



# CORNERSTONE

March 2023

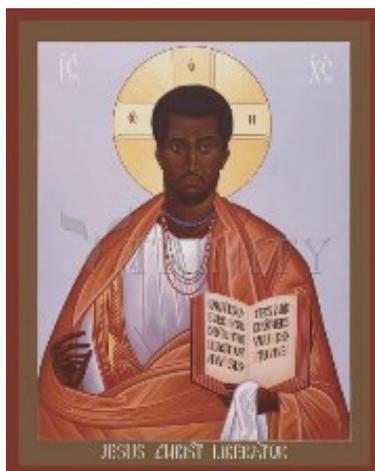
## Faith and the Arts

### Imaging Christ Anew— St. Timothy's Sacred Art Collection

About a year ago, St. Timothy's embarked on an initiative to add more culturally diverse depictions of Jesus, Mary, and Gospel accounts to our faith formation classrooms in the lower level of the parish center. One of our youth pointed out that our images of Jesus were all from a singular perspective (Western European), and this perspective is not historically accurate. Providentially, our desire to acquire a new collection of sacred art coincided with receiving funds through a Lilly grant distributed by St. Catherine University.

Researching artists and their works was unfamiliar territory to me, but I quickly became deeply connected to the project of choosing artwork. One

particular artist, Brother Robert Lentz, OFM, and his works has had a lasting impact on me. We



purchased his print called "Jesus Christ Liberator," which now hangs in room 224 of the parish center. This painting depicts Jesus as a young Black man holding an open Bible with the words "Whatsoever you did to the least of my sisters and brothers, you did to me." It was this piece of art, and the artist's explanation of it, that confirmed for me why our parish must

proceed with this project of expanding our visual representations of Jesus. Lentz points out that Christ identified with the poor and oppressed of the world. Since his resurrection, we encounter Christ in one another. Therefore, all ethnicities, races, classes, and genders are accurate to use as images of Jesus. Furthermore, seeing such images in sacred art help us to more easily behold Christ in every human being we encounter, hear about, and see on the news. No one is apart from Christ.

While this particular piece galvanized my commitment to acquiring diverse images, it is not my only favorite piece. We have several images of the Holy Family by different artists that each highlight a different aspect of family life and connectedness and give the viewer much to reflect on.

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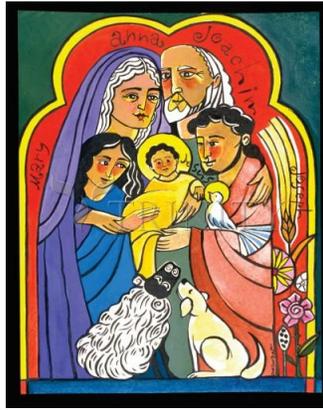
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## Imaging / From Page 1

“The Extended Holy Family” by Brother Mickey McGrath, OSFS includes Jesus’ grandparents. It is especially meaningful in considering the importance of love between multiple generations. I also find it helpful in seeing a more human side of Jesus as this picture spurs imaginings of other interactions Jesus had with his grandparents. How they must have loved their grandson—can I love Jesus like this, too?

This past fall, we held an open house to introduce our art collection to the parish. I was gratified to hear so many positive comments from parishioners viewing the art. People said things like, “I never thought about Jesus like that,” and “I’m so glad to see Jesus looking more real.” All of our art was selected to inspire thought,



reflect beauty, and uplift the viewers. Parishioners’ comments show me that goal was met.

During Lent, parishioners can view the art on Monday evenings between 6 and 7:30 p.m. Parish staff have created a reflection guide with prompts for meditating on the new sacred art pieces. The guide is available online at [churchofsttimothy.com/sacred-art](http://churchofsttimothy.com/sacred-art) and in hard copy at the parish office. Please come by to view our collection and let it reveal more about Jesus to you!

- Cindy Novak,  
Director of Parish Faith  
Formation



## A word from the editor

I can remember well being a child in the pews during Sunday Mass at St. Bernard’s Catholic Church in Middleton, Wisconsin. Though the words the priest said or the lectors proclaimed didn’t always make sense to my young ears, the beauty of the rich harmonies of the church choir and the dazzling sunlight streaming through the stained glass made a lasting impression. I can’t separate my experience of the arts from my experience of a felt sense of God’s presence.

So perhaps it isn’t surprising that in addition to pursuing a life of ministry I continue to find myself in concert halls, art museums, dance studios, and coffeehouses that host poetry readings. The arts fuel my prayer, and sometimes my prayer takes the form of creative expression—a song, a dance, a poem.

“Maybe the desire to make something beautiful is the piece of God that is inside each of us,” writes poet Mary Oliver in her poem *Franz Marc’s Blue Horses*. As you read our parishioners’ reflections on the role that creativity and the arts play in their lives, consider the relationship between faith and the arts in your life—whether or not you feel like you have artistic or creative talent of any kind or not. How do you experience the desire to make something beautiful, and how might that desire reflect the presence of God, who is the Ultimate Artist?

- Rhonda Miska

## Capturing Memory In Woolen Art

I was never a talented artist – I couldn't master straight lines or perspective, and I definitely couldn't render faces and features. As a junior high school teacher, I made several hand-drawn hall passes for my students with geologic layers or algebraic formulas. I hoped to enhance my eighth grade students' education on the off chance they might look at the hall passes on the way to the restroom. Despite my lack of artistic skills, I do appreciate visual art.



Before my wife Nancy and I went to Ireland, my sister-in-law Wendy lent us some magazines with recommendations on where to visit. I looked at them and promptly forgot any specifics. However, once we were traveling there, we were drawn to woolen designs. We had visited a number of shops with beautiful, warm woolen sweaters and purchased several as gifts for family back in the States. At a shop near Donegal in the northwest part of Ireland, we asked the proprietor if there were any local weavers.

“Oh yes,” we were told. “Turn right past the dolmen burial marker and drive about two kilometers to their shop.” Amazingly, we came to the same weaver's shop described in our sister-in-law's magazine article!

The studio operation raised and sheared their own sheep, cleaned and carded the wool, then spun and colored it to order. We were awed by their work and decided to commission a tapestry in memory of our travels. We sent them photos of our favorite

spots with the intent that they'd weave a four-by-six foot collage to remember our trip to Ireland. The work took several years to complete, but it now graces the entrance to our home.

At the center of the weaving is a Celtic cross circled by a thatch-roofed cottage, a common road sign and the Blarney Castle (yes, we kissed the rock.) The upper right corner of weaving depicts the Rock of Cashel, a sacred space where St. Patrick is said to have converted the Irish lords.

Cashel is also portrayed in a mosaic above the altar in St. Patrick's, my hometown Catholic church. Under the Cashel scene is the hexagonal lavabo where the monks would come to wash up after a day in the fields. Next to the Celtic cross is New Grange – a 100-foot mound with a white-faced front over 5,000 years old. On the winter solstice each year, the sun shines through the doorway's transom down a corridor of large rocks to light up a central worship space. The effect is spiritual and inspiring. The wild northwest of Ireland is represented by the ocean coming to shore near a “Juliet” round watch tower.

Nancy and I are shown in the weaving's lower corner – magically preserved without greying hair or wrinkles! The tapestry greets all who enter our home as a constant reminder of our Irish roots and God's ongoing movement in our lives.

- *Tim Downey*

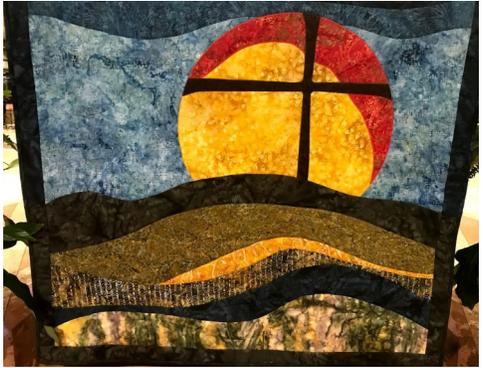


## Family, Fabric, and Faith

Once upon a time there was a girl who really liked to sew. That girl was me. I've had a sewing needle in my hand since I learned to stitch with yarn on cardboard sewing cards, a Christmas gift I received at age four. Since then, I've stitched my own clothes, pieced hundreds of quilts, and created dozens of liturgical pieces for St. Timothy's.

My mother patiently mentored me from a very early age. She was an accomplished stitcher in her own right. She sewed our parochial school uniforms, repaired our broken tent zipper, stitched our Halloween costumes, and even mended a broken heart now and again. Mom very generously shared her time and talents with me and others and encouraged me to do the same.

About ten years ago, my husband, a retired banker, was serving on the parish finance council, which reviewed the budget. He was stunned by the proposed \$5,000 budget allowance for liturgical vestments and banners. His comment to then-pastor Father Chuck Brambilla was, "Ann could make them



for less."

Father Chuck asked if I might sew a chasuble. His requirements were concise: green and white for the liturgical season of Ordinary Time, lightweight, and wrinkle-proof. I made a chasuble according to his specifications, and the rest is history. I've designed and

sewn many more chasubles and numerous small and large banners for St. Timothy's, which likely are familiar to you.

I've often looked at the banners while at church and thought, "Huh, I made that, and it looks all right. Not bad, Ann." My favorite altar piece, that I made after Mom died, looks like a slice of a tree. One Saturday, as the sun was setting near the end of Mass, I nudged my husband and said, "I wish Mom could have seen this banner." Just then, a beam of sunlight came through a side window and spotlighted the piece.

Time, talent, and treasures. These are all ways that we can give to our church community, and most importantly, to God. Each of us can decide to give from our hearts with love, filled with gratitude for all that we have been given. The power of the Holy Spirit guides me in this ministry. God freely gives me the help to accomplish what I could never do on my own.

- Ann Zemke



## Parishioner in the Spotlight: Jennifer Torres

Jennifer Torres, a Fridley native who currently resides in Coon Rapids, started attending Mass at St. Timothy's in 1999 and became a member in 2000.

"When I started going to Mass on Sunday mornings and saw an American Sign Language (ASL) interpreter who interpreted the Mass and who was willing to teach, I thought, 'Great!'" Jennifer recalled.

"I have an inner ear disorder. I know I am going to lose my hearing, so I wanted to learn ASL," she explained.

Jennifer has been active in the Worship Sign Choir ever since, gathering weekly with Nancy Kuehn, the parish interpreter, and others to learn how to interpret worship music into ASL.

"I've learned a lot about Deaf culture and members of our parish Deaf community," Jennifer said.

Learning ASL has impacted Jennifer's faith and experience of communal worship, as well.

"Since beginning to lose my hearing, learning ASL has become an important part of participating in Mass. I wouldn't get as much out of Mass without an interpreter. With ASL, there is a story with facial expression and emotion - it brings the Bible to life. Nancy really sets the scene and it's beautiful. I feel bad for others who don't know ASL - they are missing out. With ASL, you're not just singing or saying the words, you're actually showing God the words. I'm not sure I would get that out of Catholic Mass without ASL," she said.

In addition to participating in Worship

Sign Choir, Jennifer has served as a Eucharistic minister at St. Timothy's. She also volunteers at the parish carnival every September, helping sell tickets for carnival activities.



Jennifer served in the Navy from 1986-1997 and has been nominated for the Quilt of Valor for her military service. After her time in the Navy, she worked as a nurse in several area hospitals until retiring in 2021. Jennifer has two brothers and several nieces and nephews. Her parents have passed away and both of them

had their funerals at St. Timothy's.

Outside her parish involvement, Jennifer enjoys traveling now that she is retired. She is also learning to play piano, violin, and banjo.

"I like music and couldn't find the time when I was working," she explained.

You might have seen Jennifer's mobility service dog Buzz, a black standard poodle who is specifically trained to help prevent falls and assist in other ways.

"Buzz doesn't like clapping, but otherwise he does very well at Mass. He has been a godsend to me - I've had him for four years. He helps me so much."

In addition to the presence of an ASL interpreter, Jennifer was drawn to St. Timothy's by the parish focus on social justice and outreach.

"I like St. Timothy's commitment to helping people in our community—Family Promise, social justice efforts. That's who St. Timothy's is, and that's what a church should be."

# Providing a Haven For God's Smallest Creatures

Pope Francis reminds us that as Christians we need to be mindful of the natural environment and our impact on it. He calls the earth our common home and challenges us to care for God's tremendous, beautiful, and complex gift of creation. As a master naturalist, I seek to use my creative gifts to care for creation.

Many of us reside in sterilized living environments, to the detriment of the native plants, insects, birds, and animals that lived here before humans plowed them under. At St. Timothy's, we have large tracts of mowed grass and limited varieties of shrubs that surround our buildings.

After many large ash trees were lost in 2021 to ash borers, I proposed that the parish install a pollinator garden with native flowering plants and prairie grasses in an area where three ash trees were removed. It has sun and shade to allow for a diversity of plants that thrive in oak savannahs.

In January of 2022 I ordered over 400 native prairie perennial and grass plants. While snow birding in Florida to hide from the Minnesota cold, I drew up a detailed garden plan, choosing locations for each of those plants that would nourish birds, bees, beetles, butterflies and other pollinators.

Now, after two years of planning, designing, preparing the soil, and planting, that spot has become an island of prairie

amid mown lawns and big trees. Nourished by God's gifts of sun, rain, and soil, the pollinator garden is home to native shrubs, hardy native flowering prairie plants, prairie grasses, primroses and more. The pollinator garden now has 530 prairie plants and 41 trees and shrubs.



Monarch caterpillar in the pollinator garden.

The garden also offers a habitat and tasty buffet for other creatures who play an important role in our ecosystem as pollinators. In early June of 2022 a sphinx moth larvae showed up on one of the primrose plants. During the summer, the shrubs produced their berries and the bluebirds nesting nearby ate the bushes clean. I suspect they also

gathered many insect larvae from the prairie plants.

God is the Creator of all that is. As humans, we have the privilege and responsibility to care for that creation and use our knowledge and skills to be good stewards. Often when we think of creativity, we think of artistic expression like music, dance, theater, or visual art. But the way we interact with the natural world to create beauty, provide



Primroses bring beauty and also provide nectar for a variety of pollinators.

necessary habitat, and increase biodiversity is another way to express our creative gifts and give glory to God.

*-Lou Ochocki*



# The Story of a Guitar Spiritual Intervention

As an overweight, uncoordinated, and dyslexic teenager who never seemed to accomplish much, I dreamt of playing the guitar. In 1965 when I graduated from St. Timothy's parochial school, my parents presented me with a six-string acoustic guitar. Despite my dream, I discovered after several attempts, I could not magically play the guitar. I placed it in the closet where it gathered dust for three years. As a junior in high school, I gathered all my courage and decided to take guitar lessons. Despite my effort, I was told that I was wasting my money by the instructor and shown the door. Feeling like a complete failure at age 17, I took my guitar home and decided that I would teach myself. With much effort and motivation, I was finally successful.

After graduating from high school, I saw in the St. Timothy's bulletin that the church was looking for young people to perform music at the 9 a.m. Mass. This was an incredible opportunity for me at that time in my life. Was it a coincidence or was it Providence? The parish at

that time had no structured programming or activities for young people beyond high school graduation. The people I knew from high school, that attended St. Timothy's prior to graduation, seemed to scatter to the four winds and I never saw them again in church.

Our small group consisted of two guitar players and two vocalists. There was little guidance as to what we could offer during Mass, so we played many of the songs that were popular at the time. What an opportunity for a small group of young people. We were truly able to say that we made music before several hundred people at contemporary services, a status symbol among young musicians.

As my skills and confidence grew, I began to play at gigs outside of St. Timothy's. Then one Saturday night I was invited to perform at something called a "hootenanny," a popular term for the time. It was there that I met my future wife Molly. I discovered that she had similar interests in singing and we

began to make beautiful music together.

Molly joined me at St. Timothy's 9 a.m. Mass as the other members of the previous group moved on to college or other endeavors. Molly and I were married at St. Timothy's nearly 50 years ago. We sang at the 9 a.m. Mass until 1977 when our son Jon was born.

Molly continues to sing in the St. Timothy's choir and we perform regularly in the summer months at Itasca State Park, Forestedge Winery and occasional gigs around the Twin Cities.

I'm still playing guitar and singing with Molly. I still cannot read music and cannot tell a whole note from a half note. As I look back at my journey, I wonder: for a 17-year-old who felt like a complete failure, was being encouraged to move forward by musical success a coincidence, or was it a spiritual intervention?

- James  
Bauer



## For Your Reflection

Cindy Novak writes about how the parish's new sacred art collection can help us see the image of Jesus in new ways. Is there a particular image of Jesus that is significant to you? How do you respond to "Jesus Christ Liberator" by Brother Robert Lentz's

Tim Downey describes the weaving that reminds him and his wife of their travels to Ireland. Is there a piece of art—visual art, a song, a poem—that evokes a particular memory for you or helps you to savor a past experience of grace?



*"Fishermen Let Down Your Nets" John August Swanson, a newly-acquired sacred art piece in St. Timothy collection.*

Ann Zemke credits her mother for inspiring her to cultivate her creative gifts and use them to serve God and others. Is there someone in your life who has encouraged you to share your gifts generously with others?

Jennifer Torres speaks of how using American Sign Language (ASL) at Mass enriches her experience of prayer. What role, if any, does your body play in your experience of prayer?

James Bauer writes of how participating in music ministry helped him to grow in confidence as a young adult and also led him to meet his wife, Molly. What role have the arts played in your life at our parish?

Lou Ochocki reminds us of Pope Francis' call to care for Earth, our common home, and shares his efforts to create a pollinator garden. What gifts do you have that could contribute to our parish efforts to be good stewards of the gift of creation?

### CORNERSTONE

Editor: Rhonda Miska

Editor Emeritus: Tim Downey

**Church of St. Timothy mission:** We are a progressive, welcoming Catholic community that values full participation in worship and community service. We commit to being a peace-loving, Eucharistic community providing integrated faith formation and applying gospel values to daily living.

*"You are built upon the foundations of the apostles and prophets, and Christ Jesus himself is the cornerstone." (Ephesians 2:20)*



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