

Catholic

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Discovering God's Message in Creation

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God's First "Book" of Revelation

The natural world around us—from the jubilant daffodils dotting our spring landscape to the starry constellations that illuminate the dark night—is nothing more and nothing less than God's work of art, his own gallery. Saint John Paul II used to refer to the natural world as God's first "book" of revelation, the Bible featuring his second book of revelation. Through the beauty, variety, harmony, and truly wonder-filled marvels of creation, God has something to say to us.

PEXELS



with a look of surprise and recognition. “That’s what I do when I drink my coffee and watch the sun come up,” he exclaimed. In the end, the Lord granted me the grace to give him the sacraments just a few hours before he passed away at age eighty-one.

I certainly can’t see everything that happened in his heart during those years. But I’m convinced that his hours spent admiring the simple beauties and wonders of God’s gallery only increased his lifelong love of nature and put him more in tune with the gentle voice of the Father’s love for him. And it was this love that opened him to dying under the mantle of Christ’s mercy with the grace of the sacraments.

To get to know artists, we typically begin by **contemplating their works.** This exploration gives us a peek into the minds and hearts of the creators. By taking time to delve deeper into their creativity, regardless of the medium—painting, sculpture, poetry, or music—we open ourselves up to be enriched by the artists’ gifts. Consider some of the most renowned works of art, like the Sistine ceiling or the paintings of Raphael. To fully unveil the wonder of the art requires a heart and mind quiet and attentive enough to listen to and receive the messages they contain.

The world created to be our habitat—where we are born, grow, and learn to live out our calling to be God’s faithful children and cocreators—is meant to be a place where we can discover and contemplate the love, power, and wisdom of our heavenly Father. And so if we are *not* discovering and contemplating God here, we will feel less ourselves, less in sync with who we are truly meant to be, and less in harmony with the rhythm of life we were meant to follow.

Yet these days it can be harder than ever to reach that deeper level of meaning and discovery. Our relentlessly frenetic, 24/7-news-cycled, social-media-saturated, digitally dominated daily life doesn’t exactly encourage interior peace and contemplative receptivity. So finding God’s messages in the beauties of nature requires the quiet humility of a soul open to receiving our Lord’s words, his smiles, and his whispers as they are woven into the tapestry of creation. And since God knows the noise we combat, he will help us if we are open to his help.

A Father’s Touch

My dad was not a man of faith. Although baptized Catholic, he fell away from the faith at a young age and never returned, even after I joined the seminary and was ordained. He had major heart surgery in his seventies, which forced him into a more sedentary lifestyle than he was used to. He didn’t like it, but he followed orders.

During those last years, he lived alone and spent much of his time simply sitting outside contemplating nature—gazing at his yard, its garden, and the trees and fields beyond. As he grew older, my visits became more frequent. I vividly recall how his soul seemed to relax, little by little. His anxiety dissipated, he became more joyful, and he listened better. He often asked me about prayer, and I would explain Christian meditation and contemplation. One time, he responded to my explanations

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