

St. Anthony of Padua R.C. Church

160 Court Street, Buffalo, New York 14202

Traditionally Speaking by S. Casarotto 9/20/09

RELIGIOUS ARTS

Nicholas Kabasilas, a Byzantine theologian who lived in the 14th century, said that art "produces a wound." True art deeply affect the human heart so that God, source of all beauty, leaves traces of his passing in it. St. Bonaventure said in the *Legenda Maior* that St. Francis "contemplated the Most Beautiful One in beautiful things."

[Then] Card. Ratzinger once said that "true knowledge is being struck by the dart of Beauty which injures man, being touched by reality, by the personal presence of Christ Himself. This is why the Church has always believed in the language of art and has invested in art herself, as is strikingly visible at the Vatican Museums." Catholic churches and cathedrals, their statues and paintings are a testimony of the divine Truth and Beauty shining through religious art.

STATUES and SACRED IMAGES

It seems that a misinterpretation of Vatican II has renewed the iconoclastic persecution, often changing the beautiful and artistic character of Catholic churches into banal and meaningless buildings, empty of statues and sacred paintings. In fact, some churches don't even have a statue of their patron Saint. The following passage, written at the time of the first iconoclastic persecution, is a good lesson.

*"Seeing that not everyone has knowledge of letters nor time for reading, the Fathers gave their sanction to depicting these events on images as being acts of great heroism, in order that they should form a concise memorial of them. Often, when we have not the Lord's passion in mind and see the image of Christ's crucifixion, His saving passion is brought back to remembrance, and we fall down and worship not the material but that which is imaged: just as we do not worship the material of which the Gospels are made, nor the material of the Cross, but that which these typify. For wherein does the cross, that typifies the Lord, differ from a cross that does not do so? It is just the same also in the case of the Mother of the Lord. For the honor which we give to her is referred to Him who became incarnate of Her. And similarly also the brave acts of holy men stir us up to be brave and to emulate and imitate their valor and to glorify God. For as we said, the honor that is given to the best of fellow-servants is a proof of good-will towards our common Lady, and the honor rendered to the image passes over to the prototype. But this is an unwritten tradition, just as is also the worshipping towards the East and the worship of the Cross, and very many other similar things." (St. John of Damascus, *On Holy Images*, c. 730)*