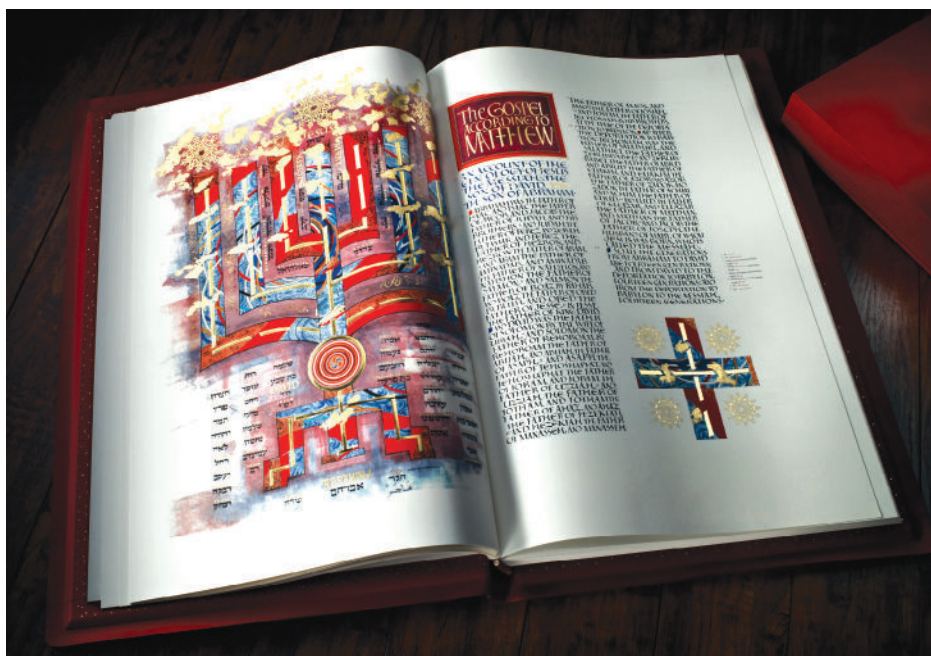


The Saint John's Bible

BY MAE DESAIRE

*A masterwork of art and spirituality—
gifted to The Basilica*



This spring, The Basilica of Saint Mary will receive a Heritage Edition of The Saint John's Bible. A Heritage Edition is a fine art edition created under the direction of renowned calligrapher Donald Jackson of the original Saint John's hand-illuminated Bible, which was commissioned in 1998 by Saint John's Abbey and University in Collegeville, Minnesota. The original Saint John's Bible manuscript is located at the Hill Museum & Manuscript Library on the campus of Saint John's University.

The Heritage Edition consists of seven volumes in one set and only 299 sets have been printed. It is being shared in communities—churches, hospitals, universities, libraries, etc.—around the world to celebrate the creative and inspired ways The Saint John's Bible can ignite one's spiritual imagination. The Saint John's Bible is a masterwork of art and spirituality that invites a spiritual journey toward God, both for individuals and communities.

This gift was brought to The Basilica through a special connection to honor Michael O'Connell's ministry and service to both The Basilica community and to

Saint John's community. Rev. Dr. John Ross, Executive Director of The Saint John's Bible Heritage Program, who is blessed to have Michael as a mentor for nearly 20 years, coordinated a small group of families to collectively gift this Heritage Edition to The Basilica.

The Basilica is honored to accept this sacred gift and share it with our community. There will be an exhibit and lectures accompanying its arrival and a dedication at Pentecost Sunday, May 19, 2024.

Johan van Parys, PhD, Managing Director of Ministries/ Director of Liturgy & Sacred Arts, spoke with BASILICA magazine.

What is the significance of receiving a Heritage Edition of The Saint John's Bible?

The creation of The Saint John's Bible was a major initiative and a wonderful celebration of the importance of the Word of God for us Christians. The importance of the Word of God is clearly underlined not only by the size of the volumes but also by the artistry of the calligraphy and the illuminations. The art of handwriting and illustrating bibles had given way to the printing press for the past 500 years. The reimagining of this ancient art to create a handmade bible for our time is a true gift.

Receiving the Heritage Edition of the Bible will allow us to celebrate the Word of God more extensively and more deeply both within and outside the celebration of the Eucharist.



Photo credit: The Saint John's Bible Heritage Program

What was your first reaction or spiritual experience when you saw *The Saint John's Bible*? Did you gain new insight from books of the Bible that you were long familiar with?

The love for the Word of God as demonstrated by the love with which the text has been written and the illuminations have been added is truly inspiring. It takes a bit of time to get fluent in reading the text because we are used to electronically produced text but the fact that we are forced to take more time to read the Word of God is deserving of the importance of the Word of God.

The illuminations are what really had first drawn me to *The Saint John's Bible*. Having studied a 15th century handmade

Cistercian Missal for my dissertation in Art History I was totally intrigued by these new illuminations. I have found that they give new insights into the text that are truly inspired and inspiring.

What do you hope this Bible brings to *The Basilica* community?

Overall, I am hoping that the beauty of *The Saint John's Bible* will kindle a deepening interest in the Word of God. I look forward to using the Bible for some of our more solemn liturgical celebrations. I also look forward to some wonderful use of the beautiful illuminations in our catechesis both for adults and children. ✚

MICHAEL O'CONNELL

Michael O'Connell was rector of The Basilica from 1991-2008 and is known for his tireless compassion, advocacy, vision, and commitment to justice in our community. He served as pastor of Ascension in Minneapolis from 1999 until his retirement in 2015. He also founded Jeremiah Program, which serves single mothers and their children.

"Michael has been a friend and exemplary man of faith for thousands in our city for six decades. We were fortunate to be two of those people. Knowing of Michael's long affection for The Basilica, the idea of a gift honoring his devoted service felt right. The Saint John's Bible is a unique gift that recognizes Michael's stewardship and will bless The Basilica parishioners for years to come."

— Kathleen Blatz & Greg Page

"Michael O'Connell has brought vision, guidance, encouragement, and access to thousands of connections over many decades. He has shared understanding and acceptance with that treasured population and confidence in their commitment to enhance the lives of all people."

— Barbara Forster