



FINALLY, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things. (Phil 4:8)

We begin today a new study involving the growth in character and faith of great people of history. This will be an interim study between our devotions directly from Holy Scripture and those in which we undertake a study on the Book of Revelations – a notable challenge to say the least.

Longfellow expressed a profound and reasoned principle when he wrote the line: “*Knowledge comes, but wisdom lingers.*” There are a great number of aspects revealed in that line, but the one most salient, in my view, is that which portends to the ultimate application of the classical arts. The arts of music, paintings, statuary, architectural design, etc., become classic when their value lingers over great distances of time. Of

course, neither knowledge or wisdom define art, but they are waypoints in the application of art. But there is a hidden principle underlying things classical: goodness endures time, vulgarity does not. In our modern age, art has become an expression of deformity and decadence – particularly that of the works of Picasso, et al, whose supposed ‘art’ depict a deformed construct of the natural beauty of God’s Creation. Are we lifted to higher plains when we view a nose where an ear should be, or legs brutally severed at the knee-caps?

In the most endearing and inspired commentary of which I am aware on the nature of art itself, Great Works of Art and What Made Them Great, by *Frederick W. Ruckstuhl*, the author says:

“If we are low vulgarians in our tastes, we will find happiness only in low emotions and sensations, such as do not take us far away from the “*warm flesh pots of Egypt*.” If we are spiritually minded, and adore the True, the Good, and the spiritually Beautiful, we will seek such emotions as will tend, like a cathedral spire, or a mountain top, to lift us toward the supernal. Recalling Emerson’s lines:

We mount to Paradise
On the stairway to surprise.

Following that brief introduction, we will take a summary look at one of the greatest artists of the Dutch Golden Age of Art – Rembrandt van Rijn (1606-1669), better known simply as REMBRANDT since his very name became a metaphor for great and classical biblical art.

Over his career as an artist, Rembrandt painted or drew more than 300 historical works based on biblical personalities or events. In his earlier paintings as a youthful artist, his subjects were filled with conjecture and not entirely based on the biblical text, for example, in *The Raising Of Lazarus*, Rembrandt has Lazarus arising from a European style grave in the earth instead of the stone-sealed tomb customary in the time of Jesus. However, in his later years, Rembrandt’s art began to depict a studied interpretation of Holy Scripture and his art reflected more accurately on the meaning and sense of Scripture.

As he grew more intimately informed of biblical meaning, his art grew to match his increased spiritual understanding. Rembrandt began to apply a process of light and darkness to draw focus upon important aspects of his art design. He often highlighted points of interest with light against dark backgrounds to draw the viewer’s eye to that matter which was of greatest importance. Isn’t life itself illustrated by this process. The wicked and dark dregs of the world are punctuated by those points of light personified by men and women of exceptional compassion and spiritual strength. No one today celebrates the life of the High Priest, Caiaphas who convicted Christ in a false trial before Pilate, but everyone knows, and half the world celebrates, the life of the Lord Jesus Christ.

In his biblical paintings, Rembrandt mastered a technique first employed by Leonardo Da Vinci about 150 years earlier in the *Last Supper* – that is, graphically capturing a precise moment in time. Rembrandt also utilized another technique first used by Da Vinci called ‘*point perspective*’ in which the elements of the work draw ones attention unwittingly to the central figure of the piece. While Da Vinci employed lines and geometric cunning in accomplishing this objective, Rembrandt used a new process of high-lighting certain figures against contrastingly dark backgrounds. The result of this process is to evoke a profound emotion in the thoughts of the observer. My favorite, though not the most popular, of Rembrandt’s art is that entitled, *Christ In The*

Storm on the Sea of Galilee. It is not possible to view this painting without a tremor of awe and mystery. I hope you will look this painting up and let me know your impressions.

Though the earlier works of Rembrandt were great insofar as accurately capturing the human condition, they were not so inspiring as his latter works. This, I believe, is owing to his spiritual growth in later years and a more meticulous study of biblical detail and interpretation in his art.

We all grow in knowledge and truth in the Lord – even great artists and great Christians. Hopefully, we shall grow likewise to love the beauty of God's Creation as did Rembrandt, Da Vinci, Michelangelo, Roselli Bach, Handel, Gustave Doré and a little known, but ingenious Korean Christian artist named, Gwank Hyuk Rhee who did a pencil drawing of Jesus Christ entitled, THE WORD, incorporating only the 24 characters of the Korean alphabet in lighter and darker tones to distinguish outlines of Christ from every word of the Book of John.