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NEWS RELEASE

FROM MARY'S HOUSE TO MARY'S LIBRARY — COLLECTION OF MADONNAS NOW HOME AT UD

DAYTON, Ohio — One year ago, Mary Fought of Parkersburg, W.Va., was worried about the fate of her collection of more than 1,000 devotional images of the Blessed Virgin. After all, it took her more than 50 years to amass the Madonnas after discovering the first two — both 1920 pictures of Mary and her infant son in oval tin frames — in an old trunk at the home of a relative, and the octogenarian wanted to make sure the images would be safely preserved for future generations.

Today, that collection resides in a most appropriate home — the University of Dayton's Marian Library, also home of the world's largest collection of printed materials about Mary, the mother of Jesus.

The library, located on the seventh floor of Roesch Library on campus, will recognize Fought's recent donation with an exhibit of about 800 pieces from the collection through Nov. 17 in the library gallery. Gallery hours are from 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., Monday through Friday, and by special arrangement by calling (937) 229-4214. Admission is free and open to the public.

Fought's collection literally filled the walls of her ranch-style home — as well as all nooks, crannies and even a few chairs and other pieces of furniture — before she started looking for a permanent home for her Marian images last year. She had tried to catalog the pieces in a small notebook, but the task became overwhelming as the collection grew. Still, she noted what she could about the images, which were as varied as paintings to greeting card pictures she carefully cut and mounted in frames and as unusual as a piece of cypress root she believes resembles the Virgin Mary cradling baby Jesus.

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Although Fought is not Catholic — she is a lifelong member of Good Shepherd Episcopal Church in Parkersburg — she found peace in the depictions of Mary and referred to her collection as “a labor of love.” As she neared her 80th birthday, Fought decided it was important to find a permanent home for the images where they would be preserved for future generations.

Their journey to the Marian Library was facilitated by UD alumni Dave and Cookie Cassidy of Findlay, Ohio, who read about Fought’s collection and concern in a *Parkersburg* (W.Va.) *News* article dated July 18, 1999. In the article, Fought said she was hoping to donate her collection to a museum and had been approached by the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts in Richmond — but the museum decided it lacked the resources to pursue an assumption.

“I was really pleased when the museum asked for (the images) because I knew they were going to be preserved,” Fought told the *News* reporter. “Now I don’t know what is going to happen to them. I don’t want to see the Madonnas burnt up after I die. I really want to see them preserved.”

After reading Fought’s story, the Cassidys sent a copy of the article to the University of Dayton where it was directed to the Rev. Johann Roten, S.M., director of the Marian Library-International Marian Research Institute. Roten contacted Fought about her collection.

Sister Jean Frisk, administrative assistant to Roten, said the library was very interested in the collection because of the religious devotion and faith it represented. “We realize the collection has little monetary value, but its devotional value is so great and that’s what is important to us,” Frisk said. “Mrs. Fought dedicated so much time and effort to this collection, which is evident when you look at the care with which the pieces were assembled.”

Frisk said there are no set plans yet on how the collection will be permanently stored, but the library will work to preserve the pieces in keeping with the care with which they were maintained.