

## *The Legacy of the Arts and Architecture – What Do We Leave For the Next Generation of Catholics?*

I can still remember the first time I held a ball of wet earth clay in my hands – the cool smooth texture, its weighty feel, the damp earthy smell. Even though I watched my art teacher pull the lump from a plastic bag, it was obvious to me, even at the young age of six or seven, that it wasn't new or man-made – it felt natural, organic and ancient. The connection I felt between the clay and my hands was immediate, like it was somehow an extension of what I was, reacting to my every touch, softening as I kneaded it, folding it back on itself over and over. The moisture transferring from my skin into the clay, warming as I shaped it – my imprints left behind as I pressed my fingers into it; and although it gave way when I leaned on it, the resistance of the clay was comfortable, somehow equal. I recall being very cognizant of the calm and peace associated with handling the lump of earth – feeling no anxiety, only possibility.

Over the years, I have heard similar accounts from other artist and craftsmen when they discovered their medium, their favorite material. For some, it is paint, charcoal, paper, and for others wood, metal, glass and sound. For me it was clay and plaster. This connection I am describing has been written and talked about generation after generation, the amazing insight in which a painter is able to capture the very soul of their subject with the perfect amount of highlight and color – the way a master carpenter seems to guide the grain of the wood perfectly through the chair or cabinet, or a sculptor who captures the horror and the beauty of the Crucifixion, able to remind the most distracted parishioner of the sacrifice and our purpose.



These connections to the arts and architecture were not lost on the early church, as paintings and sculptures were commissioned to bring Christ, Mary and the Saints closer to the faithful, images and forms that affirmed our belief, our faith. Ornate churches with grand altars were built to celebrate the glory of God and house these works that would later become masterpieces. Our very own sanctuary, adorned with bronze

statues of Joseph, Mary and a young Jesus, with its tiered stone faced walls, harkening back to the Holy land, to the geographic origins of our faith. These pieces and symbols, all intended to help us focus, help guide us to the right frame of mind to worship and be present with God, with each other.

The value to continue to support our parish, our church, our music and arts is equally as important today as it was so long ago. Families, many years from now will come to our parish, they will see our welcoming space, our beautiful sanctuary, our peaceful places of reflection and know what we were about – a community committed to our faith and to each other.

We must work to preserve the beauty that is St. Mark's, the foundation, the faith and ideals from which our parish is built. Continue to embrace our diversity, and work together to forge something

better for everyone. Continue to pray for each other; offer a hand, a smile, an embrace. Love each other, demand better for each other, and give to each other.

God bless this St. Mark's family.

Written by Stephen Waite, member of our Stewardship Committee