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## Blessed Art Thou

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# Blessed Art Thou

**Exhibit by Michael O'Neill McGrath**

*Exhibit ran from May 22 - July 28, 1995*

**M**ichael O'Neill McGrath currently resides in Washington D.C., and is a brother of the Oblates of St. Francis de Sales. He is the author and illustrator of *Journey with Therese of Lisieux: Celebrating the Artist in Us All*, as well as *Patrons and Protectors*, a three-part series of books on the saints. He has been the recipient of awards from the Catholic Press Association for his covers of *America* magazine, and his work appears regularly in the publications of today's leading Catholic and Christian publishers. Mickey is also a widely respected speaker and retreat director at parishes and retreat centers throughout the United States.

The paintings in this exhibit are also book illustrations. The book consists of twenty-one full-page representations of Mary accompanied by poems and prayers from the pen of Richard N. Fragomeni. Bringing painter and poet together, World Library Publications (WLP, Franklin Park, IL) created a nice coffee table book inviting artistic delight and spiritual joy. The paintings are a feast of colors and Mary, albeit couched in iconographical patterns of classical Marian titles, evokes a refreshing portrait of cultural variety and genuine spirituality. Here is how the painter ordered and labeled his renderings of Mary:

"The Exhibit is divided into four sections to illuminate some recurring themes found in the litanies. These themes mark elements of our own life journeys as well. The titles in the Chapter named "Mother" remind us of our hearts' continual longing for nurturing love and the desire to create. These show us the Mary of Bethlehem and Calvary. The images in the section designated "Lady" refer to the gracious Mary who is a devoted handmaid and grace-filled servant, the Mary of Nazareth at the Annunciation and Visitation. The "Mystic" group celebrates a more contemplative Mary who exposes us to our own inner potentials and possibilities. She is the Mary of the Presentation, who holds the mysteries of God in her heart. And finally, "Queen" is the title of her ultimate fulfillment as protector of all hearts that long for the love of God. As queen, she is the Mary of Pentecost and the Assumption."

The paintings are "painted prayers." They are inspired by the Litany of Loreto, the Song of Songs and the Akathist Hymn. The series gives ample space to African American and Latin-American interpretations of Our Lady. Here is the artist's ardent wish addressed to his "readers:"

"May the colors stimulate you and the words inspire you. And may Mary, who is mother, Lady, Mystic, and Queen, visit you and find a home in your heart. Blessed is she among women. And blessed, it is safe to assume, are we."

## Works displayed in the exhibit:



Assumption over Bethany



Virgin of Virgins



Mother of God



Mystical Rose



Cause of Our Joy



Dawn of the Mystic Day



Seat of Wisdom



Gate of Heaven



Promised Land of Milk and Honey



Star of the Seas



Mother of Sorrows



Queen of the Apostles



Our Lady of Peace



Queen of the Angels



Our Lady of Divine Grace,  
the New Eve



Queen of the Prophets



Our Lady of Light



Queen of the Saints



Our Lady of the Rosary



Queen of the Universe



Our Lady of Refuge

All images pertaining to this exhibit are taken from the book, *Blessed Art Thou; Mother, Lady, Mystic, Queen* and are owned by World Library Publications, 3708 River Road, Suite 400, Franklin Park, IL 60131-2158, (800)-621-5197 ext. 2767, and are used with permission. They may not be reproduced in any form without permission from the publisher.