The Humanist

2nd Year Humanists’ visit to The Museum of Fine Arts

The Disparity Between Intellect and Character

Art and Politics in the Life of Jacques Louis David

Wednesdays with Pope Francis
We’re happy to release our first academic magazine, *The Humanist*. We would like to thank those who have contributed to it, making it possible to present it to our community.

Some might wonder what the point of *The Humanist*, or any type of academic magazine is... Why write out all these articles when one is so busy, and besides, nobody’s going to read them anyway!... To answer this question, there are three main reasons for an initiative like this: the first is the clear and personal expression of thought; the second, to stimulate conversation and reflection about anything that might be of interest and relevance; and third, to express oneself effectively in writing: clear, concise, and brief articles that convey the main idea, but at the same time that avoid expressing it in unnecessary lengths.

Another aspect of these articles is that you’re able to write with less formality, since it’s not a paper that you submit for your semester grade (This doesn’t mean that papers are useless and boring. On the contrary, they are very interesting and we can learn much from them. It’s a sharing of thought, not solely a collection of long, dragged-out, and formal essays.

This initiative offers an opportunity for the brothers to express their thoughts without being afraid of what others may think or say about them. They are not afraid of discussing and exploring both traditional and controversial topics that we either generally tend to avoid in our ordinary conversations, or never get a chance to address. Here the brothers are encouraged to write about any kind of topic they wish. What you’re afraid to talk about in community, you’re able to express in writing, and so effectively communicating your thoughts with honesty and clarity. Yes, it is good to talk about Plato and his ideas, but if you don’t agree with him, say that you don’t! What we’re looking for is not just a dull recital of the ancients’ ideas. We’re interested in the development of their profound and thoughtful insights and, most importantly, your own thoughts and conclusions.

However, this is not just a chance to spontaneously express whatever you feel like. On the contrary, all of us write with an end in mind, a purpose and a goal. We want to share our reflections and ideas in order to discover the truth, to explore the heart of man, to understand the meaning of beauty, and to address the multiple aspects of today’s culture. Through our writing, we learn to develop our thoughts, to stand up for what we believe to be true, and to express ourselves clearly in a pleasurable and instructive way, and therefore, effectively forming the “Culture Changers” of tomorrow.

Are you a Culture Changer? Hopefully you are or ardently aspire to become one. We hope that many will profit from this project, and that many others will continue to contribute to the expression and sharing of our personal thoughts and experiences.
LITERATURE
Emily Brontë

Wuthering Heights

Br Alphonse Choi

Wuthering Heights has been one of the most dramatically moving and satisfying book that I have read in the Humanities. The story takes you to an isolated and gloomy Yorkshire moor, a place of hidden secrets and domestic intrigues. There a maid recounts to her visitor a story of two tragic lovers, Catherine and Heathcliff, who were made for each other, and yet whose love, as it was, denied by fate. The famous line of Catherine, “I am Heathcliff!” summarizes their devotion to each other, but also expresses the cruel and tragic love that was destined for them. It’s a dramatic plot of covetous schemes and jealous rivalries, which certainly brings out the sinister character of the book, but this darkness also prepares the groundwork for a greater and deeper message. I found this book fascinating, not solely because of its dark and solemn character, its gloomy and depressing plot, or its romantic touch, but because out of all the chaos and darkness, I found one redeeming element: Love.

Charles Dickens

David Copperfield

Br Alphonse Choi

Out of all the multitude of books that I have read so far as a humanist, I have to say that my favorite was David Copperfield. Dickens is known for his vivid and often long and descriptive writing, which gives the impression that it’s a boring and slow novel. The modern reader will certainly feel like Dickens is dragging out his plot way too much, and as a consequence, many end up giving up halfway through the story. Contrary to this common view of the renowned English author, Copperfield is an engaging and fast-paced classic that everyone will enjoy. What makes it so unique and unlike his other books?

The story brings the reader to an 18th century England, right into the heart of the industrial revolution. It’s a story of a pitiable young boy, whose journey through life touches our hearts and moves us to compassion. It’s a journey of a broken and wounded heart, one that is so eager to find love, but like the rest of humanity, faces its joys and difficulties, its failures and successes, its tragedies and moments of deep and profound healing. Dickens himself said this was his favorite out of all the novels he had written, and I hope you find yourself agreeing with him as well.

A Tale Of Two Cities

Br David Lorenzo LC

I heard a lot of praise about A Tale of Two Cities. I personally am not that great of a fan of Charles Dickens because of his sophisticated language and how his books can be slow at times. However, I picked it up because it seemed short and a lot of people recommended it to me. At first I was disappointed. The story was incredibly confusing and I had no idea what was going on after sixty pages. I was tempted to give it up. If an author took so long to get to the point, to even explain who the main character was, it wasn’t worth reading. However, something prevented me from putting it down. “You can’t just give up. What if the rest of the book is really amazing? You’re going to miss out on one of the greatest classics of all time.” So I decided to give it a shot.

I kept on reading and things started to fall into place. It seemed like Dickens wanted this to be a suspense novel, in which the reader is kept guessing as to what is going on. The confusing structure was also in line with the setting of the book which was the French Revolution, which was a very unstable and confusing time. I kept reading and when I got to about page 200, things fell into place and I was able to find my footing. However, the previous 200 pages of confusion wasn’t worthless because all the details did matter in the story, and the sensation of figuring out how is exhilarating. As each clue was revealed, a certain feeling of accomplishment arrived. Dickens is good at revealing shocking things at the right moments and it really becomes an “aahh” moment. It is like figuring out an extremely difficult Math problem. It is painful, but when you finish it, you see the beauty behind it. This is what I experienced with this book. It is painful at first, but the suffering turns into joy. When I finished it, I was so glad that I didn’t turn it down when I felt tempted to, because the story it a truly beautiful one in which you see what it means to love and sacrifice to the point of total surrender.

The main thought that I got from this book is that when evil reigns, the value of the person moves toward nothing, but when love reigns, even the smallest person is worth everything.
Literature with Calvin & Hobbes

By Bill Waterson
**Annabel Lee**

*Edgar Allen Poe*

It was many and many a year ago,  
In a kingdom by the sea,  
That a maiden there lived whom you may know  
By the name of Annabel Lee;  

And this maiden she lived with no other thought  
Than to love and be loved by me.  

*I was a child and she was a child,*  
In this kingdom by the sea,  

But we loved with a love that was more than love—  
I and my Annabel Lee—  

With a love that the wingèd seraphs of Heaven  
Coveted her and me.  

And this was the reason that, long ago,  
In this kingdom by the sea,  

A wind blew out of a cloud, chilling  
My beautiful Annabel Lee;  

So that her highborn kinsmen came  
And bore her away from me,  

To shut her up in a sepulchre  
In this kingdom by the sea.  

The angels, not half so happy in Heaven,  
Went envying her and me—  

Yes!—that was the reason (as all men know,  
In this kingdom by the sea)  

That the wind came out of the cloud by night,  
Chilling and killing my Annabel Lee.  

But our love it was stronger by far than the love  
Of those who were older than we—  

Of many far wiser than we—  
And neither the angels in Heaven above  
Nor the demons down under the sea  
Can ever dissever my soul from the soul  
Of the beautiful Annabel Lee;  

For the moon never beams, without bringing me dreams  
Of the beautiful Annabel Lee;  

And the stars never rise, but I feel the bright eyes  
Of the beautiful Annabel Lee;  

And so, all the night-tide, I lie down by the side  
Of my darling—my darling—my life and my bride,  
In her sepulchre there by the sea—  
In her tomb by the sounding sea.
Want to write a successful book? Here’s all the qualities people look for.
Top Ten Most Read Books
I first came across this painting in the National Gallery, located in Washington D.C., the grand capital of America. While touring around the museum with a group of brothers, suddenly this painting caught my eye, unfortunately “forcing” me to abandon my team. Now you might ask, “What’s so special about this? At first glance, it might seem like there’s nothing unusual, but contemplate it for a couple of minutes and hopefully the painting will speak to your heart.

The work was done by a Spanish Baroque artist, Bartolomé Esteban Murillo. His is mostly known for his religious paintings, the realistic and refined depiction of his figures, and for the simplicity of his themes. Enter into the scene. Let it envelop you in its beauty, and fill you with wonder. The foremost girl playfully and curiously stares at you, her youthful face supported gently by her right arm as she comfortably leans forward on the windowsill. The second girl giggles mischievously, hiding behind the shutter as you stare back at her. What is your impression? Why are they staring and laughing at you? What captured my attention was not so much the perfection of the work, but the humane realism of the women, their utter simplicity, but at the same time, their curious and mysterious gaze.

I found this a fascinating experience, almost foolishly having a staring contest with the women at the window, and I hope you will find it a captivating experience as well.

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St. Cecilia was a third Century Martyr in Ancient Rome. She was a vowed virgin so when she married, she asked her husband to let her live her vow to God. Later her husband and his brother both converted due to Cecilia’s example. They were arrested and sentenced to death for their belief in God. Later, Cecilia was arrested and condemned to death in the steam rooms, although she remained unharmed by the heat. A guard tried to cut her head off with three strokes, but he couldn’t sever it. Cecilia remained alive for three days and then her soul went to heaven.

“While the organs played, Cecilia sang in her heart hymns to her Lord”. This Quote from the office on her feast describes her wedding day. Because of this she is invoked as the Patroness of Music. Cavallino presents Cecilia playing a violin signifying her “singing” to God. He uses tenebrism in order to allow her figure and the vivid red color stand out. The red clock and the palm branch signify her martyrdom. Cavallino paints the clock as if it is flying up to the sky, showing that Cecilia is sending her hymn and her life to God. This painting struck me mainly because I love music. Like St. Cecilia while the organs of the world blare their songs, I too want to sing hymns daily to my Lord, not just externally, but also in my heart.
Art & Art History

“Human and divine”

Br Gustavo Godínez LC

While walking in the museum of fine arts, I was deeply moved when for the very first time my eyes caught a glance of Murillo’s painting. I was looking for a painting that could speak to me and touch my heart, and as I beheld Christ After the Flagellation, I instantly felt attracted to it.

The first thing that came to my mind was that the artist was trying to communicate a specific message and hence, he chose to paint a specific moment. The dynamics are conveyed not through the movement but through the solemn expression. In this scene, I contemplated Christ in a specific moment, that is to say, just after his flagellation. I imagined that the soldiers had just exited the scene and Christ is left alone just for a few moments right before he is taken away to Pilate. I could have spent more time in front of that painting just trying to imagine what was going on in Jesus’ mind at that very moment.

Secondly, Murillo is able to show in this painting a very deep reality, namely the two natures of our Lord. On one side, one can see his human nature by looking at his wounds and his suffering face. However, at the same time, he knows how to portray his divine nature by effectively concentrating the light onto Jesus’ own body, making his skin radiate. The angels at the right side of the painting are probably meant to contribute to this reality. To proclaim the humanity of Jesus, they are there to make the beholder experience compassion and pity, feelings proper to human suffering. But by their radiant light they also want to show the divinity of Jesus and his majestic power over all other realities.

I did not feel attracted to Murillo’s painting only for his technique and style, which are great in themselves, but most of all for his capacity to transmit a religious experience to the viewer. I was able to connect with the painting and experience Christ’s sufferings more deeply as my own.

First, the artistic quality and technique of the painting; second, the penitential dynamism of Mary Magdalen; and third, the spiritual aspect of the penitent’s profound joy found in her conversion.

When we analyze the painting and its technical aspects, we see artistic traits from both the Mannerist and Baroque periods. The diagonal composition, creating movement; the rougher brushstrokes that give texture to the clothes she is wearing, making it more realistic; the serene and idealistic portrayal of her pretty face; and finally the concentration of light on the central figure, leaving the rest enveloped in the darkness of shadow, an outstanding example of tenebrism and an effective use of chiaroscuro.

Secondly, we can see the figure’s dynamism in her penitence. In her sorrow and penance, the saint leans towards the crucifix and the Holy Scriptures. Her hands are neatly folded in profound prayer, and yet they are gently put off to the side, which clearly brings out the tranquil expression on her face. Leaving her external pious gestures aside, she comes face to face with Christ crucified, immersing her whole being into contemplating the sufferings of her Lord.

Finally, the Penitent Magdalen radiates a spiritual love for her Savior, shown clearly in the serenely joyful expression of her concentrated gaze. It’s not a worldly joy caused by the experience of physical pleasure, but a supernatural joy found in her relationship with this spiritual reality. Her face, radiating with light, tells us that she is a soul who has found a deep joy in her sorrow, a profound peace in her distress. It tells of a soul, saved and loved by a greater reality than her weak and frail self.

In short, this work didn’t catch my attention only because it was a pretty and skillful depiction of a penitent disciple of Christ. It was her expression that captivated me, an expression that told me the story of a once troubled soul that found a peaceful rest in God, who was inviting me to find that haven of peace as well.

Saint Mary Magdalen Penitent
Painted about 1615 by Domenico Fetti, an Italian artist, (1589–1624)
99 x 77.2 cm (39 x 30 3/8 in.); Oil on canvas

Br Alphonse Choi LC

Looking around the European art section, I came across this painting by Domenico Fetti. Painted in the early Baroque or late Mannerism periods, it depicts the penitent Mary Magdalen praying before a simple crucifix. What struck me in this particular painting was the specific way the artist chose to depict this figure to the observer. This can be analyzed in three simple points.
Several elements captivated my attention. The main color is grey, and the hues are darker on the top and the middle level. Among that frightening darkness, the sun is illuminating the front of the scene (a choppy sea) and a white sail by the center of the right side. The latter contrasts with the shadows and focuses the attention on the sailboat that is awaiting the upcoming storm. Definitely, navigating in the midst of those deep, dark waters is an experience that may produce fear in any sailor. In the composition, the sailboat looks like it’s struggling alone, even though there is on the left side a group of three other boats similar to the former one, and on the right, two other ships, and one of them quite bigger (and quite safer, too) than the rest. The wind is almost visible and tangible, tilting the “main” sailboat into a diagonal slant. This position makes clear the instability and insecurity of the weather.

Ruisdael is representing a scene that could have happened on a common day of his life: even the sky looks completely conventional, in contrast with the idealized skies of Claude Lorrain. Fear about what might come is a normal human experience, not only on the seas. But probably the painter put the light on the boat (together with the signs of a close estuary in the lower left corner) to show that, even if man feels alone, small and afraid, there is always hope to arrive to the port.
Principles of Art with Calvin & Hobbes

This is my snow sculpture, “bourgeois buffoon.” Can you believe mom rejected my grant application to continue making these?

Why do you need a grant?

I’m on the cutting edge of art. My work deserves public support.

What if the public doesn’t like your work?

They’re not supposed to like it! This is avant-garde stuff! I’m criticizing the lowbrows who can’t appreciate great art like this.

But you’ll take their money.

What do you want me to do, suffer?

A painting, moving, spiritually enriching, sublime, ...“high” art.

The comic strip, vapid, juvenile, commercial, hack work, ...“low” art.

A painting of a comic strip panel, sophisticated irony, philosophically challenging, ...“high” art.

Suppose I draw a cartoon of a painting of a comic strip?

Sophomoric, intellectually sterile, ...“low” art.
Principles of Art with Calvin & Hobbes

**Woh's your snow art progressing?**

**I've moved into abstraction!**

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**Ah.**

**This piece is about the inadequacy of traditional imagery and symbols to convey meaning in today's world.**

**By abandoning representationalism, I'm free to express myself with pure form. Specific interpretation gives way to a more visceral response.**

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**I notice your oeuvre is monochromatic.**

**Well, c'mon, it's just snow.**

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**Do you have an idea for your project yet?**

**No, I'm waiting for inspiration.**

**You can't just turn on creativity like a faucet. You have to be in the right mood.**

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**What mood is that?**

**Last-minute panic.**
The Disparity Between Intellect and Character

By Robert Coles
The Disparity Between Intellect and Character

Robert Coles

OVER 150 YEARS AGO, Ralph Waldo Emerson gave a lecture at Harvard University, which he ended with the terse assertion: "Character is higher than intellect." Even then, this prominent man of letters was worried (as many other writers and thinkers of succeeding generations would be) about the limits of knowledge and the nature of a college's mission. The intellect can grow and grow, he knew, in a person who is smug, ungenerous, even cruel. Institutions originally founded to teach their students how to become good and decent, as well as broadly and deeply literate, may abandon the first mission to concentrate on a driven, narrow book learning—a course of study in no way intent on making a connection between ideas and theories on one hand and, on the other, our lives as we actually live them.

Students have their own way of realizing and trying to come to terms with the split that Emerson addressed. A few years ago, a sophomore student of mine came to see me in great anguish. She had arrived at Harvard from a Midwestern, working-class background. She was trying hard to work her way through college, and, in doing so, cleaned the rooms of some of her fellow students. Again and again, she encountered classmates who apparently had forgotten the meaning of please, of thank you—no matter how high their Scholastic Assessment Test scores—students who did not hesitate to be rude, even crude toward her. One day she was not so subtly propositioned by a young man she knew to be a very bright, successful pre-med student and already an accomplished journalist. This was not the first time he had made such an overture, but now she had reached a breaking point. She had quit her job and was preparing to quit college in what she called "fancy, phony Cambridge." The student had been part of a seminar I teach, which links Raymond Carver's fiction and poetry with Edward Hopper's paintings and drawings—the thematic convergence of literary and artistic sensibility in exploring American loneliness, both its social and its personal aspects.

As she expressed her anxiety and anger to me, she soon was sobbing hard. After her sobs quieted, we began to remember the old days of that class. But she had some weightier matters on her mind and began to give me a detailed, sardonic account of college life, as viewed by someone vulnerable and hard-pressed by it. At one point, she observed of the student who had propositioned her: "That guy gets all A's. He tells people he's in Group I [the top academic category]. I've taken two moral-reasoning courses with him, and I'm sure he's gotten A's in both of them—and look at how he behaves with me, and I'm sure with others." She stopped for a moment to let me take that in. I happened to know the young man and could only acknowledge the irony of his behavior, even as I wasn't totally surprised by what she'd experienced. But I was at a loss to know what to say to her. A philosophy major, with a strong interest in literature, she had taken a course on the Holocaust and described for me the ironies she also saw in that tragedy—mass murder of unparalleled historical proportion in a nation hitherto known as one of the most civilized in the world, with a citizenry as well educated as that of any country at the time.

Drawing on her education, the student put before me names such as Martin Heidegger, Carl Jung, Paul De Man, Ezra Pound—brilliant and accomplished men (a philosopher, a psychoanalyst, a literary critic, a poet) who nonetheless had linked themselves with the hate at was Nazism and Fascism during the 1930s. She reminded me of the willingness of the leaders of German and Italian universities to embrace Nazi and Fascist ideas, of the countless doctors and lawyers and judges and journalists and schoolteachers, and, yes, even members of the clergy—who were able to accommodate themselves to murderous thugs because the thugs had political power. She pointedly mentioned, too, the Soviet Gulag, that expanse of prisons to which millions of honorable people were sent by Stalin and his brutish accomplices—prisons commonly staffed by psychiatrists quite eager to label those victims of a vicious totalitarian state with an assortment of psychiatric names, then shoot them up with drugs meant to reduce them to zombies. I tried hard, toward the end of a conversation that lasted almost two hours, to salvage something for her, for myself, and, not least, for a university that I much respect, even as I know its failings. I suggested that if she had learned what she had just shared with me at Harvard—why, that was itself a valuable education acquired. She smiled, gave me credit for a "nice try," but remained unconvinced. Then she put this tough, pointed, unnerving question to me: "I've been taking all these philosophy courses, and we talk about what's true, what's important, what's good. Well, how do you teach people to be good?"
And she added: "What's the point of knowing good, if you don't keep trying to become a good person?" I suddenly found myself on the defensive, although all along I had been sympathetic to her, to the indignation she had been directing toward some of her fellow students, and to her critical examination of the limits of abstract knowledge. Schools are schools, colleges are colleges, I averred, a complaisant and smug accommodation in my voice. Thereby I meant to say that our schools and colleges these days don't take major responsibility for the moral values of their students, but, rather, assume that their students acquire those values at home. I topped off my surrender to the status quo with a shrug of my shoulders, to which she responded with an unspoken but barely concealed anger. This she expressed through a knowing look that announced that she'd taken the full moral measure of me.

Suddenly, she was on her feet preparing to leave. I realized that I'd stumbled badly. I wanted to pursue the discussion, applaud her for taking on a large subject in a forthright, incisive manner, and tell her she was right in understanding that moral reasoning is not to be equated with moral conduct. I wanted, really, to explain my shrug--point out that there is only so much that any of us can do to affect others' behavior, that institutional life has its own momentum. But she had no interest in that kind of self-justification--as she let me know in an unforgettable aside as she was departing my office: "I wonder whether Emerson was just being 'smart' in that lecture he gave here. I wonder if he ever had any ideas about what to do about what was worrying him--or did he think he'd done enough because he'd spelled the problem out to those Harvard professors?"

She was demonstrating that she understood two levels of irony: One was that the study of philosophy--even moral philosophy or moral reasoning--doesn't necessarily prompt in either the teacher or the student a determination to act in accordance with moral principles. And, further, a discussion of that very irony can prove equally sterile--again carrying no apparent consequences as far as one's everyday actions go. When that student left my office (she would soon leave Harvard for good), I was exhausted and saddened--and brought up short. All too often those of us who read books or teach don't think to pose for ourselves the kind of ironic dilemma she had posed to me. How might we teachers encourage our students (encourage ourselves) to take that big step from thought to action, from moral analysis to fulfilled moral commitments? Rather obviously, community service offers us all a chance to put our money where our mouths are; and, of course, such service can enrich our understanding of the disciplines we study. A reading of Invisible Man (literature), Tally's Corners (sociology and anthropology), or Childhood and Society (psychology and psychoanalysis) takes on new meaning after some time spent in a ghetto school or a clinic. By the same token, such books can prompt us to think pragmatically about, say, how the wisdom that Ralph Ellison worked into his fiction might shape the way we get along with the children we're tutoring--affect our attitudes toward them, the things we say and do with them.

Yet I wonder whether classroom discussion, per se, can't also be of help, the skepticism of my student notwithstanding. She had pushed me hard, and I started referring again and again in my classes on moral introspection to what she had observed and learned, and my students more than got the message. Her moral righteousness, her shrewd eye and ear for hypocrisy hovered over us, made us uneasy, goaded us. She challenged us to prove that what we think intellectually can be connected to our daily deeds. For some of us, the connection was established through community service. But that is not the only possible way. I asked students to write papers that told of particular efforts to honor through action the high thoughts we were discussing. Thus goaded to a certain self-consciousness, I suppose, students made various efforts. I felt that the best of them were small victories, brief epiphanies that might otherwise have been overlooked, but had great significance for the students in question. "I thanked someone serving me food in the college cafeteria, and then we got to talking, the first time," one student wrote. For her, this was a decisive break with her former indifference to others she abstractly regarded as "the people who work on the serving line." She felt that she had learned something about another’s life and had tried to show respect for that life.

The student who challenged me with her angry, melancholy story had pushed me to teach differently. Now, I make an explicit issue of the more than occasional disparity between thinking and doing, and I ask my students to consider how we all might bridge that disparity. To be sure, the task of connecting intellect to character is daunting, as Emerson and others well knew. And any of us can lapse into cynicism, turn the moral challenge of a seminar into yet another moment of opportunism: I’ll get an A this time, by writing a paper cannily extolling myself as a doer of this or that “good deed!” Still, I know that college administrators and faculty members everywhere are struggling with the same issues that I was faced with, and I can testify that many students will respond seriously, in at least small ways, if we make clear that we really believe that the link between moral reasoning and action is important to us. My experience has given me at least a measure of hope that moral reasoning and reflection can somehow be integrated into students’--and teachers’--lives as they actually live them.

Robert Coles is a professor of psychiatry and medical humanities at Harvard University.

The Text Nobody Reads

[anonymous]

[Veritas] nihil de causa sua deprecatur, quia nec de condicione miratur. [...] Unum gestit interdum, ne ignorantur damnetur. (Tertullian)

I know you are not reading me. I am just a random article in the middle of many others, which are much better than me. The title does not sound original at all. Moreover, I have just started with a boring quote in Latin—and without the translation!
We want tolerance

Br Javier Castellanos LC

There is in the Reference library a magazine with the title for the month: The Gay Divide. Interesting, punchy, and appealing to your curiosity. When I started to read some of the articles, my moral principles worked in the defense, and I armed myself with all my prejudices. But a breach was finally opened through the lines and two ideas entered the walls of my mind. I want to talk about one of them: tolerance. This is a word that the homosexual cause claims with pride. Who can deny this ethical foundation to anybody? And yet, tolerance is a word that may sound empty. If it is not well understood, it can be used both for an argument and also for its opposite. Is society (objectively speaking, not solely the gay supporters...) using it wrongly? For the most part, not really: they are using it in the right way, but probably without knowing it.

What do you mean when you say “I cannot tolerate this anymore”? If I understand well, you mean that there is an injustice, or an evil that has gone beyond a certain line. It has surpassed the limit of your duty to respect other’s freedom. And, if I understand well, people with same-sex-attraction are claiming something they already have in our society. Nobody kills them, like the Nazis, nor banishes from the country, like the Spartans. They are free to follow what they consider good, and personally I try to respect their freedom, even if it leads them to wrong and harm for themselves.

But labeling as “tolerance” their demand for a legal “marriage” goes beyond the line of tolerance itself. Tolerance does not mean to consider right what is wrong. And for their own good, we cannot close our eyes and pretend a different reality. Probably the best we can do for them as Catholics is to keep defending, not only truth, but the real happiness of everyone. And sometimes to defend real happiness entails not to compromise with apparent or relative gaiety.

Nevertheless, I am here because I have something to say. It would be an insult to the truth not to transmit my message. Many brothers in your community know this, and have shared very interesting insights in what they have written. Each man in this world has something to say, in order to help his fellow travelers in the common journey towards truth. It does not have to be a Summa, or an Aristotelian treatise on the essence, substance and being. Seneca, for example, transmitted short, but wholesome phrases, which are like little candles for the mind. That is the reason why he calls them lucella.

If this is true for the little intellectual messages that you have, how much more for the great Message [kerygma- if you want to sound erudite] that you have been called to share with others. You have something very important to say! The world needs your words, because it needs so desperately the Word! Why not practice from now on transmitting your messages?

If I have succeeded in keeping your attention so far, I would like to challenge you. Dare to know about your brothers’ lucella, and dare to share with your brothers your share of truth!

Sandy Hook

Br Michael Matthews, LC

The other week at CCD I was talking to the 7th grade kids about the love of God for humanity. Most of them seemed to be in full agreement with what I was saying. I opened up to questions, and for the most part it was the superficial easy stuff, but then I called on David Jr.

His question went like this: “Yeah Br Michael, I know you say God loves everyone and all, but if he loves them then why does he allow them to die horrible deaths, like in Sandy Hook. How could a loving God let twenty seven year old kids be massacred?”

I was a little shocked at the depth and matter of his question, but the Holy Spirit gave me an answer. I talked to him about the gift of free will, and how God allows evil in order to bring a greater good. He said he was content, but I could see in his eyes that he still couldn’t understand. In the end I think all of us are in the same boat as David Jr. We can never fully understand why some horrendous things happen, but we can live with faith and trust that God in His infinite love has a plan.

Zeus vs. The Almighty

Br Joseph Ory LC

The Greeks believed in many gods, but we all know quality is better than quantity. The Greek gods were often impetuous, bickering with each other, and making mistakes. Maybe all of their imperfections actually made it easier for the Greeks to believe in these gods. If we look around at the world, we can’t deny that there is evil. The Greeks have no problem reconciling their gods with evil because their gods don’t have ultimate control over the world, nor can they foresee into the future. They are bound by the same time as we are.

Catholics, on the other hand, have a more difficult challenge. We believe in an omnipotent, omnipresent, and omniscient God who providentially makes everything turn out for the good. This is a difficult truth to reconcile with the reality of evil in the world. We ask ourselves the perennial question of God’s existence whenever we witness suffering or tragedy. The only action capable of giving us security is an act of Faith in God’s providence, though we can’t wrap our puny heads around it.
Ethics with Calvin & Hobbes

By Bill Waterson
HOBES, DO YOU THINK OUR MORALITY IS DEFINED BY OUR ACTIONS, OR BY WHAT'S IN OUR HEARTS?

I THINK OUR ACTIONS SHOW WHAT'S IN OUR HEARTS.

I RESENT THAT!

I DON'T BELIEVE IN ETHICS ANY MORE.

AS FAR AS I'M CONCERNED, THE ENDS JUSTIFY THE MEANS.

GET WHAT YOU CAN WHILE THE GETTING'S GOOD - THAT'S WHAT I SAY. RIGHT? THE WINNERS WRITE THE HISTORY BOOKS!

IT'S A DOG-EAT-DOG WORLD, SO I'LL DO WHATEVER I HAVE TO, AND LET OTHERS ARGUE ABOUT WHETHER IT'S "RIGHT" OR NOT.

HEY!

WHY'D YOU DO THAT??

YOU WERE IN MY WAY. NOW YOU'RE NOT. THE ENDS JUSTIFY THE MEANS.

I DIDN'T MEAN FOR EVERYONE YOU DOLT! JUST ME!

AHH...
Meat and Greet

Br. Andrew Lane LC

I have heard it said that getting a group of Catholic men together is a very difficult thing to do. Perhaps it is because of the fact that they work so much, or maybe because they are perfectly comfortable sitting in front of their TVs and don't see any need to come out of their comfort zone and surrender their precious free time.

Well, a few weeks ago I saw something that I must say impressed me very much. There, in Higganum, CT, were gathered over one hundred Catholic men for an event that I can only describe as both authentically manly and extremely Catholic. Neither I nor the brothers with me were expecting what we found. There were potato cannons firing, a pumpkin catapult launching, and burgers frying on the grill. And amidst it all, grown men were talking with each other about being a Catholic in today's world; it was the “Meat and Greet”.

Perhaps you could say that the “meat” was just what they served for dinner, but I would say that it was the spiritual main course that the organizing team provided with their spiritual talks and the intense manly and Catholic atmosphere.

All things said and done, I found this to be a great example of dynamic Catholic leaders living out Pope Francis’ Joy of the Gospel, as number thirty-three expresses: “Pastoral ministry in a missionary key seeks to abandon the complacent attitude that says: “We have always done it this way”. I invite everyone to be bold and creative in this task of rethinking the goals, structures, style and methods of evangelization in their respective communities. I encourage everyone to apply the guidelines found in this document generously and courageously, without inhibitions or fear...”
Culture and Thought

A Culture of “Likes”
Br Alphonse Choi LC

We live in a culture of “likes”. We live in a society whose motto is “Live, Laugh and Love”. Facebook drowns you with its friend requests; Twitter overwhelms and flatters you with its countless followers; Millions flock just to see and to comment on a picture on Instagram. Humanity seems so friendly, curious, and satisfied. Barney might as well turn his “I love you, you love me, we’re a happy family” into “I like u, u like me, and we’re a gr8 society” …Yet despite all this, people are lonely. Why?

Aristotle once said that we men are, by nature, social animals. This is clearly seen in the obsession to communicate in our electronic world. However, no matter how efficient it is, electronic communication can only offer so much. Yes, it is effective in getting short messages across and sharing thoughts and ideas, but it lacks the personal touch, the authenticity and proximity of communicating face to face. People are afraid of showing themselves as they are because they are dissatisfied with how they look, with what they do, the way they think or say something… so they hide behind a mute, detached and masked profile which they themselves project onto the world screen. They think that by doing this, the world will accept them, love them, and make them happy. However, the result is that they get lonelier and grow increasingly dissatisfied with themselves.

People long for friendship, people dream of love, people crave for happiness. Yet they don’t realize that the impersonal electronic world utterly fails to fill this gaping hole. There’s a common saying that “Actions speak louder than words”.

Fallen Leaves
Br Alphonse Choi LC

“In a broken little town/ they were lost and never found/ fallen leaves/ fallen leaves/ fallen leaves on the ground…”

~ Billy Talent, Fallen Leaves

When autumn draws near, leaves turn yellow, and mother earth radiates her glory. One can’t help but admire the different hues of the leaves on the trees. Some even collect them as souvenirs, as bookmarks, or simply as a hobby. They speak to us of the beauty and the glory of our world.

However, when autumn draws to a close, the leaves fall down, and we know winter is coming. All the splendor of autumn is swept away and the earth becomes a barren wasteland.

Often, as I walk around contemplating the beauty of the leaves in their glory, it suddenly occurred to me that, sooner or later, they will all fall down. It hit me that just as the leaves we men fall at the height of our pride, at the pinnacle of our glory, at the summit of our splendor. While pride destroys us, assuring us of false hopes and cunning lies, the only thing that saves us in our weakness is humility. Yes, we are men and we will fall. But if we are humble, we will find sufficient strength to face our weaknesses and to rise up greater than we were before.
Jesus Waits for You.

Know Your Priority.
Renew Your Identity.
Prove Your Love.

Visit the Lord.
Art and Politics in the Life of Jacques Louis David

Br David Lorenzo LC

Introduction

Jacques Louis David is a remarkable man. Throughout the history of the world, few have lived through such tumultuous events such as he and been able to document the spirit of the times such as he through art. Having lived through the time leading up to, during, and after the Revolution, and being an ardent Jacobin and later a dedicated disciple of Napoleon, David was in a marvelous position to express the views and ideas of his time in art. He was able to do this in such a powerful way that he was placed in a position of power over art by his fellow Jacobins during the Revolution. Although he was definitely a product of the culture of his day, one can say that his art illuminated and expressed the culture so much so as to make his artworks a symbol of the Revolution. Not many can make a claim such as this, and because of this, Jacques Louis David stands apart as an artist to be recognized.

The Pre-Revolution Years

1. Neo-Classicism pertaining to the current day

Before the French Revolution, David had developed his mature style of painting. Although he painted different subjects, he is well known for depicting classical themes which had a significance relating to the present day. His paintings usually had a predominantly clear message and the subject and is also unmistakably clear. Although it is debated whether or not he actually intended certain revolutionist political messages with his pre-revolution paintings, the messages and ideas represented were so in tune with the revolutionary spirit that they helped to bolster the spread of its ideas.

2. Belisarius

One example of a painting which later was interpreted in light of the Revolution was Belisarius which he completed in 1781. It calls to mind the story of a Roman general named Belisarius who was noble and successful during the reign of the Emperor Justinian. However, after being wrongly convicted of treason, he was banished and possibly blinded. He became impoverished and a beggar later on in his life. The painting depicts a scene where a former soldier of Belisarius recognizes him begging and is shocked and awe-stricken.

The completion of the painting coincided with an event in France in which a French general was executed under a false charge of treason. This is a great example of how his paintings synchronized very well with events of his day. Whether or not he intended to promote a view of anger against the current system of government for executing noble and innocent victims, one could see how revolutionaries could draw this meaning out from the painting.

3. Horatii

Probably David’s most famous pre-revolutionary painting was the Oath of the Horatii which was completed in 1785. It was a painting in which revolutionaries saw their ideals represented. The painting depicts Horatius making his sons swear loyalty to the fatherland as they prepare to go into battle against the Curatii. This probably did not have any explicit political messages, but it highlighted a common ideal of the times that one should be willing to risk all for the sake of defending something higher than themselves, that is the fatherland. Again, one can see the clear possibility of identification with revolutionary ideas.

4. Brutus

Right at the dawn of the French Revolution David began his work on Brutus. It was commissioned for the crown and so it did not seem to be meant as a political painting. However, as David was transforming a blank canvas into the famous painting, the whole political setting of France changed. “…by the time it was completed for the Salon of 1789, the oath had been sworn in the Tennis Court, the Tiers État had taken over and the Bastille had been stormed.”

The painting depicts Brutus, the man who defeated the last of the Tarquin Kings and helped transform Rome into a republic. He is sitting at home while some lictors are bringing his sons’ corpses into the room. He had his sons executed because of a plot by them to bring back the monarchy. Meanwhile, his wife and other children are crying on the side. This came to symbolize the degree of loyalty one must have for his country, that even ties to one’s country go beyond family ties. This heralds the later central imagery of the Revolution which is the cult of Brutus. One cannot see this painting and not see its direct correlation (intended or not) with the ideals of the French Revolution.
The Revolution Erupts

1. A true Jacobin

Right from the beginning of the French Revolution, David became part of the Jacobin club and was a good friend of Robespierre. He was a staunch revolutionary, being elected in 1792 to the National Convention, voting for the death of the King, and being elected for thirteen days as the President of the Convention. He was also nicknamed “Robespierre of the brush” and became the de facto art dictator of France. There are not a lot of surviving works from David during the French Revolution and curiously a lot of works begun were left unfinished. The reason for this might be the fact that the political climate was so quick to change that he did not have time to finish a work before his subjects or themes became unbefitting for the current thought of the Revolution. However, despite his lack of finished works, his popularity and importance among the political figures at the time can be seen from the words of a fellow Jacobin who spoke for the club when they commissioned David to paint the Oath of the Tennis Court to immortalize the meeting of the Third Estate: “To immortalize our thoughts we have chosen the painter of the Brutus and the Horatii, the French patriot whose genius anticipated the Revolution.” It is clear that he was considered one of the artistic heralds of the new regime.

2. The Death of Marat

One painting, however, was completed and probably could be considered the most politically influential of his paintings. This is the Death of Marat. It relates an event during the Revolution in which a rigorous Jacobin, Jean-Paul Marat, was murdered in his bathtub by a political enemy. The murderer, Charlotte Corday, gained access to his apartment and presented him with a petition. While signing it, she killed him with a butcher knife. It was a gruesome murder of a terrible man who was known for his violence, but David was able to make him into a martyr for the cause of Liberty. He borrows aspects from Christian iconography such as solemnity and calm in the face of suffering and persecution so to show the triumph of the Revolution beyond death. He also sought by it to bring about Revolutionary ardor. Marat then became a symbol of Liberty being something worth dying for. He became a sort of saint of the Revolution. According to Rosenblum, “Atheists though they were, David and Marat, like so many other fervent social reformers of the modern world, seem to have created a new kind of religion.”

IV. Napoleon Bonaparte

“Bonaparte is my hero”

After the fall of the Reign of Terror, Robespierre was executed and David sent to prison. After being released, he expressed a desire to stand clear of controversial subjects in his art because of the suffering he had to endure in prison. This desire was lost soon after, however, when he met Napoleon Bonaparte because he found in him a man to be followed, a man who would seemingly change the world and he expressed that Bonaparte was his hero. “…David…was to see Napoleon - however mistakenly – as the one man capable of leading France without sacrificing the principles of 1989.” David became a dedicated follower, painting several portraits and scenes of Napoleon’s life and eventually becoming his premier painter. However, he never spent much time personally with Napoleon and painted a lot of his works from a distance. However, this did not hinder David from expressing the grandeur he saw in Napoleon through powerful works such as Napoleon Crossing the St. Bernard Pass, Coronation of Napoleon in Notre-Dame, Enthronement, and Distribution of Eagle Standards.

When Napoleon’s empire fell, David still believed in his power, and upon Napoleon’s return, supported him during the famous Hundred Days. Finally, when Napoleon was defeated, he went into exile in Belgium when all regicides were banished even though he could have been exempted. His last years were spent there and he refused even later in his life to return to France when presented with an opportunity to do so. He died in 1825 and was denied burial in France, rejected by the country whose concern filled his whole life.

V. Conclusion

Jacques Louis David was an iconic figure of the Revolutionary period in France. He was seen as the herald of the Revolution, the art dictator of France, and the premier painter of Napoleon. He was present at one of the most controversial times of French history and his art expressed the ideals of that period. He believed in the Revolutionary spirit, helped elevate its view in France, and died a man true to his principles in self-imposed exile. He was an artist who was living in his time and who was affected by the culture around him. However, at the same time, he influenced it and gave it a visual expression and power and impetus with the mastery and meaning of his art.
Love Christ.
Love His Vicar.
Defend the Church.

Get your Wednesday audiences for your meditations.

*For more information, contact Br Alfonso Leon LC
"Without words, without writing and without books there would be no history; there could be no concept of humanity."
~Hermann Hesse

"Most of us find our own voices only after we’ve sounded like a lot of other people."
~Neil Gaiman

"To be the kind of writer you want to be, you must first be the kind of thinker you want to be."
~Ayn Rand

"Being a writer is a very peculiar sort of a job: It’s always you versus a blank sheet of paper (or a blank screen) and quite often the blank piece of paper wins."
~Neil Gaiman
Devote yourselves to Prayer.
Colossians 4:2