



Searching for truth and beauty, preaching through the transforming power of the arts

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Telling the Story – Notes from the 2022 DIA Gathering

Keynote speaker – Sister Ann Willits OP

Sister Ann Willits was the keynote speaker at the 24th Gathering of the Dominican Institute for the Arts. She embraced the theme of the Gathering, *Telling the Story*, in her timely remarks. This writing highlights some of her wisdom to us.



To preach through our art is not a matter of choice, but a matter of conscience. The DIA has become an integration of opposites, a mirror of wholeness. DIA is a chain where each member sits with one's feet in the reflective pool constantly demonstrating each one's unique imagination in your way as a Dominican Artist. We affirm each one of you because each one of you is Dominican. Our mission is to bring closer awareness to God in creation.

Annie gave us this poem she entitles AWHILE:

How long can you stay? I ask.

I will stay awhile you say.

Whenever that time comes, awhile will be well on its way to becoming more.

The next time we will stay not only longer, we just might stay forever.

There will come a time when we will answer to the world as artists.

***A time when each of us will go public with our art not only for now but a time we call forever!
The happiness of God is like that you know.
Let me ask you again, how long can you stay?
You answer my question differently this time.
This time YOU say: "We just might stay forever because the work we do is so important. Then after a pause you say, "It is much more important than those things we remember."***

Annie remarked that those who are working artists are not helping the world go around, but forward. In each one there is a creative self-starving for eternity. Annie then told the story about her Confirmation as only she could tell a story. The humor had a point that a name is important.

She told the story about an aged sister who was dying. Others asked if they should call a priest for the last rites. They were asked, "Does she have chocolate on her face? And does she have the morning paper. If she had those, she had the last rites.

After a few more stories, Annie asked us two questions:

- ***How many of you were born an artist?***
- ***How many of you became an artist after you were a Dominican?***

Many consider artists absent minded and not concerned with social obligations. An artist sometimes refuses to be interrupted because you, as artist, are alone and responsible for your work. Maybe you forget some things because you are an artist. Art becomes a form of human expression. There is a kind of spirituality in beauty. Everyone deserves beauty. The soul is refreshed by what is seen, heard, written, or preached. The beauty created by artists is not meant to distract. It's what

creative artists have produced to be a part of one's spiritual contemplative life. Most artists are very generous. Your art becomes the property of the Universe.

Annie asked the question, "How is it that we have come to choose sides over what is beautiful or not? How have we become separated in mind and heart?"

We also understand "All will be well," if we can move back in relationship with one another. Perhaps these words can give hope because everyone deserves beauty: in the landscape, in the presence of what we have inherited as artists. Isn't DIA also why we are all present?

Creative work needs solitude - for inspiration, a place to pace, to chew pencils, to scribble, to erase and scribble some more.

As you think how your art encourages or challenges you, ask two more questions:

- *Does my art give me joy?*
- *Does my art challenge me to remember that I am gifted for others?*

In Part 2 of her keynote speech, Annie told a story of meeting a man in the airport. He had just buried his beloved. Each one of us tells stories that give us hope. He said to her, "You found me at exactly the right moment when I needed someone just like you." We are hungry for sharing what words can do for us.

Perhaps poetry is something that we need right now. We not only need it, we hunger for it. Aren't we hungry for some fresh things to tell each other? Hard truths, and don't we often find that it is the stories we tell that give us hope? Poetry can work not only for us but for others, too.

I want to share with you one of my poems. It's called REALITY.

*My heart has learned to not touch fragility.
To somehow respect a broken vase, to not
interfere with suffering,
To grieve, to cry, to laugh in public, but most of all
to heal in the holiness of friendship.
Good art can always give us a sense of belonging.
Good art can always give us a sense of meaning.
Good art can always give a sense of personally
participating in being bold in creating and being
imaginative ourselves.*

Art reveals to people belief. Art begins with both receptivity and judgement. When we look at art, it has its own purpose. We do not eat it, or own it, or run from it. In fact, we do not want anything except the beauty of it in awe. We complicate it, we contemplate it, and we do not want it ever to end.

Doesn't this place around us offer us peace and calm? You see beauty is exercised in creative imagination. When we have the eyes to see and the ears to hear and an open mind to grasp the truth of the moment, great beauty will tell all that God has made, yes, here at Racine. Parker Palmer wrote: "Life is a found poem."

He once found a poem written by Barbara Kuker and it goes like this:

*Today the sky is a soft blue of a work shirt washed
a thousand times.*

*The journey of a thousand miles begins with a
single step on the interstate listening to NPR
and red bud trees their gaudy flowers hover over
barbed bare limbs.*

*Barely doing sixty, I pass a tractor trailer called
"Glory Bound."*

Aren't we all old enough to pass a tractor?

Just yesterday I read a poem written by Lee Pole. She writes:

*There is no end of things in the heart, but it seems
like things are always ending.*

*Vacation, childhood, relationships, or stores going
out of business.*

*Like the old one that sold jeans that really fit,
Where do we fit in? How can we get up in the
morning knowing what we do? How do we put
one foot after the other or open the window,
or make coffee or see the steam curl up and
disappear.*

*At night the scent of phlox curls in the open
window,
while the sky turns red, violet, lavender, thistle, a
box of spilled crayons.*

*The moon spills its milk on the black tabletop for
the thousandth time.*

After reading this poem a couple of times Parker Palmer writes:

“My fascination runs deep because this poem takes me down into the layered reality of life and death. In this poem the blue work shirt launches a meditation that makes many stops on the way down, ending with a constancy and mystery called the moon.”

As a bonus, there’s a lot of shore along the way. In addition to skill and sensibility God and poets help each of us to see that amid the seemingly random events of life and death, paying attention allows us to create patterns of meaning. Eventually all of us are able to make music, to dance, to write a poem, to act and even to preach. Maybe all of us are able finally to do something. This is what I know, that everyone is an artist. Let me repeat that.

EVERYONE IS AN ARTIST.

The art you have displayed, shared, danced, written, or preached, has raised a question for all of us to think about, talk about, take home with us wherever

we live. This is the question: **Could it be that your art has become a form of human expression?**

Rather than becoming trapped or hypnotized with all that you have already accomplished, you just might always remember that we can catch bees in a jar because bees can’t look up. We need to look up, to look at, in order to really see, hear, and understand that looking up, looking away, looking down, or just at each other - at people, at creation, even at life - or death itself is freedom.

It’s what we call our freedom as artists. After all it’s the way the Dominican family, the DIA, becomes grace.

I plead with you to always remember; you are more than you create. Be who you are while you create. BE Dominican artists.



The 2022 Spirit Award

Each year an award is given to a member who has contributed time, talent, and energy to the DIA. The recipient for 2022 is Sister Miriam Brown, a Sinsinawa Dominican. In her comments Mary Pat Reid said, *“The Spirit Recognition Award is presented to a member who not only embodies the spirit of the Dominican Institute for the Arts but also has served it well.*



This year’s recipient has been a loyal member for several years. A writer and a preacher, this member has served on Gathering Planning Commissions and has led Workshops. She has attended every Gathering since she became a member, is always willing to help out in any way she is able and can always be counted on to give encouragement and support to other members. It is with great pleasure that the Dominican Institute for the Arts presents this year’s Spirit Recognition Award to Sinsinawa Dominican Sister, Miriam Brown.”

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

The other morning, while drinking my first cup of coffee, I heard it—ping, ping, ping. The annual Acorn Ritual had begun! You see, there is a 100-year-old majestic oak tree twenty feet from the house. Every year at this time, squirrels climb that tree and shake the branches so that the acorns fall to the ground—many of them landing on the deck, thus the pings. Then the real action begins as the squirrels

scamper down the tree trunk, survey “the goods” and then scurry off, acorn in mouth, to hide it in tree cavities and crevices or bury it in the lawn or the perennial gardens. Occasionally, they take a break to energize themselves by chewing on a couple of acorns and then it is back to the task at hand. Over the course of a couple of days, this process is

repeated until the squirrels are apparently satisfied that their winter food supply is sufficient. Not all the acorns are hidden. Lots are left as an ongoing buffet for the squirrels as well as the deer who seem to relish them.

As the temperatures drop and the days become colder, the squirrels’ summer food (berries, grass, leaves, and my neighbor’s vegetable garden) becomes scarce, eventually withering away. The previously hidden acorns become the source of their nourishment. Throughout the

coming months, divots in the lawn and garden will indicate where the squirrels retrieved their hidden treasures. By next summer, any unclaimed acorns buried in the lawn or garden will reveal themselves as tiny sapling oak trees. Although oak trees are beautiful, I prefer not to have them growing in the lawn and garden, so the saplings are removed. To hold in hand a sprouting oak tree is an awe-filled experience. The buried hard-shelled acorn has broken open and developed roots. Replanted elsewhere, this tiny sapling will flourish and mature. Someday, another generation of squirrels will shake acorns from its branches.

Over so many years, the acorns from that majestic 100-year-old oak tree have been the source of nourishment for squirrels and deer and the genesis of several younger trees. It is a wonder of nature. It is the circle of life. Above all, it is one of the miracles of our Creator God that I am grateful to witness.

It strikes me that sometimes our art is similar to buried acorns. An idea pops into our head but we can’t wrap our brain around it or flesh it out, so it goes on the back burner to simmer. It often takes a while but eventually that simmer comes to a boil. The next thing we know, we have a new poem, painting, or musical composition. As a creative Dominican artist, what do you put aside to sustain you during hard times? When what you put aside grows scarce, what do you do?

Pat

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Fra Angelico Awards

The 2020 Fra Angelico Award Recipient: **Sister Irene Mary Diones**

Since Sister Irene Mary Diones was awarded the Fra Angelico Medallion during Covid-19, virtually, we would like to recognize her in this Newsletter as having attended the 2022 Gathering as a recipient of the award.



Sister Geraldine Mueller of Caldwell was the recipient of the 2022 Fra Angelico Medallion. Following is the commentary on her receiving the Medal.

Proclaiming Sacred Scripture by means of art has been the life work of this multi-talented, sublimely gifted, prolific Dominican artist.

Masterpiece works have been created in stone sculpture, wood, clay, mosaic, copper, enamel,

stained glass, illumination, glass etching, and calligraphy – all of which are filled with color and joyful imagery.

Viewing this artist's work, admirers not only are drawn to the beauty of the art but also to the

soul of an artist deeply in love with her God.

With a passion, this artist has preached and taught beauty and truth to a vast audience here in the United States and across the globe.

In 2017, Caldwell University opened, dedicated, and named its new gallery in her honor and on September 16, 2021, this gallery opened an



exhibit titled "Imago Dei" which featured and highlighted her work and legacy. The date of the opening was also this artist's 100th Birthday. Even today, if you are looking for her, you most probably will find her in her studio creating art and this as she approaches her 101st Birthday.

It is with great pleasure that the Dominican Institute for the Arts presents the 2022 Fra Angelico Award to a woman who has spent her entire life preaching God's Word through art, Dominican sister of Caldwell, Geraldine Mueller.

The 2021 Fra Angelico Medallion was awarded to **Brother Joe Kilikevice**, of the Central Province. The reasons for his award follow:

Weaving involves one person taking various



thread components and interlacing them together into one beautiful piece of fabric. Each of the threads is different. No one else's fingers are deft enough to create such an intricate tapestry

for others not only to visualize but also to incorporate into their lives.

Following the calls for respectful dialogue with the peoples of all faith traditions not only by the Second Vatican Council but also by the Order of Preachers, this Dominican artist has taken the different colored and textured threads of poetry, ceramics, dance and movement, sculpture, sacred ritual, painting and preaching and has interwoven them into one all-inclusive ministerial tapestry dedicated to seeking peace and unity beyond the differences that divide.

This artist has willingly shared and taught the Dominican tradition of using the body for prayer. Through the years, this process has affected thousands including the Dominican Youth Movement, Dominican Preaching Conferences, and the Dominican Institute for the Arts, to name a few. The Sacred Rituals provide an alternative to our fast-paced, noise

filled, multi-tasking lives bringing us back to dignity, civility, respect, and tranquility.

It is with great pleasure, that the Dominican Institute for the Arts presents the 2021 Fra Angelico Award to this true son of Dominic, who has preached and shared his art his entire religious life – Dominican Friar of the Central Province, Joseph Kilikevici.

The 2022 Gathering Photo, Racine, Wisconsin



Front Row: Left to right: Clarise Sevegney, OP, Mary Vosters, OP, Joella Miller, OP

Second Row: Pat Daly, OPA, Grace Dennis, OP, Marion Diedrick, OP, Ann Willits, OP, Christa Cunningham, OP

Third Row: John Mascazine, OPA, Mary Navarre, OP, Catherine Anderson, OP, Irene Mary Diones, OP, Mary Reinhardt, OP, and Nancy Murray, OP

Fourth Row: Janet Wright, OP, Jane Rudolph, OP, Elizabeth Lee, OP, Rosemary Asaro, OP, Fran Belmonte, DIA Friend

Fifth Row: Ann Marie Santen, OP, Kathy Solie, Associate, Marti Washburn, Associate, Miriam Brown, OP, Mary Pat Ried, OP, Barbara Kukla, OP

Last Row: Elizabeth Slenker, OP, Ruella Bouchonville, OP, Gail Jacobson, Associate, Joe Kilikevici, OP, Liz Sully, OP

Not Pictured: Mark Hanes, Photographer, Carmen Agbuis, OP, Mare Wheedler, Associate

Please send website submissions to: Sister Barbara Schwarz OP at Artafire@hotmail.com

Gathering Workshops

Each person chose what workshop one wished to attend. This year the variety of offerings included:

“Getting Your Work Out There” by Elizabeth Slenker

This workshop addressed creative writing, illustration, and ideas for publishing one’s work.



“The Maker’s Mark” with Sr. Mary Pat Reid involved drawing used as Storytelling.



The participants considered their place in God’s creation and practiced drawing objects and shapes that reflected their relationship with God.

Plein Aire Painting

Self Conducted

Some participants chose to create a piece of work using the Racine setting as their inspiration.



Tour and Create at the Lighthouse led by Carmen Doubek. This tour allowed the participants to tour the Wind Point Lighthouse.

Participants could choose to explore the surroundings, and draw, photo, or write. We got a celebrity from this tour. Sr. Catherine Anderson, OP, 87 holds the record for being the oldest person to ever climb the stairs to the top of the lighthouse. Kudos, Catherine.



Japanese Tea Ceremony with Joe Kilikevici

His ritual ceremony provided an alternative to our fast paced, noise filled, multi-tasking lives, and brought tranquility, and peace to the participants.



A Message from Sister Catherine Anderson

In March 2020, I heard about the Corona Virus, but did not understand what it was let alone impacting me in any way. But it did. Two days before I was to have knee replacement surgery, it was cancelled. I was so angry, I went to my art table, took a watercolor sheet of paper, and painted the whole page yellow. Then I dipped the brush into red paint, swishing the brush back and forth.



It looked so bad, I put it aside to dry intending to throw it away. Later, when I looked at the painting, I saw the shape of three dragon heads at the top and a red shaped ball that looked like the virus as shown on television. I said to myself, "Wow" and named the painting "Dragons of the Corona Virus."

A few days later, when I was out for a walk, I saw crocuses poking up through the snow. It was a sign of spring and hope. They reminded me that with God, all

things are possible. So, I painted a picture of crocuses. I named the picture: "Signs of Hope."

During these two and a half years of the pandemic, my art has been for me a time of inspiration and hope.



Gathering Ambiance

In the meeting room the ambiance set at each table related to the various artistic disciplines in which DIA members are involved. The theme of the Gathering, "Telling the Story," was anchored by an open book upon which was put the tools of the artistic form. This was carried throughout all the tables. These are examples of the decor.



Preserving Dominican Art

Dear Dominican Institute for the Arts Family, I had the honor to be able to lead a session at the last Dominican Institute for the Arts conference on August 2, 2022, at the Siena Retreat Center on the beautiful campus of the Racine Dominican Sisters. My topic was preservation of Dominican Art in the United States.



I was accompanied by the McGreal Center's Aaron Reisberg, who cares for the DIA's records and works with many of our digital projects. And in this way, we

do preserve the DIA's work. But the thrust of the DIA's mission is preaching through the arts, of course, and that means many diverse artistic objects, pieces of literature, music, and more. What happens to this art? Currently, much of it lives among the Dominican communities around the country. Many other pieces of art are in homes and in liturgical spaces of all kinds. I have seen firsthand, around the country, the wonderful collaboration among Dominicans across communities. And there is a history here. Since Fra Angelico successfully convinced Dominicans that the arts were a viable means of preaching, the tradition has spawned many who were called to preach through their artistic talents. It is hard to study the history of Catholicism in America. In part, because the record is so fragmented, and often in danger of loss. So as Dominicans, how do we preserve this history and make it accessible to historians, community members, and the public? To be more specific to DIA, how do we preserve the

heritage of Dominican art in the United States? One answer is to make it less fragmented. We can work together to make it accessible and a topic that attracts historians and scholars, instead of exhausting them, but also teaching future community members what the Dominican charism looks like in art form. The other tool in our proverbial box is digital solutions. I wish I could host a museum with storage that could accommodate the best and brightest of Dominican art in the United States. But I simply do not have the space. But I do have digital space. So, the McGreal Center this 2022-2023 year is piloting a program to digitally preserve Dominican art using a website called, "Dominican Art in the United States." You can keep up with our progress here:

<https://opusartcollection.omeka.net/>. The skeleton has been built, but we will be working to find ways for you to submit significant art pieces to our project to be digitally preserved and accessible for the future, and you will be able to eventually submit digital files at our website, <https://www.dom.edu/mission-andministry/mcgreall>, much like we have set up a portal for oral histories. Here are some things to consider as you think about submitting digital copies of your art.

1. Be curatorial. Nobody can save everything but think about what you do want to be saved, and why.
2. Find a good photographer to photograph your piece (if it is three dimensional). Or a good audio person if it is aural. If you do use photography, aim for high resolution. 300dpi at the minimum, 600dpi+ is preferred. We will accept jpegs, but RAW or TIFF formats are preferable.

3. When sending the digital copy of the art, be sure to give us some information (dimensions, medium, title, artist name(s), date, genre, content, etc.)
4. Be clear about your copyright restrictions. All artists can claim copyright by the very act of their making. But there are many ways you can navigate copyright. You can say I want to share this with the world, but just ask to be credited. You can relinquish copyright altogether. Or you can say that your work can only be used for study and personal use, and if someone wants to use it you must contact the artist. Or you can hand the copyright to your community, or another entity once you pass. Otherwise, the copyright will follow United States copyright laws, which can be a bit fuzzy around art pieces.
5. Is there a plan for your work when you are gone? If not, you may not be in control of the fate of your art once you are gone. Others may eye the dumpster as the final resting place for your work.
6. Most art doesn't have monetary value unless the artist is well known, so the market may not benefit your community.

The McGreal Center's mission is to serve the history of the Order of Preachers in the United States. We are here to help. Aaron and I are willing to advise you. Stay tuned for our digital solution and website that will be coming into being this year; we have an intern who is going to work on it! Pat Daly and I will keep you updated. You can contact the McGreal Center at mcgrealcenter@dom.edu. Or via phone, (708) 524-6546, or (708) 524-6677.

Blessings,
Chris

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Gathering Entertainment

The Gathering was privileged to have the Trinity Irish Dancers for the Gala Entertainment. This is a renowned group that travels internationally and is very respected by their competitors. The dancers range in age from five to college level. The older Irish dancers mentor the younger members. They have traveled to Ireland, Belgium, and throughout Europe. One of their teens has placed 22nd in the world in his dance expertise. The little girl had a problem with her shoe coming off during the dance, but she was such a trooper she kept right on dancing, and only tried to get the shoe back on after the number was completed. The costumes were elaborate. The girls explained that they get the costumes with lots of extra seams so that as they grow it can be tailored to stay up with their development.



Poetry Page

I Never Planned to be a Poet

Something put its paws/pause on me?

Possibly

Probably

Particularly

Peculiarly?

No!

Word came – as invitation when I woke

In a wilderness one morning.

Word was waking

in the forest of me,

a stretching, yawning tangle,

vines – some sharp thorned,

strangling the canopy.

There were vestiges of the Trail obscured

Where once upon the timeless Way

I was led – toward a sunlit meadow place-

To a purple flowered carpet space-

To where... I lay me down.

Essential: The machete of my pen

and a willingness to begin...

to get lost.....

or found.....again.

martha bartholomew

Unthinkable

The angelic body bowed low
in adoration

Before the woman soon-to-be-
with child.

“Blessed,” he called her.

“Why,” she asked.

“Chosen.” was his answer.

He waited. She wondered.

“How? Not now,” she said.

“God changes time.” said
the messenger.

“A son but not husband.

A mother before
being a wife?”

“Impossible!” she protested.

“Exactly,” he smiled.

Jo-Ann Iannotti, OP



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