

GOD'S TROUBADOURS OF BEAUTY

Artists and Handicrafters

adapted from the writings of Catherine Doherty

Arts and crafts made by one's own hands, reflecting the ingenuity and creation of one's own mind, can bring beauty into the world and make God's presence more visible. For all creative effort is from God, and God is Beauty itself.

A Bond of Tradition

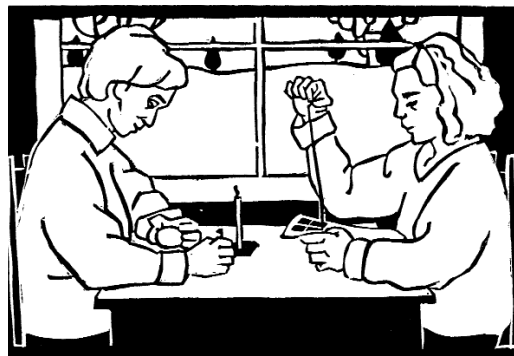
Both crafts and the fine arts, such as painting and sculpture, can be a bond of tradition, bridging the old and the new. Unless there are such bridges, people are fragmented, each like an island unto himself or herself. We are unmoored and do not know where we came from or where we are going. Because of the rapid pace of our technological age, an artistic bridge with our roots is more needed than ever.

A Bridge of Communication

As a bridge of communication, especially with those who speak different languages or who may be fearful, shy, or sick, crafts often bring special blessings. There is something reassuring, homey, pleasant, and relaxing in seeing someone embroidering or knitting on a train. One feels a trust and confidence about such a person. If one has some similar work at hand, one becomes friends almost without words. Or one might ask what the other is making and a bond of friendship, gentle and warm, is established with this person who only a short time ago was a stranger. The craft is the bridge.

Gathering Up the Fragments

Handicrafters can "gather up the fragments lest they be wasted," as Jesus says in the Gospel (John 6:12). Rather than turn up their noses at what might appear to be "junk," they can fashion something beautiful of it, or restore what would otherwise have been wasted. They are able to use materials that other people might reject; "one man's scrap is another man's gold." Handicrafters help others to recognize the hidden potential for beauty in scraps.



Donna Surprenant

Creativeness at Work

But handicrafts are much more. Humanly and psychologically, creating is one of our needs as persons. What today are called crafts, yesterday were simply all the things people needed to make in order to live: clothes, housing, tools and domestic utensils. So crafts were not just a pastime to keep occupied but rather one's creativeness at work, finding ways to fill real needs. As people became more skillful they crafted more beautifully the things they needed.

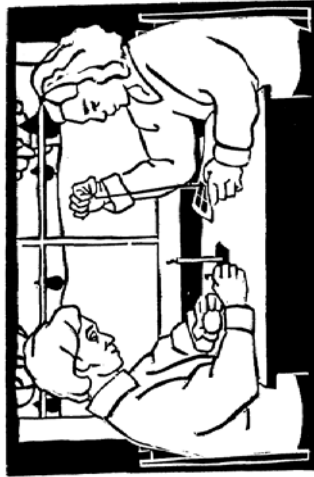
Liberating the Spirit and Giving Peace

Artists who are humble and are people of prayer realize that God is going to create through them. They bring a new dimension to human lives: they bring enthusiasm for art, for beauty, and creativity to everyone

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Pass It On! #28



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they meet. God has sent them as teachers of a new “language” to their brothers and sisters and neighbors.

They liberate spirits and give peace. To create is to be at peace, for in creating one is joined with the Creator. Yet this peace will permit, in fact will almost demand its opposite: tension. Tension is part of creation, part of life. These tensions, and artists’ fears and doubts, must be endured and then transmitted into art.

Bridge Between God and Man

Artists are ordinary people with extraordinary gifts; they know they cannot bear the weight of these gifts so they lay them in the hands of God. They know they have to lean on God; they know that God is the great Artist. They are like a bridge between God and man. The artist is a mirror who reflects God’s image in his creation. Art need not have a religious subject, for all beauty reminds people that God is the creator. Artists are his troubadours of beauty.

An artist is a healer who partakes of the power of the Good Physician because his or her works console and comfort. However, his or her art must also ask questions, for the artist is a “disturber” of people as well, like Christ is; artists do not allow people to fall into a sort of mediocrity.

Living in the Truth

Artists must live in the truth: in truth with God, with themselves, and with the world—because it is to the world that they have to convey the truth.

Art defies all definitions of efficiency in production. Artists need to be given time for their work. It may appear as if they “do nothing,” but their doing nothing is essential to their creativity: having time to think, time to wander through the woods and through the cities to observe and to sketch, time to research, time to talk, and time to pray.

Pilgrims in Search of Beauty

An artist needs understanding and encouragement. We must be reverent before the gift of creativity in whatever its form. Artists are Gospel people, to whom talents have been given. They put those talents to work so that when the Master comes, he finds them doubled, quadrupled, or maybe even returned to Him a hundred-fold. In sharing their talents, they are like just stewards, who give out grain to all their household.

Artists are pilgrims in search of beauty, in search of ways and means to bring God to all humanity.

From: *The Vision on the Mountain: The Madonna House Artist*, and *People of the Towel and Water*, both by Catherine Doherty, available through Madonna House Publications.

Artwork by Donna Surprenant

Catherine Doherty (1896-1985), born in Russia, was foundress of Madonna House and a prolific writer and teacher. Her passionate zeal impelled her to pass on her faith in God. She is now being considered for sainthood by the Catholic Church.