

Dear Padre,

Are naked statues, like Michelangelo's David, really appropriate for public viewing?

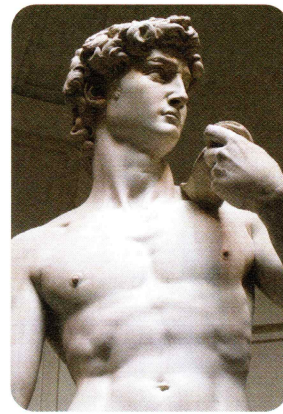
It is helpful to consider if the artwork depicts the body to heighten transcendence, or to objectify the body to satisfy basic instincts. Art is admittedly subjective, and the interpretation of nudity in true art is in the eye of the beholder. Nudity can evoke feelings of shame for some; for others, the nude body in art can be an aesthetic experience of illuminated grace in humanity, and ultimately in the glory of our Maker for all his gifts—including the gift of Christ's resurrection that restored us to the original image and likeness intended by our Creator.

Since ancient times, the nude human form was a common subject in art. The intention is to draw the viewer to a better appreciation of the human body's natural beauty. However, nudity is often associated with sexuality, and for some, sexuality is equated with sin.

In his series of addresses about the theology of the body, St. John Paul II expounded on original nakedness that was referred to in Scripture: "Man tries to cover the real origin of fear with the shame of his own nakedness" (Genesis 3:10). "In the state of original innocence nakedness did not express a lack. Rather, it represented full acceptance of the body..." (*Real Significance of Original Nakedness*, 1980).

So to answer the question, assuming the purpose of the artist is to inspire, and the atmosphere in which the statue is viewed is conducive to such inspiration, yes, such a public display is appropriate. ●

Fr. Byron Miller, CSSR / DearPadre.org



MORTA PONS MOREIA / SHUTTERSTOCK

Monday

August 19
Weekday
Ez 24:15-23
Mt 19:16-22

Tuesday

August 20
St. Bernard,
Abbot and
Doctor of the
Church
Ez 28:1-10
Mt 19:23-30

Wednesday

August 21
St. Pius X, Pope
Ez 34:1-11
Mt 20:1-16

Thursday

August 22
Queenship of
the Blessed
Virgin Mary
Ez 36:23-28
Mt 22:1-14

Friday

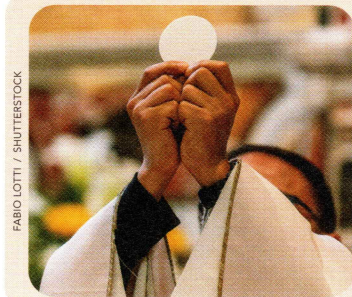
August 23
Weekday
Ez 37:1-14
Mt 22:34-40

Saturday

August 24
St. Bartholomew,
Apostle
Rv 21:9b-14
Jn 1:45-51

Sunday

August 25
Twenty-first
Sunday in
Ordinary Time
Jos 24:1-2a,
15-17, 18b
Eph 5:21-32
or 5:2a, 25-32
Jn 6:60-69



FABIO LOTTI / SHUTTERSTOCK

A WORD FROM POPE FRANCIS

Around the altar we find what spiritually feeds us and quenches our thirst today and for eternity.... The Eucharist shapes us so that we live not only for ourselves but for the Lord and for our brothers and sisters. Life's happiness and eternity depend on our ability to render fruitful the evangelical love we receive in the Eucharist.

ANGELUS, ROME, AUGUST 19, 2018