

Some Reflection Questions Following Encounter of December 12, 2008

Catechesis by Archbishop Richard Smith

Full text available at www.edmontoncatholic-church.com/beautiful.shtml

What does beauty mean to me? What relationship in my life would I call beautiful and why? Where does my relationship with Jesus fit into this?

In what ways do I share my love for Jesus with others? Am I sometimes afraid to speak of my love for Jesus even with my closest friends? Why?

What are the deep questions in my life, that I might not even want to admit? How can my relationship with Jesus lead me to explore these more profoundly? In times of economic instability, terrorism, and uncertainty, what does my faith in Jesus really mean to me?

Is my relationship with God truly a dialogue, or is it a monologue? Do I both speak and listen to God in my prayer and in my life?

What have I learned from the Scriptures about my own human worth and dignity? About that of others? What biblical stories have inspired this learning?

Pray Psalm 139, verses 1-18. Savour the verses 13-14: "It was you who formed my inward parts; you knit me together in my mother's womb. I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made." *What does this psalm tell me about myself? If I apply the same verses to someone I dislike or consider an enemy, substitute their name for "my", "me" and "I", then how does this change my attitude towards that person?*

Where do I see the signs of my own beauty and goodness in my life? How can I grow in awareness that these gifts flow from my relation to God? In what ways is my goodness a "fragile goodness"?

In his homily on December 31, 1977, the martyred Archbishop Oscar Romero said: "The Church, entrusted with the earth's glory, believes that in each person is the Creator's image and that everyone who tramples it offends God. As holy defender of God's rights and of God's images, the Church must cry out. It takes as spittle in its face, as lashes on its back, as the cross in its passion, all that human beings suffer, even though they be unbelievers. They suffer as God's images. There is no dichotomy between the human person and God's image. Whoever tortures a human being, whoever outrages a human being abuses God's image, and the Church takes as its own that cross, that martyrdom." *In our world, where is the Creator's image being trampled? How might we be complicit in this destruction of God's image? How can we defend it?*

Archbishop Smith spoke of this as being all about encountering Jesus. *How do I **encounter** Jesus Christ? In what ways has my experience of this event been an encounter with Our Lord?*

Witness Presentation by Lea Singh

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When I hear the word beauty, what comes to mind? How has our culture influenced our understanding of beauty?

The beauty of the Gospel is often revealed to us through other people or events. Which people or events have revealed the beauty of the Gospel to me? How do I show the beauty of the Gospel in my life?

How does my Christian faith change my day-to-day life? Are there areas where I could do better? What would have to change?

Has there been a point in my life when “it all felt strangely hollow and empty”? How did I respond? What support did I receive from my faith community or local parish? What do I need right now to support me through that experience and come to something more life-giving?

What keeps me from feeling my own hunger for real meaning and the truth? What would I be willing to give up in order to satisfy that hunger?

Lea described the beauty of sacrificial love modelled on Jesus’ love. Can I identify moments in my life when I have lived this way? Have I seen that love in the life of others? What’s the experience like? How do I show in my daily living that I am created in the image and likeness of God? That I am in relationship with Jesus?

Read Matthew 19: 16-26, the Parable of the Rich Young Man.

Have I been pursuing things that I thought would make me happy – and now find that I’m still unfulfilled or disappointed? What are the good things in my life right now? How might a fuller embrace of the Gospel enrich these?

Lea described the consequences of her “downward mobility”: lower income, different housing, and a different lifestyle in general, and yet a profound sense of unity at the depths of her being. Right now, can I say with her, that my life, my work, my values, my faith and my meaning in life are completely aligned? If not, which one is out of alignment? What might I need to change or give up to come to a similar sense of unity? Lea’s talents, dreams, ambition and education prepared her in certain ways for the work she is currently doing, even as she gave up one good thing for another. How do I see God’s providence acting in my own life, not just in the positive experiences, but also in more difficult ones?

Does the profound alignment that Lea spoke of guarantee such smooth sailing in life? What place might suffering, misunderstanding, or discouragement have in the life of a faithful disciple? How does the Gospel help me live through these kinds of experiences? Where is the beauty in them?

Saint Francis of Assisi has written, “**Let all the brothers, however, preach by their deeds.**” (**Earlier Rule of St. Francis (1221), chapter 17, on Preaching**). Can I describe the kinds of preaching I have witnessed in this way? How might I have lived in this manner?