

Servants of God and Prophets of Joy – The Art of Br. Mickey O’Neill McGrath, OSFS

February 12 - March 11, 2020
The Gallery at The Sheen Center

Artist’s Statement

The paintings in this exhibit are representative of my work and spiritual journey for the last twenty-eight years, beginning in 1992 when I had a truly transformative experience as an artist through the inspiration of Sr. Thea Bowman.

I had never met Thea, and in fact had never heard of her until after her death, but a video I watched about her life rocked my world and changed me forever.

In 2019, Thea was declared a Servant of God by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, opening the path to her canonization as a saint.

The paintings in the Thea Bowman series each have the title of a spiritual, as African-American music was at the very heart of Thea’s spirit and legacy. For the last twenty-five years, I have shared these images in art and music celebrations of her life at churches and conferences all around the country.

As a result, Thea has led me to deeper awarenesses of my own spiritual development and journey, and has helped me grow more sensitive to the many different voices and faces of Christ in the margins of our church and world today.

Ever since the Holy Spirit opened those Thea floodgates within me, I have paid closer and more loving attention to the lives of other saintly, heroic people whose faith and courage have inspired me to paint, draw, and write.

Another Servant of God, Dorothy Day, was the co-founder of the Catholic Worker movement. She worked tirelessly to radically change what it means to be a Catholic Christian in the modern world by leading us back to Christ – where it all started: to feed the hungry, give drink to the thirsty, clothe the naked. The works of love and mercy are at the very heart of Christianity, and she started it all right here in New York City.

Venerable Augustine Tolton, the first recognized African-American priest and Servant of God, Nicholas Black Elk, a Lakota visionary are more recent subjects of my painterly devotion. Each of them has “risen up to bright glory” by breaking the boundaries of racial prejudice and cultural division.

Each of these courageous, saintly, and thoroughly human figures has contributed in their own unique way to my artistic vision and my ever-evolving determination to be my true self fully, gratefully, and perfectly well.

Brother Mickey McGrath, O.S.F.S., an Oblate of St. Francis de Sales, lives and works in Camden, NJ. He is an award-winning artist, author, and speaker whose work celebrates the connections between art, beauty, and religious faith.

He is a Guild Master at the Grunewald Guild, an interfaith art community in Leavenworth, WA, where he has taught for thirty-three years. No matter the subject or topic, Brother Mickey’s work highlights themes of art for meditation; social justice and cultural diversity; and the healing power of beauty in all its forms.

Brother Mickey currently holds the title of visiting artist at De Sales University in Center Valley, PA. Brother Mickey is a popular presenter at conferences and retreats throughout the US and Canada where he shares his colorful interpretations of Gospel stories and the lives of saints and prophets from across the ages.

Most recently, Brother Mickey has been overseeing the creation of murals as communal events incorporating the prayerful nature of art and beauty and their connections to social justice and Catholic social teaching.

Brother Mickey is also the illustrator and author of twenty-one award winning books. His two most recent published works are: *A Holy Mosaic: Family, Love and Diversity*, (World Library Pub., 2019) which contains his illuminations of quotes from Pope Francis found mostly in *Amoris Laetitia* and other sources. It is Brother Mickey's third book on Pope Francis. bromickeymcgrath.com



The Gallery is open 7 Days a Week from 9 AM to 10 PM. Admission Free.