

## **DANCING WITH GOD THROUGH THE ARTS**

### **Part Six – Saints Among the Artists**

So far, we have talked about Beauty that is more than just *in the eye of the beholder*, but a call from God to *dance* or at least *get in step* with our creator through creation in its many manifestations, like art, music, dance, math, architecture, language, nature, and so forth. It is through our creativity that we actively participate with God in our world through beauty, even if that participation is simply visiting galleries and attending music halls.

But beauty can be more than the creative arts since it can also include even the area of Math and Physics. Again, this was shown through the interesting article on *Emmy Noether's Beautiful Theorem*, which begs the question, what is beauty? Hopefully Fr. Spitzer, SJ, was able to satisfy this question through his philosophical point of view from his book in the section *The Nature of Beauty and the Desire for Perfect Beauty*.

In this last part, I would like to present the architects, even one who is now up for canonization, Servant of God Antoni Gaudi (1842-1924), **Servant of God**, an *Architect* who lived in Barcelona, and was offered the project to design and build a new Church called Holy Family, *Nuestra Familia*. The project relied on a lay association and individual donations. Over time the design grew into an astonishing work of art that reflected his imagination but also **his growing faith!**

He adopted an ascetic life, dressing as a workman, fasting frequently, and attending daily Mass. He even slept on a cot in the church. He died on 7<sup>th</sup> June 1926 when he was struck by a streetcar but wasn't identified as the now famous architect until later. He was mistaken as a beggar and taken to the charity ward of the local hospital where he died on the 10<sup>th</sup> of June 1926, three days later! Today it is nearing completion and was consecrated and then in 1999 it was named as basilica. Antoni Gaudi, Servant of God, has been proposed as a candidate for canonization!

The 19<sup>th</sup> century has produced several religious and lay Catholics who evangelized through their art and beauty. Two named in the Catholic

Telegraph in the February 2021 edition are Gerhard Lamers (1871-1964) and Edward Schulte (1890-1974).

Gerhard Lamers was born in Germany and showed artistic talent from a young age. While he lived in Germany, he decorated more than 100 churches in Europe. Eventually he moved to America and continued to paint murals in churches including commissions in the archdiocese of Cincinnati: *St. William*, Price Hill; *Annunciation*, Clifton and *All Saints*, Kenwood.

Edward Schulte from Cincinnati was a leading authority on church architecture. He received 300 commissions over 40 years from new church structures and renovations to schools and convents. He led the renovation of St. Peter in Chains Cathedral and now Basilica and other churches including St. Cecilia and Christ the King.

The last artist to be included is Marie-Alain Couturier, Dominican Artist (1897-1924). "Following service in World War I and years of art studies, he entered the French Dominican Province in 1924. His superiors urged him to pursue his artistic talents, now in service of the Church. Eventually he and a fellow Dominican Fr. Pie Regamey became editors of *L'Art Sacre*, turning the journal into a vehicle for their vision of artistic renewal."

Concerning art, he felt so strongly about good art that he even went so far as to write, "Better a genius without faith than a believer without talent." And again, "...we told ourselves that a great artist is always a great spiritual being, each in his own manner." Many applauded his efforts, which included support of other artists such as Rouault, Matisse, Chagall, Braque, and Le Corbusier. Unfortunately, many traditionalists were appalled, and such above statements only added fuel to their fire. In 1952 the Vatican issued a statement on sacred art that was widely seen as a rebuke of the Dominican project; it warned against "*distortions and unusual images*," that can spread "*dangerous*" error. Next year *L'Art Sacre* was suppressed.

It seems that *beauty is in the eye of the beholder* was superseded by beauty is in the eye of who or what the Church deems beautiful. ***If God is Beautiful and Beauty is God***, I believe that all true believers participate in God's attributes with sincere hearts and everyone else will eventually be led there if their participation in beauty through art is sincere.