



## Thoma Swanson Presents Painting Honoring Dominican Family

**Thoma Swanson, OP** (Columbus) has created a painting which she calls "Dominicans Under the Shelter of Mary's Mantle." The **DIA** Newsletter is happy to feature that painting during May, the month traditionally devoted to Mary.

**Thoma** writes: "Mary holds open her mantle at the request of Dominic, who looks all over heaven for his brothers and sisters. He finds that Mary shelters the whole Dominican family. On the right is Dominic, praying his rosary and carrying the Gospel of Matthew. Next to him, Catherine of Siena ponders her letter to the pope; and Pius V, wearing his papal crown, contemplates the scene. Thomas Aquinas offers Mary his Summa, while Albert the Great nudges him forward. Below Thomas is Hyacinth of Poland carrying the Blessed Sacrament.

Next to Pius is a Chinese Sister, and below her, an African friar and a contemporary Sister who has just completed her education, representing the vocations that are the gift of God to those who preach the Gospel. At the bottom right, under the mantle, is Jane of Aza, Dominic's mother; with her is the dog of her dreams. The Sister with her diploma demonstrates the continuing dedication of Dominicans to study. At the front is Margeret of Castello who attained sanctity as a

Dominican after her parents abandoned her because of her blindness and deformity.

"On the left, with the boat, is Vincent of Valverde, a Spaniard who sailed to Peru as chaplain with the soldiers and heroically tried to save the Indians from the conquerors. Below him is Rose of Lima with a basket of food for the poor. Her companion, Martin de Porres, holds medicines while his animal friends look on. Below Martin is his friend and contemporary, Juan Macias, whose burro knows his way through the streets of Lima to the poor *barrios*.

"Behind Rose is Fra Angelico holding his palette; behind him those dear friends of Dominic, Dianan and Cecilia. The smiling blonde is a contemporary Dominican Sister who somehow got into the back row. The two below her with familiar veils represent founding members of American congregations. Behind them is Bartolome de las Casas with his hand on the shoulder of Native Americans he is defending. Below him are contemporary members of the Dominican family: a couple with their baby, and Dominicans making use of advanced technology to preach the Word of God and to record this heavenly event."

# What Does It Mean To Be 'Excellent'?

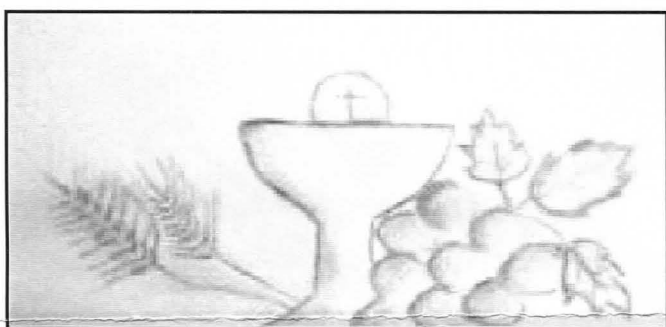
by Jean Ackerman, DIA President

Recently I attended a dialogue of peers on "excellence in ministry." As I reflected on the subject, I came to the conclusion that we as artists are responsible for valuing and achieving excellence in our particular artistic endeavors. The questions and concerns we hold about being faithful to the gifts with which we have been graced often shape the context of our individual art.

Examining "excellence" from the inside out, I ask myself the following questions:

**What is the meaning of an excellent artist; What are the signs of an excellent artist; What are the practices of an excellent artist; What obstacles keep one from being an excellent artist?**

In July we will gather from across our country and from even beyond our shores to reflect upon and experience the varied "excellence" of our members. In those days may we have conversations about our responses to the questions I have presented. Encourage your friends to join us for the July conference. Remember that there is a piece of the artist in every person: both those who create the art, and those who appreciate it. May beauty and excellence surround us as we prepare to gather in Adrian.



Original drawing by Rita E. Martin (Racine)

## Fall Issue of DIA Newsletter to Focus on Eucharist

Honoring both our recently deceased pontiff and our newly elected Benedict XVI, we respect John Paul II's dedication of this year to the Eucharist. The DIA Newsletter invites all its artists to highlight the importance of the Eucharist in the spiritual life of all Christians, and to share with us the fruit of your own unique artistic expression.

We solicit contributions which embrace and exemplify Eucharist as the center of our prayer life, as food for the journey, as the bond which unites us, helping us become what we proclaim we receive: the Body of Christ.

Poems, excerpts from your homilies, copies of art work, photographs of activities—all are welcome and may be featured in October's issue, as space allows.

**All contributions meant for inclusion in the Fall issue are due on or before September 15, 2005.**

## Looking for Advent Program?

No, it's not too early to plan ahead. If you are one who likes to be prepared for a program, and if you deal with high school/college students or adults, you may be interested in a one-act play suitable for either Advent or a review of the Old Testament.

"Waiting" is a fantasy set in the Celestial Women's Lounge, Court of Heaven, where Sarah, Leah, Rachel, Miriam, Judith, Susannah, Ruth, Deborah, Esther and – of course—Eve share their stories.

It can be presented as a drama or as a dramatic reading, with opportunities for singing and dancing, if the director wishes. The setting is simple, with a background drape and some chairs as the only requirements.

Previous audiences have enjoyed the adventure, humor, and emotion of the presentation, which lasts about thirty minutes. Anyone interested may contact the playwright, Mary Fisher, at [smtfisher@hotmail.com](mailto:smtfisher@hotmail.com) or at 5635 Erie St., Racine, WI 53402-1934 for further information and for a master copy which may be duplicated as needed for cast members.

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## DIA Represented at Romero Anniversary Celebration

DIA members **Thoma Swanson, OP** (Columbus) and **Mary Vosters, OP** (Racine) were among those who honored **Oscar Romero** in El Salvador this spring on the 25th anniversary of his martyrdom.

**Thoma** had been contacted from Rome by Joao Xerri, the Promoter for Peace and Justice for the Dominican Order in Latin America. Granting his request and that of Patrizia Morgante, Secretary of the International Commission for Justice, Peace and Care of Creation of the Order of Preachers, **Thoma** painted a vividly dramatic poster commemorating Archbishop Romero's assassination and the martyrdom of the four women who followed him in death less than nine months later.

In the painting, she depicts not only the deaths but also the passion, love, joy, and solidarity which united the martyrs to their people, as requested by Xerri: "This is what their killers envy and cannot endure ... We honor their memory because we want to keep all this alive in us today. We are committed to this hope."

"Oscar Romero, Archbishop of San Salvador, was assassinated with a bullet to the heart as he was celebrating Mass on March, 24, 1980," **Thoma** writes. "Maryknoll Sisters Maura Clark and Ita Ford, Ursuline Dorothy Kazel, and laywoman Jean Donovan were assassinated December 2, 1980, by members of the National Guard."

Commenting on her work, Thoma continues: "Over the heads of the martyrs, the country of El Salvador weeps tears of blood for those martyrs and for all the Salvadoran women and men who died in El Salvador because of their great zeal for justice. The tears fall

into the chalice and are mixed with the Blood of Christ. "From left to right in the painting are martyrs Maura Clark and Ita Ford, members of the Dominican Family; Archbishop Oscar Romero; Dorothy Kazel and Jean Donovan. Jean and Ita carry martyrs' palms, as do also the multitudes of Salvadoran martyrs. All are marked with the sign of the living God."

**Mary Vosters** was fortunate enough to be a part of the anniversary celebration, joining other members of the Racine Dominican community and 140 U.S. citizens in a pilgrimage sponsored by the SHARE Foundation. "These were holy grounds," **Mary** said, speaking about the various sites visited: the Memorial Wall at Cuscatlan Park, the Metropolitan Cathedral, Romero's home, burial crypt, etc.

At each location presenters recounted the events of 25 years ago, placing them within the political and economic context of contemporary Salvadoran life. Mary and the others joined 10,000 people from around the world in a commemoration Mass for Romero, then participated in a march with 16,000 pilgrims, celebrating the martyr's life and spirit.

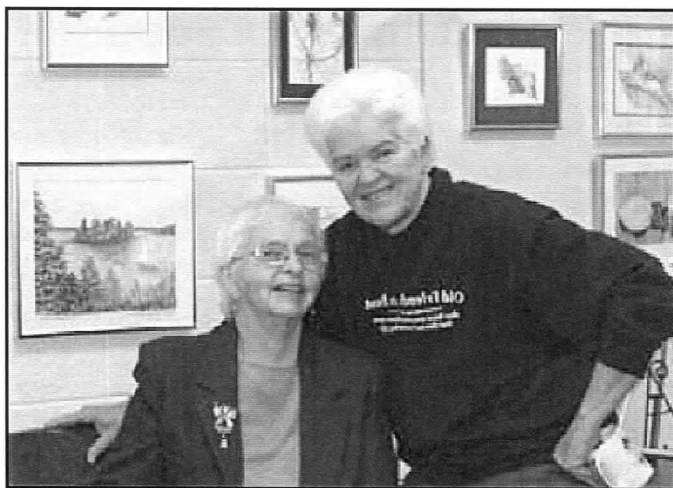
"I prayed for the entire Dominican Family at this time," **Mary** remembers, "asking for all of us the sacred dedication to truth and justice that characterized Archbishop Romero."

"It was an honor and a privilege to make this journey," **Mary** comments. "I shall never forget it, nor the people I met there."



**Mary Vosters** (rear, with white hat) and others find their way through a Salvadoran coffee plantation.





**Jan Wright, OP** (Adrian) and **Elaine des Rosiers, OP** (Kentucky) enjoy a serendipitous reunion.

## Surprise Meeting Brings Joy

by **Elaine des Rosiers, OP**

There it was on the wall of the retirement home of the Sisters of Mercy in Farmington Hills, Michigan: in the midst of a gallery of the paintings by the Sisters was the name of their art instructor, **Jan Wright, OP**.

I was at McCauley Center enjoying the hospitality of the Mercy Sisters after attending the solemn profession of one of the nuns at the nearby Dominican Monastery of the Blessed Sacrament. How fortunate that I was present on the day Jan came there for her class!

We had a great reunion, one befitting **DIA** friends. Jan's skills as art teacher are evident in the work produced by these senior Sisters, who, I hear, are inspired to paint all week long.

"It takes a long, long time to become young."

--Pablo Picasso

## Members Recommend Books

**Elaine des Rosiers, OP**, (Kentucky) sends the following:

"In *Image and Spirit: Finding Meaning in Visual Art*, Karen Stone offers help in interpreting art. A review in the Spring Book Section of the National Catholic Reporter (February 11, 2005) may help readers decide if this is for them." Mary Schaffer reviews the 171 pages.

Another **DIA member** writes:

"I remember my dismay when a literary criticism prof claimed that "Little Red Riding Hood" was insidious Communist propaganda. He, a "modernist critic," also contended that Dickens' Ebenezer Scrooge was a

frustrated misogynist. Evidence? His youthful fiancée was named "Belle"—the word "reminds the reader of the shape of a woman's womb"—and young Scrooge eventually broke the engagement. "HA!" the Freudian critic brayed, "That proves it: he rejected **all women!**"

Roger Kimball reminds us of this sort of "scholarship" in his book, *The Rape of the Masters: How Political Correctness Sabotages Art* (Encounter Books, 2004) condemning this kind of sabotage with impressive knowledge and piercing wit.

You will laugh out loud when you read this work; you will marvel at the author's vocabulary and applaud his insights. Surely you will want to join him in an outraged, inflamed diatribe against those who rape art by attributing perverse sexual overtones to almost every piece examined.

In this thought-provoking, fascinating work Kimball, a noted art critic, demonstrates how art has been violated by pretentious, psychologically obsessed radicals posing as art connoisseurs. "What is still worse," he asserts, "they take others hostage to their chicanery when they teach this drivel to their undiscerning students."

Kimball deserves accolades for exposing this slimy under-belly of academia for what it is: a contemptible, reprehensible assault on our treasured sources of beauty, culture, and civilization.

## Federation Convocation Wins Praise From Dominicans

"**One Planet, One People, One Preaching**" drew almost five hundred Dominicans from around the country for the Second National Convocation of the Federation of Dominican Sisters USA in Chicago from April 22- 24. **DIA** was represented by those who either attended or sent works to be displayed.

**Rita E. Martin, OP** (Racine) reports that vitally interesting and stimulating topics focused on the care of the earth, the needs of people around the world, and the special gift of spreading the Word through preaching.

"A truly unified Dominican spirit permeated the proceedings," Rita remarks; "we were united in our concern about such subjects as 'Experiencing One-ness Through the Human Energy System,' 'Peacemaking Through Building Relationships,' and the presentation of **DIA's Barbara Schwartz, OP** (Amityville) on 'The Art of Creation: Our Cosmic Story.'" "I definitely look forward to the next Convocation in 2008," Rita concludes with enthusiasm.

# Liturgical Art Offers 'Epiphanies of Beauty' to the Whole World

Helen St. Paul begins her article, "Evolving Associations of Ministries: Liturgical Arts" (*Ministry & Liturgy* / Vol. 32, No. 4; pages 15-17), with a quote from Pope John Paul II:

*To all who are passionately dedicated to the search for new 'epiphanies' of beauty so that through their creative work as artists they may offer these as gifts to the world.*

*'God saw all that he had made, and it was very good' [Genesis 1:31].*

*None can sense more deeply than you artists, ingenious creators of beauty that you are, something of the pathos with which God at the dawn of creation looked upon the work of his hands. A glimmer of that feeling has shone so often in your eyes when—like the artists of every age—captivated by the hidden power of sounds and words, colors and shapes, you have admired the work of your inspiration, sensing in it some echo of the mystery of creation with which God, the sole creator of all things, has wished in some way to associate you.*

*That is why it seems to me that there are no better words than the text of Genesis with which to begin my Letter to you, to whom I feel closely linked by experiences reaching far back in time and which have indelibly marked my life. In writing this Letter, I intend to follow the path of the fruitful dialogue between the Church and artists which has gone on unbroken through two thousand years of history, and which still, at the threshold of the Third Millennium, offers rich promise for the future.*

*[Letter of his Holiness John Paul II to Artists (1999), Introduction, page 1]*

Although this is a long quote, it is so replete with inspiration, insight, and sublime wisdom, that it cries for inclusion here.

Helen St. Paul continues her article by recording the history of religious art from its inclusion within Egyptian tombs, through the early Christian catacombs, sarcophagi, and frescoes. She alludes to the wealthy Roman patrons of the arts, the guilds and craftsmen of the Middle Ages and Renaissance, and the glory that was Florence.

"By the late sixteenth--in fact, from the 4th to the 18th century," she writes, "academies were formed and the guilds began to die out; however, the arts were promoted and supported by the wealthy and the Church." The Church's interest in and support of the arts has continued through the ages, the writer avers.

Today lay and ordained artists meet to form guilds and organizations to support their ministry. Nevertheless, liturgical artists still struggle to find the rightful place for themselves and their work.

The article concludes with impassioned praise for today's artists who "bring a richness of color and texture" to our churches: a "transcendent nature to our environment." Their work, produced through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, touches us and invites us to plunge ever more deeply into God's mysteries.

## An Open Invitation to Artists

We hope that you, having read the above review, are motivated, encouraged, and stimulated to create your own liturgical art for the next issue of this Newsletter, which will be devoted to the Eucharist.

The formal announcement appears on page 2 of this issue; please note the September 15 due date.

## Memos from our DIA Members

- ❖ Our dear brother across the Atlantic, **Rudolph Loewenstein, OP**, composed most of the music for a recent concert performed by the Highgate School of Ballet in the Rudolph Steiner Theatre in Baker Street, London. Two concerts on a Celtic theme had sold-out performances, thoroughly enjoyed by both parents and children.
- ❖ And our dear sister in California, **Brigid Bray, OP**, was sponsored by the Fruitvale San Antonio Senior Center in a program which featured her paintings and sculpture. "It was a very nice day," Brigid writes, "with people who enjoyed the lunch, the speakers, the dancing, and all my art."
- ❖ The Racine Dominicans felt privileged to participate in "Living the Just Word," a dynamic, soul-searching, unforgettable presentation by **Donald Goergen, OP**, on April 30. After his initial sharing, four panelists shared their own experiences of ministering to the vulnerable poor, relating them to principles Goergen had articulated. Comments and questions from the audience were welcomed, also, to make the morning a veritable gold mine of inspiration.

*Remember to send in  
your registration for the Gathering  
in Adrian, July 16-19.*

## DIA Welcomes New Members Maria & Bob Curtis from Arizona

"I have long wondered what my role was in the mission of the Order," **Bob Curtis** admits. But as he initiated the first **OPrize for Poetry** last winter and came in contact with the **DIA**, it seems he had a major epiphany: perhaps life as a member of this illustrious band of preacher/artists was exactly what he needed to find the sense of completeness that had eluded him. And so here he is—all the way from Arizona—along with his wife **Maria**, who has also joined the **DIA**. Both Maria and Bob are Life-professed Dominicans (**OPLs**), affiliated for the last ten years with the Western Province.

Bob, a member of **MENSA**, has an MFA from Arizona State in creative writing while his wife has one in music. They are proud of all their children: son Rob and his wife Carrie, both of whom were in the Order for three years, until the "speed of young married life caught up with them," Bob notes. Their older daughter teaches first grade at a school for the underprivileged in Phoenix; their younger daughter is a freshman in high school and plays violin, cello, piano, and is a member of the internationally renowned Phoenix Children's Choir, obviously having inherited a great many of her mother's musical talents.

Bob has taught moral theology, designed courses, and produced materials for the Chapter, realizing that he must use the gifts God has given him in order to find happiness. He has written several articles for Christ in the World, the Journal for the Western Province, along with "Dominicana: A Guide for Inquirers," a small treatise on Dominican life which has proved a helpful resource for those interested in the Order. He has written three novels, three books of poetry, and two books (one, a workbook) on the psychology of spirituality.

In an effort better to understand the dynamics of their role in the Order, Maria turned to music; Bob, to poetry, to discern the "signs of the times" in issues like social justice, moral theology, politics, ethics, "just wars," and other contemporary issues. Soon the couple realized that their artistic endeavors could give voice to their concerns, and, like other Dominicans, they, too, could minister through the arts. Thus **OPrize for Poetry** was initiated last winter to encourage poetry and as a ministry to articulate who Dominicans are and what concerns people who sign themselves **OPs**.

### OPs Invited to Join Poetry Seminar

Dominicans interested in a Poetry Seminar, "Sharing the Fruits" (a help to understand, appreciate, and write poetry), are encouraged to access [www.OPrize.com](http://www.OPrize.com) for information about the seminar initiated, mentored, and conducted by **Robert Curtis, OPL**, with **Mary Fisher, OP**, assisting. Those without a computer may write **OPrize for Poetry**, Poetry Seminar, PO Box 6331, Chandler, AZ 85246

Enrollees will eventually submit work to be critiqued—a personal service offered at no charge and no commitment other than to try again. If you are adventurous and interested in poetry, contact Bob on or before July 1, 2005. You, too, may engage in poetry as an effective ministry.

**Pillars**, a selection of poems from Dominicans who entered the **OPrize for Poetry Contest**, will be available soon for only \$10. Please watch for future notices.



**Robert and Maria Curtis, OPLs**, take seriously their commitment to God, to the Order, to each other, and to their ministry through poetry and music.

### Judges Select Poetry Winners

The First Annual **OPrize for Poetry** winners are: All those who submitted entries! Judges, including organizer and mentor Robert Curtis, praise all who submitted their work.

Some entries, however, deserved special recognition, exhibiting giftedness in **creativity, impact, cohesiveness**, and **craftsmanship**—criteria used to award :

Gold Medal: **Jeremiah Loverich, OP**

Silver Medal: **Petronilla Davis, OP**

Bronze Medal: **Ruthanne Williams, OP (DIA)**

Honorable Mention: **Barbara Chenicek, OP (DIA)**, **Mary Clara Johnson, OP**; **Gloria Escalona, OP**; **Faith Flaterty, OP**; **Patricia Morisset, OP**; and **Charlotte Mercer, OP**. Congratulations to all who wrote, but particularly to our talented **DIA** members!



## Board Secretary Reports: 'Something's Cookin'!'

by **Irene Mary Diones, OP** (Mission San Jose)

Board members present (**Jean Ackerman, Jude Bloch, Irene Mary Diones, Colleen Gallagher, Rudolf Loewenstein, and Jeanne Stickling**) shared creative ideas and energy at the March Board Meeting at Regina Convent in Wilmette, Illinois. Results of their lively discussions were communicated to **Barbara Schwartz** and **Pat Daly** via phone conference.

Highlights of the meeting included the approval of all final plans and details regarding the **2005 Gathering** in Adrian and review and discernment for the Fra Angelico Award based on nominations received from the membership-at-large. President **Jean Ackerman** will present the Award at the gathering in July.

Members worked to identify responsibilities of the Planning Commission and the Board to assure a smooth flow of the planned activities and clarify tasks for all participants involved. The Board promises a Business Meeting which will be fun, creative, and actively involve the gathering. Wait and see "**What's Cookin' ?**"

Members may browse through the Membership Biography binder, becoming better acquainted with other members and their gifts, and utilize an opportunity for updating information, especially if self-photo and samples of work are missing.

Other significant matters discussed were the prospective **DIA's 10th Anniversary** celebration during the **2006 Gathering** on the West Coast and the **2007 Gathering** in the Southeast. We also shared hopes for featuring youth preachers at the next gathering. **Jean Ackerman** relayed information regarding an accountant, **Louette Guenther, SSF**, who will be working with **Jeanne Stickling**, Treasurer. The meeting closed after a discussion regarding membership recruitment and website updates, sharing of **DIA's** preaching portfolio, and gratitude to leadership teams.



**Joella Miller, OP** (Adrian), on-site coordinator for the **July Gathering 2005**, confers with **Jeanne Stickling, OP** (Adrian), liaison for the Planning Committee, about some of the details and responsibilities. They urge **DIA** members to register soon.

### Why be a member of the DIA?

Among the many rewards of membership in the inter-nationally renowned **Dominican Institute for the Arts** are:

- Reduced conference rates;
- Opportunities to exhibit and showcase Dominican art;
- Support for collaborative Dominican artistic projects;
- Potential for mutual support and connections with other Dominican artists;
- Continuance of the treasured preaching tradition of Fra Angelico into the 21st century;
- Receiving the DIA Newsletter;
- A listing in the Website Directory;
- Use of the listserv

### DIA MEMBERSHIP

Please Check:

- ☐ New Member   ☐ Membership Renewal  
☐ Information Update

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_

Zip: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Cong./Province: \_\_\_\_\_

My Art Interests: \_\_\_\_\_

Membership fee of **\$35.00** spans the year in which your check is written (January 1 - December 31). Please make check payable to **DIA**. Mail check and this membership form to **DIA Membership Liaison: Irene Mary Diones, OP, 6024 Terrace Drive, Los Angeles, CA 90042**

"May God bless us with discomfort at easy answers, half-truths, and superficial relationships so that we may live deep within our hearts. May God bless us with anger at injustice, oppression, and exploitation of people, so that we may wish for justice, freedom, and peace. May God bless us with enough foolishness to believe that we can make a difference in this world; so that we can do what others claim cannot be done."

—Anonymous

## Previews of Coming Attractions at 'Gathering 2005' in Adrian

Anyone who has ever been in charge of an event or even tangentially responsible for the way things are supposed to go—whether it's a play, pageant, performance or prayer service—knows the multitude of matters that must be attended to.

Imagine the time and effort involved in scheduling four or five days rich with inspirational, meaningful, pleasurable exhibits, displays, presentations, etc.

Multiply your needs by 75 or 80; what do you get? **Pressure? Pandemonium? Pain? No**—the Board members, the On-Site Coordinator, and the members of the Planning Committee have all under control.

**YOU? Just relax and enjoy  
'Gathering 2005'!**



(above) **Adele Rowland, OP** (San Rafael), will gladly share her photographic expertise in **Adrian 'Gathering 2005.'**

(right) **Janet Wright, OP** (Adrian), will conduct a watercolor workshop; **Alyce Van Acker, OP** (Adrian), will demonstrate and work with drawing.



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