

Materializing the Mystery--Body Imagery in Catholic Visual Culture

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St. Augustine was walking along the seashore at Civitavecchia. Lost in contemplation about the great question of Augustine's day, the mystery of the Trinity, he runs into a little boy who was busy dipping water with a shell in a small pail of water. "What are you doing?" Augustine asks the boy. "I'm scooping the sea into my pail," replied the boy. "But that's impossible," said Augustine. "No less impossible than trying to understand the mystery of the Trinity with the mind of a human," said the child.

The tension of this paradox informs much of the history of Catholic imagery. Certainly clerics from all three traditions represented at the Colloquium—Protestant, Catholic, and Orthodox—have struggled to understand their relationship to the Mosaic covenant, and, especially, how to worship God in "spirit and truth." I am being asked to address what distinguishes religious imagery as recognizably Catholic in order to contextualize past and present praxis?

I am addressing the use of imagery in religious worship primarily from an art historical and theological perspective, though informants for the Luce Study would be served by sociological, psychological, and anthropological lenses and lexicons as well. I have selected images from fourteenth and fifteenth century northern European devotional paintings for the use of imagery in devotion is both visually endorsed and supported by rich literature as well. As I seek to frame and limit a subject that deserves volumes, I cannot resist looking at the titles of the five-dozen books that line my workspace here at the Getty Research Institute. At least a third of them bear titles containing the word "image." The treasures here bring to mind another set of images in the hallway of the GRI on "L3" where researchers and scholars work. Black and white photographs of Getty scholars remind viewers restricted to staff and extended readers of the fecundity of the research conducted here

and that we, too, are privileged to work here in the desire to keep the gift moving. The settings and backgrounds of these scholars remind us of their work in the larger world. I am inspired by these images, and can project onto them that they witness our work here, yet I know this to be a projection. The images represent people, some of whom I will meet, most not. In contrast, images of Christ and the Virgin Mary and saints who lived as humans on the earth represent two realities: what artists imagined them to look like as humans, and symbols of the communion of saints that do indeed surround us as a great cloud of witnesses. Unlike the Getty scholars who are presented as mortals, very accomplished ones, the saints are presented for those who can receive the invitation as examples in both life and eternity as having said 'yes' to God's will completely, even unto death. These images serve as role models and call one to both an assent of will and conformity of righteousness.

What do books such as Hans Belting's *Likeness and Presence: A History of Image Before the Art* and Ousterhout's *The Sacred Image East and West* offer our study of imagery in worship within three different Christian traditions? As Hans Belting observes in his introduction entitled apropos of our discussion, *The Power of Images and the Limitations of Theologians*,¹ much of the wrangling in the first millennium of Christianity over images and the consecration of these images (the power and politics) involved how *Christians have picked their way between the graven images of polytheism and the ban on images imposed by the Jews.*² How images are presented can be seen as both cause and reinforcement of religious division. There are images that appeal so powerfully to the human soul that seem to transcend doctrinal differences.

Within Catholicism, imagery often represents as vividly as possible actual bodies: bodies rendered by artists specifically seeking to make mystery manifest. This fleshing forth has proven a stumbling block to those outside Catholicism. Why this emphasis on the physical, the carnal, the tangible image? Why must there be a corpus on a cross to serve as a crucifix in every church and cathedral? Is there not a paradox inherent in a tradition known for accommodating mystery yet encompassing such a vast material culture? Let us stand back from these *local*³ questions to ask more *catholic*⁴ ones? In what way does imagery serve to trigger one's love for the Divine? Jesus asserts that he is the

resurrection, and that he came to give life so that humans might live more abundantly. How does one receive this abundant life? How does one gain access to the unseen bounty promised by the Holy Spirit? In a world so saturated with images, how does one grow in the faith that Paul describes as the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things unseen? Is this not a contradiction?

The basis for use of imagery in Catholic worship is the concept of *Imago Dei*. We are made in God's image. Our very bodies bear some semblance of the divine, and this radical affirmation of Christianity flows from the heart of the Incarnation that the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us. In one sense, imagery seeks to signal and make that dwelling sensible and new. The imagery of the plastic arts in Catholic visual culture seeks to materialize the mystic. Use of imagery can be discussed as private devotion, e.g. in *andachtsbild*, and in communal worship such as liturgy.

What is the function of imagery? Images reinforce a sense of relationship: Jesus dwells within one's own heart as in this painting of Jesuits with the Sacred Heart. This literal image of a heart signals one thing to Catholics raised with the image but proves inaccessible even bizarre to someone like my Jewish husband. [Image]. Images serve as aids to prayer. In the fifteenth century, religious images were employed as for *conformatas*—the devout would pray to become like Jesus. [Image] Images are triggers of both personal memory as well as catalysts of historical collective memory.

This point was articulated well by a chapel speaker during my undergraduate years at Wheaton: *it can be told to love my neighbor ad infinitum; but if you offer my imagination an image or story of that neighbor, then a bridge grows between my heart and the other. I can break through the wordiness to the empathy.* Images help create bridges of loving vertically as in the vision of Jacob's ladder. They help bridge us horizontally to our neighbors. In the case of the National Gallery's *Virgin and Child with Saints and Donor* by Gerard David, 1510, the viewer sees the donor amidst the holy personages and is reminded of a *sacre conversazione*, one in which all are invited to participate by prayer and *conformatas*. In effect, the sense of being made in God's

image, and the use of icons to express and celebrate that relationship, is catophtic as well as iconic.

Although one might rightly observe that Catholic visual culture seems nothing if not catophtic, a tension does exist between the catophtic and the apophtic, or imageless, approach. Indeed Jesus said to Thomas, "Blessed are those who believe without seeing." Early church fathers wrestled with the popular desire to use imagery and the monotheistic injunctions against engraved images and idolatry by allowing for representations of Christ's humanity. This, it seems, prevented early believers from propagating an image that was worshipped; instead, the human form of Christ's representation served as an image that referred to the prototype.

This discourse of physical to spiritual returns us to the basic doctrine of *Imago dei*, affirming that humans are created in the image of God, and specifically in and through the Word made flesh. *Imago Dei* reminds us that humans are called to a relationship of love, a covenant of obedience, a pilgrimage of faith. The Trappist monk Thomas Merton offers us the following equation, emphasizing the physical: "We are made in the image of God. God is love. Therefore, love is the reason for our existence".

In essence if love covers a multitude of sins, then such a large blanket as Merton's may well represent imagery that encompasses a wide range of religious art: from the Sistine Chapel and the Getty Annunciation by Dieric Bouts to crucifix necklaces and pink plastic rosaries. If *Imago Dei* helps pilgrims bear the inevitable pain and suffering of being human, then Catholic imagery will continue to include all sorts of expressions of that pain, from the profound and the sentimental to the kitsch. In between fine art and kitsch is much other Catholic imagery outside the walls of the church: whether it is the image of the Virgin of Guadalupe [Image] blazoned on the wall under the freeway, or St. Sebastian riddled with arrows in a West Hollywood parlor. The Luce research will focus specifically on individuals' engagement with images within their tradition. At the same time, researchers will observe the unique combination of factors when immigrants bring and often adapt their iconography in ethnically rich southern California. The

appropriation of imagery will, as I seek to do in some small way here, reference historical precedent while anticipating new forms.

What one brings to the images, and what one receives from them, are two different propositions. Ultimately what is important for our purposes here is that at the heart of visual engagement with imagery is the desire to strengthen the devout's offering of love and adoration to the Triune God; and to feel a sense of kinship with the Holy Family and the communion of saints. The five senses are the divine germs with which we experience beauty, and with which we hunger for connections to the Divine. However I will limit my comments here to the theological and art historical, employing images from 15th century Northern European religious paintings; liturgical examples; with a passing note regarding space and architecture.

I. PAINTING AND SCULPTURE: THE THEOLOGY OF INCARNATION

Catholics affirm that it is both Spirit and Flesh that ground and guide our pilgrimage on earth. The present Catechism of the Catholic Church states, "The sacred image the liturgical icon principally represents Christ. It cannot represent the invisible and incomprehensible God, but the incarnation of the son of God has ushered in a new economy of images: Previously God, who has neither a body nor a face, absolutely could not be represented by an image. But know that he has made himself visible in the flesh and has lived with men, I can make an image of what I have seen of God and contemplate the glory of the Lord, his face unveiled.

This unveiled face proves significant, especially during the Renaissance and following. Unlike an icon, paintings such as the Birmingham Christ as Saviour and Judge by Petrus Christus, c. 1450, seek to materialize the mystery of Jesus appealing to our sympathy as if the Savior is leaning forward out of the frame, inviting us to touch his wound. c.

[Image] In this small devotional image painted on lapis lazuli, Louis Cousin called Il Gentile, depicts Saints Catherine of Siena Drinking from the Side Wound of Christ. Even my colleague, the monk Robert Hale, found this image quite shocking, yet the

ardent tenderness of St. Catherine it brings home the physicality and often sensuality of mystical devotion.

As early Church fathers sought to explain the Word made Incarnate, they endeavored to convey the importance of Jesus as both fully human and fully divine. In the Prado's Trinity by El Greco, the artist referred to as the greatest mannerist portrays Jesus being held by his heavenly father with the Holy Spirit as dove above them surrounded by a swirl of saints and angels. El Greco seeks to present that which cannot be represented literally as the boy reminded Augustine. [Image]

Tertullian emphasizes the flesh not only as a tangible path to understanding Christ's duality, but also as the hinge of salvation itself: *Caro salutis est cardo*.

We could simply say that it is impossible for the soul to obtain salvation unless it comes to faith while it is still in the flesh. The flesh is the hinge of salvation. When the soul is bonded to God, it is by means of the flesh that it is so bonded.

A perfect example can be seen here in the *Vierge Ouvrante*, Cologne, 1300. [Image]

When closed, it portrays the Virgin nursing, the iconographical convention of *Madonna Lactans*. When opened [Image] the *Vierge Ouvrante* reveals Jesus as the Mercy-Seat. This object with its sacred imagery on the interior and exterior of the object embodies the concept of the flesh as the hinge of salvation, and gives honor to Mary's role in bearing the body. Note the scenes painted on the inside of the Virgin's body surrounding the sculpted figure of Jesus. These images reinforce Gregory Nazianzen's dictum found in his letter to Cleodius: *Quod non est assumptum, non est sanatum*, which I translate in the affirmative to read as *only that which is assumed can be healed*.¹

Art historian Leo Steinberg writes about Renaissance art that, whether the naked infant Christ sits up to give audience or deftly slips a ring of his circumcised self as a marriage vow to St. Catherine,

The depicted Christ is at all times the Incarnation of every man. Very God. The palpation of the Child's privy parts serves to set the Virgin's son apart, putting the Catholic Creed in the center: God's descent into manhood.

Integral to incarnation is the passion of Christ. Here is a popular image in both medieval and Renaissance practice of meditating on the passion of Christ. [Image] These arma christi, the instruments of Christ's passion, bring home the price of Christ's assumption for the soul's healing.

This explicit bodiliness from the corpus on the Crucifixion to the transubstantiation of the consecrated Host as Eucharist distinguishes Catholicism and shares with Judaism a covenant of totality: in effect, loving God with all one's heart, mind, soul and strength engages all five senses, especially the visual.

Paolo Berdini of Stanford University describes a painter as one who reads a text, e.g. a Scriptural passage or story, then translates his reading into a problem in representation to which he offers a solution—the image. It is the effect the image has on the beholder that Berdini calls the trajectory of visualization. What factors condition and mediate our access to these images?

An example of the trajectory of visualization is both the story and depiction of the Mass of St. Gregory. Augustine defines sacrament as the visible form of invisible grace; and art and imagery depicting the sacraments of baptism, reconciliation, Eucharist, Confirmation, marriage, ordination, and anointing of the sick, constitute much of the sacred imagery in the church, like this image depicting the sacrament of Eucharist, which I use here exemplified by the Getty painting of the Mass of St. Gregory. [image]. Here is one version of the image's origin:

A woman who sometimes baked and offered bread to the church heard St. Gregory, at the time of the consecration, utter the words: "May the Body of Our Lord Jesus Christ profit thy soul unto life everlasting!" The woman began to laugh. At once St. Gregory drew back his hand holding the Host that he was about to place upon the woman's tongue. He then set the sacred Host upon the altar. Before the entire congregation, he asked the woman why she had dared to laugh. And the woman made answer: "I laughed because you called this morsel of bread, which I kneaded with my own hands, the 'Body of Christ.'" Then Gregory, faced with the woman's lack of belief, prostrated himself in

prayer, and when he arose, he saw the Host which lay upon the altar had changed into a piece of flesh in the shape of a finger. Seeing this, the woman recovered her faith. Then he prayed again, saw the flesh return to the form of bread, and gave communion to the woman.

This story, as related in *The Golden Legend*, became such a popular source of illustration that by the fifteenth century, numerous artists painted their version of the Mass of St. Gregory. We see in these two images that instead of a finger, the artists, influenced by the popularity of the Feast of Corpus Christi, portray the entire body of Jesus. Similarly, this painting of Hans Memling, the Washington National Gallery's *St. Veronica with the Sudarium* shows Veronica displaying her veil impressed with -the Vera Iconóor true image of Christ. This painting exemplifies the visual trajectory from the physical to the spiritual. When Veronica wiped Jesus' face with this cloth, his image was miraculously imprinted on her veil. [Image] Both the Mass of St. Gregory and the *Veronica* reflect the growing emphasis in the Renaissance on the humanity of Christ, and specifically, on the corpus of Christ. His Body is lifted up on every crucifix and is revered in the consecrated host of the Eucharist. The Greek influence on depictions of the body influenced some Renaissance Italian painters to depict Jesus as strong and heroic.

An annual event at an ethnically rich parish in neighboring Glendale, Holy Family illustrates the impact of sculpture on community. A statue of the Blessed Virgin Mary holding Jesus faces the church on the right side of the altar while Joseph faces the church from the left side. A group of votive candles with a donation box mediates the space between the kneeler and the statue. Once a year, in honor of The Feast of Guadalupe, Hispanic parishioners construct a temporary shelter. They nail boards to concealing the statue of the Blessed Virgin Mary, a statue portraying the mother of Jesus as fair-skinned with light golden brown hair. Next the parishioners nail to this shelter or booth a framed print of a larger-than-life image of the Virgin of Guadalupe. The temporary shelter also holds two-dozen plastic vases filled with scarlet and yellow roses that wreathe the

beloved image. A group of devout Catholics kneel on the kneelers in front of the image of the Virgin of Guadalupe, some with heads bowed in silent prayer. Others light candles, and some hold rosaries. Others wait patiently in line for the opportunity to pay respect and pray before the image. The charged energy surrounding the vibrant image of a dark-skinned Virgin in colorful garb speaks of the power of this image to evoke a sense of wonder and gratitude. On one level, the image acts as catalyst to remember the story of the Virgin appearing to Juan Diego, a mystery made manifest. Not only did Juan Diego see this magnificent Lady, but she gave him two signs -- the roses both out of season and climate with which he filled his tilma, and the image of herself imprinted mysteriously on his humble raiment. This image -- like the Sudarium of Veronica -- is considered *acheropita*: not painted by human hands. Such miraculous images reinforce the sense of images as gifts that nourish one's faith personally and collectively.

This image, even in its reprinted version also triggers a sense of connectedness to the Mother of God who within a specific time of history affirmed the worth and belovedness of people who deserved to be treated better by both society and the established church. It took the miracle of the image for this to occur. The image comforts and reassures viewers of their relevance in the pilgrimage of faith.

II. BODY & WORSHIP: LITURGY

The liturgy is translated as, literally, *the work of the people*. Individuals on earth use their bodies to participate in the dramatic arts of the Mass; and indeed upon entering the church, they dip their fingers in the holy water to make the sign of the cross over their own bodies. They genuflect before the tabernacle containing the Host. They kneel in prayer and stand as the altar servers, deacon and priest hold high the Word of God and the crucifix for all to behold. In addition to touch, the other four senses are engaged: smelling the incense and candles; hearing the bells, songs and prayers; seeing the cross lifted and processed and tasting the Bread and Wine believed to be the actual Body and Blood of Christ. It is a mystery to most, inside or out of the Church.

The Second Vatican Council emphasized the liturgy as the celebration of the mystery of Christ and the church, through sensible signs and through rites and prayers. The Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, 122, includes the following about precious materials and challenged artists to make the things set apart for use in divine worship worthy, becoming, and beautiful, signs and symbols of supernatural realities. The liturgical calendar with its prescribed readings and corresponding vestments reflects and reinforces the memory of the Church's continuity.

Liturgical art, as it were, emphasizes the drama of salvation, the continual calling of the pilgrim on the journey of faith to abide in love, trust and fellowship. Each Mass is an enactment, with the material culture employed in service of the commemoration of the Lamb's great and conclusive sacrifice. The communicant, by receiving the Eucharist, partakes of this kenosis, of Christ's self-emptying.

The Sacraments are visible signs of invisible grace instituted by Christ. They confer grace in the very enactment of the rite and are thus simultaneously instrumental cause and sign. These are mediated through the body of believers for and because of the Body of Christ.

The Mass with the essential Body of Christ is being celebrated around the world and throughout time, constantly repeating itself yet never entirely the same. The beauty is, to employ Augustine's words, never ancient, ever new. The imagery of the liturgy offers the most enduring of signs and symbols to examine, for this imagery enables the enactment of the drama of salvation in the Mass.

. Each week the priest's vestments visually reinforce the liturgical season, as do the linens on the altar, the banners and flowers. Music, of course reinforces the imagery thematically. Integral to the liturgy are the artistic furnishings that service the altar and support the consecration of the Host. The newly published *Thesaurus des objets religieux* exemplifies the immensity of the material culture within the Catholic Church: religious furniture and furnishings, religious objects, liturgical linen and ornaments, and religious vestments are but a few of the categories of objects that serve the rites and

rituals of the Church. The furnishings of the altar and sanctuary provide the material means for displaying (monstrance and ostensoria), holding (paten and chalice), and carrying (pyx) the Body and Blood of the Eucharist. In addition, some objects appeal to more than the visual sense: objects, e.g., censers and an incense boat decorated with images of the annunciatio
n burn incense, the Paschal candlestick holds the beeswax candle symbolically marked and blessed, and even the ordinary candles are ritually blessed February 2 each year on the Feast of the Presentation which is also Candlemas. Trying to write about use of imagery and symbolism within the Catholic church feels like watching the few loafs and fishes multiplied to feed the multitudes!

An artist might speak of these images and objects as props for the staging of salvationís drama. An ethnologist would be interested in these ritual objects as tools for human actions. Sociologically the parish can be viewed as a repository of local cultural and social life with its beliefs and history. A devout lay person might view the sacred imagery and artifacts as objects that deserve special care and reverence for both their symbolic value and their actual agency as, e.g. in the case of a chalice containing consecrated wine, an object that bears the actual presence of Christís blood. A poet might name the material culture including artwork as both the dowry and trousseau of the Bride of Christ until the time when the Bridegroom will serve his Bride as the Wedding Banquet.

In speaking of the Liturgy, one, in addition to addressing its function as corporate worship also looks for the functioning of imagery in strengthening communal bonds. The art historian and scholar Hans Belting, in his fecund study of the *íHoly Imageí*, distinguishes the use of image before the Middle Ages as *íerving in the symbolic exchange of power,í* embodying *íthe public claims of a community.í* Let us return to the ethnically rich parish at Holy Family Glendale on the day of the Feast of Guadalupe. Participants in the Hispanic Mass have gathered outside the church at 12:40 p.m. while Filipino parishioners leave their 11:00 Mass to the sounds of spirited drumming. Some Hispanic parishioners dressed in Aztec garb, large peacock feathers attached to their scanty briefs, hold drums covered with animal skins. Singing and signaling in shrill

whoops, they process in a high-spirited fashion into the church. (Recall that that the statue of the lily-white complected Virgin Mary stands concealed behind a temporary shelter, the one supporting the framed image of the dark-skinned Virgin of Guadalupe.) This large image of Our Lady of Guadalupe serves as both catalyst and reflector of the powerful surge of emotion and sound that erupt into the church as other parishioners ó not only the dancers and musicians but those clapping and singing rejoice in this charged processional behind the traditional Crucifix and Bible held high by the priest and deacon. A palpable feeling imbues the air as if the spirit of the Magnificat animates the celebration: we are the beloved, we are the chosen ones, like Mary, we will be raised up. In a capitalist society that glorifies prestige and money, how significant to have accessible imagery, easy to digest, that empowers the counter-cultural truth: that each person is created as Imago Deo. Jesus calls each of us to be bearers of grace. The Hispanic reappropriation of an image of the Mother of God that empowers the truth of the gospel thereby serves the agenda of redemption.

III. CATHEDRAL ARCHITECTURE

One cannot speak of the Body in worship without recalling that most liturgies occur in churches and cathedrals that were designed in the shape of Christ on the Crossóthat is according to the human body of Jesus. The material church exegetically and physically represents the body: the altar is the head, the transept the hands and the arms, and the remainder toward the west, the rest of the body. , A drawing in Berniniís hand testifies to this idea and this intent: the church seen as the mother welcoming her children. Certainly, the architecture, stained glass windows, furnishings of the altar, vestments, constitutes a large corpus of imagery that merits study as the context for the plastic arts. The physical church environment also serves as the domus ecclesiae from which individuals bring imagery to their homes for private devotions.

Let us call to mind a cathedral--Brunelleschiís Duomo in Florence or Notre Dame in Paris, but two examples of structures that surround and create ritual space for worship. These buildings were intended to provoke a sense of awe and with their imagery glorify Go. Simultaneously, they embody Godís majesty; reminding those who enter and those

who pass that Jesus made a sacrifice as powerful as those structures are awe-inspiring.

At the same time, the body of Christ on the Cross

The research for this background of imagery in Catholic worship deepens my awareness of the pervasiveness of imagery in both content and form of Catholic worship. Both an art historical and theological understanding informs the way that I seek to shape the welter of information. As significant as the aesthetic considerations of imagery and art remain, the Luce research, strikes me as occurring in a fascinating intersection or crossroads of many disciplines: in addition to theological and our base is an evangelical seminary and art historical, the psychological, sociological, and anthropological seem as integral to nuancing our understanding of popular usage of religious imagery.

David Freedberg, an art historian, felt frustrated by the limitations of his discipline for understanding the history of popular response to imagery, including the visceral and empathic response that interests us in worship. In Freedberg's introduction to *The Power of Images: Studies in the History and Theory of Response*, he observes:

The kind of evidence that turned out to be most germane was exactly that which art historians usually avoid in their concern with more intellectualized forms of response. In thus suppressing the evidence for the power of images, it seems to me, they pass over in silence—usually ignorant, rarely knowing, silence—the relationship between image and people that are recorded in history and are plain from anthropology as well as folk psychology. The history of images stands at the crossroads of these disciplines, but the history of art, as traditionally conceived retreats from the meeting.

. It behooves those of us participating in the Luce Colloquium and research to appreciate the faith formation that uniquely shapes and disposes the viewer of religious imagery within his or her own tradition. Each of the speakers will appreciate the beauty of the icon that our Orthodox scholars present, and these Orthodox brethren will respectfully remind us that their engagement with the icon, the praying with and reverencing of the icon, is very different from our own. Indeed, over half a millennium ago in 1438, at the Council of Ferrara-Florence, the Greek Patriarch Gregory Melissenos argued against the proposed church union with these words:

When I enter a Latin church, I can pray to none of the saints depicted there because I recognize none of them. Although I do recognize Christ, I cannot even pray to him because I do not recognize the manner in which he is being depicted.†

As I think about this approach and access, it is the Body of the human Jesus who became the risen Christ and how this Body is presented, often in three dimensions that distinguishes Catholic imagery from Protestant and Orthodox imagery. Paul spoke of all things being lawful but not all things being profitable or edifying, and the catholicity of visual culture ranging from infrequent contact such as reliquaries to frequent exposure such as crucifixes drives home for Catholics that Jesus assumed the flesh out of love, and in assuming and bearing all he was able to redeem all.

While each tradition and cultural context informs what enables the viewer either to behold and feel beheld, it seems that for our Jewish family members as well as members of diverse Christian traditions, the Psalmist reminds readers not to be led by a bit and bridle but to recall, it implies to me, that we are being invited by the loving gaze of God to be led by my eye.† In a world saturated by media's consumeristic images, what is the calling for those on the pilgrimage of faith—to what kind of vision and seeing? How can we both be led by the all-seeing eye of God and consecrate our vision to bring to abiding in love all that our eyes see? In what ways does the mystery made manifest in the Body of Christ remind us, as Thomas Merton affirms in his words, *we are made in the image of God. God is love. Therefore, love is the reason for our existence.*†

May the care and attention we give to sacred imagery deepen our own sense of being looked upon with love. Thomas Aquinas states, *From my breath I extract God and my eye is a shop where I offer him to the world.*† Seeing imagery and being seen as made in the image of God is a dialogic loop, one with our bond to the Creator at the heart of the relationship. For better or worse, Catholic imagery unabashedly seeks to make mystery manifest, to materialize the mystery.