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## Remarks from Opening Celebration

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Sarah Cahalan

Remarks for exhibit opening event, November 10, 2022

Juggling for Mary: Vocation, Gifts and Performing for Our Lady

Hello and welcome!

I am Sarah Cahalan, the director of the Marian Library, and your MC for the program this evening. I'm going to say a few words, and then we have some special guests and entertainment for you. Before I jump in, a quick matter of housekeeping--restrooms are back that way around the corner, and there are single-occupancy and other restroom options on other floors of the building.

I would like to acknowledge some special guests: Danielle Poe, Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences; Kathy Webb, Dean of the University Libraries; members of the Libraries Advisory Council; and any Marianists in attendance. Thanks to everyone who made time in their schedule to celebrate with us today.

The programming around this exhibit--the food we'll enjoy shortly, the costs associated with the story walk, performances, and so on--are funded by gifts from last year's Giving Day. Those gifts will also support creative programming around other exhibits being offered this fiscal year in the UNiversity Libraries. So if anyone gave, even just \$5, believe me we have put it to good use here in the Libraries.

A really significant gift needs to be acknowledged, too. The stained glass piece we are standing near was created in 2018 for an exhibit in Washington, DC. When we planned to host this exhibit in 2020, it was offered as a loan, and there was no way we could justify the significant transportation costs associated with getting it here... and back. But once we reached 2022, the loan had become a donation, and thanks to a generous gift by former Libraries employee Jane Dunwoodie, we were able to transport it here for display as part of the exhibit. Jane has always been committed to incorporating visual art into library spaces. Thank you, Jane.

The story of the juggler, in brief, is a story about vocation and the gifts we each have to offer. On Christmas Eve, a juggler performs for a statue of the Virgin Mary and the Infant Jesus, scandalizing the other monks in his community. Juggling is *not* appropriate--not the kind of gift one should give. In other words, not appropriately intellectual or elevated, like the gift of a book or a poem. But those judgemental observers are wrong because, when the juggler has finished his performance and collapsed in exhaustion, the statue comes to life: the Infant Jesus smiles, the Virgin Mary wipes his sweaty brow. There are connections to other Christmas stories here, such as the Biblical gifts of the Wise Men; or nativity sets where villagers bring fish or pretzels to the Holy Family; or popular Christmas songs such as The Little Drummer Boy.

The juggler story dates back over 700 years. In that time it has been adapted into different media, including opera, children's books, radio plays. It started as an example of devotion that priests could plug into a sermon; it went dormant for a time in the period following the Reformation. It got picked up again in the 19th century by philologists and folklorists; it then entered popular culture by way of a touring opera. Most famously, in 1978 the children's book author Tomie dePaola wrote and illustrated a children's book; my colleagues jumped through hoops to get some of his original sketches for the book here as part

of the exhibit--it's great to see the process behind the product! Those materials, on loan from the University of Minnesota, are on display just outside the Rose Gallery.

One thing we ask exhibit visitors to consider is whether the story has continued or new relevance today. A 1974 edition of the story included this note: "The message of *Our Lady's Juggler* with its emphasis on compassion for human weaknesses and its dedication to divine love and forgiveness seems especially appropriate for our time. Society everywhere appears to be seeking a more intense and personal religious experience in a world of suffering. But underlying the pessimism of our age is the ideal of optimism for man [humanity] appears to be making an effort to solve his [our] problems by a general desire for peace centered around the concept of justice." To me, at least, this still feels relevant.

This exhibit is one example of how the libraries can facilitate connections across disciplines. There is currently a bunch of theatrical equipment in the Rose Gallery which I have been saying is actually a temporary part of the exhibit. The student cast and crew of "Simple Gifts," a performance being offered by the Theatre, Dance, and Performance Technology Program, directed by Professor Jerome Yorke, has been rehearsing there this week. Their performances are ticketed and are taking place tomorrow and Saturday... though I have heard a rumor that audience members would not be turned away if they stay for the unticketed dress rehearsal that starts at 6pm tonight! The Rose Gallery has space to try juggling, space to sit and read a story, and other interactive opportunities. Upstairs on the 7th floor, we have a more traditional library exhibit with lots of interesting artifacts, as well as nativity sets.

We are scheduling a special lecture to several of Dr. Miriamne Krummel's English classes in early December, and others on campus with an interest in the topic will be invited to join as well. We are also joined today by students from Dr. Gloria Dodd's section of REL 250, which uses the theme "Why Mary?" -- I hope this exhibit helps make the case.

We are also working outside of the curriculum, incorporating juggling and the story walk into Christmas on Campus this year. And we are looking forward to scheduled visits from the Bombeck Center and other area schools. There will be regular juggling demonstrations--please check the calendar on the exhibit website!

If I were to thank everyone who helped make this happen, I would keep you here all night and I want to give you time to enjoy the exhibit! But I hope you can take a moment to look at the lists posted near the gallery entrance and upstairs; this is the sort of project that can only happen when people with a wide variety of skills come together in collaboration. (And of course I am living in fear that we left someone off the lists, so please just accept my preemptive thanks if you were involved at all!) I do want to give particular thanks to Eve Wolynes, Melanie Fields, and Kayla Harris, co-curators who have also worked on programming around this exhibit. And most particularly to Ann Zlotnick who designed and installed all of the graphics--Ann has been up on ladders multiple times in the past couple of weeks, doing delicate work with fussy materials. But many many thanks to all of our additional colleagues in the University Libraries and beyond who have worked with us on this, many in very creative and unexpected ways.

I also want to acknowledge any students in attendance from multiple sections of EDT 350, taught by Dr. Mary-Kate Sableski and Professor Jennifer Adams. These students developed the story walk which starts

at Roesch and goes to Serenity Pines as well as creating read aloud programming and will offer storytimes within the exhibit space in November and December. Speaking of activating the collection! This was a semester-long project that ties right into their work on literature as a foundation for literacy. I am excited to introduce two of those students to say just a couple of words about their work this semester--Mary Horvath and Brynne Kessler.

[Mary Horvath and Brynne Kessler speak]

Sarah: Thank you, Mary and Brynne!

Last winter I had an incredible meeting with Dr. Andrea Chenoweth Wells and Professor Jerome Yorke, where we looked at a bunch of Marian Library collection items and discussed possible collaborations. The result is an original composition for soprano, piano, and juggler, "Barnaby's Gift." The full piece will be performed on January 21 on campus in Sears Recital Hall, but we are getting a sneak preview tonight. They are joined by Professor John Benjamin on keyboard this evening. I will turn it over to them now for some more background.

[performance]

Sarah: Thank you! You can enjoy the full performance of "Barnaby's Gift" will take place in Sears Recital Hall on January 21 at 2pm, around when this exhibit wraps up. Ticketing information will be available soon.

Please accept this exhibit and accompanying programming as a gift, as an act of love, from your colleagues in the Marian Library. It has been a difficult couple of years and we are hoping to generate some joy.

At this point, please enjoy some food and company; please look around today and also come back with friends/family. The interactive components are here on level 1, with more artifacts and historical information, as well as some nativity sets, up on level 7 (which has more limited hours, check the website for hours and events/performances). And if you feel like juggling, please do--just juggle gently.

Thank you!