11-5-2007

Polar Bears at the Nativity

Follow this and additional works at: https://ecommons.udayton.edu/news_rls

Recommended Citation

https://ecommons.udayton.edu/news_rls/1999
Polar Bears at the Nativity

11.05.2007 | Fine Arts, Campus and Community, Catholic  "We want to show who else was at the manger," said the Rev. Johann Roten, S.M., director of International Marian Research Institute at the University of Dayton and curator of one of the largest collections of nativity scenes in the U.S. "Most cultures have very distinctive ways in which an important event is greeted, and those are expressed in ways that are unique to that culture."

Thirty-three displays from the University of Dayton's Marian Library collection of 1,500 nativity scenes will be on display during the annual national convention of the Friends of the Crèche. The public can see the nativity scenes, also called crèches, in a free viewing from 1 to 5 p.m. Saturday, Nov. 10 at the Embassy Suites Hotel in Dublin.

Roten said this year's selections reflect how nativity scenes express ethnic and cultural diversity, even political conflict, by focusing on what he called the "secondary figures."

A crèche from the Northwest United States is rich in that region's animals and Native American traditions. A polar bear, moose and seal take up the spots usually reserved for donkeys and sheep while dancers in frog and beaver costumes look on.

Political conflict is expressed in a scene from the Chiapas region of southern Mexico, where revolutionaries in black and red carrying guns and backpacks, gather to be with the similarly dressed Holy Family.

"We have one that features wooden figures of a musical band from Togo because in that culture, when something important happens, it's greeted by all the musicians in the community," he said. Other crèches depict dancers.

Animals of all kinds come to the nativity from their native habitats, Roten said, noting that the crèches on display include crocodiles, turtles, fish and birds of all kinds.

Friends of the Crèche is a nonsectarian, nonprofit organization for those who collect, exhibit, study, create or simply treasure Christmas nativity scenes and other material related to the nativity.

The convention, which runs from Thursday, Nov. 8 to Saturday, Nov. 10, will also feature presentations from artists, musicians, craftspeople and collectors about nativity scenes and music with a special focus on many cultures represented in the Midwest: German, Irish, Norwegian, African-American, Slovakian, Italian, and Greek.

The 33 Marian Library crèches will also be on display at the Dayton Art Institute during the Christmas season Nov. 23 to Jan. 6.