

A Beautiful Adventure: the Gift of the Arts in Spiritual Formation

with Carolyn Arends

Reflection Guide: Session 3

1. Were metaphors a rich part of your early Christian formation? If so, how was this conveyed? Was sacred art part of your learning about faith? What are some memories you have of encountering sacred art as a child?

2. Reflect on what metaphors for God have been important to you at different times in your life. Can you remember what first introduced those particular metaphors to you? A song? A sermon? A book? A piece of art? What caused a shift in the metaphors you found yourself meditating on?

- 3. Think about an opinion or position on which your mind is fully made up. No if's, and's, or but's. Now take some time for silence and invite God to offer you a metaphor that connects to this position or opinion. For example, think of a political position you hold. Now let's say the metaphor that comes to you is, "Politics is a dance." Allow your mind to explore as many different facets of the metaphor as you can imagine. The point is not about changing your mind or position - but allowing your mind to welcome more reflection, more spaciousness, and perhaps deeper wisdom. What issue did you choose and why? What metaphor came to you in your time of silence?

- 4. As you listened to Carolyn describe a low or high symbolic hedge, what resonated for you? Do you tend to function with a low or high symbolic hedge? Do you think this is something you'd like to try to increase? What steps might you take to welcome deeper symbolic truth into some of the things you're experiencing in your life? Be surprised by the unexpected. Why might this be helpful in our spiritual journeys? In what ways might you be blessed by 'opening' your attention to new aspects of the arts?

5. Carolyn invites us to be curious and open to the wonder of art that doesn't immediately appeal to us. Have you ever had a piece of art "grow on you"? Were you able to eventually begin to appreciate things about it you didn't immediately notice? In the week ahead, be alert to such a piece of art - it could be a visual piece or a musical piece or perhaps a poem that, at first read, doesn't seem to speak to you. Spend some time with that piece with an open heart and mind to experience something new and perhaps something beautiful.
