

# Appreciation and Reflection with Kathy Dhaemers

## *A Sacred Arts Retrospective*

BY JOHAN VAN PARYS, PHD

**O**n November 30, 2024, Kathy Dhaemers will retire from her ministry at The Basilica of Saint Mary. Leaving a corporate role, Kathy has been the Associate Director for the Sacred Arts since the year 2000. During these past 24 years, Kathy has managed hundreds of concerts and exhibitions. These artistic endeavors have invited thousands of people into the mystery of the Divine, many of whom had never been to The Basilica before. In addition, Kathy has cared for our own Basilica Art Collection and has shepherded our docent program. Reminiscing about her career at The Basilica, Kathy reflected on a few questions.

### ***What moved you to give up your corporate career and start working for The Basilica?***

In late 1995 I decided to attend Mass at The Basilica rather than the other parishes where I typically worshiped. I discovered a more vibrant community than The Basilica I had experienced in the 1980s.

I immediately felt welcome and quickly became engaged in a few ministries. One of those ministries was assisting with the liturgical environment, followed by Sacred Arts that included the Icon Festival.

When the staff position managing concerts opened in 2000, I offered to help for a while. Johan had a vision to expand the position to include art events including exhibits in the newly created John XXIII Gallery and Teresa of Calcutta Hall in the lower level of the church.

I soon realized that my business degrees and knowledge and skills from years in corporate marketing and communications were equally valuable in creating and managing Sacred Arts and church events. And so much more fun than insurance. During this quarter century I have met and worked with some of the most interesting, gifted, and influential people of our time.

### ***How has the work you do inspired you?***

I am inspired when I witness the impact of a piece of art or music on an individual or group of people. During my years at The Basilica, I've had the honor of observing significant impacts on people of all ages and backgrounds. And through many art forms including art exhibits, art installations, concerts, architecture, dance, puppetry, and recently an opera. I've also had the privilege of spending time with artists, in conversation and in their studios watching them work. While their processes and sources of inspiration vary, most speak about being the conduit through which God's messages are shared.

I have experienced the role of art in fostering understanding, respect, reconciliation, and peace.

We are so grateful for the great work Kathy has done in lifting up the arts and in celebrating "Beauty that Saves" in our community and beyond. It has been an amazing journey. We wish Kathy a restful and rewarding retirement and look forward to seeing her at Mass and future concerts and exhibits.

### ***Why do you think it is important for The Basilica to celebrate the arts?***

Sacred Arts have always been part of the Christian tradition and play a role in the life of many religions. They are seen as essential both to worship and catechesis. As a shared form of communication for centuries, the arts have enabled stories to be told in new ways and provided a history of humanity in different times and places. The creativity and vocation of artists are meant to serve and evoke beauty, helping to make God present in the world. The beauty of creation and beauty that saves provide a glimpse of the Divine. Beauty fills our lives with joy. ✚

*Johan M.J. van Parys, Ph.D., has been The Basilica's director of liturgy and sacred arts since 1995.*

# Kathy's Selected Favorites

*from Her Career at The Basilica of Saint Mary*

## The Seat by Kelly Kruse

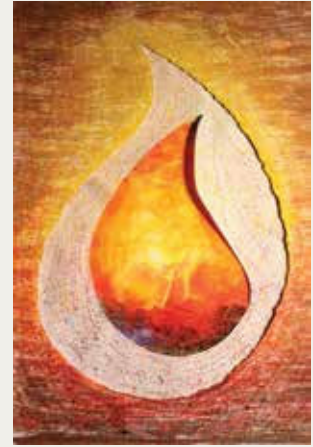


Kathryn Heidelberger, Kelly Kruse, and Kathy Dhaemers at the artist reception for the Magnificat exhibit, 2018



## Interpretations of Faith

Women Artists in the Jewish and Christian Tradition



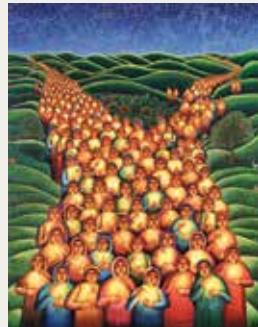
Healing by Renanah (Rani) Halpern

## A Festival of Light (2002) and Bringing Stories to Life (2012)

Serigraphs by John August Swanson



Washing of Feet



A Festival of Light

## Annual Crèche Exhibit



## Voice to Vision

Holocaust Survivors Share Their Experiences Through Art, with University of Minnesota professor David Feinberg

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