

Seeing Jesus

Easter reminds us that through, with and in God we experience our own re-creation and renewal – an eternal resurrection. As the scattered people of God we are called to find our way to the divine through the example and life of the person – Jesus Christ.

How do we see Jesus?

In the article “Christ in the Garden: An Easter reflection on Fontana’s ‘Noli Me Tangere’” published Easter 2009, the author, Franco Mormando, highlights the artist Lavinia Fontana and her artwork which was painted in 1581.

The painting depicts the encounter between Jesus and Mary on Easter Sunday morning described in the Gospel of John (20:14-17).

“Most artists had shown the resurrected Saviour casually holding some garden implement, Lavinia, instead, gives us a Jesus – rather homely – completely decked out in horticultural apparel: coarse, belted smock, wide-brimmed straw hat, with a large shovel capable of digging real holes. It was no act of simplistic literal-mindedness on her part; Lavinia deliberately wishes to impress on us the fact of “Jesus as gardener,” as if to remind us that the specific nature of Mary’s misidentification had some spiritual truth to convey.”

Through Mary’s first encounter of the Risen Christ we are offered an example for us to follow and a representation of Jesus’ presence in all things, all of the time.

Franco concluded, “Of the many metaphors by which we traditionally imagine Jesus and the working of his influence in our world, I now find this ancient but long-forgotten one strangely compelling. Jesus the gardener at work in the often rough, hostile and forbidding terrain of the human heart, transforming empty deserts into fertile patches of a renewed Eden, producing the most unexpected, life-giving



fruit, which in turn sends its seeds off in every direction the wind spontaneously takes them” (<https://www.americamagazine.org/issue/694/fine-arts/christ-garden>).

WHO WAS LAVINIA FONTANTA?

Lavinia was an artist, a wife and a mother of 11 children who, in a male-dominated field, was both economically and critically successful in her career. Garnering prestigious commissions from princes and prelates and in 1603 being called to Rome by Pope Clement VIII to serve as official painter to the papal court, where she died in 1614.

REFLECTION

> Where is Jesus the gardener at work in your life under ministry?