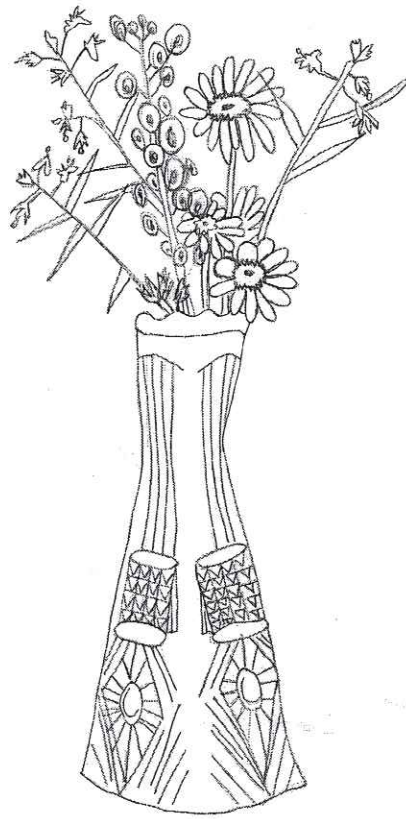


# Drawing God's Magnificent Garden

## Teacher's Guide and Resource Book



*Dedicated to the Sacred Heart of Jesus*

Sherry L. Foster © 2009

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421 S. Lochsa Street  
Post Falls, Idaho 83854  
208-773-7265, [www.olvs.org](http://www.olvs.org)

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## *Introduction*

*“Art is not sufficient in itself – the soul must be suitably disposed to make it and view it.”*

*...Dom Andre Mocquereau, 1896*

Years ago I was discussing an upcoming ‘potty art exhibit’, sponsored by a formerly reputable local art organization, with another artist and home schooling friend. The featured art, according to a large newspaper picture, was a used and junked toilet – unadorned. The article never said why this came to be selected as the central piece in a prominent exhibit, but it was much touted in the papers for weeks. This was one of *many* ‘toilet art’ exhibits we’d been reading of, and since then exhibits featuring toilets were to become the sideshows to a larger worldwide series of horrific exhibits featuring potty art applied (in several cases literally) to representations of Our Lord and Our Lady and holy objects. *How did society sink so low?*

In trying to answer that question we realized we also had to ask more: *what is the true formation of a Catholic artist? Can he make art that isn’t religious? What are his guiding principals? What do these principals flow from? What happened to make art sink so low and what is the antidote to this barbarism?* Nothing in our Novus Ordo magazines, home school curriculums, or wider reading touched this subject. The Church had adopted the world’s ugly ‘self expressive’ and abstract art in *her* art and architecture and taught the same in a purely secular way. Additionally, many Catholics have adopted the vague sense that to be an authentic Catholic artist you can only make religious art; but this thinking seemed to separate the Faith from the making of art.

It took over five years of reading traditional catechisms and many other books and articles to begin to unearth the Catholic principals of art. On a bibliography search I luckily dug up the bones of an abandoned body of work of tremendously valuable literature including workshop lectures, research, and programs that led to the answer *and* the remedy. The body was The Catholic Art Association (CAA), who along with the Catholic University of America, and important Catholic artists, teachers and professors, heads of art departments, and experts in their own fields, (luminaries like Florence Berger, Adelaide de Bethune, Sister Jeanne File and many others) did over 50 years ago what we need to do today! The goals of this group included extensive self-education, networking, outlining and expounding on the *Christian Philosophy of Art*, and writing and implementing art programs for the parochial school system, all to aid their goal, *“to stimulate artists and teachers to contribute to the renewal of Christian culture through professional artistic expression”*.

I was thrilled to find that the work had already been done in the U.S., but I almost cried when I read those optimistic yet realistic goals, especially since I was reading them from the other side of Vatican II and beyond a pile of toilet bowls. It was heartbreaking to see this movement buried and abandoned at the pinnacle of its life. In particular, because through this organization and its wide influence there was a *naturally occurring synthesis* of Catholic art principles and historical art techniques with the Catholic culture and positive influences of our times – in effect, the hope for the development of American *Catholic* artists and art; not just medieval style copy cats. Their books were written around 1956; by 1959 there were some modernist workshop presentations regarding the liturgy already showing up in the lectures. These books, papers, and articles, written just before Vatican II, contained the hopes of an art education program that was, although in its infancy, flourishing throughout the Catholic school system, including Catholic colleges. Their hope for the future in 1956 is still ours today – although now rather than *renew* we must work to *restore* Christian culture.

I also discovered Emile Mâle, a famous French Catholic scholar whose art books (recommended reading by the CAA) are still relevant and especially timely because they are written from this perennial Catholic view. They should be picked up again by all Catholic artists for the spiritual formation they offer as well as the principals of art they teach. (see *Endnote*)

Over the years I kept teaching art, but I was frustrated by the art programs available for Catholics, and wanting to incorporate this Catholic philosophy of art into my students' lessons in order to connect them with the supernatural realities of making art I began to formulate a series of classes using these principals. I started by peeling away any obstacles between the student and God: videos, copying work, photo models, and computer generated 'art' books, and so on. I began *focusing* on the student, God's creation, the sketchbook and the pencil. I kept it very simple! What I found most rewarding was the obvious and constant connection between God's creation, Scripture, and the Liturgy. My students and I were more aware of God's presence and we could see 'Divine Synchronicities' between our nature/art activities and spiritual realities. Drawing became a form of prayer – much like singing hymns. These classes eventually evolved into a book for others to use.

Talks with Catholic school teachers, artists teaching in their studios, home school parents, and self-learners revealed that they needed answers to the same questions I had had and they too wanted the same approach to teaching art *with* the Faith. But they also wanted to teach *art skills*. So I left the lessons flexible enough to adapt to different learning circumstances and different ages.

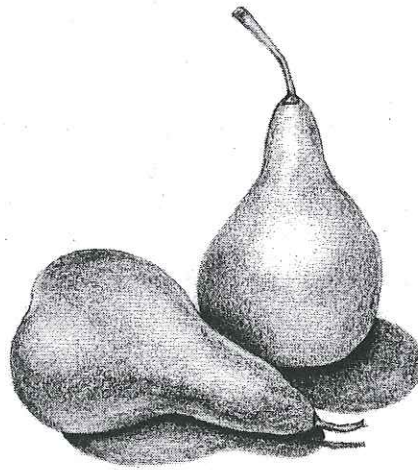
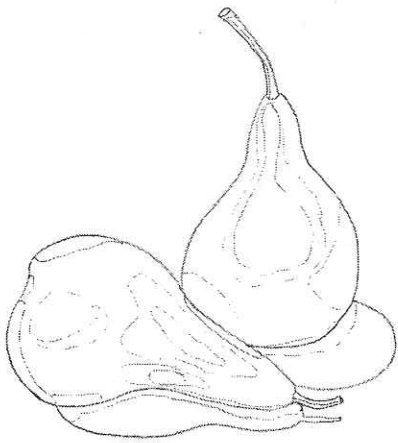
*Drawing God's Magnificent Garden, Basic Course* and the accompanying *Teacher's Guide and Resource Book* are designed for use in the traditional classroom, home school, or for independent study, from ages 10 and up. It focuses on teaching basic sketching and drawing skills by training the student to see shapes, values and colors accurately while drawing from life – fresh from the hand of God - using fruits, vegetables, flowers, and plants. Value studies and color lessons along with vocabulary words are incrementally studied while the student learns to make a connection between art, creation and the Creator that will stay with them their entire life. The simple exercises, if studied carefully and practiced, will help the student prepare for more advanced art lessons in the future since accurate drawing skills are the foundation for acquiring proficiency in all the other fine arts.

This drawing course differs from 'craft oriented art courses' where the student usually does his 'own thing' or makes an exact copy of a computer generated sample given in a book. Most of the drawing examples were drawn by Catholic boys and girls from my classes.

In the *Teacher's Guide* I attempted to include some of the important but scattered information I had gleaned through the years from out of print books and hard to find articles. They were written by an average parent/teacher for average parents/teachers in order to help share the answers to questions we all have asked about Catholic art principals. It includes sample lesson plans, articles relating to the principals of Catholic art and nature study for teacher formation, a brief art history from a Catholic perspective, extensive book lists, and suggestions for art activities in other areas of the curriculum. Directions for critiquing art projects, grading and exhibiting are also covered.

***Learning to create beautiful art develops the imagination and primes the young mind to appreciate and seek beauty!***

*Endnote:* The Catholic Art Association's workshop books, *Art in Christian Education*, and *Art and Language*, along with books by Emile Mâle help immensely with the formation of Catholic art principles. *The Gothic Image*, and *Religious Art from the Twelfth to the Eighteen Century*, are still used in universities, and Dover Publications carries an affordable copy of *Religious Art in France of the 13<sup>th</sup> Century*. However, the CAA's books are very rare and hard to find – photocopies are going for around \$75 online! They can be found mothballed at <http://archives.nd.edu/findaids/ead/html/CAA.htm>. Additional reference books are listed at the end of this Teacher's Guide.



## ***Teacher's Guidelines***

The student lessons are designed to be studied in the order given in the text - jumping around the lessons might confuse the student and frustrate the incremental skill building planned into the course. The lessons can be repeated using different models, especially if a certain chosen model seems too easy or too complicated for a student; in fact, the entire course can be repeated using different models and mediums.

***The larger Crayola® sets have all of the color wheel colors by name and are critical to the color lessons - please do not substitute them.*** This approach helps the student to see standard colors and learn their names. The graphite pencil set can be substituted or added to, and students can also experiment with many different types of pencils, pens and erasers. Hard erasers can be cut to fit tight spots in a drawing; the kneaded eraser is important for lifting or blending dark areas.

As much as possible, use the models God supplies in your area each season. For example, if it's autumn use leaves for models along with pumpkins and squash. If you have a field trip planned use it to also teach a drawing exercise. In the dead of winter bring in shell collections, or look for unusual and colorful produce at the market - or in your yard.

Have students draw each day if possible. They should repeat certain exercises (especially color wheels) using the other color mediums - oil pastels, colored pencils and crayons, and then compare them. Some students are heavy handed, some are light, some sketch, others line-draw, some crosshatch, some scribble-shade and the teacher should encourage each of them to develop their own shading technique. I used a smooth blended style in my examples, but by no means should that be taught as the only way to draw - see *Lesson Fourteen* for ideas.

It often happens that a favorite drawing gets lost, ripped, spilled on or otherwise ruined. It's important that along with showing the student sympathy, he is guided to offer this disappointment to God as a sacrifice. God, to Whom it was offered in prayer, has seen it and knows its importance to the artist, and since the world can no longer enjoy it, it becomes a gift just for God. This helps teach the student holy detachment from his art and prevents artistic egotism.

No two examples in any of the exercises will be alike due to personal style, light source, different models, and other factors making student comparison impossible. It takes a lot of practice over time for the student to be able to see accurately enough to draw well, so don't push the process, it will happen over time. Emphasize that they are not drawing pictures for praise; they are learning *skills* and developing their own style, which will take repeated efforts and some 'ugly ducklings'.

As the student progresses in the course he will acquire more skills and draw more accurately, he will automatically choose the techniques which help him best (contour line, basic shapes, negative space, etc.). However, he will probably use a combination of these techniques to check his work, but he doesn't have to use them all in a particular drawing.

Read each lesson carefully before you teach it; if possible, do the lesson yourself before you teach it to make sure you have all needed supplies and that there are no surprises! The *Answer Key* on page 59 of the student text can be removed. Sample Lesson Plans, ideas for grading, and many more suggestions for teaching are in following articles.

### **Classroom Setting**

The teacher has the option of using the text to springboard his own ideas or change them as needed depending upon his students' ages and capabilities. He can adjust the lessons to fit the time he has for art class. As a suggestion, a class of young students working at a slower pace would learn one lesson per week with the *Follow Up* exercise from the same lesson as the next week's assignment.

During each weekly lesson the teacher might read each lesson out loud, help gather the materials, give a demonstration of the lesson, and then critique the student's finished art work. Plan an entire school year to complete the lessons for younger students using this approach.

Older students would work through the lessons in less than one year by learning one lesson a week with the *Follow Up* exercise as homework or in another class time during the same week. However, I would give more difficult models as homework keeping the lessons spread over a year. For advanced or even older students a weekly class could cover two or more lessons each week.

The most common problem is not having enough time in the school schedule for art. At the very least you'll need 45 minutes a week with homework in order to see *some* progress in skills; at best, 1 ½ hours a week with homework is needed for consistent skill building.

Plan sketching and nature study fieldtrips if possible, or bring the outside in. A classroom can become art friendly by keeping some natural (and if possible *living*) items in it – potted plants, rocks, branches, pictures of nature, and also by having students bring in fresh produce on drawing day. Some exercises might also be coordinated with the students' other studies.

### **Family Setting**

A family-style or home schooling class for multiple ages (except very little ones) can be achieved by the parent gathering the materials for the lesson, reading the lesson aloud and demonstrating it, and critiquing the students' finished work. The parent should check the next lesson for materials that need to be gathered ahead of time. A family 'Mary's Garden' project could be added to the curriculum, or inside houseplants could be nurtured for drawing projects during the winter months. The family might make weekly trips to a farmer's market for uncommon produce or colorful eggs to use as models. Most parents who appreciate art have a secret longing to learn to make art; taking this course with your students would be an easy way to get started. Lessons can be adapted to a family art camp as a fun summer activity.

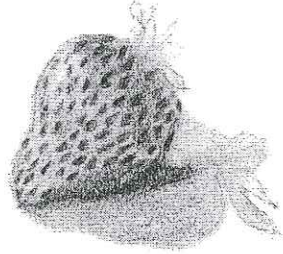
Help your students by providing a quiet and undisturbed environment for their drawing time – an environment very different from the usual party atmosphere of a fun craft making day! The student should not have to share his drawing tools with toddlers or defend his space against a younger sibling - make sure younger children are occupied elsewhere during art class for the older students.

### **Teaching Art in the Little Years**

It's easy to develop a love for beauty through nature in the souls of little children. They have a natural inclination toward beauty and they love nature! Nurture their developing wonder of the world by helping them to *see* and *observe* - natural activities for little ones. They have been created to learn by observing everything around them and to also copy what they observe. Everyday situations lend themselves to building and refining observation skills - just spend some time with your child gently drawing their attention to God's beautiful creation. After a young child spends some time talking to an insect deep within a flower in the yard you can suggest the colors of the flower and offer to get crayons for drawing it or the insect! Drawing is a form of communication – and often a child will produce a fairly accurate drawing of a flower even when they aren't old enough to verbally describe it. When they are this young find nature nearby – you don't really need too many nature walks or field trips. Use the nature study suggestions in the essay *Meeting God in His Garden* on page 14.

Little ones will happily draw the things they see around them, but don't correct or 'fix' their work. Experimenting with mediums and exploring colors and shapes found in nature, while working on developing hand/eye coordination is the plan for this stage of development. Gather and compare and

## *Learning to Draw from Life*



**“Given the great wealth of natural objects, nature requires and demands that we have recourse to her rather than to the masters who have learned from her.”**

**...Leonardo da Vinci**

How do we deepen the connection between studying nature and using it to ‘draw’ closer to God by using it as inspiration for art studies, especially drawing? Most schools and art textbooks shy away from teaching drawing using objects from nature or life; in fact, many have students copy line drawings or computer generated pictures from a book or video. Students use these programs for years and never really learn to draw what is in front of them – to ‘draw from life’. *Why?*

Here’s a simplified explanation of how the brain works when making art. There are two sides of the brain which control various functions: the left side controls the verbal skills of reading, thinking, speaking, rationalizing, listening to and processing speaking; the right side controls the non-verbal skills of *seeing* shapes, colors, shadows, puzzle pieces, targets, and relationships between these images - without using words. A typical child’s education mainly uses and develops the verbal skills of reading, writing, and speaking, which strengthens the *verbal (left) side* of the brain, but tends to leave the student with a weaker non verbal or *artistic (right) side* of the brain. Most art programs compound this imbalance by having the child copy simplified computer generated pictures, or someone else’s simplified drawings, because these ready made images are preferred by the *verbal side of the brain*, giving the student easy successes, and because they provide a uniform way to ‘grade’ or judge the work – everyone does the same thing! This is not to say that copy work doesn’t have its place in some drawing exercises, or when learning the techniques of masters, or copying traditional religious or folk art styles; however, copying *copies* of simplified or artificially created images takes from the student time better spent learning directly from God through nature. It also fails to help the student develop their individual artistic ability and it can prevent them from ever making realistic art because they never strengthen and develop the artistic side of the brain – they remain left brain artists.

**“We tend to see what we expect to see or what we decide we have seen... without our conscious awareness...”**

**... Betty Edwards**

The *verbal side* of the brain is very comfortable with, and actually prefers, these simplified images – it can control them even to the point of superimposing them into a drawing that a student tries to make from life. This is why most students cannot realistically draw an object in front of them even after years of using various ‘art programs’. The ‘verbal side’ likes to draw the same house for all houses, the same bird for all birds – it cannot help with drawing the *real* bird in front of the student, but it won’t give over control to the weaker *artistic side* which can. The verbal side of the brain, when in use, will always overpower the artistic side unless the artistic side has been *exercised and strengthened*.