agenzia fides
Fondata nel 1927
Organo di informazione delle Pontificie Opere Missionarie
http://www.fides.org

VATICAN - "STONES, SOUNDS, COLOURS OF THE HOUSE OF GOD: The Vocation of the Artist (2)
by Bishop Mauro Piacenza

Vatican City (Fides Service) - The Book of Genesis, which we have often quoted, tells us «Now the earth was a formless void, there was darkness over the deep, with a divine wind sweeping over the waters.» (Genesis 1,2). Still today the Church proposes two beautiful prayers to the Holy Spirit, the sequence «Veni, Sancte Spiritus» and the hymn «Veni, Creator Spiritus», which every artist, as every Christian, should recite before beginning the day's activity. Spontaneously we note analogies between «"breath - breathing" and "inspiration"! aware that «the Spirit is the mysterious Artist of universe» (Letter to Artists John Paul II, 15).

Every artist should strive to depict the theme of the Eucharist, the central mystery in the life of the Church because it holds within it the Mysteries of Salvation. Artists, if believers, with their sensitivity and love can produce works of art capable of leading to biblical and theological knowledge of this Mystery of the Lord's real presence and therefore to individual and community adoration, silent and intimate dialogue with the Lord which constitutes a factor of unequalled effectiveness for self-fulfilment in holiness, for intelligence of the things of heaven, for the promotion of words of charity, for the budding of vocations, for true peace, for the unity of Christians, for the missionary spreading of the Kingdom of Christ to the ends of the earth and to the depth of every heart.

With regard to which themes to represent, Church tradition has elaborated an extensive iconographic repertoire of a narrative and symbolic character. The first, with an evident catechistic intent, draws both from the Old Testament, many episodes considered prophecies of the Eucharist (Abram and Melchisidech, the manna of the Exodus etc.), and from the New Testament, where the prophecies are fulfilled (the Last Supper, the crucifixion, the miracle of the loaves and fishes, the two disciples of Emmaus and so forth), particularly references to transubstantiation and adoration; the texts of this repertoire can be found in the Missal, in the Lectionary of the Mass of «Corpus Christi» or the votive mass of the Blessed Sacrament, or in the Ritual for Eucharistic devotion outside Mass. The symbols of the Eucharist well known, need only be mentioned; some belong to early Christian times, a fish, the good shepherd, a dove, loaves marked with the sign of the cross, a lamb, a pelican, etc. However not to be undervalued, also non-figurative art, applied to window panes or other techniques with drops of light and colour, can create an atmosphere propitiatory to meditation and contemplation of the Most Holy Sacrament.

The labour of those who build and decorate the house of the Lord receives its statute from Sacred Scripture. When he led the work to build the Holy House Moses told the Jews «'Look, Yahweh has singled out Bezalel son of Uri […],and has filled him with the spirit of God in wisdom, knowledge and skill in every kind of craft: in designing and carrying out work in gold and silver and bronze, in cutting stones to be set, in wood carving and in executing every kind of work» (Exodus 35, 30-33). Certainly the work of the artist is no common task and we have already emphasised that it is a very special vocation. Bezalel, Oholiab and all artists and artisans have a project to achieve «as God commands» (cfr Exodus 36,1), according to an image conceived by God and communicated to Moses.

However Christian artists and artisans are called not to execute predefined objects renouncing their own creativity, but rather to see their work as a service to something greater than simply self expression, worship of God, which has though rules and rituals and I say this also for the most metaphysical and "angelical" of art, in other words, music and song. To feel one is part of tradition in no way mummified, but palpitating and living for millennia, should not be lived as a mortification of creativity or a safe haven from which to draw for lack of inspiration; tradition offers guidelines which must be followed, to enrich rather than impoverish, an immeasurable heritage of faith, rich in consequences for evangelisation. This labour is a service «to» and «in» the Church, attentive to one's own personal inspiration.

I contenuti del sito sono pubblicati sotto Licenza Creative Common - http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/3.0/deed.it

+ Mauro Piacenza, president of the Pontifical Commission for the Cultural Goods of the Church, president of the Pontifical Commission for Sacred Archaeology. (Agenzia Fides 14/11/2006 - Righe 51, parole 734)

I contenuti del sito sono pubblicati sotto Licenza Creative Common - http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/3.0/deed.it