

## *Selected Quotes*

### “Art in the Worship Environment”

SWLC Study Week Workshop C-4



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## Church Documents

- *Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy*  
(1963)
- *General Instruction of the Roman Missal*  
(1975, 2003)
- *Environment and Art in Catholic Worship*  
(1978; See Note 2 on next slide.)
- *Built of Living Stones*  
(2000)

## Church Documents - Notes

1. Please refer to complete text for context and important footnotes.
2. The American Bishops' Committee on the Liturgy published the document *Environment and Art in Catholic Worship* in 1978. This document has been replaced by *Built of Living Stones*. Quotes from EACW are included for insight and historic reference only.

## Noble Simplicity

- . . . in the revision of the liturgy, the following general norms should be observed:
- The rites should be distinguished by a noble simplicity; they should be short, clear, and unencumbered by useless repetitions, . . .

*(Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy #34)*

## Noble Beauty

“Ordinaries, by the encouragement and favor they show to art which is truly sacred, should strive after noble beauty rather than mere sumptuous display.”

*(Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy #124)*

## Noble Simplicity

“Church décor should contribute toward the church’s noble simplicity rather than ostentation. In the choice of materials for church appointments there should be a concern for genuineness of materials and an intent to foster the instruction of the faithful and the dignity of the entire space.”

*(General Instruction of the Roman Missal #292)*

## Sacred Art and Sacred Furnishings

- The practice of placing sacred images in churches so that they may be venerated by the faithful is to be maintained
  - Moderation
  - Right Order

*(Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy #125 – 1963)*

## Images for Veneration by the Faithful

- In keeping with the Church's very ancient tradition, it is lawful to set up in places of worship images of Christ, Mary, and the saints for veneration by the faithful
  - Limit their number
  - Do not distract from the celebration
  - Only one image of any one saint
  - Consider the devotion of the entire community

*(General Instruction of the Roman Missal #278 – 1975)*

## EACW 1978

“In a period of church and liturgical renewal, the attempt to recover a solid grasp of Church and faith and rites involves the rejection of certain embellishments which have in the course of history become hindrances.”

*(Environment and Art in Catholic Worship # 99 )*

## EACW 1978

“In many areas of religious practice, this means simplifying and refocusing on primary symbols. In building, this effort has resulted in more austere interiors, with fewer objects on the walls and in the corners.”

*(Environment and Art in Catholic Worship # 99)*

## Quality and Appropriateness

“*Quality* is perceived only by contemplation, by standing back from things and really trying to *see* them, trying to let them speak to the beholder.”

- More than ‘What is it worth?’ ‘What will it do?’
- Hand stamp of the artist
- Honesty and care in the making
- Honesty and genuineness of materials

(*Environment and Art in Catholic Worship* #20 – 1978)

## Quality and Appropriateness

“*Appropriateness* is another demand that liturgy rightfully makes upon any art that would serve its action.”

- Bear the weight of mystery, awe, reverence, wonder
- Must clearly *serve* (and not interrupt) ritual action

(*Environment and Art in Catholic Worship* #21 – 1978)

## Quality

- Perceived by contemplation
- Not pragmatic
- Honesty and genuineness of materials
- Love and care in the making
- Personal stamp of the artist
- Draws the beholder to the Creator

*(Built of Living Stones #146-147)*

## Quality

- Any art form employed in the liturgical environment or action:
- Architecture, Windows, Doors, Every Visible and Tactile Detail;
- Furniture, Glass Art, Sculpture, Painting, Pottery; Textiles, Vesture;
- Music, Bells, Organs, Other Instruments

*(Built of Living Stones 147, 149)*

## Quality

“The integrity and energy of a piece of art, produced individually by the labor of an artist, is always to be preferred above objects that are mass-produced”

*(Built of Living Stones #147)*

## Appropriateness

- Capable of bearing the weight of mystery, awe, reverence, wonder
- Clearly serve (and not interrupt) ritual action
- Nothing trivial and self-centered
- Nothing fake, cheap or shoddy, nothing pretentious or superficial

*(EACW/ Built of Living Stones #148)*



## Appropriateness

- A kind of transparency - see and experience something beyond the surface
- Stretching beyond what the senses perceive
- Reaching beneath the surface reality toward its hidden mystery

*(Environment and Art in Catholic Worship)*

## Appropriateness

- “Beautiful, compelling artworks draw the People of God into a deeper awareness of their lives and of their common goals as a Christian community as well as of their roles and responsibilities in the wider world.”

*(Built of Living Stones #148)*

## Quality and Appropriateness

*“If sham and illusion, always irritating, become detestable in sacred art, it is because it is profoundly illogical that deceit should serve to decorate God’s house.”*



Jacques Maritain,  
*“Art and Scholasticism”*

## Sacred Images – 2003 GIRM

“... in keeping with the Church’s very ancient tradition, images of the Lord, the Blessed Virgin Mary, and the saints may be displayed in sacred buildings for veneration by the faithful, and may be so arranged there that they guide the faithful to the mysteries of the faith celebrated there.”

*(General Instruction of the Roman Missal #318, 2003)*

## Sacred Images – 2003 GIRM

- The number should not be increased *indiscriminately*
- Arrange the images so as not to *distract* the faithful's attention from the celebration itself
- One image of any given Saint
- Consider the devotion of the *entire community*
- Consider the *beauty* and *dignity* of the images

*(General Instruction of the Roman Missal #318, 2003)*

## The Role of Religious Art

- Evoke the transcendent mystery of God
- Bring the divine to the human world
- Raise the human world to God
- Provide spiritual insights
- Stir the emotions

*(Built of Living Stones #142 - 145)*



## The Role of Religious Art

- Not just something pretty or well made
- Not to make the ordinary more pleasant  
(Not just “Catholic Decoration”)
- The place of worship is not a museum
- Enhance our life of prayer
- Invite the world into the mysteries of our faith

*(Built of Living Stones #142 - 145)*

## Materials of the Artist – BLS 2000

- Bridge the visible and the mysterious invisible
- Express ideas, concepts, visions, imagination
- Nourish the senses with beauty
- Disclose the “transcendent value” and the  
“aura of mystery” in the Christian message

*(Built of Living Stones #161)*

## Materials of the Artist – BLS 2000

- Artists choose materials with integrity because:
  - They endure from generation to generation
  - They are noble enough for holy actions
  - They express what is most respected and beautiful

*(Built of Living Stones #162)*

## Materials of the Artist – BLS 2000

- Materials and designs that are of short lived popularity are unworthy
- Avoid promoting features identified with any specific class, ethnic, or age group to the exclusion of others in the community

*(Built of Living Stones #162)*

## Materials of the Artist – BLS 2000

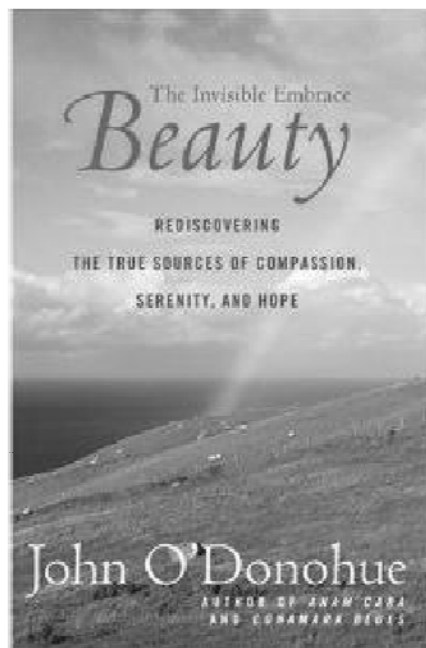
- Similarly, artworks consisting of technological and interactive media, such as video and other electronically fabricated images, may also be appropriate for sacred purposes.

*(Built of Living Stones #163)*

## Materials of the Artist – BLS 2000

- Subject to the same criteria of suitability as other sacred art, technologically produced works of art can point toward sacred realities even though they do not possess the more enduring form, color, texture, weight, and density found in more traditional sacred art.

*(Built of Living Stones #163)*



## Beauty

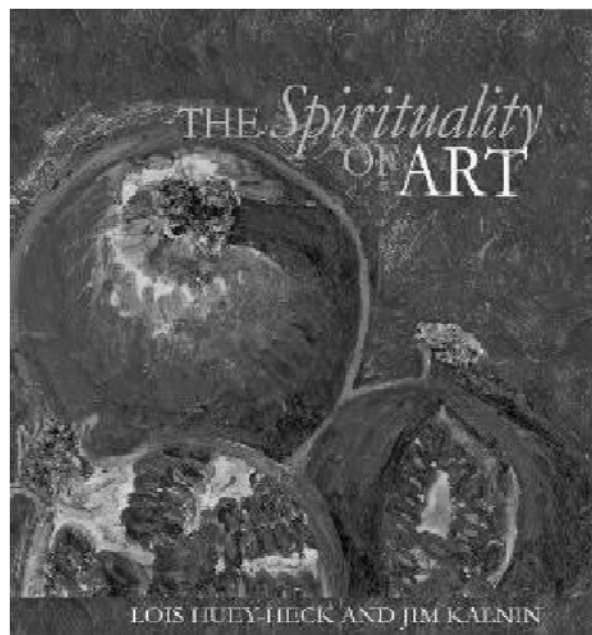
“When beauty touches our lives, the moment becomes luminous. These grace-moments are gifts that surprise us.”

“In order to become attentive to beauty, we need to rediscover the art of reverence.”

## Beauty

“The experience of beauty . . . envelops and overcomes us. Yet there are times when beauty reveals itself slowly. There are times when beauty is shy and hesitates until it can trust the worthiness of the beholder.”

“Beauty tends to avoid the siren call of the obvious.”





## Spirituality of Art

“I came to appreciate how important time is when it comes to seeing.”

“Culturally, we move so fast now.  
‘Anything that slows us down is a spiritual practice.’”

## Spirituality of Art

“When we take the time to really see a piece of art - we are affected in some way.”

“When we open ourselves to the intrinsic value of art - in its vast array of styles and techniques - we open ourselves to being met by the Holy One who speaks in unexpected ways. May you be surprised.”

## Spirituality of Art

“Suspending judgment and overcoming the need to have answers to everything can indeed open the doors behind which lie great rewards. Learning to look at art as a form of prayer or meditation leads us to new levels of understanding, and makes any spiritual journey that much richer and more rewarding.”