



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

E-Newsletter Volume XXI No. 2 Fall 2020 www.diartsop.org

SPECIAL TWO VOLUME EDITION asking DIA members the question:
“How has COVID-19 affected your life? Volume 1.

The Plague and I

By **Barbara Schwarz, O.P.**



Feel swallowed alive by the Coronavirus pandemic? I did when **COVID-19** consumed my life in March. It came with a fury and brought covid encephalitis, COVID double pneumonia, fevers, terror and a black hole. Trying to remember pre-covid is like being on one of those rope bridges over a chasm in Nepal with some slats missing.

From the arrival in Winthrop hospital until my homecoming over a month later, I never saw anyone except health professionals. It was terrifying. I didn't understand what was happening to me and do not remember phone calls or even that I had a phone. I left both the hospital and rehab facility to standing ovations and the cheers of staff members. The doctors and nurses say I am a miracle. And I know it was the result of the prayers of my Dominican Family, DIA and friends. My friends and community have been very supportive and all the cards!!!!

Although my community had dropped off my laptop to rehab, I couldn't even do an email or use my phone. When I did the email for Pat Daly concerning her illness, it took me hours instead of minutes.

Our congregational Wellness director brought me home. My sisters greeted me clanging pots and pans and singing “You are my sunshine.” I came home walking without assistance and overjoyed at seeing my loving community. They had been so upset not to have seen me since the gurney carried me onto the ambulance. So it was a celebration. Even the air force planes did a fly by that day.



God has gifted me with an ability to be in the present moment—listening to my body and life around me. I was not patient-- I have been held in love by God. I promised to be present to that and not rush the process. My prayer is in my steps and every breath.

In April and May, I started to record my experience. I painted four paintings, wrote some poetry and walked outside every day. At first around the church property, weeks later around our long block and today most days I walk a mile. This helps my lungs to heal. I often took photos as I walked. They were a contemplative prayer of life unfolding.

I've continued to improve with limits of fatigue. I have cooked and been driving. A Cat scan found some mild permanent scarring on my lungs and inflammation from the pneumonia could last for months. Some days I can do a mile walk and others not so much. This past week I could concentrate enough to read a book! I do feel I am getting stronger, more confident. I am sure it is the result of all the love and prayers I have received.

My art and poetry share what God has done. I am grateful.

A ball of light moving away

Yet connected to me

I am alive!!

I celebrated the light

And being alive for hours

then it changed.

As I talked

It was as if there were tensular chords attached

from the ball, a seeming background of tweed

God Leading a way to where I knew not

Only enough to ask for companionship

It was a strong movement taking me

and flipping over the alternate cosmos

I was thrown into our common cosmos

Message from the President



As a spiritual photographer of nature, “shelter in place” severely impacted my ministry of preaching God’s Word through my art. To back up a bit: I have always been a film photographer (no digital for me!). However, facing the cost of film when it could be found plus the exorbitant expense of film processing, I finally surrendered. Biting the bullet, I purchased a digital SLR camera with the necessary lenses. Being electronically challenged, I made arrangements for me to have in-person classes on how to use it. Enter the **COVID-19**: “shelter in place” cancelled camera classes. No film, no digital camera equates to no photographs – not even backyard ones.

As a user of phone rather than email or text, I called a few DIA members just to “check in”. Before I knew it, I was “checking in” with two or three different DIA members every day. Waking in the morning, I never knew which DIA members I would be phone -visiting with that day.

A **COVID-19** ministry from my little Braintree, MA cloister was founded. From these phone visits, I learned that despite a global pandemic, DIA members continue to pour out the fruits of their contemplation through their art. During our chats, some folks mentioned a family member who was ill and, with the member’s permission, Requests for Our Prayers were sent to all members.

The Fall issue of the Newsletter is usually the one that features our annual DIA Gathering. Not this year!! Because of the global pandemic, our 2020 Gathering was cancelled. Therefore, OPalette editors invited DIA members to report what art they did with the unexpected gift of time. Because it is chock- full of the various ways in which we, as Dominican artists, have responded to the pandemic, these volumes are historic. Since our newsletters are archived at the Nona McGreal Center for Dominican Historical Studies at Dominican University in River Forest, IL. , years from now, folks researching Dominican art will discover how members of the Dominican Institute for the Arts continued to preach God’s Word through their art even through a global pandemic. There is no doubt, this pandemic is a very sour lemon of which we have made a delicious lemonade.

Take care of yourselves, be well and stay safe.

Peace, *Pat Daly*



2020 Fra Angelico Award and DIA Spirit Recognition Awards

After careful consideration and, based on nominations from membership, the Board made the unanimous decision that the 2020 Fra Angelico recipient is multi-gifted artist **Irene Mary Diones (Mission San Jose)**.

The Board selected our long time and loyal member, **Liz Sully (Sinsinawa)** as the recipient of the 2020 DIA Spirit Recognition Award.

The actual Fra Angelico medallion and the Spirit Award will be presented to Irene Mary and Liz at the 2021 Gathering in Adrian, MI.

A formal announcement regarding these awards will be issued by the Dominican Institute for the Arts in the near future.

Congratulations to both!

Donna Brunell's Wall Quilt



Healing



Harmony



Hope



This wall quilt tells a small part of my journey through the year 2020, a journey which has made me ever more aware of the interconnection of all peoples with each other and with Earth.

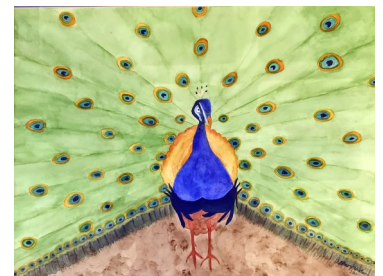
A “globe” is set against a background depicting the natural environment and including a representation of the vast areas on the west coast devoured in flames during the season of drought. The quarantine requirements prompted the exclusion of human beings from this piece, but included wildlife that appeared to be more “at home” in their natural surroundings.

The mask, set on a common image of the virus and hand printed with BLM, for Black Lives Matter, was inspired by a story emailed to me about a woman who was not able to participate in protests because of health issues. She decided to print the letters BLM on the mask she wore, as she walked her neighborhood streets, to let passersby know she cared. The globe includes representations of people of all races holding hands in a gesture of harmony - the beginning of HOPE for our world?

From Racine we heard from **Barbara Kukla** and **Mary Vosters**:

Mary and Barbara have been painting in the Siena art studio. Barbara wrote this:

“It has been a blessing to paint during the pandemic. Eighteen of our sisters celebrated Jubilee this year, and I painted an 8x10” watercolor for each of them.” Two sisters turned 100 this summer, and the two paintings attached here from Barbara are paintings she gave to them:



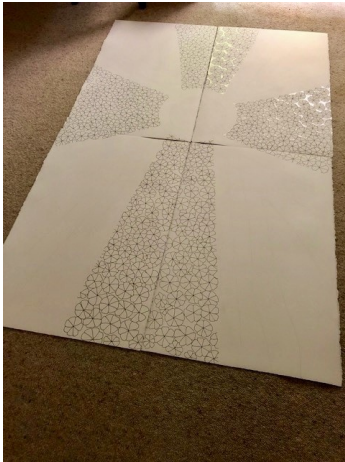
Barbara's Centennial Paintings

Mary felt close to nature.

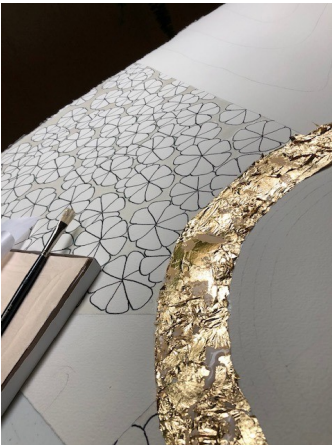
Uplift from Down Under: COVID HOPE CROSS by Sheila Flynn

In Melbourne, Australia, from the first lockdown in March 2020 to May 2020 Sheila Flynn with faculty and students in Siena Heights College High School created an artifact entitled COVID HOPE CROSS. Fabricated collaboratively, the cross represents the hope we keep alive during these surreal times. At the center point of the painting is the Dominican shield. Students' words forming a band around the cross describe the meaning of hope for them. **"Hope is the value that keeps us human and sacred in the face of the unthinkable."** **"Hope is not an attitude that allows one to sit back and wait for God to accomplish that for which we yearn. Rather, hope turns its face toward the future while anchoring its feet in the now."**

Created on Arches handmade paper, painted with acrylic inks and filigree gold leaf squares, with embroidered embellishments on the flowers, the Covid Cross stands 7 feet 2 inches high by 4 feet 5 inches wide – in four panels.



Preliminary plan



Gold leaf application



Gold leaf complete



Student embroidering



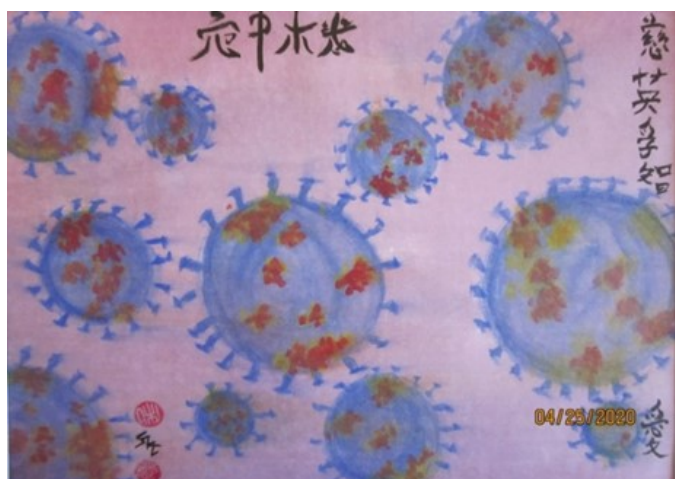
Teacher embroidering

“Crisis AND Opportunity”

by **Mary Anna Euring**

Upon seeing a photo of the corona-virus under a microscope, I couldn't help but notice how beautiful it is in its flower-like, garland-shaped crown. Beautiful but lethal! Causing immeasurable havoc on minds, bodies and spirits around the globe, it has also brought me to reflect on the single Chinese character which means both crisis and opportunity. During the past six months of "shelter in place" here in New York, I have noticed a tremendous blossoming of compassion and courage, the search for truth on every level and a deep wisdom regarding the meaning of life which continues to emerge. Overall, and within all, LOVE can be seen in action

throughout the worldwide community.



The Asian Brush Painting named "Corona's Crisis & Opportunity", is my attempt to express this reality. The top center of the painting reads, in Chinese calligraphy: "Crisis and Opportunity", the right side expresses what it has called forth: Compassion, Courage, Truth, Wisdom and Love. The Lower left chops express "Harmony" and the observation "When one is living amidst calm and stillness, that one can perceive the deep reality of life in all its forms". Yes, through unfathomable pain and suffering, this pandemic is bringing us

to the realization that we are all connected and we are all One. May our lives, each in its own unique way, reflect this universal reality!

"For those who know how to see, everything is sacred". Teilhard de Chardin

Corona Masks New Ministry

DIA members, **Thoma Swanson** and **Mary Jo Knittel** joined the “Mask Making Team” at the Dominican Sisters of Peace Motherhouse. The team had been making masks since the coronavirus started. First they made them for the Sisters and Columbus employees and soon had 3,000 completed. Sr. Thoma and Mary Jo are among those who made many more thousand of masks and donated them to prisons, group homes and families plus anyone or group who requested them. As of today, more than 6,000 masks have been made at Columbus. It’s quite a ministry, just right for this time.

The Activities Director shared with Pat Daly that the scissors purchased at the Dollar store, and used by DIA members to create the Energy Circle at the 2019 Gathering and subsequently donated to the Columbus Activities Department were the scissors they used to cut all the material for the **COVID-19** masks. She said, “Those \$1buck scissors are saving lives.”



PRAYERS in Pandemic Times

by Irene Mary Diones

It's another day of **COVID-19** local and world news. Many disturbing questions continue to run in my mind. When will this end? What am I doing? Where is God? People are ill-stricken, many are dying, families are suffering especially the poor, large numbers are jobless now relying on meager means to sustain their daily needs, fear is on peoples' faces, hunger is evident and a wave of chaos is caught in the air. Yet in the midst of all, I see caring hands, love and goodness from all walks of life; from simple ordinary workers, organizations, religious groups and charities, medical people, volunteers young and old working together to provide assistance to those most in need, and, people are praying. These are **HOPES SURGING**; strong, unwavering, alive, moving forward!

Surely God is present calling us to hold on to our faith and trust. Trust each other for the best of who they are in the depths of their being; the competence of those in scientific and medical fields, the strength and bonds of nations and world leaders pulling resources to work for the common good, the power of all peoples and nations, races and colors mutually reaching out to and for each other, the reality of life and death experiences, and the ultimate call and just response to this critical time in our humanity . **PRAYERS RISING!** Transformation IS happening! A new day is dawning beyond the distant horizon, A New world is birthing ahead!

Listen! See! God is ever near and his mercies never fail, just as tomorrow unfailingly comes. Arise each morning in thanksgiving that we are alive!



God's **MERCIES FLOWING** in every breath we take!

Open our hearts, our minds, our wills!

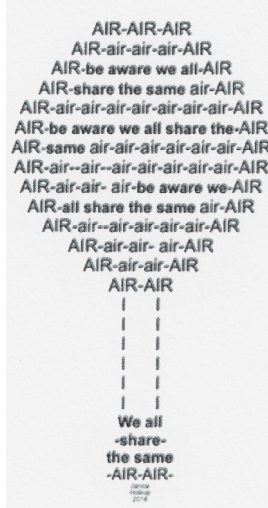
Be still! Remain in an open-hand posture in God's Omnipresence!

God is at work in and among us all! Believe! God IS present!

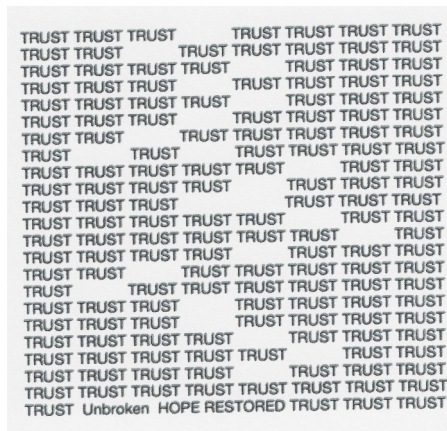
Reflections from "Triptych Acrylic Swipe", June 2020

JANICE HOLKUP WRITES:

THE PIECE TITLED AIR IS AN OLDER PIECE BUT ONE THAT CERTAINLY FITS THIS PANDEMIC BECAUSE THE VIRUS IS AIR BORN. I HAVE LONG REFLECTED THAT WHEN WE LOOK AT THE BASICS OF LIFE, ALL, RICH AND POOR, HAVE SOME THINGS IN COMMON. OF COURSE THE RICH WORK HARD TO EXPOSE THE POOR TO THE DIRTY END OF THE SPECTRUM—ENVIRONMENTAL RACISM IS AN EXAMPLE, WHILE PROTECTING THEMSELVES.



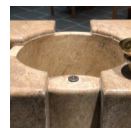
THE SECOND PIECE, TITLED TRUST, IS MY DIRECT RESPONSE TO THE PANDEMIC. AGAIN, TRUST IS THE BASIS FOR OUR LIVING TOGETHER AND SHARING LIFE ON THIS PLANET. I FIRST REFLECTED ON THIS THE DAY THAT NIXON RESIGNED. THAT WAS AN ALMOST FATAL BREAK IN THE TRUST REQUIRED FOR ANY GROUP OR SOCIETY TO SUCCEED. OF COURSE THE POLITICAL DIVIDE FEEDS ON LACK OF TRUST. THIS PIECE FINALLY CAME TO BE ABOUT TWO WEEKS AGO. THE IDEA SIMMERED IN MY MIND BEFORE THEN.



Beyond Letting Go

When **COVID-19** closed the Adrian Dominicans' Saint Catherine Chapel, **Rev. Cathy Johnson**, Chaplain, created a virtual "sacred space" by photographing "**Beyond Letting Go**" which was shared first with resident sisters on closed-circuit TV and eventually as a YouTube video.

We let go of some things and the font became dry...



We let go of more and the Altar's gifts are served only on Sundays...



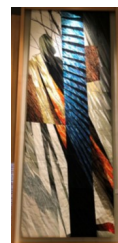
We let go of even more and the Chapel became still...



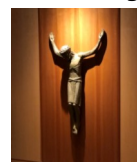
And yet, beyond the Font and the Altar, through the tall window
we watch rain water splashing in the pool,



reminding us of the water of life that continues to flow,
embodying our tears of grief for all the letting go,
bringing steady drops of hope for the future.
And so we pray:



*St. Catherine,
in this season of Lent and beyond,
tend this space for us,
hold our prayers and our presence, our sorrows and our tears,
our song and our silence,
so that when we gather again in this sacred space
we will celebrate a new rolling away of the stone.*



*Our Lord, in this season of Lent and beyond,
open our arms to show us the power of letting go of our will
to make more room for God's amazing love.*

St. Catherine Chapel, Adrian, Michigan

March 23, 2020

Glimpse of Grace © Cathy Johnson

Everyday DNA

With the Pandemic 19 running
rampant over our beautiful blue
planet religion has become quite
a private matter a matter of the
heart perhaps a cosmic lesson
the sacred lying within and not
exclusively in mosques temples
churches synagogues shrines
rather within the heart of each

human being a reflecting back
to the beginning a resolution of
chaos to order each bit of life a
spark of sacred existence a leaf
in the garden to a leaf on the
sacred Tree of Life in our
everyday DNA exuding truth
goodness beauty

Joan Breit



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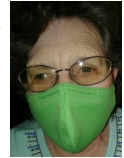
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