

Have you ever heard a piece of music and been awakened?

Have you ever seen a painting and been inspired?

Have you ever read a poem and found that you understood something about yourself for the first time?

Have you ever had an experience that changed you?

What are your answers to those questions?

The problem:

- Our lives are full of distractions. Very rarely do we realize the beauty around us or in us.
- We are lost in our busyness and the loudness of the day.
- We forget that the presence of Christ, in all His beauty, is all around us.

What were you doing on the way here tonight?

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- *Listening to music?*
- *The news or podcast?*
- *Thinking about work?*
- *Worrying?*
- *Making plans?*
- *Distracting yourself??*

The solution:

- To be truly alive, we must be aware.
- We must be able to look at things with fascination and curiosity--seeking the face of Christ.
- We are called by Christ to be fully alive in Him!
- By observing culture in a present and mindful way, we can begin to be awakened to this curiosity.

Reflections about curiosity and hiddenness...

Shouldn’t I be curious about that which is hidden from me?

Reflections about curiosity and hiddenness...

We have faith in what we cannot see! Christ is “hidden” from us--a mystery--but he comes to us every moment with an invitation to know Him.

I ask “shouldn’t I be curious about that which is hidden from me?” How do I know He is there?

Recently, I had two experiences that opened my eyes to this question. The first was when I was cooking a pot of chili on my mom’s stove. (She didn’t know what I was cooking, as she was in the other room.) After I got it ready to simmer, I put the cover on the pot and went into the other room to read. After awhile, I heard her go into the kitchen. I thought to myself: “I bet she will look inside the pot.” A few seconds later, I heard the sound of the ceramic pot cover being moved and taken off. I smiled. She was curious! What

provoked her to be curious about the pot? Well, the tempting aroma of good food, the foreknowledge of her daughter’s good cooking, her hunger, and… the unknown! She was curious about what she couldn’t see, but had plenty of evidence of its existence.

Another example of this was over Christmas (and I think everyone has witnessed this…) when I saw a child who was given a wrapped present. He was so curious and excited that he couldn’t wait to open it. He was jumping up and down! Why is the child so excited about something, when he doesn’t know what it is? Here again, he is being provoked. The present has an unknown, it is wrapped and hidden, but the wrapping (and the mere gesture of the gift being given) provokes the curious questions: “What’s in there? Is it something that I’ve always wanted? Is it something that will make me happy?” “Is it something that will fulfill me?”

It is our task to recognize these “packages” that provoke us, make us curious, make us ask questions, make us wide eyed and fascinated, and make us have good desire. Jesus is here, and he wants to give us perpetual gifts.

What is culture?

- Culture (the expression of humanity) draws us out of ourselves and our distractions, and into a new way to look at reality and our faith.
- Culture can take the form of many things: art, literature, music, film, nature, etc--anything that can be considered in its beauty or that provokes us.
- Looking at culture in the proper way, can change us, and bring us closer to the presence of Christ.

Why do we look at culture?

- A piece of art can ask you questions about yourself, and your relationship with God—how do you see Him?
- This doesn't mean that you have to like something.
- You don't need to like something to have it provoke you, or challenge you, or make you grow.

Pay Attention!

We are constantly being given gifts! Whether we are aware enough to except them is the problem.

Pay Attention!

- Pay attention to the daily readings for the Mass
- How do I experience the content of these readings in my daily life? (They usually correspond!)
- What is God telling me?
- What am I lacking, and what do I need to ask for?

Pay Attention!

- Pay attention to the gifts that are being given
- What am I thankful for?
- What is new in my life?
- What are the experiences I am having?
- What is the meaning of these experiences?
- What is the meaning of my relationships?

Pay Attention!

- Pay attention to attitude and posture
- Am I being open to receive these gifts?
- What is holding me back from being open?
- Am I looking at my experiences positively or negatively?
- Where do I find beauty or meaning?
- What are the desires of my heart?

Why do we meet as a group?

- Culture is beauty and humanity.
- It can be quite beautiful to experience a piece of music by yourself—it can awaken you!
- However, what do you do after this awakening? Where do you go with it?
- We need others to share our experiences with. We need others to teach us by their experiences.
- In discussing culture together, we begin to recognize the presence of Christ in others and within ourselves.

The proposal:

- Encounter Culture is not a class, lecture, or program.
- It is not a discussion of theology or politics.
- If we are being true to ourselves, there are no right or wrong answers.
- Everyone with an open mind and heart is welcome.

Encounter Culture:

- Our monthly “awareness” training!

- By doing our work here in Encounter Culture, we will be trained for awareness in our daily lives...

The Method

(Please review the document entitled “The Method”)

Practice session

1) Access the piece of music *The Marriage of Figaro K 492: Overture, Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart at* *http://youtu.be/ikQNFqVkNNc*
2) Use the painting on the next slide and the reflection in the document titled: “Reflection 1/10” Reflect for the entirety of the piece.
3) Opening prayer
4) Intro and “Guides” for *Dinner and a Movie*
5) Watch and then use disscussions questions to discuss
6) Intro and Guides for *Vlad Sings the Blues*
7) Watch and disscuss
8) Closing Prayer



