

Fr. Robert Letona
First Mass
Our Lady Queen of Heaven
Wisconsin Rapids, Wisconsin
November 8, 2009
Msgr. Robert P. Hundt

I invite all present relish the beauty of it all.

A thing of beauty is a joy forever.

Today is a thing of beauty.

It is at the deepest level a beauty which mostly escapes the eyes but infuses the soul with an almost overwhelming light.

I clearly do not refer to the physical beauty of the church edifice or

the sartorial ceremonial splendor of our dear friend & new priest, Fr. Letona, who, along with his parents, Julio & Cynthia, brother, Julio, sister, Veronica, and grandmother, Clara, we congratulate in the most sincere terms.

With our natural vision we see a friend arrived at a mountain top. Coming to which were several switch backs, and sometimes it seemed a solid & unclimbable rock wall, but here he is—faith, perseverance, patience, hard work come to fruition.

With the eyes of our Christian faith we see a man on that mountaintop transformed
transfigured

We see the God-given beauty of a man now shot through with a special order of grace, so that now his words & actions in glorious moments of grace project him to the pinnacle of human beauty & truth & power.

He can & will act in divinely-charged liturgical moments in the person of Christ, Son of God, crucified & risen

Lord
Savior
Redeemer

Human life can know no greater splendor or beauty or power.

The glory of God is man fully alive

The newly-ordained priest shares a power & a mystery which can only be understood in heaven. We see man fully alive, we see the beauty of divinely touched human life, a soul-cleansing wonder which the intellect cannot fully penetrate but the humble soul rises to the throne of God with the simple words:

Lord I believe, help my unbelief.

Father, you will spend your days as a priest in a world in which many dismiss the priesthood as a leftover relic of pre-modern days. Not all see man “fully alive” in the Holy Priesthood. The beauty of the priesthood is a contradiction to the world in which you will live your days as a priest.

Lavish beauty on your people, Father.

So celebrate the Sacred Liturgy that people cannot miss the wonder that at Mass earth is joined to heaven & the angels & saints are gathered around the altar of your church when the Holy Sacrifice is offered.

Lavish beauty on your people, Fr. Letona.

I remember reading that the Cure of Ars, a man who boiled 7 potatoes on Saturday & ate one each day for the next week—then repeated the process for the next week.

A man of such asceticism, such self-discipline & self-denial, spent \$15,000 on a set of vestments to celebrate an anniversary Mass in his parish church.

The beauty of vestment, altar & church speaks of the beauty of priority properly placed—nothing is too good for the honor & glory of God, of God's altar & the sacrifice of the Mass.

Lavish beauty on the people, Father, to the extent you can.

The splendor of well-chosen words of truth of a homily nurtured in the heart, spoken with clarity & joy befitting the light of divine revelation with which the Christian community is gifted.

Lavish beauty on your people.

The simple clear ordered beauty of the church's moral teaching—a bright
clear
warm

light in the cold darkness & confusion which runs & ruins too many individual lives
families
communities
nations

Share beauty with your people, Father—the beauty of the history of our church with its army of martyrs
saints
artists
scholars
explorers
scientists

Good & holy laymen & women in multi-millions in every profession
in every generation
of every century

Lavish beauty on the people, Father, to the extent you can.

In Calvinistic Geneva, in Switzerland, at the height of religious tension in the city between Catholic & Calvinists, there was a great bishop, Francis de Sales. Bishop de Sales was known for many things, among them that he was the best-dressed & most gracious, kindly & wise religious soul in

all Geneva. The well-dressed, gracious & smiling bishop converted many & was declared a saint of the church—immerse your people in beauty, Father.

The beauty of holiness of life marked by a calm & peaceful spirit, itself a message of power
& beauty for a restless
agitated
noisy age

Lavish beauty on your people, Father.

The beauty of the widow's handful of flour & the last drops of oil

No beauty so overpowering than the beauty of
trust that is total
faith that is practical & active
&
self-giving that is fullhearted
so beautiful and so powerful because all too rare in our narcissistic world

Lavish beauty on your people, Father.

The beauty of the widow's mite

Before the infinite mercy & richness of God we are all no more than the widow's mite, & those who offer their mite to God lift the minds & spirits of many to see the beauty of a life lived totally for God & for others.

That is a beauty of life & beauty of insight desperately needed in our world.

The great Russian, Dostoyevsky said, "The beautiful will save us."

By this he meant the redeeming beauty of Christ crucified for us & our salvation
Risen & glorious our promise of eternal life.

Share beauty with your people, Father, share Christ in all His glorious light & power, eternal & infinite beauty which dispels all darkness, all ugliness.

Strive to share beauty in such a warm & powerful manner that many of your people come to appreciate the words of the great St. Augustine:

"Late it was that I loved you, Beauty so ancient & so new, late have I loved you."

Share beauty, Father, & your priesthood will be a constant celebration of gratitude & peace of spirit for you and a joy and inspiration to others.

For truly a thing of beauty is a joy forever.