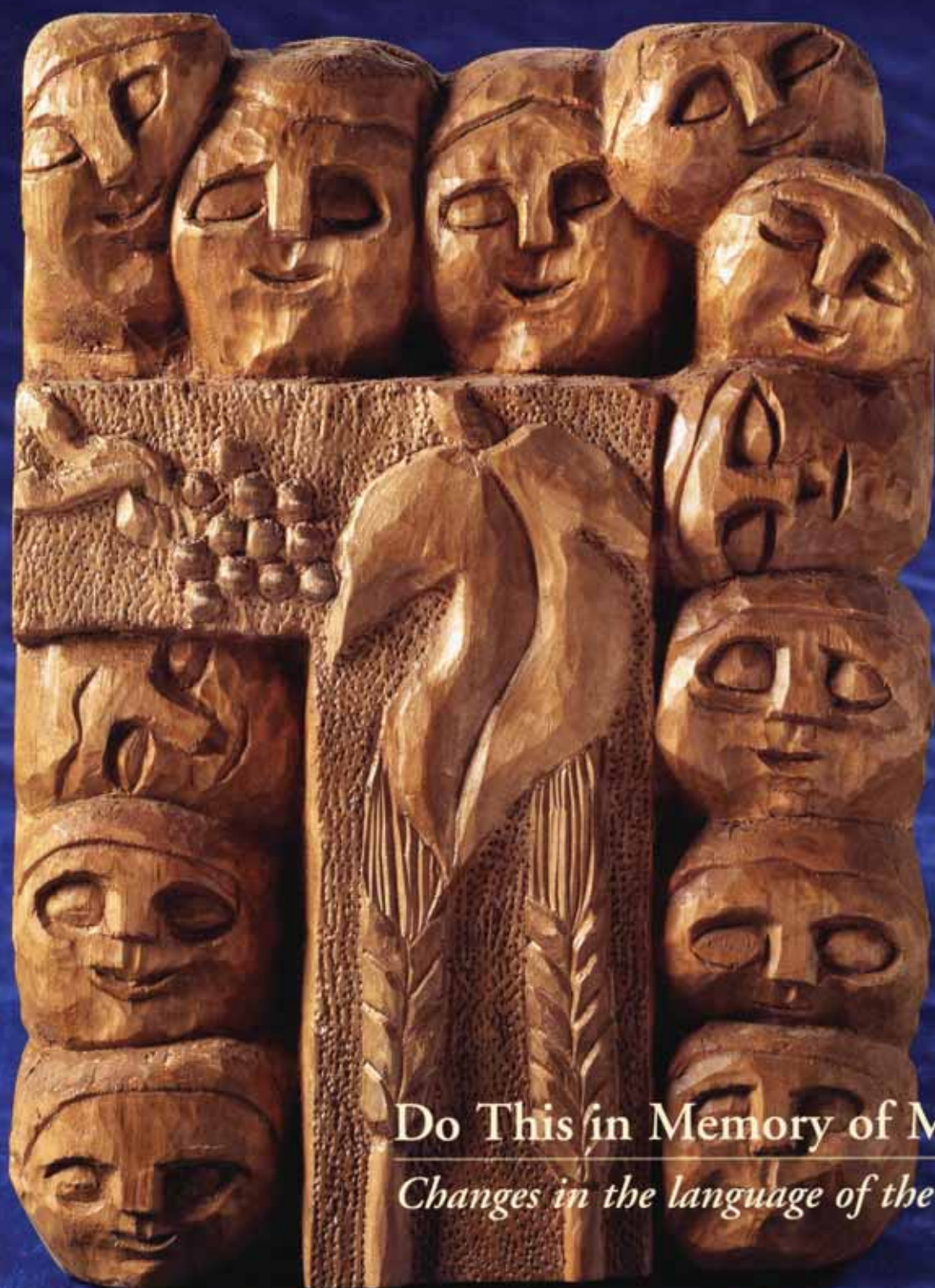


BASILICA

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Do This in Memory of Me!

Changes in the language of the Liturgy

An Artful Calling

Expressing spirituality through wood sculptures

Sister Mary Ann Osborne has a calling beyond her profession as a School Sister of Notre Dame (SSND). In her studio, located on the School Sisters of Notre Dame campus on Good Counsel Hill in Mankato, she listens to God and follows her heart as she carves and sculpts images into wood.

Recently she talked with the *Basilica* magazine about how sculpture has shaped and inspired her life.

What draws you to sculpture?

I love the inner strength of the forms in sculpture. Often the shapes are organic and they create patterns of light and shadow. A good work of sculpture invites constant exploration. It is still and silent, yet there is something eternal about it.

What are you thinking about when you work on a piece?

I try to carve what the wood is expressing – to enhance its natural qualities. For instance, if it is a piece on compassion, I try to put that emotion into the wood so that others will feel that energy when they view the piece. I like to invite the viewer into the piece and to connect with their story so the piece can become alive for them. My work is to be viewed and experi-



enced by others. It is something that I am called to do. It is who I am.

Is all your work sacred?

Sacred pieces, done well, have a mesmerizing effect on me. They leave me feeling whole. The path that I have found in my heart to express ancient truths is through carving pieces that portray nature, scripture, peace and justice. One of the subjects that I explore often is God in our midst.

By **Mary Jo Stocco**



“ONE WHO BROKE THROUGH THE DARKNESS”

— by Sister Mary Ann Osborne.

This woodcut was inspired after visiting a homeless shelter in Germany. During Mass on All Souls Day, Sister Mary Ann witnessed homeless people weeping and praying for their homeless friends who had died — the same people they had slept next to in a cardboard box or stood in line with to receive food from a distribution center. Sister Mary Ann could not understand what they were saying with their words, but their spirits spoke a loud message about crossing over from darkness to light. The woodcut depicts Christ breaking through everyone’s darkness: the alcoholic with the bottle, the starving woman with the bowl, the wounded man with the crutch, and the working woman scrubbing the floor.

This piece and others included in a collection of Sister Mary Ann’s work, titled “The Journey,” will be displayed at The Basilica of Saint Mary June 5 through July 25 and will include woodcuts and wood carvings. The collection’s theme reflects our universal calling to enter into the journey — allowing silence, source and inspiration to guide us down the pathways where the heart takes us.

How is your art connected to your personal and spiritual self?

I cannot separate who I am and what I believe from my art. Being a School Sister of Notre Dame has opened up many opportunities for me and influenced how I view things. One blessing for me was my time spent in Germany studying wood sculpture with a Franciscan Sister. She taught me more than anything to follow my heart with my art. What touches me, I must express. This is how God works through me to touch others. It requires spending time listening and knowing that it is not about me, but rather something that God is doing through me to speak to others.

Did you grow up with exposure to the arts? Not really. I grew up on a farm in St. Peter, MN. There were seven children in my family — five girls and two boys. I am the sixth child. My parents always taught us to respect all things and appreciate beauty. My mom grew and arranged fresh flowers for our home, and my dad would make us little wooden toys for Christmas. We were exposed to beauty around us, and nature played an important part in our upbringing. We would often go the woods to have a family outing of picking flowers, hunting mushrooms, and having a wiener roast.

When and how did you realize you had this gift from God?

In my childhood, I often climbed trees and admired the branches imagining what could be made out of them. I was always interested in viewing things in a new way. I would write stories about scripture and put a contemporary spin on them. Somehow, I always navigated back to wood and the written word to express myself. It is constantly being revealed to me that creating sculpture is a gift from God when I see people standing before my pieces and crying or being moved by something in them that not even I realized was there. I simply create a porthole for others to bring themselves into the sculpture and explore their own story. ✦

