness” and “Sanctity”

But what is it about the Consecrated that is different from the Sacred?

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Note

Sacred is a fine word. It is a noun. Though I think it has lost its meaning in common usage.

For me personally, I would restrict “Sacred” to the Divine or to those things upon which the divine rests. God is Sacred.

He is Holy.

His is Sacred.

His is a Sacred Idea in which we all participate.

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Note

The consecrated: “to associate with the sacred”
To be set aside for Godly service and dedication to the Holy.

A consecrated place, object.
A consecrated ‘heart’, or mind, or will.
A consecrated people.

The word speaks of intent.

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Note

Armenian Orthodox Bishop Sevon, of the Cathedral of St. James in the Armenian Quarter of the Old City of Jerusalem gave me a “lesson in the consecrated” via, “Why James is not ‘the brother’ of Jesus...” (not to discuss doctrine here, or validity of historical content).

Bishop Sevon brought up these points to me:
Chalice “You do not take what is made for holy purpose and use it for common drink”
Plate “....holy/common”
Womb of Mary: “God consecrated Mary’s womb to bear Messiah... you don’t take what is made holy and make it common”

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Note

Reverence to the Holy:
Consecrated Space speaks of intention and directs reverence.
Symbols of Heavenly weight are seen: Salvation, Epiphany,
Life and Death...

Intention

[mention the memorial for the soldiers} lives in memory
(consecrated in a way) by the hanging ribbons and tags along
church fencing in NYC.

This is a great function of a church through intentional community, especially in context to the church building as a symbol of great things and the contemplation of the Spiritual Reality.

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Note

I have entered into many consecrated spaces – they have been open to the community throughout the day – sometimes there is a mass, other times people just come in to pray – to be in the silent contemplative of a place that is set aside intentionally for concentrating on God with out distraction – a place where there is communal agreement that this place is recognized in identity as God's House, for His people who love Him, who seek to know Him in being still.

In their very being, these places speak of God. They are designed to do this.

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Note

Although it is a bane to the Jews in Israel, the Dome of the Rock stands on the Temple Mount where once stood the Jewish Temple and The Holy of Holies. Yet this Mosque stands out in its beauty and has become a poster landmark of the Holy City.

Visual Art and Visual Beauty matter. What does it communicate of a culture?

More people will spend money on making their own homes beautiful in isolation, than they will on making a beautiful house that speaks of God as a center of community.

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Note

Yet when money is spent to establish 'God's House'; when many minds, lives, and hours are spent in such worshipful activity - LIVES are touched - sheep are fed.

The very building material is transformed into a voice.

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Note

There once was an idea of community where by unique church buildings and specific decorum identified the 'Body of Christ'. It was central to a community – buildings with such intent are, in this idea, specific in their identity – identity serving to remind us of who we are, less we stray. And we do stray...and we do forget.

The Building and all inside, is an identity – it tells us this is "God's House" – God is present with us. Here is His story – Here is His transcendent Love – "come, all are invited."

The Building and all inside is an identity – it tells us this is "God's House" – God is present with us. Here is His story – here is our story. Here is His Love – "come, all are invited."

Seeing such a place where we congregate and identify, is that reminder, especially when the Church building was built to be that reminder. I am in particular speaking of Christianity.

The consecrated space, serves the people as refuge – shelter from the literal storm and the harsh realities we face in our lives in this world. It does this, NOT just by being opulent, but by reminding us in ways that inspire us of the HOPE that is promised us in Moshiah – The Anointed One (the Christ), King of Kings, Lord of Lords.

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The “Holy Jerusalem”

A Representation of the Heavens

A reminder to Awareness Of the Spiritual where it Intersects with the Material

God’s Kingdom Come – Present Now

Note

Fundamentally, literality is a problem.

Materialism is a problem in the same way.

In seeing only literally, and only seeing the material for face value, a building is only seen as a ‘building’ and not as representative of a greater idea and that also happens to function as a ‘building’.

What begs to be asked is, “*what are we building?*”

When is a house a ‘home’ (when does structure become a representation of the heart)?

When is a church building only a structure serving only practical building concerns, and when does a church building become a representation of our heart to God and to one another as people of Faith?

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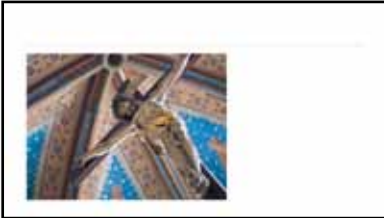
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Toward Discussion

- Ambassadors of Beauty: we have a responsibility
- Visual Art is a voice expressing ideas – so to in architecture and all inside expressing Faith
- Ways that sheep get fed
- We speak a visual language
- Our intention made manifest is also a visual clue that reminds us of our identity in His-story
- **What IS beauty and how does it move us?**

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Toward Discussion

- When is a house a Home?
- What are we building?
- A refuge that serves to re-member, invites all to come in, serves community, God-centric, speaks without words or person present
- What visual culture are we making by which our faith is communicated?
- Consecrated space and hearts pointing to sacredness and sanctity
- Intention Intention Intention

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Extras from Consecrated Space | people and place

TEXT on Slide 9

SACRED

The word “sacred” descends from the Latin *sacrum*, which referred to the gods or anything in their power, and to *sacer*, priest; *sanctum*, set apart. It was generally conceived spatially, as referring to the area around a temple.

Holiness, or sanctity, is in general the state of being holy (perceived by religious individuals as associated with the divine) or sacred (considered worthy of spiritual respect or devotion; or inspiring awe or reverence among believers in a given set of spiritual ideas). In other contexts, objects are often considered ‘holy’ or ‘sacred’ if used for spiritual purposes, such as the worship or service of gods. These terms can also be used in a non-spiritual or semi-spiritual context

TEXT on Slide 10

CONSECRATE

Consecration is the solemn dedication to a special purpose or service, usually religious. The word “consecration” literally means, “to associate with the sacred”. Persons, places, or things can be consecrated, and the term is used in various ways by different groups.

A synonym for consecration is to sanctify. An antonym is desecrate.

The Visual Arts

- promote focus, describe intention, establish identity
- inspire consideration, imagination, contemplation
- makes ideas tangible

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