12-18-2015

God Still Comes

University of Dayton

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God Still Comes

They are crafted from metal, wax, even burlap. They come from Ghana, Thailand and Egypt. Thousands of Nativity scenes make up the collection assembled by the Marian Library at the University of Dayton during the last 20 years, and although they all tell the same, timeless story, each tells that story in a unique way.
Now anyone can learn about the history and symbolism of the Nativity and how it's portrayed by different cultures in a new book written by the Rev. Johann Roten, S.M., director of research, art and special projects for the Marian Library/International Marian Research Institute.

*God Still Comes: From the Manger to the Heart* features more than 250 large, colorful photos of Nativities, or crèches, from the library's collection.

“The representation of the Nativity is more than a matter of figures and sets,” Roten writes in the book. “Nativity sets convey a message. They come with a special intent, sometimes obvious and clearly stated, at other times the message is wrapped in symbols, colors or cultural ingredients. The central message will always be that of the Incarnation of Jesus Christ. Every single Nativity representation is a sacred image of God’s coming into the world.”

The book also discusses materials, culture and themes found in different Nativities including:

* Different people who are portrayed at the manger and their body language

* Animals present at the birth of Christ

* Artistic styles from Gothic to contemporary

* Political messages in 20th century scenes

* The eternal and ongoing struggle between good and evil.

The book also gives a timeline of Nativity culture and details the Biblical texts that relate to the Nativity.

“These manger scenes tell us that a Nativity set is not just a Nativity set, but is part of the story of how Christianity has shaped the culture of the people whose faith was captured by the good news of Christ's birth,” Roten writes. “Likewise our Nativity sets are signs of the many ways in which culture has helped the message of the Bible to be better understood and more gratefully cherished.”

The book is available for $25 at the Marian Library or $30 online, including shipping. It follows the publication of *Mirror of Hope*, a book on a very special, large-scale Nativity set on permanent display in Roesch Library, which represents the story of the Christian faith from the Old Testament through the New Testament, with 240 figures by Kevan Hanna. *Mirror of Hope* is also available to purchase online for $15.

Selections from the Marian Library's Nativity collection are on display through Jan. 24 in Roesch
Library with “At the Manger: Christmas and Beyond.” The display is open from 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Monday to Friday, and 1 to 4 p.m. Saturday and Sunday. It will be closed for holidays on Dec. 24, 25 and 31; and Jan. 1 and 18.

For more 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.

For more information, contact Meagan Pant, assistant director of media relations, at 937-229-3256 or mpant1@udayton.edu.

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