



Evangelizing Through Beauty

A Labor day Message from Chief Human Resources Officer, Lauren Consentino

Recently, my husband and I had the privilege of hearing Bishop Robert Barron speak at Loyola Marymount University on the topic of evangelizing through beauty. The argument in his talk, simply put, is:

“The best evangelical strategy is one that moves from the beautiful to the good and finally to the true.” (Rather than the reverse which is what man so commonly tries to do.) . . . The pattern is more or less as follows: first the beautiful (how wonderful!), then the good (I want to participate!) and finally the true (now I

understand!).”

Bishop Barron led the audience through a series of wonderful anecdotal examples of how this pattern works to draw people in and bring them to an understanding and appreciation of all sorts of things . . . of literature, of dance, or of religion.

In each instance, the basic pattern is the same: first, one is captivated by the beautiful. There's something about the beautiful which resonates with us. We don't need to think about it or analyze it. Just being present in front of the beautiful, we are moved by it, drawn towards it, captivated by it. Then, being captivated by it, we desire to participate in it. And finally, once we participate in it, we come to a true and experience-based understanding of it.

Several weeks later as I was talking to a prospective new employee about Pepperdine and what a special place it is to work, it dawned on me I could think about the way in which one might be drawn to, and ultimately come to a real understanding of and appreciation for Pepperdine's Christian mission, in terms of Bishop Barron's model.

At first, it might be the sheer beauty of the location - the mountains, the ocean, the sunsets - that draws someone to consider Pepperdine as their University or place of employment. Or, it might be the reputation of our academic excellence through our wonderful programs. I think of so many unique graduate program experiences Pepperdine offers in addition to our exceptional international program offerings at all five schools. But then, soon after the initial interest, it is the beauty of the compassionate Pepperdine community that really captivates the attention and interest of a new member of our community. One gradually becomes aware of the palpable sense that Pepperdine is a unique and special family of faculty and staff, united and guided by a noble and Godly mission: to strengthen lives for purpose, service and leadership.

Once a person is captivated by the beauty of Pepperdine and the community of goodness that it is, it is easy to see why they would want to be a part of it. And once that individual accepts the invitation to become a part of this place, they become participants in what we do here—care for others as Christ would have us do on His behalf.

“A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.” John 13:34-35

Finally, it is by participating in what we do here at Pepperdine, as a part of this unique Pepperdine family, united by purpose, and committed to its Christian mission, that one comes to truly understand, in a very real and experience-based way, the beauty and the goodness of this University, and the important truth that guides and blesses our work at this place.

As members of this Pepperdine family, we come to recognize how this University and the precious souls that carry on its work draw other people nearer to God.

And we come to recognize and appreciate the extraordinary opportunities we have in our work every day. For us, each day is an opportunity to mirror beauty to another in a word, a gesture, a pause, a patient tone, a hug, an open door, a handshake, or even simple eye contact and respect. Each day is an opportunity to participate in the good work done by this special community in this beautiful place. And each day is an opportunity for us to grow deeper in our understanding of and love for the truth that guides our mission and our work. In the words of Bishop Barron—“First the beautiful, then the good, then the true.”

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