

ART AND THEOLOGY: My Ruminations on the Good, the True, and the Beautiful

By, Fr. Jay Suero

Something is "beautiful only because the delight that it arouses in us is founded upon the fact that, in it, the truth and goodness of the depths of reality itself are manifested and bestowed, and this manifestation and bestowal reveal themselves to us as being something infinitely and inexhaustibly valuable and fascinating." (*Hans Urs von Balthasar*)

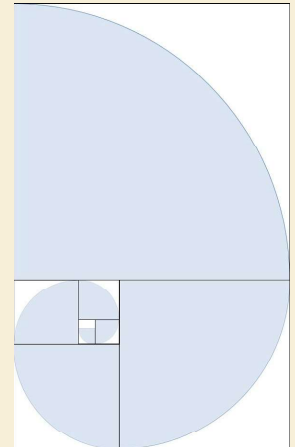
True beauty draws us out of ourselves toward the transcendent. The more beautiful an encounter is, the more the divine presence is made manifest to us. Thus, there is none more beautiful than that of the Incarnation of Christ. My hope with my drawings is to point to that fundamental importance of beauty as a vehicle to journey into the mind of God.

Every month I will share an art piece of mine along with a description of the theological reflection that went into it so as to hopefully provoke theological reflection of our own.



The Logic of the Cross

This drawing stemmed from my intrigue of the golden ratio which builds the pattern to the right, the golden rectangle and golden spiral. It is said that you can see this pattern recurring in nature, albeit not perfectly, but there are many examples that tend toward this ratio. The golden ratio, however, is also one of many other patterns we may see recurring in nature and, to me, it is fascinating to think about because it points to the reality that there are underlying laws that govern and hold together the universe and these laws point to Christ who IS the underlying law of the universe (or in terms of ancient Greek Philosophy and the Tradition of the Church, he is the Logos) "for in him all things were created...all things were created through him and for him. He is before all things, and in him all things hold together." (Col 1:16-17)



What is also interesting is the fractal nature of this ratio. Fractal means self-similar infinitely across different scales. It is a never ending pattern. In the golden rectangle we can see how it infinitely folds in on itself with the golden spiral following suit. Paradoxically fractals are also found among chaotic phenomena such as snowflakes. Every snowflake is unique yet at the same time constructed of an ordered fractal pattern. I think this reflects how, although God allows the chaotic disorder of sin in respect to our free will to choose against his divine plan, He is

still able to bring order to it. The idea of fractals also reflects the created order of the universe that not only is Christ the underlying principle of the universe but also everything in it reflects God's being, down to the very smallest molecule. This reality allows us to look at nature and encounter God on some level. This applies especially to us persons who not only reflect Him but were also created in His very image.

Focusing on this one fractal pattern, I utilized the golden rectangle in this drawing as a fundamental principle underlying everything. Everything is contained by this rectangular pattern and thus is used as a symbol for Christ. Dominating the picture is the cross. The deep and light blue colors represent the death to self and the entering into new life of baptism. The red color signifies the blood of Christ and his sacrifice on the cross. The five yellow marks allude to the five wounds of Christ through which our salvation poured out from. Angels surround the cross giving veneration to it. On the bottom is death and Satan. The cross appears to be coming down upon Satan to show that both he and death are conquered by it. They too fall within the pattern of the golden ratio. Even in their chaos they are bound by the order of Christ.

Another theme that comes into play is Plato's metaphysics. An abbreviated (and thus inadequate) explanation is that what is most real and reliable to Plato are the universal ideas, the forms, for they never change and what is least real and untrustworthy is what we perceive through the senses; for our interaction with space and time is always changing and ever fading (for further explanation, please read into Plato's Cave). Within the drawing as your eyes move up from death and sin to the cross it moves from the more sensible looking to the more abstract, signifying the movement from lies and deceit upward towards the contemplation of the truth, Jesus Christ.