

12-1-1989

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CONTEMPORARY MARIAN ART

by *Bro. Cletus Behlmann, S.M.*

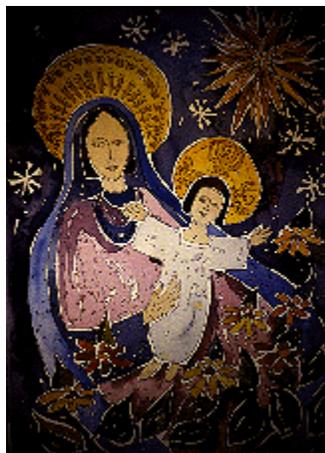
Exhibited at the Marian Library: December 1, 1989 - January 19, 1990

Bro. Cletus Behlmann, S.M.

Bro. Cletus Behlmann, a Marianist brother at St. Mary's University in San Antonio, was born and raised in Florissant, Missouri. Nothing seemed to predestine him to become an artist. One of twelve children, Cletus was more familiar in his youth with the numerous chores on the family farm than with brush and chisel. Although always interested in the arts, Cletus studied English and music. Following graduation, he worked for a year and then joined the Brothers, and eventually began a teaching career that spanned nineteen years.



La Pastorcita



Madonna and Child

His first opportunity to study art came at age twenty-eight when he was teaching at a parish school in El Paso. As a matter of fact, he ran into trouble trying to draw a simple bean pot. "I was given a paper, a piece of charcoal, and the bean pot," he recalls, "and I had the worst time." Though the results of the first lesson may have been less than encouraging, Brother Cletus continued to take lessons and later studied at the Chicago Institute of Art and Washington University. He settled in San Antonio in 1977 and began operating St. Mary's University Art Center.

Today, Bro. Cletus is chairman of St. Mary's Fine Arts Committee. He runs the Art Center, gives demonstrations, and teaches art. It is thanks to his artistic inventiveness that the gallery, studio and center reflect art and convey beauty. Cletus may seem quiet and unassuming on the surface. Yet, deep down there is a drive that fires both his creative imagination and productivity. He has been called "shockingly productive" - over the years he did literally hundreds of paintings, metal sculptures, and ceramic pieces. He works in a variety of

media: metal, acrylics, watercolors, batik, stained glass, pastels, ceramics, and weaving. Although his themes range from religious to folk art to abstract, the overall leitmotif of his work is in "celebration of life," from the wonders of nature to the miracles of God's Redemption. No wonder that Cletus' canvases suggest a joyous symphony of bold and bright colors, so different from the discreet and delicate expression of the message he wants to convey. The deeply spiritual quality of his work, for instance, "is a little more suggestive than it is obvious," as Cletus himself explains. Essentially a religious artist, Cletus wants the beholder to discover the correspondence and ultimate unity between religion and life.

Most recently, Cletus taught art in Japan, traveled to China, Europe and Mexico, and was the artist-in-residence for the World Council of Churches' San Antonio Conference 1989. Yet his home turf remains the great state of Texas and beautiful bicultural San Antonio. That is where most of his works and clients are, of whom only a modest sampling can be mentioned here:

- Coors Dickshire Distributors, El Paso, Texas.
- Dominican College, New Orleans, Louisiana.
- St. Brigid's Catholic Church, Leon Valley, Texas.
- La Mansion Hotels - Central Office, San Antonio.
- St. Joseph Catholic Church, Dallas, Texas.
- Mount Carmel Convent, New Orleans, Louisiana.
- St. Mary's High School, St. Louis, Missouri.
- Our Lady of the Assumption Church, Harlingen, Texas.
- United Church of Christ, Leisure City, Florida.
- University of Texas Health Science Center, San Antonio.
- Lord of Life Lutheran Church, Kirby, Texas.
- England AFB, Alexandria, Louisiana.

ART WORKS BY CLETUS BEHLMANN, S.M.

1. *La Capilla de la Virgen, Oaxaca, Mexico*, watercolor
2. *Nuestra Senora del Jardin, Queretaro*, watercolor
3. *A Walk in the Woods*, watercolor
4. *Virgen de la Fachada de la Capilla*, watercolor
5. *Virgen de la Fachada, Oaxaca, Mexico*, watercolor

6. *La Fiesta de la Virgen, Mitla, Mexico*, watercolor
7. *The Assumption*, watercolor
8. *La Pastorcita, Apaseo el Grande, Mexico*, watercolor and pastel
[shown above at right]
9. *Mother and Child*, watercolor and pastel
10. *Mother and Child*, acrylic and pastel
11. *Mother and Child*, acrylic and pastel
12. *Mother and Child*, acrylic and pastel
13. *Mother and Child*, watercolor

ALSO DISPLAYED AT THE MARIAN LIBRARY

William Joseph Chaminade (1761-1850) and the French Revolution

Father Chaminade, founder of the Marianists, saw that his life's mission was to restore to France the Christianity that the French Revolution had almost destroyed.

The exhibit opens with views of Bordeaux, where he ministered for over half a century: first, during successive Reigns of Terror (1792-97), when he was often in danger of death; and then as a rebuildier of the faith (1800-50). Next come views of Saragossa, Spain with its shrine of Our Lady of the Pillar, where during three years in exile (1797-1800) he planned his future work.

There follow portraits of those (Diderot, Rousseau, Voltaire) whose rationalism and attacks on the Church were assumed by many of the Revolutionaries. After them come Danton, Robespierre and Talleyrand, who prosecuted the Revolution and Napoleon, who brought that era to an end. Supplementing these are illustrations of the famous Tennis Court Oath and of the festivals honoring the Goddess of Reason and the Supreme Being.

Documents dating from those days include a 1791 edition of the Civil Constitution of the Clergy, which tried to remove the Church in France from allegiance to the Pope. With this is a letter of Pius VI (1792) excommunicating

clerics who took the oath to uphold that Constitution and a letter from a bishop protesting his replacement by a constitutional bishop. Finally, there is a letter from Pius VII (1801) asking all bishops of France to resign their sees so that a new beginning could be made in conformity with the Concordat signed with Napoleon.

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