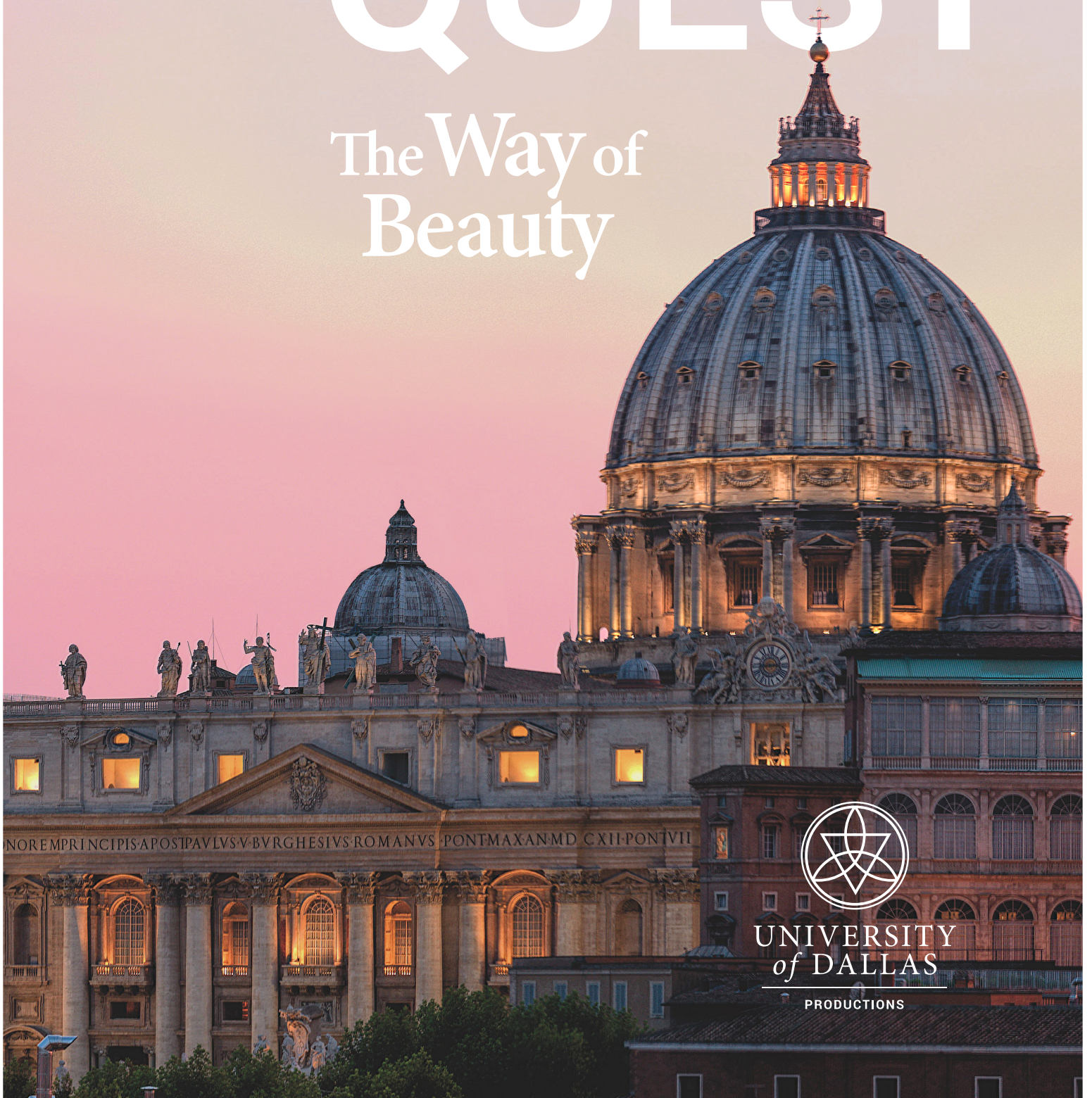


EPISODE DISCUSSION GUIDES

THE QUEST

The Way of
Beauty



UNIVERSITY
of DALLAS

PRODUCTIONS



EPISODE 6: Incarnation

True Beauty “open[s] the pathway for the search for God, and disposes the heart ... to meet Christ, Who is the Beauty of Holiness.” – The Pontifical Council for Culture

As we continue our quest to live our purpose with courage, we may find that we struggle to keep going. We are left asking God, “Where are you?” We long to experience His presence and to feel joyfully and abundantly alive in His love. The Way of Beauty leads us into a deeper encounter with God.

God created us in His image. In His Incarnation, God shows us that the human body is a fitting receptacle for the Divine Presence. This is why Beauty can move us toward the Good and the True: because God meets us in our daily lives through the body and the senses.

Beauty can be seen as a distraction, or even as a deception, because evil is imitative of what is good. The world says that beauty is what glitters, but God shows us that true Beauty is His revelation of Himself. The Holy Face of Jesus is the most beautiful face because it shows us the depths of His love for us.

The Pontifical Council for Culture proclaims that true Beauty “open[s] the pathway for the search for God, and disposes the heart ... to meet Christ,

Who is the Beauty of Holiness.” The Way of Beauty invites us to become like little children again and to rush out to meet God in wonder and joy.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. Are there moments in your life when you have felt joyfully and abundantly alive in God’s love? What was this feeling like? How did these moments offer consolation?
2. Think about Dr. Alexander’s statement that “the logic of the sacraments is the logic of Christ.” How does this help you see more clearly the incredible love and mercy that God shares with us?
3. Think about Dr. Sanford’s statement that everything which is evil is a perversion of that which is good. Have you seen this in your own experience? What might this tell you about the true longings of the human heart?

SUGGESTED READINGS

- The paintings of Fra Angelico (especially *The Annunciation*)
- St. Augustine, *Confessions*
- J.R.R. Tolkien, *The Hobbit* and *The Lord of the Rings*
- Isaiah 53
- St. John of the Cross, “The Dark Night of the Soul”

Notes:



EPISODE 7: Pilgrimage

“Pilgrimage helps to reignite our passion for our ultimate purpose: to find everlasting life.”

On our quest to discover our purpose and live it with courage, pilgrimage can reignite our passion for our ultimate purpose: to find everlasting life. Pilgrimage invites us into a story that is much bigger than ourselves. This experience awakens our “historical imagination” and places our daily lives on the grand stage of eternity. This perspective helps us to reflect more deeply on the consequences of our choices.

Pilgrimage connects us to the community of the faithful, who walk together on this road even if they are separated by centuries. It reminds us that the saints were once people just like us. If we aren't able to make a physical pilgrimage to a place, we can travel there in our imagination. Entering into this meditative “travel” invites us into a deeper experience of God's presence.

Ultimately, pilgrimage invites us on the path of conversion and transformation, which is essential to our growth in the spiritual life, as we learn from the Book of Exodus. We long to see God's face, but for now, we search for His reflection in the world around us.

Notes:

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. Have you ever taken a pilgrimage? How did it transform your life? If you haven't taken a pilgrimage yet, is there a place you feel called to visit? Why is this place special to you?
2. Why do you think it is so important for us to experience the humanity of the saints by walking in their footsteps and visiting their tombs?
3. Why is it important for us to sometimes step outside of our ordinary experiences? What does this give us an opportunity to do?

SUGGESTED READINGS

- Dante Alighieri, *The Divine Comedy*
- Geoffrey Chaucer, “General Prologue,” *The Canterbury Tales*
- The Book of Exodus
- Acts of the Apostles



EPISODE 8: Creation

“Beauty is the particular vocation of the artist.”

– St. John Paul II

St. John Paul II says that beauty is the particular vocation of the artist. In the *Summa Theologiae*, St. Thomas Aquinas meditates on God as an artist, who forms man out of the clay of the earth. The human artist has a special call to participate in God’s work of creation.

Great beauty in art is not a “Hallmark card.” Beauty is not always “pretty” – because sin, horror, grief, and suffering are all a part of the human experience. We rely on artists to give expression to the range of human experience and ultimately to remind us of the beauty we are made for.

The artistic movement of the Baroque, which was in part inspired by the Council of Trent, emphasized the “marvelous” – that element of surprise which leaves us in awe. Art gives us marvels in imitation of a God who gives us marvels.

The marvels of the natural world can help us to experience God’s great love for us. St. Mary Magdalen of Pazzi saw every flower she picked and every piece of fruit she ate as a special gift from God. We should consider how small we are

compared to the vastness of the cosmos and yet how infinitely precious, because God became one of us and died for each one of us.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. Have you ever been to dark sky country? How does looking up into the stars help us to meditate on our profound humility and smallness, while also recognizing how vast God’s love for each one of us truly is?
2. Why do you think art (in all its forms) is so important to our life of faith?
3. How might it change your experience of your daily life if you used St. Mary Magdalen of Pazzi’s expression of gratitude for everything you receive, no matter how small?

SUGGESTED READINGS

- St. John Paul II, *Letter to Artists*
- Genesis 1
- William Shakespeare, *The Tempest*
- J.R.R. Tolkien, *The Silmarillion*
- Gonzalo de Berceo, “The Miracles of Our Lady”
- John Keats, “Ode on a Grecian Urn”
- Boethius, *The Consolation of Philosophy*

Notes:



EPISODE 9: Imitation

“The most beautiful thing in this world is the human heart transformed by grace.”

When Hans Urs von Balthasar and Pope Benedict XVI reflect on the Way of Beauty, they consider the Church’s artistic tradition and the lives of the saints. The saints show us that the deep relationship with God that we have been searching for is possible.

Love gives the saints the light to see others as God sees them. They perceive the true beauty of the soul loved so passionately by God. The lives of saints such as St. Francis, San Alberto Hurtado, and Mother Teresa of Calcutta invite us to see the person of Christ in everyone we encounter.

The saints also invite us to meditate on the power of friendship as a way of sharing God’s love with others. St. Philip Neri transformed the city of Rome by “hanging out” with people, and St. Thomas More’s deep friendship with Henry VIII extended even to the scaffold.

The saints also remind us that we are called to a deep life of holiness in every moment of our lives. St. Josemaria Escriva says that the Christian vocation

is making heroic verse out of the prose of everyday life – that ordinary moments are extraordinary opportunities for grace, and that if we can’t find God in these ordinary moments, we might never find Him at all.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. Who is your favorite saint? Why? What about this saint’s life inspires you?
2. What are some ways that you can work to see the “angels in the laundry” – that is, the beauty in the ordinary moments of our lives?
3. When you think about the beauty of a “life well-lived,” what does that mean to you?

SUGGESTED READINGS

- *The Second Shepherd’s Play*
- “The Dream of the Rood”
- John Saward, *The Beauty of Holiness and the Holiness of Beauty*
- *The Little Flowers of St. Francis of Assisi*

Notes:



EPISODE 10: Sanctuary

God is Beauty, and He will invite us forever to journey “further up and further in,” deeper into the mysteries of His love.

As we reach the end of our pilgrimage journey, we meditate on the times and places of rest, of sanctuary. T.S. Eliot calls the Word of God the “still point” of the turning world, and we are called to abide in Him. The Holy Eucharist calls us to abide in deep friendship with God.

Entering into a church is a small taste of what Heaven will be, and the beauty of these spaces reminds us that we are in God’s presence. Cistercian architecture reminds us to turn inward and to meditate on our hearts transformed by God’s grace.

The Virgin Mary is our most trustworthy guide to the Heavenly Jerusalem. Mary’s contemplative spirit is a model for us as we seek to hear God’s voice in our own hearts. God calls us to “be still” and know that He is God, but so often, we push Him away. The sacrament of Confession restores us and prepares us to meet God as our perfect friend.

The end of our pilgrimage is not St. Peter’s Basilica, but the Kingdom of Heaven. The Way of Beauty

continues on for eternity, as God invites us forever to journey “further up and further in,” deeper into the mysteries of His love.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. Why do you think Cardinal Sarah calls silence the language of God? What are some ways to make silence more a part of your daily experience?
2. Pray the Litany of the Blessed Virgin Mary and notice how many times she is called by the title of a sanctuary space. How do these titles help you to relate to Mary, and through Mary, to God? How might you turn more often to Mary as a sanctuary in your daily life?
3. Has meditating on all the many ways God meets us in our daily lives helped your spiritual journey? What is your favorite takeaway or mode of encounter to incorporate more often into your daily life?

SUGGESTED READINGS

- Polyphonic chant
- T.S. Eliot, “Ash Wednesday”
- *Pearl* poem
- Gerard Manley Hopkins, “The Virgin Mary Compared to the Air We Breathe”
- Cardinal Robert Sarah, *The Power of Silence*
- C.S. Lewis, *The Last Battle*

Notes:
