

"Begin with the beautiful, and it leads you to the true." --Father Robert Barron

"Beauty: the quality or aggregate of qualities in a person or thing that gives pleasure to the senses or pleasurably exalts the mind or spirit," – Merriam-Webster Dictionary

I surprised myself by going to the opera one night. It was a first for me as someone who has always mocked, albeit gently, opera as little more than a country-western song that lasts three hours and is sung in a foreign language. "Tosca" fit that criteria -- it was long (two hours and forty-nine minutes instead of two minutes and forty-nine seconds like many country western songs) and incredibly sad. All the leads die. "There's blood everywhere," said the docent gleefully prior to the show. Of course, where it differed was that there was no truck or dog or D-I-V-O-R-C-E. Just death and sadness.

What I didn't expect, though, was to be so completely drawn in and mesmerized by "Tosca." It was beautiful -- the sets, the symphony, the singers, the music. Captivating. The time flew by. It was amazing. While I didn't run out and buy season tickets, you can be sure that I'll be putting opera on my list of things to do. It was too beautiful an experience not to enjoy again.

T. C. Henley wrote in an essay "Beauty is a nectar which intoxicates the soul." "Tosca" certainly intoxicated my soul. As beauty moves me in soaring works like opera, Manet's impressionism, the architecture of the National Cathedral, an Ansel Adams photograph, a finely turned phrase in a novel, and in the everyday experiences of my life.

So why, if I want to live a God-intoxicated life, do I so often to forget that beauty is part of my discernment of what God wants me to do with my life? Why is it I rarely ask, "What beauty will come to me by doing this?" or "What beautiful thing will result from my doing that?"

You might want to ask the same.