

**Foundations Document for the Catholic School Curriculum of the
Diocese of Marquette, March 2014
Approved By Bishop John Doerfler**

“The dignity of education lies in fostering the happiness and perfection of those to be educated” (Pope Benedict’s speech to American Catholic educators, Catholic University of America, 2008).

Fostering the happiness and perfection in those to be educated

The greatest happiness a person can attain is communion with Jesus Christ. [1] Therefore, the core of our curriculum is the person of Jesus Christ. We hope to graduate students who have “encountered the living God who in Jesus Christ reveals his transforming love and truth (cf. *Spe Salvi*, 4). [2] This relationship elicits in the student a desire to grow in the knowledge and understanding of Christ and his teaching. In this way, those who encounter Christ are drawn by the power of the Gospel to lead new lives characterized by all that is beautiful, good and true; a life of Christian witness nurtured and strengthened within the community of our Lord’s disciples, the Church.”[3]

Furthermore, our curriculum seeks to form our graduate’s character, aiming as high as its perfection. [4]

A person of character is someone who within their personality unifies and develops the powers of their soul through the help of grace: [5][6][7]

- to seek and to know the truth through the exercise of their intellect and memory;
- to choose the good and act according to it through the use of their intellect and will; and
- to be informed and inspired by all that is beautiful through the use of their intellect, imagination and passions.

The Catholic school curriculum is at the service of these motivations and goals.

Four essential parts of our academic curriculum

In order to lay a solid foundation to assist students in the formation of their character based in their relationship with Jesus Christ, our curriculum is founded upon four essential parts of all education: **ordered basic knowledge, basic skills or tools of learning, development of the moral imagination, and the principle of correlation between subjects.**

Ordered basic knowledge is the knowledge most worth having. It is the knowledge of God and his revelation (theology, which is knowledge by faith as well as reason); of what he has made through his creation (what we can know through science and mathematics and all that is created along with understanding of this knowledge as creation in God’s own image); knowledge of our own humanity, in its thinking (philosophy and the arts), its achievements

(history), and its daily acts (moral knowledge). Another way of stating this is: we teach our students to come to know the truth about life, the world and God. God created us "in his own image and likeness" and will not deprive us of the truth necessary to orient our lives. The ability to make judgments about what is true and what is false and to make choices based on these judgments is the goal of learning basic knowledge in the elementary school. [8] [9]

Basic skills or tools of learning are necessary to enable students to learn effectively while in school, and perhaps most importantly, to continue to educate and form themselves throughout life. These include the abilities to listen attentively, to stick to the point, to speak clearly, to write effectively, and to read critically. In addition, they include competency in logical thinking and mathematical computation. In the area of science they include the ability to observe well, to apply the scientific method and the intellectual virtues to solve problems and explore new creative solutions to problems. These basic skills also include proficiency in the elements of art, music and technology. These skills make sense because they are part of an education centered on deeply meaningful values and vision. [10] [11]

The development of the student's personal aspirations derived through worthy hopes and ideals is the third essential part of learning. The development of the student's personal aspirations are derived from inspiration and reflection upon the ideals of the good, true and beautiful found within the curriculum and subject content taught.

The question is: how does this development of the moral imagination, through the elements of the good, the true, and the beautiful, impact the classroom curriculum? The answer is not very difficult. "In each subject matter, the ideal [true, good, beautiful] corresponding to that subject matter must be assimilated no less than the corresponding skills, methods and basic knowledge. The skill or methods give the efficiency, the basic knowledge gives the content or truth to be known, but the ideal gives the force, the drive, and the hunger. Skills, [methods and content knowledge] without ideals flicker out and die. Ideals, on the contrary, give life and motivation to learn the knowledge, skills and methods." [12] [13] [14] [15] They make us more of who we are as humans created in God's image. Best of all, they better prepare us to encounter Christ: the True, the Good, and the Beautiful. [16] [17][18] It is necessary, then, to derive from the study of any and all subjects the intellectual, moral, and aesthetic ideals which shall be capable of giving intellectual, moral, and aesthetic force to our students' minds.

The principle of correlation between subjects. Our curriculum also follows the principle of correlation between subjects. [19] The common experience of primary teachers is to teach through units which constantly make connections for their students across the subjects. For example, when teaching a unit about a particular time in American history, our primary level teachers will look for the witness of faith through biographies of saints of this period, literature, art, music, politics, Church history (etc.), knowledge that relates to the theme of the unit, and include it. Other examples of these relations between subjects include the subjects of math and physics which are related to art and music; or when asking a question about the geography of a place, showing relation to the historical and natural history of the place as well. Language Arts are related across all disciplines since we know all subjects through reading, writing, and hearing about them. "Religious instruction occupies a central position in the correlation of the curriculum" (Willmann-Kirsch, *The Science of Education*). When we study Christian doctrine through Scripture texts, Bible history, and Church history, the moral law and the forms and

ceremonies of public worship we can make direct connections with literature, history, philosophy, poetry and music. In summary, we design our curriculum aiming to make the principle of relations between the different subjects more transparent to our students.

Our curriculum in light of the development of the child

In order to accomplish these four essential parts of our curriculum, we must consider the developmental stages of our students. Keep in mind that the grade levels within the developmental stages described below are approximate.

The Foundations Stage (preK-3rd): Learning the foundational content and skills.

In the early grades of school, young children are like sponges. They are hungry for any new knowledge and experience. This is the period when their foundation in ordered content and basic skills is so very important. Therefore, the goal during this period is to provide our students with an outstanding primary school education in order to set a firm foundation for learning for their middle school years. We focus on teaching them the fundamentals of religion, reading, writing and math through thorough, systematic content and foundational skills. A content-rich primary grades curriculum always imbued with the true, good and beautiful in the hands of competent Catholic educators leads to a successful foundation for future growth.

The Grammar Stage (4th-6th): Learning the structure of the knowledge presented and the relationships between the subjects taught.

Given that the basic foundational skills and content are now present in the student, the curriculum at this second stage entails an increase in the amount of content and skills students are expected to learn. A key to teaching this greater amount of content and skills is to systematically teach the structure or “grammar” of each subject and its skills in an orderly way. For example, during this period, students learn the grammar of English by studying the parts of speech and how they are then transferred into writing clear sentences and paragraphs. In history, students learn the grammar of history through an orderly study of the dates, events and persons of history. In math, students learn the foundations of mathematical operations and basic geometry before they can apply this knowledge to higher algebra and more abstract math. In science, students learn the basic structures and elements of life, earth and physical sciences so they can later apply these understandings to more complex scientific concepts. The study of natural science helps students of this age to not only learn about the created world, but to order and categorize detailed data they collect through examination and artistic documentation of insects, leaves and other wonders of the natural world according to its kingdom, phylum and species, etc. This systematic approach to teaching and learning how each subject area is structured and organized is key to the organization of the entire curriculum at this second stage.

Students of this age are also helped to see the relationships between branches of knowledge. This is why we teach the content of the curriculum in an integrated manner, structuring the delivery of the content to reveal the relationships between subjects such as teaching the history, literature, art and religion of a time period all together in one unit. As another example, each student creates a timeline “map” across the grade levels (built on and continued each year), which includes all content areas such as history, religion, literature, science, art, music,

and even math. This provides the student with a “place” to categorize each content point and its location in history when it is first approached, as well as a comprehensive picture or map of knowledge of the world to update and reflect on as the child grows and progresses. This intentional integration of the content presented in our curriculum by both teacher and student ensures student learning to be a more unified and meaningful process.

In summary, during this period of development, our teachers present to our students each subject, how it is structured and its relationship to other subjects while ensuring they continue to master essential skills.

The beginnings of the Adolescence Stage (6th-8th): Helping students answer the “how” and the “why” questions while developing habits of the mind.

During the middle school years, there is significant physical, emotional and social growth. Intellectually, students are beginning the argumentative period of adolescence. This is a time when students begin to need reasons for the “how” and “why” within the content. It is during this period that our curriculum aims to direct these natural tendencies to argue by delving deeper into the subject matter and looking in greater detail at the causes for and explanations of what we are studying. For instance, students are taught to draw out the deeper meaning found in the fiction and non-fiction literature they are reading as part of the curriculum. They are taught to speak well and with respect while taking a position on controversial topics. Their writing is expected to be organized, proficient, and reflect the abilities to analyze and synthesize. In the study of history, our students develop a taste for historical truth. They are taught to see history as something real: the drama of human grandeur and human misery.

Since in the actions recorded in history, man projects on the world the good or the evil that is within the individual, history is subject to moral judgments. Learning the deeper meaning within and exercising moral reflection upon history is our approach to this subject at this age level. The overall approach to more synthesis and analysis and a deeper reflection on the meaning within the content in every subject is what marks this period of the curriculum.

Therefore, this is a crucial time in the student’s development when a vision of the ideals to be found within the content is necessary to inspire the student to seek the truly beautiful, the highest moral goals, and live by truth: principles such as justice, self-sacrifice, freedom, etc.

This is also a time when the relationship between the teacher as mentor and the student is very important. The teacher assists the student to integrate the ideals being learned through the curriculum with the choices the student makes to choose the good and act according to it in daily life. This attention to each student’s total development through interpersonal relationship is essential in helping the student to freely begin to form their own character as a foundation for a happy and virtuous life.

This stage is also important for the development of habits, most particularly skills for learning that can be used repeatedly throughout the student’s academic career. While learning the truth and meaning present within each subject and being inspired by the ideals found within every unit of study are always priorities, enabling each student to develop the habits of mind (for example: speaking clearly, writing well and effectively, reading closely and critically, thinking logically, etc.) is also of high importance at this stage in a student’s education. These habits of mind as well as a personal love for learning, the development of a consistent seeking for the

most excellent things, the truly beautiful, and the strength to make the free choice to do the good, all work together towards forming the young person of excellent education and character.

Content and methods

Therefore, the content and methods we select in our program are always aimed at what is most excellent and has stood the test of time in our culture. To summarize, all of our content and methods are viewed through the lens of the good, the true and the beautiful. This curriculum structure has traditionally been defined as a liberal arts program. Choosing a curriculum in the liberal arts tradition is based upon the belief that some things are worth knowing for their own sake because they are true, beautiful and good. Learning in this way ensures the fullest means of development for our students while also preparing them for future professional life and work. Above all, learning the liberal arts through the “seeing” of the true, good and beautiful prepares the student to recognize, encounter, and know God, the first truth, the supreme good, and beauty itself (cf. *Via Pulchritudinis* II.2, footnote 14).

Faith, culture and life

Our schools prepare students to relate the Catholic faith to our particular culture and live that faith in practice. [20] As one example, we seek to consistently look for the touch points between our Catholic values and our culture in how and what we teach. Oftentimes, these touch points between God, our culture and ourselves are aspects of the vision of greatness (the true, good and beautiful), which furthers the development of the encounter between Christ and the student we have set as the overriding goal of our curriculum.

The witness of the educator

This program is possible only when it is sustained by our teacher’s experience and witness of a personal relationship with Christ [21] (also cf. *Lay Catholics in Schools: Witnesses to Faith*, footnote 15).

Notes and Additional Resources
Foundations Document for the Catholic School Curriculum of the
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[1] *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 27.

“The desire for God is written in the human heart, because man is created by God and for God; and God never ceases to draw man to himself. Only in God will he find the truth and happiness he never stops searching for:

The dignity of man rests above all on the fact that he is called to communion with God. This invitation to converse with God is addressed to man as soon as he comes into being. For if man exists, it is because God has created him through love, and through love continues to hold him in existence. He cannot live fully according to truth unless he freely acknowledges that love and entrusts himself to his creator (Vatican Council II, *Gaudium et Spes*, 19, 1).

[2] Benedict XVI, *Spe salvi*, Encyclical Letter, 4.

“We have raised the question: can our encounter with the God who in Christ has shown us his face and opened his heart be for us too not just ‘informative’ but ‘performative’—that is to say, can it change our lives, so that we know we are redeemed through the hope that it expresses? ...”

[3] Benedict XVI, Meeting with Catholic Educators, Catholic University of America, 2008, P 2.

“Education is integral to the mission of the Church to proclaim the Good News. First and foremost every Catholic educational institution is a place to encounter the living God who in Jesus Christ reveals his transforming love and truth (cf. *Spe Salvi*, 4). This relationship elicits a desire to grow in the knowledge and understanding of Christ and his teaching. In this way those who meet him are drawn by the very power of the Gospel to lead a new life characterized by all that is beautiful, good, and true; a life of Christian witness nurtured and strengthened within the community of our Lord’s disciples, the Church.”

[4] Pius XI, *Christian Education of Youth*, P 38.

“Christ-like character formation is the product of Catholic education.”

[5] Vatican II, *Declaration on Christian Education*, 2.

“A Christian education does not merely strive for the maturing of a human person as just now described, but has as its principal purpose this goal: that the baptized, while they are gradually introduced the knowledge of the mystery of salvation, become ever more aware of the gift of Faith they have received, and that they learn in addition how to worship God the Father in spirit and truth (cf. John 4:23) especially in liturgical action, and be conformed in their personal lives according to the new man created in justice and holiness of truth (Eph. 4:22-24); also that they develop into perfect manhood, to the mature measure of the fullness of Christ (cf. Eph. 4:13) and strive for the growth of the Mystical Body; moreover, that aware of their calling, they learn not only how to bear witness to the hope that is in them (cf. Peter 3:15) but also how to help in the Christian formation of the world that takes place when natural powers viewed in the full consideration of man redeemed by Christ contribute to the good of the whole society.”

[6] Msgr. George Johnson, *Guiding Growth in Christian Social Living: A Curriculum for the Elementary School*, Catholic University Press, 1944, p. 8.

“The man or woman of character is the one who has come to know the truth, who loves the truth and finds joy in it, and who at all times and in all circumstances acts in accordance with it. The will is strong because the will is free, emancipated from ignorance by knowledge, from concupiscence by noble attitudes and appreciations [beauty], and from unworthy habits by an armor of virtue.”

[7] Archbishop J. Michael Miller, C.S.B., Secretary for the Vatican's Congregation for Catholic Education, Keynote Address: *"The Holy See's Teaching On Catholic Schools,"* The Catholic University of America, Sept. 14, 2005, Section III.4.1.

“The greatest challenge to Catholic education in the United States today, and the greatest contribution that authentically Catholic education can make to American culture, is to restore to that culture the conviction that human beings can grasp the truth of things, and, in grasping that truth, can know their duties to God, to themselves and their neighbors. . . . The contemporary world urgently needs the service of educational institutions that uphold and teach that truth is ‘that fundamental value without which freedom, justice, and human dignity are extinguished’ [*Veritatis Splendor*, 4]...”

“Closely following papal teaching, the Holy See's documents on schools insist on the principle that education is about discovering truth both in its natural and supernatural dimensions: ‘The school considers human knowledge as a truth to be discovered. In the measure in which subjects are taught by someone who knowingly and without restraint seeks the truth, they are to that extent Christian. Discovery and awareness of truth leads man to the discovery of Truth itself.’”

[8] Congregation for Catholic Education: *"Religious Dimension of Education in a Catholic School,"* 1988, (57, 60, 61).

57. “Every society has its own heritage of accumulated wisdom. Many people find inspiration in these philosophical and religious concepts which have endured for millennia. The systematic genius of classical Greek and European thought has, over the centuries, generated countless different doctrinal systems, but it has also given us a set of truths which we can recognize as a part of our permanent philosophical heritage. A Catholic school conforms to the generally accepted school programming of today, but implements these programs within an overall religious perspective. This perspective includes criteria such as the following:

Respect for those who seek the truth, who raise fundamental questions about human existence. Confidence in our ability to attain truth, at least in a limited way - a confidence based not on feeling but on faith. **God created us "in his own image and likeness" and will not deprive us of the truth necessary to orient our lives. The ability to make judgments about what is true and what is false; and to make choices based on these judgments** [emphasis mine]. Making use of a systematic framework, such as that offered by our philosophical heritage, with which to find the best possible human responses to questions regarding the human person, the world, and God. Lively dialogue between culture and the Gospel message.

60. The increased attention given to science and technology must not lead to a neglect of the humanities: philosophy, history, literature and art. Since earliest times, each society has developed and handed on its artistic and literary heritage, and our human patrimony is nothing more than the sum total of this cultural wealth. Thus, while teachers are helping students to develop an aesthetic sense, they can bring them to a deeper awareness of all

peoples as one great human family. The simplest way to uncover the religious dimension of the artistic and literary world is to start with its concrete expressions: in every human culture, art and literature have been closely linked to religious beliefs. The artistic and literary patrimony of Christianity, is vast and gives visible testimony to a faith that has been handed down through centuries.

61. Literary and artistic works depict the struggles of societies, of families, and of individuals. They spring from the depths of the human heart, revealing its lights and its shadows, its hope and its despair. The Christian perspective goes beyond the merely human, and offers more penetrating criteria for understanding the human struggle and the mysteries of the human spirit. Furthermore, an adequate religious formation has been the starting point for the vocation of a number of Christian artists and art critics.

In the upper grades, a teacher can bring students to: an even more profound appreciation of artistic works **as a reflection of the divine beauty in tangible form. Both the Fathers of the Church and the masters of Christian philosophy teach this in their writings on aesthetics - St. Augustine invites us to go beyond the intention of the artists in order to find the eternal order of God in the work of art; St. Thomas sees the presence of the Divine Word in art** [emphasis mine].

[9] Vatican II, *Gaudium et Spes*, 62.

“Literature and the arts are also, in their own way, of great importance to the life of the Church. They strive to make known the proper nature of man, his problems and his experiences in trying to know and perfect both himself and the world. They have much to do with revealing man's place in history and in the world; with illustrating the miseries and joys, the needs and strengths of man and with foreshadowing a better life for him. Thus they are able to elevate human life, expressed in multifold forms according to various times and regions.”

[10] Congregation for Catholic Education, *The Catholic School on the Threshold of the Third Millennium*, (8, 9).

The fragmentation of education, the generic character of the values frequently invoked and which obtain ample and easy consensus at the price of a dangerous obscuring of their content, tend to make the school step back into a supposed neutrality, which enervates its educating potential and reflects negatively on the formation of the pupils. There is a tendency to forget that education always presupposes and involves a definite concept of man and life. To claim neutrality for schools signifies in practice, more times than not, banning all reference to religion from the cultural and educational field, whereas a correct pedagogical approach ought to be open to the more decisive sphere of ultimate objectives, attending not only to ‘how’, but also to ‘why’, overcoming any misunderstanding as regards the claim to neutrality in education, restoring to the educational process the unity which saves it from dispersion amid the meandering of knowledge and acquired facts, and focuses on the human person in his or her integral, transcendent, historical identity.

[11] John Paul II, *Fides et ratio*, Encyclical Letter, (72, 81-82, 85).

72. The Church cannot abandon what she has gained from her enculturation in the world of Greco Latin thought. ...

81. One of the most significant aspects of our current situation, it should be noted, is the “crisis of meaning”. Perspectives on life and the world, often of a scientific temper, have so proliferated that we face an increasing fragmentation of knowledge. This makes the search for meaning difficult and often fruitless. Indeed, still more dramatically, in this maelstrom of data and facts in which we live and which seem to comprise the very fabric of life, many people wonder whether it still makes sense to ask about meaning... To be consonant with the word of God, philosophy needs first of all to recover its *sapiential dimension* as a search for the ultimate and overarching meaning of life. [My addition: Replace the word “education” for “philosophy” in the sentences above.]

82. Yet this sapiential function could not be performed by a philosophy which was not itself a true and authentic knowledge, addressed, that is, not only to particular and subordinate aspects of reality—functional, formal or utilitarian—but to its total and definitive truth, to the very being of the object which is known. This prompts a second requirement: that philosophy verify the human capacity to *know the truth*, to come to a knowledge which can reach objective truth

85. ...this is why, taking up what has been taught repeatedly by the Popes for several generations and reaffirmed by the Second Vatican Council itself, I wish to reaffirm strongly the conviction that the human being can come to a unified and organic vision of knowledge. This is one of the tasks which Christian thought will have to take up through the next millennium of the Christian era. The segmentation of knowledge, with its splintered approach to truth and consequent fragmentation of meaning, keeps people today from coming to an interior unity. How could the Church not be concerned by this? It is the Gospel which imposes this sapiential task directly upon her Pastors, and they cannot shrink from their duty to undertake it.

[12] Jaime Castiello, S.J., *A Humane Psychology of Education*, Sheed & Ward, 1936, p. 142.

“In each subject matter, the ideal corresponding to that subject matter must be assimilated no less than the corresponding skills and methods. The skill gives the efficiency, but the ideal gives the force, the drive, the hunger. Skills without ideals flicker out and die. Ideals, on the contrary, work themselves out into skills and methods. It is necessary, then, to derive from the study of any and all study subjects the intellectual, moral and aesthetic ideals which shall be capable of giving intellectual, moral and aesthetic force to our minds.”

[13] Pope Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium*, Apostolic Exhortation, November 2013, (35-36, 42, 167-168).

35. Pastoral ministry in a missionary style is not obsessed with the disjointed transmission of a multitude of doctrines to be insistently imposed. When we adopt a pastoral goal and a missionary style which would actually reach everyone without exception or exclusion, the message has to concentrate on the essentials, on what is most beautiful, most grand, most appealing and at the same time most necessary. The message is simplified, while losing none of its depth and truth, and thus becomes all the more forceful and convincing.

167. **Every form of catechesis would do well to attend to the “way of beauty” (*via pulchritudinis*)** [emphasis mine]. Proclaiming Christ means showing that to believe in and to follow him is not only something right and true, but also something beautiful, capable of filling life with new splendour and profound joy, even in the midst of difficulties. **Every expression of true beauty can thus be acknowledged as a path leading to an encounter**

with the Lord Jesus [emphasis mine]. This has nothing to do with fostering an aesthetic relativism which would downplay the inseparable bond between truth, goodness and beauty, but rather a renewed esteem for beauty as a means of touching the human heart and enabling the truth and goodness of the Risen Christ to radiate within it. If, as Saint Augustine says, we love only that which is beautiful, the incarnate Son, as the revelation of infinite beauty, is supremely lovable and draws us to himself with bonds of love. **So a formation in the *via pulchritudinis* ought to be part of our effort to pass on the faith** [emphasis mine]. Each particular Church should encourage the use of the arts in evangelization, building on the treasures of the past but also drawing upon the wide variety of contemporary expressions so as to transmit the faith in a new “language of parables”. We must be bold enough to discover new signs and new symbols, new flesh to embody and communicate the word, and different forms of beauty which are valued in different cultural settings, including those unconventional modes of beauty which may mean little to the evangelizers, yet prove particularly attractive for others.

168. As for the moral component of catechesis, which promotes growth in fidelity to the Gospel way of life, it is helpful to stress again and again the attractiveness and the ideal of a life of wisdom, self-fulfilment and enrichment.

[14] *The Via Pulchritudinis, Privileged Pathway for Evangelization and Dialogue, Concluding documents of the plenary assembly, 2006.*

II.1. Beginning with the simple experience of the marvel-arousing meeting with beauty, the *via pulchritudinis* can open the pathway for the search for God, and disposes the heart and spirit to meet Christ, who is the Beauty of Holiness Incarnate, offered by God to men for their salvation. It invites contemporary Augustines, unquenchable seekers of love, truth and beauty, to see through perceptible beauty to eternal Beauty, and with fervour discover Holy God, the author of all beauty.

II.2 How can the *Via Pulchritudinis* be a Response?

Pope John Paul II, an untiring scrutiniser of the signs of the times, indicates this way in his Encyclical *Fides et Ratio*: "I have unstintingly recalled the pressing need for a *new evangelisation*; and I appeal now to philosophers [substitute “educators” for “philosophers,” my addition] to explore more comprehensively the dimensions of the true, the good and the beautiful to which the Word of God gives access. This task becomes all the more urgent if we consider the challenges which the new millennium seems to entail, and which affect in a particular way regions and cultures which have a long-standing Christian tradition.

This call to philosophers might surprise some people, but is not the *via pulchritudinis* also a *via veritatis* on which man engages to discover the *bonitas* of God's love, source of all beauty, truth and good? Beauty, as much as truth and good, leads us to God, the first truth, supreme good, and beauty itself. But beauty means more than the truth or the good. To say that something is beautiful is not only to recognise it intelligible and therefore loveable, but also, in specifying our knowledge, it attracts us, or captures us with a ray capable of igniting marvel.

III. THE WAYS OF BEAUTY

Three areas stand out for the privileged way of beauty to enable dialogue with contemporary cultures:

III.1 The Beauty of Creation;

III.2 The Beauty of the Arts; and

III.3 The Beauty of Christ, Model and Prototype of Christian Holiness.

3.1. A) The contemplation of the beauties of creation causes an interior peace and sharpens the sense of harmony and the desire for a beautiful life.

3.1. C) Some movements try to install in the youth an ability to observe nature and make them aware of the need to protect it. This helps people discover the project of the Creator God, by appealing to the sentiments connected to marvel, adoration and thanksgiving. We must carefully put in practice the twofold dimension of listening:

- listening to creation that tells the glory of God.

- and listen to God who speaks to us through his creation and makes himself accessible to reason, according to the teaching of the First Vatican Council (*Dei Filius*, Ch. 2, can.1).

Catechesis in its efforts to form children and young people can make the most of it by developing a pedagogy of observation of natural beauties and consequent fundamentally human attitudes: silence, interiorisation, listening, patient waiting, admiration, discovery of harmony, respect for natural equilibrium, meaning of gratuity, adoration and contemplation.

III.2 The Beauty of the Arts

III.2 A) Pope John Paul II, in his *Letter to Artists*, called for a new *epiphany of beauty* and a new dialogue of faith and culture between Church and art...

If cultural milieu strongly conditions the artist, then, echoing the appeal of Von Balthasar, we must raise the questions: How can we be guardians of beauty in today's contemporary artistic culture where erotic seduction stems the instincts, pollutes the imagination and inhibits the spiritual faculties? Is not the task of saving beauty that of saving man? Is this not the role of the Church, "expert in humanity" and guardian of the faith?

Pastoral Proposals

John Paul II's *Letter to Artists* is a fundamental reference point here, and finds a clear echo in the passage cited from the Pontifical Council for Culture's document *Towards a Pastoral Approach to Culture*.¹[28] Episcopal Conferences can take these two texts as the starting point for concrete initiatives.²[29]

It is a matter of using an appropriate pedagogy to initiate people into the language of beauty, to educate them to seize the message of Christian art. This is what makes works beautiful and above all favours in them a meeting with the mystery of Christ.

III.3 The Beauty of Christ, Model and Prototype of Christian Holiness

While the beauty of creation is, according to St Augustine, a "confessio" and invites contemplation of *beauty in its source*, i.e., the "creator of heaven and earth, of all things, seen and unseen," and while the beauty of artwork makes manifest something of *beauty in its figure*, the Son who took flesh, "the most beautiful of men", there is also a third fundamental way, perhaps the most important, which leads us to the discovery of *beauty in the icon* of holiness, work of the Holy Spirit who shapes the Church in the image of Christ, model of perfection. For the baptised person, it is the beauty of witness given by a life transformed in Grace, and, for the Church, the beauty of the liturgy. It lets us experience God alive among His people attracting to Him those who let themselves be taken up in this meeting of joy and love.

The *Ecclesia de charitate*, witness of the beauty of Christ, reveals herself as his spouse made more beautiful by her Lord when she makes acts of charity and preferential choices, when she engages in the promotion of justice and building up the great common house where every creature is called to live, especially the poor: they too have a right to beauty. At the same time this witness of beauty by charity and by engagement in the service of justice and peace announces the hope that never fails. To offer the men and women of today the true beauty, to make the Church attentive to always announce, in good times and in bad, the beauty that saves and that is felt in those places where eternity has planted its tent over time is to offer reasons to live and hope to those who are without or risk losing it. The Church, witness to the final meaning of life, seed of confidence at the heart of human history, appears already as the people of the beauty that saves, for it anticipates in these last times something of the beauty promised by this God who will bring all things to completion in Him at the end of time. Hope, militant anticipation of the coming into the saved world promised in the crucified and resurrected Son, is a proclamation of beauty. Of this the world has a particular need.

A) On the Pathway towards the Beauty of Christ. The absolutely original and singular beauty of Christ, model of a "truly beautiful life," is reflected in the holiness of a life transformed by Grace...

For those who wish to contemplate it, the icon of the Crucified with disfigured face contains the mysterious beauty of God. This beauty is fulfilled in in pain and sorrow, in the gift of self without personal gain. It is the beauty of love which is stronger than evil or death. ... As Pope Benedict XVI expressed during the first Canonisation of his Pontificate at the closing Mass of the XI ordinary general Assembly of the Synod of Bishops on the Eucharist, "the saint is the one who is so fascinated by the beauty of God and by his perfect truth that he is progressively transformed by it. For this beauty and this truth, he is ready to renounce everything, even himself" (23 October 2005).

The beauty of Christian witness expresses the beauty of Christianity and provides for its future. How can we be credible in announcing the "good news" if our lives are unable to manifest the "beauty" of this life?

...So the Christian life is called to become, in the force of Grace given by Christ resurrected, an event of susceptible beauty to arouse admiration and reflection and incite conversion.

[15] Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education, *"Lay Catholics in Schools: Witnesses to Faith,"* 1982, 30.

"Critical transmission also involves the presentation of a set of values and counter-values. These must be judged within the context of an appropriate concept of life and of the - human person. The Catholic teacher, therefore, cannot be content simply to present Christian values as a set of abstract objectives to be admired, even if this be done positively and with imagination; they must be presented as values which generate human attitudes, and these attitudes must be encouraged in the students. Examples of such attitudes would be these: a freedom which includes respect for others; conscientious responsibility; a sincere and constant search for truth; a calm and peaceful critical spirit; a spirit of solidarity with and service toward all other persons; a sensitivity for justice; a special awareness of being called to be positive agents of change in a society that is undergoing continuous transformation."

[16] Benedict Ashley, O.P., *Philosophy Serves Theology*, Lecture 4: “Why We Need the Liberal Arts,” International Catholic University.

“A great theologian of our time, Hans Urs von Balthasar, has emphasized that the Bible is about not only the power and the goodness of God, but the beauty of God, the glory of God: how the Bible talks about the glory of God. God is something to be looked at and loved because of his glory, to be praised. And to communicate that, theology needs those arts that know how to express the beautiful, the contemplative, the dramatic.”

[17] *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 319.

“God created the world to show forth and communicate his glory. That his creatures should share in his truth, goodness and beauty – this is the glory for which God created them.”

[18] John Paul II, *Fides et ratio*, 83.

“Wherever men and women discover a call to the absolute and transcendent, the metaphysical dimension of reality opens up before them: in truth, in beauty, in moral values, in other persons, in being itself, in God.”

[19] Bl. John Henry Newman, *Idea of a University*, Discourse 5: “Knowledge, Its Own End.”

“I have said that all branches of knowledge are connected together, because the subject-matter of knowledge is intimately united in itself, as being the acts and the work of the Creator. Hence it is that the Sciences, into which our knowledge may be said to be cast, have multiplied bearings one on another, and an internal sympathy, and admit, or rather demand, comparison and adjustment. They complete, correct, balance each other. This consideration, if well-founded, must be taken into account, not only as regards the attainment of truth, which is their common end, but as regards the influence which they exercise upon those whose education consists in the study of them.”

[20] Archbishop Michael Miller, *Holy See’s Teaching on Catholic Schools*, Section III.4.2.

“From the nature of the Catholic school also stems one of the most significant elements of its educational project: the synthesis between culture and faith. The endeavor to interweave reason and faith, which has become the heart of individual subjects, makes for unity, articulation, and coordination, bringing forth within what is learned in a school a Christian vision of the world, of life, of culture, and of history.”

[21] John Paul II, “*The Teacher’s Task is to Witness to the Truth*,” Address to the plenary assembly of Catholic Education, 1995.

“...Therefore, the first indispensable necessity in one who is going to live the identity of a lay Catholic educator is to sincerely share in, and make one's own, the statements that the Church, illuminated by Divine Revelation, has made about the identity of an educator. The strength needed to do this should be found through a personal identification with Christ.”

LCIS, Lay Catholics in Schools

Additional Resources

The Science of Education in its Sociological and Historical Aspects, in Two Volumes
by Otto Willmann, Archabbey Press, Beatty, Pennsylvania, 1922, Trans. from 4th German ed.

Ever Ancient, Ever New: The Role of Beauty in the Restoration of Catholic Culture

by Bishop James D. Conley, STL

<http://www.catholiceducation.org/articles/printarticle.html?id=5490>



“He only is a true educator who can kindle in the heart of his pupil the vision of beauty, illumine it with the light of truth, and form it to virtue.”

~ *St. Bonaventure, Doctor of the Church*