

What's Happening

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September 28, 2017, Ann Arbor, Michigan – Sister Barbara Cervenka, OP, completed an artistic journey of accompaniment September 24 when she finished painting her 1,000th image of an origami crane.

But the accompaniment of the Dominican Sisters of St. Catherine of Siena of Iraq continues for Sister Barbara and for the Dominican Family. The Iraqi Sisters continue to live as internally displaced refugees with tens of thousands of other residents who fled their homes in the Nineveh Plains in August 2014 after the arrival of ISIS. Donations to Sister Barbara Cervenka's [1,000 Cranes for Iraq Project](#) help to fund the Iraqi Sisters' ministry within the refugee community.



An artist, Sister Barbara made a New Year's Resolution in January 2015 to paint every day. It was the plight of the Dominican Sisters and the other refugees that gave direction to her resolution.

"I thought keeping that resolution would be easier if I painted some small things," Sister Barbara explained. "One day I picked up an origami crane and painted that. When I did the second, I remembered the [legend of the] thousand cranes. I had been thinking about the situation in Iraq and wondering what I could do for it when the idea came to me."

The Japanese tradition of folding 1,000 origami cranes for peace and health was popularized after World War II. Sadako Sasaki, a Japanese girl who had been exposed to the atomic bombing of Hiroshima at the age of 2, contracted leukemia 10 years later. She began the process of folding 1,000 cranes for her recovery and for world peace, but lost her battle with cancer. Since then, the tradition of 1,000 cranes has been associated with efforts for world peace.

Sister Barbara's 1,000 Cranes for Iraq Project gives people their choice of a crane painting for a donation of \$100. Since its launch in August 2015, the project has raised more than \$40,000 to help the Dominican Sisters with their ministry to the refugees.

The project has shaped Sister Barbara's daily life since January 15, 2015, when the first crane was painted. Since then, Sister Barbara has gone into the basement of her home after dinner every day to paint a crane. She has also taken the project with her on vacation and during other times of travel. "It's a discipline, but it's also a pleasure," Sister Barbara said.

Her involvement in the project "has made me much more conscious of the situation of people all over the world who have been displaced," she said. "I'm much more in tune to the news and more aware of the people who have been displaced by hurricanes and other disasters."

Sister Barbara said the project has also helped to build a community of people who are concerned about the plight of the Iraqi refugees and other suffering people. Sisters Suzanne Schreiber, OP, and Janet Wright, OP – also Adrian Dominican artists – have participated in the project. Sister Suzanne photographed live cranes as well as people with the origami cranes, and Sister Janet has painted living cranes. Their artwork is also available to purchase from the 1,000 Cranes for Iraq Project.

Part of the challenge has been to paint 1,000 distinctive cranes, using the same origami crane model but with different still life settings and lighting each time, Sister Barbara said. “Every day I just go down and paint. There’s certainly a lot of repetition and continuity, but every day I’m a little different,” she said, explaining that that fact leads her paintings to be slightly different from one day to the next.



Sister Barbara Cervenka, OP, with the 1,000th crane, completed on September 24. She began her 1,000 Cranes for Iraq Project in January 2015 to support the work of the Dominican Sisters of St. Catherine of Siena in Iraq, who fled their home from ISIS in August 2014.

Sister Barbara is gratified by the number of people who have made donations of \$100 to help the refugees. “It’s not because they want a painting of a crane, but because they really are aware, too, of the terrible situation that so many people are facing,” she said. “That’s creating a little community of awareness.”

But Sister Barbara admits that the almost three-year journey hasn’t always been easy. “The challenge was just the sheer number,” she said. “I never realized how much 1,000 is until I got into the middle and realized how many more cranes I had to paint.” But, with the interest and encouragement of others, she was able to keep up with the discipline. “That’s why I feel it was more like a community project than just mine,” she said. Being part of this effort has been a privilege, she added.

Many of the crane paintings are still available for selection and adoption with a donation to the 1,000 Cranes for Iraq project. Framing is available for an additional \$35. The entire collection can be viewed at www.1000cranesforiraq.org/donate.

An exhibit of available cranes will be featured at the [Klemm Gallery](#) of [Siena Heights University](#) from Monday,

October 9, 2017, through Friday, November 3, 2017. Gallery hours are 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. Tuesday through Friday and noon to 4:00 p.m. Sunday. A reception with Sister Barbara at the Klemm Gallery is from 6:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. Friday, October 13, 2017.

In the meantime, Sister Barbara helps to keep up the good habit she developed of painting every day. "I don't know what I'll do next, but I'd like to keep painting," she said. "This has motivated me to go down into the studio every day. I'd like to keep up that momentum."

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So proud to say that this talented person was my 4th grade teacher, Sr. James Annette. I remember her teaching us "perspectives", I believe it was called. Such wonderful and meaningful work, Sister Barb. You were an inspiration back in the 4th grade and continue be. God bless you!