

Grow Your Soul, Do Art
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Introduction/Homily

David Bayles writes about what it means to be an artist. One of his books is called **Art and Fear**.

And maybe some of you, young and adult, think that is a puzzling title.

After all, what is there to be fearful about art?

Art is free, and fun, and you get to create, and so how could there be fear?

So, I'll tell you a secret:

Things that are important are sometimes scary.

Oh, sometimes, they're not; we just embrace them.

But usually, if it matters, we are a little scared.

The holy. That's important, but we're a little afraid of what it means. What if we have to change how we live?

Love. That's very important, but we're scared to give ourselves over to something more powerful than ourselves.

What if we get our heart broken?

Things that are important can be frightening.

Art is like this. Creativity is like this. It matters.

It reaches into our heart, and into mystery, and that's important, but we can be afraid.

David Bayles writes this:

The desire to make art begins early. Among the very young this is encouraged (or at least indulged as harmless) but the push toward a 'serious' education soon exacts a heavy toll on dreams and fantasies.... Yet for some the desire persists, and sooner or later must be addressed. And with good reason: your desire to make

art -- beautiful or meaningful or emotive art -- is integral to your sense of who you are.

Your desire to make art is part of who you are.

An integral part of who you are.

We want to express ourselves, our deepest, mysterious selves. You want to let your light shine.

Let your light shine.

To put into art what beats in our heart,

to put into poetry what we can't say in prose,

to make in music what cannot soar without rhythm.

But then we are worried we won't do it right.

Bayles writes:

But if making art gives substance to your sense of self, the corresponding fear is that you're not up to the task -- that you can't do it, or can't do it well, or can't do it again; or that you're not a real artist, or not a good artist, or have no talent, or have nothing to say. The line between the artist and their work is a fine one at best, and for the artist it feels (quite naturally) like there is no such line. Making art can feel dangerous and revealing. Making art is dangerous and revealing.

It is dangerous and revealing.

I like that he just admits it. That's what it is.

So we treat it as silly, or only for children, but it is for everyone.

And it doesn't have to be a technical masterpiece; it has to be real.

You don't need your beret to make art.

You just need yourself.

You need to open up your heart and your mind, and let go of the fear, at least enough to begin.

Art has the power to connect us and to express what is beyond the explicable.

Creativity and art — whether that be painting or sculpture or music or poetry or dance or photography or whatever it is -- art has the power to connect us.

It connects us, first, to ourselves.

To what is in us and longs to get out.

To what we cannot name yet.

You start with a blank piece of paper, with a block of clay, and you just begin. And something happens.

Something in you needs to be created.

It connects us, second, to each other.

Sometimes we make art together - collages of paper, choral anthems, and onward.

Sometimes we gather to see art together,

we talk about what it might mean for us,

or we simply stand there and see it together,

united before the experience of art itself.

It connects us, third, to the world we share,

and to the work of justice and provocation.

Art questions power; it is inherent in the power of art itself.

Nietzsche wrote "we have art so that we shall not die of reality."

Art imagines other possibilities, it pokes fun, it disturbs and stirs up, and in so doing helps remake the world.

Through all these ways, and all on its own, directly, art connects us to the holy.

We are connected to something more, to something powerful, and yes, that's fearful, but it is also essential.

It is how we learn to live a life —

though the practice and the cultivation and the work of making of our life, of the world, art.

Homily - Grow Your Soul, Do Art.

When the spirit says do, do.
When you feel the need to dance, dance.
When your heart wants to paint, paint.
When you need to write poetry, write.
See with your heart.

A poem -

Monet Refuses the Operation BY LISEL MUELLER

Doctor, you say there are no haloes
around the streetlights in Paris
and what I see is an aberration
caused by old age, an affliction.
I tell you it has taken me all my life
to arrive at the vision of gas lamps as angels,
to soften and blur and finally banish
the edges you regret I don't see,
to learn that the line I called the horizon
does not exist and sky and water,
so long apart, are the same state of being.
Fifty-four years before I could see
Rouen cathedral is built
of parallel shafts of sun,
and now you want to restore
my youthful errors: fixed
notions of top and bottom,
the illusion of three-dimensional space,
wisteria separate
from the bridge it covers.

What can I say to convince you
the Houses of Parliament dissolve
night after night to become
the fluid dream of the Thames?
I will not return to a universe
of objects that don't know each other,
as if islands were not the lost children
of one great continent. The world
is flux, and light becomes what it touches,
becomes water, lilies on water,
above and below water,
becomes lilac and mauve and yellow
and white and cerulean lamps,
small fists passing sunlight
so quickly to one another
that it would take long, streaming hair
inside my brush to catch it.
To paint the speed of light!
Our weighted shapes, these verticals,
burn to mix with air
and change our bones, skin, clothes
to gases. Doctor,
if only you could see
how heaven pulls earth into its arms
and how infinitely the heart expands
to claim this world, blue vapor without end.

Art matters.

It connects us to ourselves, to each other, to the fuller
life, and to the holy. Because it matters, it disturbs.
And someone may want to fix our eyes.
Say, that's not how it looks!

But that is how it looks, if you look with your soul.
Can we only see what they want us to see, or can we see
more deeply?

Can we see with our heart?
Can we see with one another's heart?
Can we access our creative nature, the nature that lives
in each and every one of us?

This takes practice! It takes effort, and work.
You don't need a beret, but you do need to set aside
time, and space, and make the effort to cultivate your
artistic nature.

Write poems.
Doodle.
Play with clay.
Pick up a guitar.
Take time.

video - time to be creative —

<https://www.facebook.com/binishkumarks/videos/10150455838601609/>

Our busy lives, our busy culture, is a conspiracy against
the heart, a conspiracy against mystery, against love and
hope.

When we don't take time to make art, we don't have time
to grow our soul.

The notion that you're not an artist, or not a good
enough one, is a conspiracy against the truth, against the
calling of the spirit to become alive.

Don't listen to such nonsense.

Listen, instead, to the words of Kurt Vonnegut:

"To practice any art, no matter how well or how badly, is
a way to make your soul grow. So do it."

So do it.

Make the time, make the space.

Let what is in you become alive.

Connect with one another.

Speak to the truth that must be spoken.

Make the world more beautiful.

Who are we to make art? Who are we to be creative?

We are

Mothers of courage

Fathers of time

Daughters of dust

Sons of great vision.

We are

Sisters of mercy

Brothers of love

Lovers of life and

the builders of nations.

We are

Seekers of truth

Keepers of faith

Makers of peace and

the wisdom of ages.

Who are we to make art?

We are human. We are holy. We are creators. We are artists. Don't forget. Become.