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# Little Saints Bringing Gifts

University of Dayton

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# NEWS



*Tuesday November 4, 2014*

## Little Saints Bringing Gifts

From kings to lavender cutters to poker players, a new collection of dozens of santons from Provence bring their gifts to our annual Nativity display.

The University of Dayton's Marian Library annual Nativity exhibit will showcase two significant new gifts to its collection as well as turn to children to highlight the original, educational purpose of manger scenes.

"At the Manger: And Now the World" runs Saturday, Nov. 29, through Sunday, Jan. 25, at Roesch Library, and will feature four displays of more than 200 Nativities, also called crèches, drawn from the extensive collection of the University's Marian Library.

A community open house will kick off the exhibit 1-5 p.m. Saturday, Nov. 29. The family-oriented event includes all exhibits, children's activities, light refreshments, live entertainment and even a college football viewing area. The exhibit and the open house are free and open to the public.

The exhibit will also showcase entries from Catholic schoolchildren in the Marian Library's first Crèches Creation Contest, as a reminder that an important part of the Nativity tradition is to teach children about the birth of Christ.

The first floor exhibit will highlight more than 100 Nativities from around the world, including many from the newly acquired collection of Judy and Bob Davis, a California couple who gathered Nativities during many years of worldwide travel, taking them to countries such as Fiji, Bulgaria and Kyrgyzstan.

Another new exhibit is an extensive French Provençal village of 150 clay figures called santons, a gift from the estate of the Rev. John LaCasse, a Michigan priest. LaCasse, who died in 2011, had amassed the collection over 25 years

The handmade santons, literally "little saints", range from 7 inches to a foot in height and are highly detailed representations of the people of a French village, who come to the manger bearing gifts to honor the birth of Christ.

According to the Rev. Johann Roten, S.M., Marian Library director of research and special projects, the santons include the poorest of the village, bringing just one apple or even stolen firewood as well as the villagers with the products of their occupations and professions: fish, bread, vegetables, cheese, baskets, wine, even lavender, cut from the lavender fields of southern France.

"The village represents the whole world, and how the Christ child gathered the whole world together," Roten said. "The santon tradition is very detailed and all of the figures correspond to specific names and specific stories.

"The lady with the firewood is Mary Gold, who goes into the woods to steal the firewood to give to Jesus. The card players behind the stable aren't too concerned, but will eventually leave the table to go to the manger," Roten said.

Roten is especially taken with the man on top of a rooftop jumping for joy.

"He's the simpleton of the village but he's also called 'the exalted one' because he's the first one who realizes that there is something very special going on in the stable below."

As part of that mission, the library also offers free World Nativity lesson plans prepared by education majors from the University's School of Education and Health Sciences. Suitable for home-school lessons, church schools and families, the lesson plans for pre-K through 8th grades can be downloaded on the exhibit website

The Nativity Bazaar will offer for sale crèches that duplicate those in the Marian Library collection and handmade Christmas decorations. Proceeds support the care and exhibit of the collection. The bazaar will be located on the seventh floor and will be open for only two days: 1-5 p.m. Saturday and Sunday, Nov. 29-30.

The exhibit is the University's gift to the community during the Christmas season, displaying items from the University's Marian Library/International Marian Research Institute. The Marian Library holds the largest collection in the world of printed materials and other artifacts devoted to Mary, the mother of Jesus and includes nearly 3,000 crèches as well as Marian art from around the world.

### **How to go:**

Exhibit hours vary; for information on exhibits, hours, directions and parking, visit <http://udayton.edu/libraries/manger> or call 937-229-4265. Guided group tours for six or more are available on request by calling 937-229-4214.

All campus exhibits are closed Dec. 8, 24-28, Jan. 1-4 and Jan. 19. All events are free and open to the public.

### **ROESCH LIBRARY EVENTS**

**Grand Open House**, 1-5 p.m. Saturday, Nov. 29. "At the Manger" premieres with a free community open house, creative children's activities, refreshments, live music and a college football viewing area. Four exhibits.

**"At the Manger: And Now the World,"** all-new display of Nativities from the Marian Library collection highlighting pieces from the Judy and Bob Davis collection, first floor Roesch Gallery, Saturday, Nov.

29, through Sunday, Jan. 25. Open during library hours.

**"Crèche Creation Contest,"** Nativities created by Dayton-area Catholic and Christian schoolchildren entered in the first Crèche Creation Contest, second floor Roesch library, Saturday, Nov. 29, through Sunday, Jan. 25. Winners announced 4 p.m. Saturday, Nov. 29. Open during library hours.

**"A Global Village,"** The first display of a French Provençal village built around 150 large, beautifully clothed Provençal Nativity figures from the estate of the Rev. John P. LaCasse, seventh floor Marian Library Crèche Museum, Saturday, Nov. 29 and throughout 2015. Open 8:30 a.m. - 4:30 p.m. Monday through Friday; 1- 5 p.m. Saturday and Sunday through Jan. 25.

**"Christmas Between Beauty and Beast,"** contrasting Nativities by Hummel, Boehm and Lladró with Expressionist art, seventh floor Marian Library Crèche Museum, Saturday, Nov. 29 and throughout 2015. Open 8:30 a.m. - 4:30 p.m. Monday through Friday; 1- 5 p.m. Saturday and Sunday through Jan. 25.

## **COMMUNITY EXHIBIT**

**"The All-American Crèche,"** The Gallery St. John at Mount Saint John, 4400 Shakertown Road, Dayton, Ohio. Dec. 3 through Jan. 4. Noon to 4 p.m., Wednesdays through Sundays, Dec. 9 through Jan. 6, other times by appointment. A selection of Nativities from the United States from the Marian Library collection. Hours and days vary; call 937-320-5405 or visit Gallery St. John.

For interviews, contact Cilla Shindell at [shindell@udayton.edu](mailto:shindell@udayton.edu) and 937-229-3257.