

## Column

We've all heard people say, I do my worshipping out-of-doors . . . on the golf green, walking in the forest, viewing a sunrise or looking over the mountains at the close of day. Perhaps you have used that line yourself.

God's great outdoors can indeed be inspiring. A brilliant sunrise or sunset can take your breath away, give you a tingle right down at the very core of your soul.

The same is true with art. I remember many years ago walking into St. Paul's Cathedral, London, and looking up at the mosaics on the domes. I felt I had been lifted up into heaven. Earth and heaven were one.

Philip Kosloski, a Roman Catholic author, develops this thought that both nature and art can be vehicles of grace when he writes:

“In addition to the beauty of creation, the beauty of art, both religious and secular, has the capacity to lead souls into a deeper union with Christ. Similar to the beauty of the natural world, artistic creation possesses its own capacity to evoke the ineffable aspect of the mystery of God.”

There is no doubt truth in Kosloski's observation. Beauty, whether drawn in the sky or painted on a canvas, can create a longing for something, Someone, outside of ourselves. Both can cause us to look up in awe and wonder and give moments of joy.

But, there are limits to the ecstasy we experience in these moments. Something more is needed, and that is the full disclosure of God and His purposes and His will which comes to us in Jesus Christ.

The world around us – the soaring mountains, the mighty waves of the sea, the little flower in the field, the soaring oak tree – opens the shutter of the mind providing a momentary intake of light. Jesus, the Son of God, meanwhile, brings us into the full blaze of God's glory, not for a moment, but for all eternity.

Shifting metaphors, nature and art might be thought of as signs along a road. It would be foolish indeed to pull your car over to the roadside and to continue to gaze on one of those signs. Signs are significant, but they are not the destination. So it is with nature and art. Jesus is destination we seek, whether we know it or not.

He is the end of life's quest. St. John in the Prologue to the Fourth Gospel puts it like this: "In him was life; and the life was the light of men."

Weary seekers of truth: Turn your eyes upon Him.

*O Heavenly Father, who hast filled the world with beauty; Open, we beseech thee, our eyes to behold thy gracious hand in all thy works; that rejoicing in thy whole creation, we may learn to serve thee with gladness; for the sake of him by whom all things were made, thy Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.*

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