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The Necessity of Reverence

Cultivating a pilgrim's eye for beauty

Sister Dominic Mary Heath

"HOLY SEPULCHRE, Batman!" It's a saying my family coined on a trip to the Holy Land when I was a child. The idea of pilgrimage was still foreign to my family of American evangelicals, and I remember my dad turning to me as we entered the tomb of Christ in Jerusalem, a site at the heart of Christian devotion to the Incarnation: "Holy Sepulchre... Batman!" he said, and I echoed it back to him.

This saying, which has since become something of a family joke, captures the typical irreverence of tourists. Too often, that's what tourists do: tame uncommon beauty with everyday irreverence. For every one soul flooded with grace in a sacred space like the ancient Church of the Holy Sepulchre, there are floods of tourists moved simply by curiosity and a very natural desire to see something famous. Sudden exposure to beauty just doesn't work miracles for a lot of people, even those who should "know better."

Discussions on beauty in evangelization tend to overlook just this point: conversion is a grace, but reverence is cultivated. Reverence is not a heightened emotional state provoked by a bring-me-to-my-knees aesthetic experience. It's an attitude that involves a certain way of seeing the world, a discernment of the excellence in things and particularly the excellence of God, which gives me the capacity first to recognize, then to receive, the beautiful. Reverence can tell me what I'm looking for when I behold something beautiful. And when it tells me I'm looking for Christ, I become a pilgrim with purpose, not a tourist without aim.

The good news is that even if you can't get to a famous cathedral in Jerusalem, Cologne, Santiago, or Westminster, you can cultivate reverence.

What Is Reverence?

Reverence is the attitude of submission we owe to God as the source of our being. It is the posture proper to us as human persons who should recognize our finitude: *I did not make myself and I do not hold myself in being*. Reverence can be called a *posture* in both senses of the word: it involves not only the subjection of our minds, but also the humbling of our bodies. The first leads to the second, like charity in the heart leads to charity in deeds. In fact, the posture of reverence is formed in us by a whole host of virtues with charity at their head. Reverence thrives on charity because charity is a love of God, self, and neighbour for God's own sake that *informs* all the Christian virtues, animating and perfecting them like the soul *informs*, or animates, the body.

Charity forms reverence in us, first, by teaching us the fear of the Lord. When our fear of God is a *slave-like* fear of punishment, our reverence is real but imperfect. Reverence reaches its perfection when our fear matures into a *childlike* dread of separation from a beloved Father. As Saint Augustine says, "It is one thing to be afraid he may come, another to be afraid he may leave you." Brought to perfection by love, reverence becomes the sign of the Holy Spirit in us crying "Abba! Father!" (Gal. 4:6).

God, of course, is not just any father; he is the first principle of creation and the eternal wisdom governing all things. We revere him not because of his *goodness* (this is the object of our love), but because of his *excellence*. Reverence takes excellence as its object because it is a humbled response to what excels us. This gives reverence a special relation to another set of virtues – the virtues of justice. *(To be continued)*

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Funded by Living the Joy of the Gospel Campaign

Sacraments Review in Dublin Diocese

In September 2018, Archbishop Martin set up a Sacraments Review Group to make recommendations on the future practice of Baptism, First Reconciliation, First Communion and Confirmation. The approach agreed was to consult widely and deeply and, out of this, to determine future directions.

The Review Group carried out an online survey, with 1800 responses from parents, parishioners, clergy and parish workers, school principals and teachers.

The responses have been collated and now form the raw material for a further stage of reflection among the interested parties. *The responses are not 'results' but data for use for future reflection and consideration.*

A strong pattern in the responses is a desire for change being expressed across the board.

Ireland is unique in its dependence on schools in preparing for and celebrating the sacraments. Parishes are becoming more involved and there are some efforts to involve parents more. However, in the survey, all express dissatisfaction that it is still largely a school event. Schools themselves feel that they are still working in a vacuum.

All the voices in the survey are asking for more movement in the direction of parent and parish responsibility. All are saying that passing on the faith is primarily the responsibility of the home, with the support of the parish as well as the school.

A big challenge at the next stage is to figure how this can be actioned. It seems to be about a significant shift of focus, from the current set-up where schools engage with children to a new set-up where parishes engage with parents.

At the heart of what has to be figured out, the survey suggests, is how to relate to parents who are coming from different places. The survey highlights the contrasts between parents who are churchgoers, others who are not churchgoers but profess to have faith, others again who see the sacraments as family milestones with no faith dimension.

The survey asked about future practice in relation to the preparation and celebration of the sacraments. The responses seem to register a strong desire among schools for the home and parish to step up to the plate. The survey did not ask about religious education and religious formation.

The next step is to meet with people who participated in the survey, from home, parish and school. At these gatherings over the coming months we will reflect together on the responses and what they might mean for us.

Faith for Life

Faith for Life is an adult faith course designed to help you to discover new ways to live out your faith in the reality of today's world, within relationships, family, home, workplaces and the events of daily life. It aims to help you to be more active, open, faithful, confident, trusting and willing to work for change.

The course is experienced as a journey of four 'Movements' inviting you to explore the call you received in Baptism. The process for each weekend includes teaching, personal and group reflection, prayer and liturgy.

Participant's are required to attend all four weekends. This course has taken place in Dublin Diocese for the past six years and is designed and delivered, through a partnership agreement between the Archdioceses of Dublin and the Archdiocese of Liverpool.

The course will take place again this year starting in October.

If you would like more information please email: rlavelle@dublindiocese.ie or evangelisation@dublindiocese.ie

THOUGHT FOR A DAY

It is striking how the earliest Christians, like mainstream rabbis of the period, clung to the twin doctrines of creation and judgment: God made the world and made it good, and one day he will come and sort it all out. Take away the goodness of creation, and you have a judgment where the world is thrown away as so much garbage, leaving us sitting on a disembodied cloud playing disembodied harps. Take away judgment, and you have this world rumbling on with no hope except the pantheist one of endless cycles of being and history. Put creation and judgment together, and you get new heavens and new earth, created not *ex nihilo* but *ex vetere*, not out of nothing but out of the old one, the existing one. *N. T. Wright*

In Memoriam

6pm: John and Elizabeth Lynch (Anniversary)
9.30am: Catherine Crean (Anniversary)

Masses and Confession

Sundays: Vigil, 6pm (Saturday), 9.30am, 11am, 5pm
Croatian Community Mass 6.30pm
Daily masses 10am and 12.40pm, Saturday 10am only
-**Rosary** daily after 10am mass

Adoration Blessed Sacrament, Weds 10.30-12.40

Last Week's Collections

1st Collection: €1,016
2nd Collection: €1,060 (Ministry)
Weekday collections: €530.

THANK YOU