

Afterword

“Give me Your eyes for just one second
Give me Your eyes so I can see
Everything that I keep missing
Give me Your love for humanity
Give me Your arms for the broken-hearted
The ones that are far beyond my reach
Give me Your heart for the ones forgotten
Give me Your eyes so I can see”
—Brandon Heath

IMAGINE: WHAT WOULD the world would look like if we pursue redeemed vision?

Every man and woman would see themselves — and each person they meet — as God sees them: As persons with inherent dignity, worthy of respect. The very idea of reducing a person to his or her sex appeal and using others as a means of one's selfish gratification would be unthinkable. The body would be treated as an integral part of the person instead of a commodity, threat, or burden.

Some may scoff that the vision proposed within these pages is a utopia, an impossible dream that couldn't possibly be realized because we are fallen creatures. To these people, I would simply

ask, is redemption real? To what extent are you willing to allow redemption — rather than the Fall — to direct your life?

Lust does not have the final word. Through the power of Jesus Christ, we have been given the ability to look with a loving gaze and shatter the chains in which we and others are bound. God's grace gives us the power to pursue this redeemed vision of the body *today*.

My prayer is that this book will give people hope that real freedom from the lure of pornography is indeed within their grasp — and that of their loved ones.

BE NOT AFRAID! I dare you to take up the challenge to change the world by changing the way you see. My prayer for you is that you will say YES! to pursuing the deepest desires of your heart, never settling for a counterfeit, but instead seeking what will satisfy.

“Ask, and it will be given you; seek, and you will find;
knock, and it will be opened to you.”

—Matthew 7:7

Appendix

Nudity as an antidote for lust: a personal testimony

by Fr. Thomas J. Loya, S.T.B., M.A.

IN BOTH *LOVE AND RESPONSIBILITY*, and in his *Man and Woman He Created Them: A Theology of the Body*, St. John Paul II makes the salient point that it is never the human body itself that is a default occasion for lust. Rather it is the crucial dynamic that takes place between how the body is presented and how it is received by the viewer. It is precisely the sacred art of the Church that gives testimony to this.

Beneath the floor-to-ceiling nudity of the Sistine Chapel, complete with detailed genitalia, the Vicar of Christ, the Pope, is chosen and the Holy Sacrament of the Eucharist is celebrated. Only in a Church that knows how to present and to see the naked human body mystically can such a reality exist and draw the viewer to a transcendent experience. Any form of lust or even of scandal in this case becomes a willful choice on the part of the viewer and has nothing to do with the mystical presentation of the human body in this sacred art. However, the Sistine Chapel is but one example of the preponderance of the presentations of the naked human body throughout the entire history of both sacred and legitimate secular art. The human body remains and always will be the primary motif repeated in the art of the Church and of the secular world. Plain and simple, to study art is to study the naked human body.

My entire life has been spent studying and practicing visual art. There is no real study and practice of art — there is no real art, there is no real artist — without first and always the study and attempted mastery of the naked human body. This is because “The body, in fact, and only the body, is capable of making visible what is invisible.”¹ The human body represents the sum total of all of the elements of beauty found in the entire order of creation. Artists have known this since time immemorial, and this why to be a real artist — a capable artist — one must strive always to master the representation of the naked human body. There is so much more to being an artist than manipulating premade images on a computer screen and calling oneself a graphic “artist.”

My love and study of visual arts all of my life meant that since childhood I therefore studied the presentation of the naked human body.

The body, in fact, and only the body, is capable of making visible what

There was never a hint or temptation in my eye or heart, ever, to turn what I was seeing into lust. When I went to Art School

is invisible

TOB 19:4

I knew that I would be drawing and painting in real life what I only saw in books and art museums — the naked human body. I was 18 years old when I entered the Cleveland Institute of Art, the age at which males physiologically are at their incredibly powerful sexual peak.

I shall never forget that first moment when a young female model in my first life drawing class stepped up onto the podium, dropped her gown, and struck a nude pose in front of us young students. I can only describe the experience as mystical. In that

¹ TOB 19:4

moment I crossed a threshold of seeing, of recognizing the gift that was being ENTRUSTED to me and how I must receive that gift. My reciprocal gift was to attempt, with all of my artistic ability, to capture through pencil and paper the integrated elements of beauty that stood before me.

Any serious student of art can testify to the fact that in the process of trying to capture through line and color the character of the human body, there is a focus, a concentration, a challenge that necessarily gives no room for lust and shame. For a live nude model to become an occasion of lust would require the student in a life drawing class to put their pencil down, pause, and CHOOSE to start lusting at what they are seeing.

During life drawing classes, the models would take a break from what is a torturous task of trying to sustain a motionless pose even for a short time. During the break the models would often take a peek at the progress of our art work to see how the gift of themselves that they were giving was being reciprocated by the viewer, the art students. The models usually donned their robe during these breaks, but not always. Some felt so at ease with the dynamic of the life drawing class that they could sometimes converse with the art students still totally nude. Having had this experience many times I can say that as a life drawing class student I was perfectly at ease conversing with a live naked person standing next to me.

An amusing example can help to confirm the whole point here that purity of heart and art is all about seeing mystically — how something is presented and how it is received:

Models who give the gift of their bodies in life drawing class come in all types of sizes, shapes, and ages. Contrary to our culture's obsession with super thin female bodies, when

it came to female models I always found the less shapely and even older models (with sags and wrinkles) more interesting as an art subject.

One day in one of my life drawing classes, we had what our culture would consider a particularly shapely female model. We spent hours trying to capture the character and pose of her naked female body. When our life drawing class ended that day, I was in the hallway of our art school conversing with a male friend of mine. As we spoke we first heard the clip-clop of high heeled shoes coming down the hallway. But then both our gazes were simultaneously drawn to a figure of a young lady walking by us with high heeled shoes and what was at that time the fashionable short skirt with low neckline. My friend and I looked at each other and laughed aloud.

The woman who suddenly drew our attention was the very model whose completely naked body we had just spent hours looking at in our life drawing class. In her full nakedness she did not draw our attention other than the usual artist's focus required to capture the character of her body and pose in a life drawing class. It was when her body was no longer naked but partially clothed that our attention was grabbed, an attention that could easily have been a gaze of lust exclusively by means of the presentation of her body through the style of clothing that was designed by fashion designers to in fact be attention grabbing.² St. John Paul II was so correct. It is not the naked human body

2 To reiterate the point presented in Chapter 9, the responsibility for how a man looks at a woman lies entirely with the man. Fr. Loya rightly acknowledges here that the intent of the fashion industry and the intent of the person choosing what to wear contribute to "how [the body] is presented," but "how it is perceived" depends on the orientation of the recipient's heart.

alone that is an occasion for lust — it is how it is presented and how it is perceived.

To achieve a true purity of heart, all human beings must learn and choose to see what artists naturally see — beauty. Purity of heart comes from a choice to see mystically: to see God, who is true, good, and beautiful, revealed in every dimension of the created order come to its fullest in the human body-person. Although artists are striving to capture objective elements of beauty when working with the subject of the naked human body, this is not to be confused with the artist objecti-FYING the person that is being revealed before them through their body. The artist never forgets that this is a person who is taking a huge risk, as St. John Paul II mentions, to trust that the gaze of the viewer (artist) is being received in the manner in which it is being given as gift. The artist reciprocates with the gift of their particular artistic portrayal of the mystical beauty that stands before them.

I am a Byzantine Catholic priest. I daresay that my lifelong experience of art, which always has as its fundamental motif the presentation of the human body, is one of the very things that inspired me to become a priest. Having the lifelong privilege of studying God revealed through the beauty of the human body-person and having that privilege come to its crowning opportunity during my art school life class experience inspired me to answer a call whose very nature is to practice, preach, and teach chastity and purity of heart. The work of the priest is indeed to help people see mystically and live according to that mystical apprehension of the beauty of God's entire order of creation.

The only way to truly cross the threshold between lust and purity of heart is not to run from our sexuality and the appro-

priate sight and presentation of the human body. Rather it is to run headlong into it — but with the eye of the artist, with the eye of the mystic, the eye of the contemplative. When our eye, mind, heart, and soul sees as God sees — as God has enabled the artist to see — our appetite for the counterfeit seeing of lust and pornography becomes uninspiring and unattractive.

As a priest-artist, Fr. Thomas Loya uses art as therapy in healing lust and addictions to pornography. He even takes people to museums and guides them through the art of gazing mystically upon the naked human body properly presented in the greatest masterpieces of sacred and secular art.

In addition to his background in art, Fr. Loya was present every Wednesday for Pope St. John Paul II's personal presentation of the Theology of the Body. Fr. Loya is co-founder of the Tabor Life Institute for teaching and formation in the Theology of the Body (taborlife.org).

Redeemed Vision

Setting the Blind Free
from the Pornified Culture

Steve Pokorny