

## Commentary to the Fourth Sunday of Lent (B)



I do enjoy landscapes, but for me most beautiful expression of God's art contains people. There is no more beautiful handiwork in all of creation than human beings. "We are God's masterpieces? one translation of the second reading proclaims. God's artistry is deeper than the eyes of Hans Holbein's Thomas Moore, more beautiful than Botticelli's Venus, livelier than Dali's Ecumenical Council, and more serene than DaVinci Mona Lisa. God, the infinitely talented artist, found a way to make his image real in the world, yet unique in each individual.

But man threw mud on the painting and took a sledge hammer to the statue. The Book of Chronicles, today's first reading describes the destruction of God's work: In those days, all the princes of Judah, the priests, and the people added infidelity to infidelity, practicing all the abominations of the nations and polluting the LORD's temple which he had consecrated in Jerusalem. Early and often did the LORD, the God of their fathers, send his messengers to them, for he had compassion on his people and his dwelling place.

But they mocked the messengers of God, despised his warnings, and scoffed at his prophets, God endowed man with wondrous gifts to use to find him, but instead mankind hid behind the gifts and refused to see or seek the Creator behind the creation. The extent of man's suffering the result of his own actions still effects us as we experience the horrors that man inflicts upon man, be they dictators or liberators, as we silently witness the death of children from sickness and famine, as we experience the destruction of marriages due to the impact of selfishness and materialism.

We call upon God during Lent to restore beauty to his world. We call upon God to teach us once more what true love is. And God answers with the simple sentence that Jesus gave Nicodemus: "For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him might not perish but might have eternal life." Love is experienced, beauty is restored, order defeats chaos, and goodness conquers sin through the Cross of Jesus Christ. The power of God is greater than the machinations of man. In today's second reading Paul tells the Ephesians and us that God is rich in mercy. He has tremendous love for us. Even when we were dead in our transgressions, he brought us to life with Christ.

The awesome love that was displayed on the cross is the continual means of our salvation. God has not thrown out his canvas. He is still completing his artwork. Only, we must now be his paint brush. We have to paint over the smudge marks of hatred with the Love of the Lord. We have to fill in the empty spots of selfishness with sacrificial love. We have to turn from the glorification of materialism to the determination to live the spiritual life given to us by the Passion, Death and Resurrection of the Lord. The restoration of God's artwork began with Jesus, but it must continue with.

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