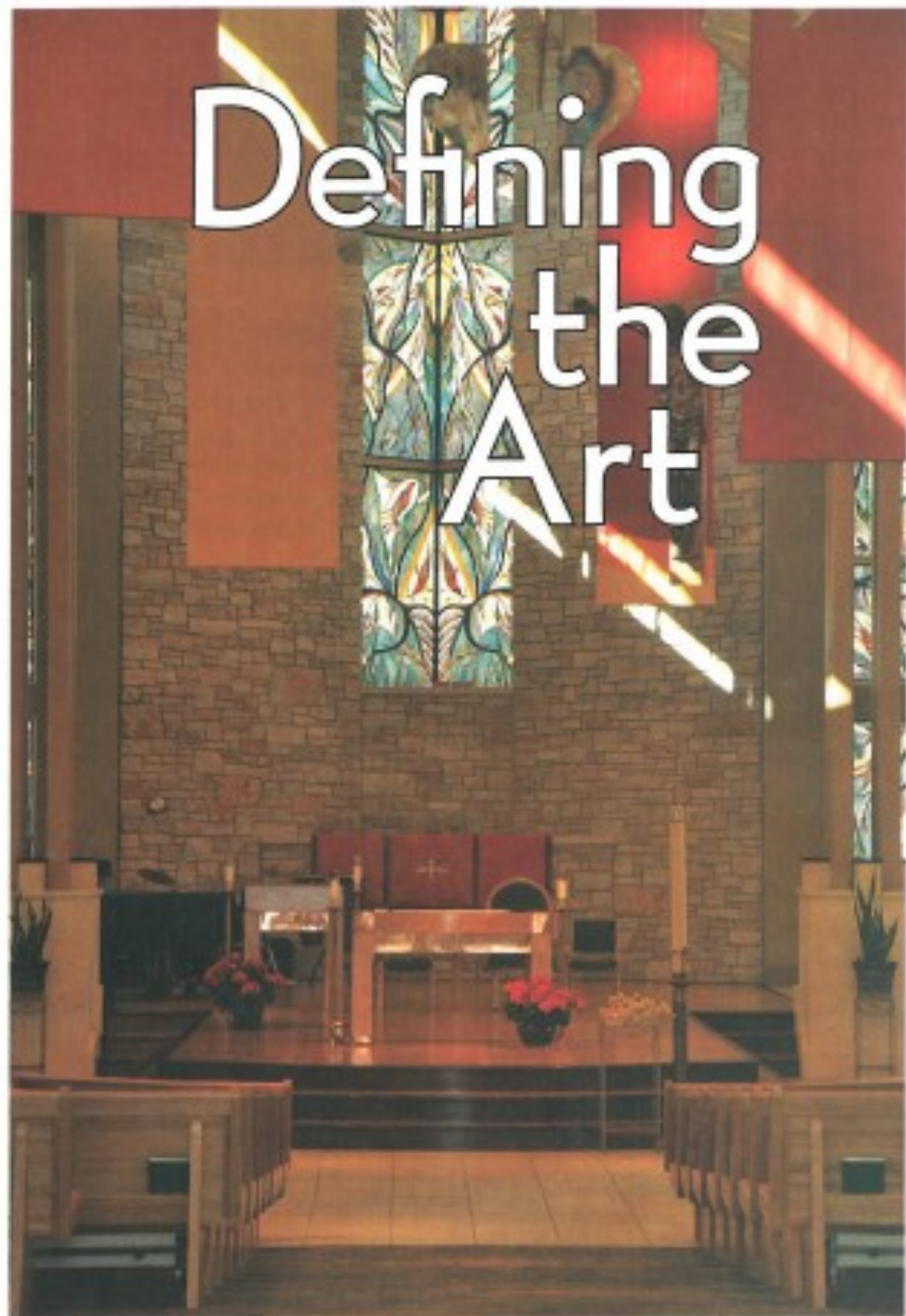


Holy Spirit Catholic Church:

Defining the Art



In the process of consolidating three parishes (St. Gerard, Holy Family, and Sts. Peter and Paul) into one and of planning to build a new church, the new parish, named Holy Spirit, endeavored to integrate and acknowledge 150 years of accumulated years of ministry and to incorporate into its planning art and elements from the natural environment of central Montana.

The architects, SlaterPaull from Denver, determined that the people desired a building that looked traditional from the outside but was designed for contemporary worship within. The most prominent buildings from the past in the Great Falls community had been those that housed the copper smelter along the Missouri River. That traditional look naturally suited itself to this desire.

The inspiration for the church design was "light and windy" and by adapting the structure of the

planned building with its high-arched roof line and upper ridge of windows, the architects incorporated the significant feature of natural light into the building. Since most of the year the sun is prominent on the plains of eastern Montana, the use of natural light throughout the building established a connection between the inside and outside environment. With that thought in mind, Montana artists, who understood the native environment and could interpret it artistically, were called upon by the planning committee and architects. To capture and illuminate the natural light, it was decided to create several large stained glass windows behind the altar area and a rose window in the church entry thereby adding another spiritual focus within the church itself.

We were privileged to have available in-state artists of national acclaim who also shared our Catholic traditions and sense of worship. This "art walk" through Holy Spirit Church attempts to portray the vision and faith of these artists.



Stained Glass Windows

Dana Boussard, a well known Montana artist with a reputation throughout the country for her naturalistic designs in glass and fabric, was asked to develop themes to illustrate the native colors, plants, and landscape as well as the elements of light and wind. She was commissioned to design and build a massive, 700-square-foot stained glass project before Holy Spirit was built.

"It's a contemporary church, so they wanted a contemporary look to the design," says Boussard. "After that they only had two suggestions, that I incorporate wind and wheat into the pieces. The visions I kept having came from the Scriptures: 'I am the vine and you are the branches.' The spiritual light would come from illuminating those images."

Inside there are 7 windows in 25 sections with over 20,000 individual pieces of hand-cut stained glass that took three years to design and construct. The glass came from all over the nation as Boussard searched for the right types and colors. The largest design is the four story high piece at the center behind the altar. Rising from the base of the windows, the native



wheat is whipped and tumbled by the prairie wind. These natural forces are a very special part of the Central Montana landscape where Boussard grew up and they give the work its sense of place and motion. With each cut of glass, these earthly elements of grass, wheat, water and wind beckon the eye upward. They become undulating vines, flowers, and birds that weave into the spiritual symbols within the windows. Surrounded by images of doves and wheat, the deep purple vines branch into the form of a chalice with the host, bathed in radiant light, rising above. Upward, crowned angels, whose wings unfold in celebration, mantle the subtle colors of the cross. Expressing the hope of transcendence, they lift the Virgin Mary through the clouds and into the starry sky, symbolizing her Assumption. "For me," says Boussard, "art and spirituality have always been intertwined, and in each of the windows throughout the church that narrative continues." The other windows compliment and support that central expression of our Catholic faith.



Stations of the Cross

The late Joe Halko, beloved artist and sculptor who lived in Choteau, Montana, created the fourteen Stations of the Cross that are hung to the left and right of the worship area. Halko's bronze works brought into the church a connection to the area's historic copper-smelting past. The planning and the completion of the bronzes within his studio took over three years. According to his wife, Margaret, Halko was challenged by the project, but was also very excited. He liked it. It was his last commissioned project.

On December 7, 2008, as the Stations were dedicated and blessed, Halko offered these words on his thoughts as he worked on each station.

1. Jesus is condemned to death: The lone figure emphasizes the tension and drama of the scene and puts a specific face on the crowd.

2. Jesus takes up His cross: Jesus becomes the dominant figure, reluctant but knowing that this is His mission. Roman soldiers are also somewhat hesitant in following orders.

3. Jesus falls the first time: To emphasize the burden and weight of the cross, it has fallen on top of Jesus covering his face to emphasize that burden.

4. Jesus meets his afflicted mother: The love and sorrow of mother and son meeting overshadows the tense situation.

5. Simon is forced to take up the cross: Simon is shown as a reluctant helper symbolizing that we, one with the crowd, are also reluctant to reach out and get involved. Jesus is reaching out to Simon, rather than vice versa.





6. Veronica wipes the face of Jesus: Veronica willingly reaches out to comfort Jesus and represents those who take a risk in reaching out to those in need.

7. Jesus falls for the second time: Jesus reaches back to Veronica as he falls. This is re-establish-

ing the Way (road) of the Cross. Each station is part of that Way rather than a "stand alone" scene.

8. Jesus meets the women of Jerusalem: Some women's faces are covered, some come forward. Each expresses a different human emotion: reluctance, fear, confusion, sorrow.



9. Jesus falls the third time: This signifies the complete exhaustion of Jesus.

10. Jesus is stripped of his garments: The soldier's domination over Jesus is emphasized as they strip him of his clothes and force him to the ground, exposing Jesus' earthly vulnerability.

11. Jesus is nailed to the cross: The prominent soldier with his raised hammer emphasizes the pain and the drama of the situation. The face of Jesus is left to the imagination of the viewer.

12. Jesus dies on the cross: Jesus is slumped on the cross with prisoner crosses on each side. The landscape is included to signify the starkness and vastness of the scene.

13. Jesus is taken down from the cross: Jesus' legs are slumped to signify death. The inspiration came from an unfinished Michelangelo sculpture that Halko saw in Florence, Italy.

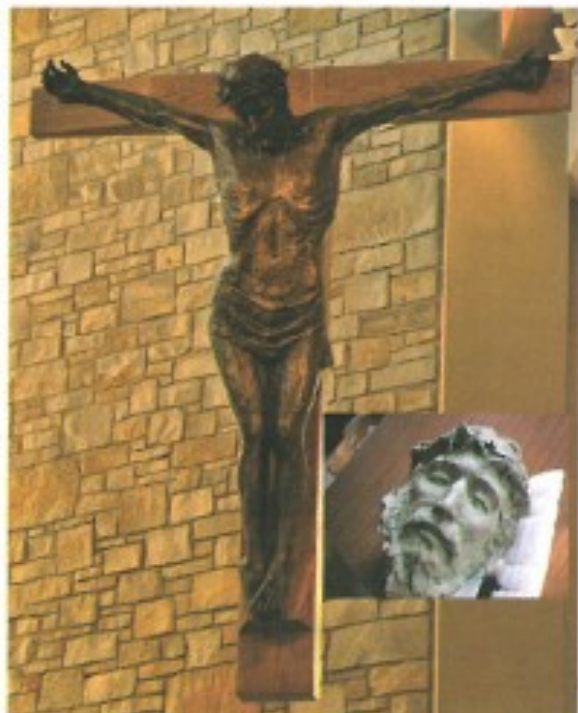
14. Jesus is laid in the tomb: The worshipper is part of this bleak scene looking out from the back of the tomb at Jesus' lifeless body. The huge stone is ready to close the entrance.



The Corpus

Artist Terry Mimnaugh, a Great Falls native who grew up in Sts. Peter and Paul Parish, created the Corpus of Christ for the crucifix behind the altar at her studio on Flathead Lake. She is highly sought after for her commissioned work of heroic sculptures and religious icons, as well as her paintings in oil, watercolor and pastel. The new church is located in the same pasture where she used to play with the horses as a child. Mimnaugh took at least a year to build the model for the Corpus which was then cast. The bronze cast weights 350 pounds without the wood of the cross. It is seven feet with the arm span of nearly seven feet as well. In her artist statement, she writes

that although Jesus' body was distorted from dislocation of joints and from the torture of the crucifixion, the bronze sculpture takes on a



serpentine shape as a reminder of His recovery from sin and death, that we might have Eternal life with Him. The nails pierced the wrists to withstand the weight of a man causing the thumbs to turn inward as evidenced in the image of the Shroud of Turin. It is Mimnaugh's thought to "cast a loving grateful gaze to the Crucifix which won for us our salvation."



Metal Gate with Wheat Motif

The metal gate with the wheat motif was designed by Holy Spirit parishioner and local architect, Gordon Whirry, to reflect the importance of grain production in our area. It was his inspiration to seek nature and growing things as an outlook on life. The design is fairly abstract, and intended to be. Specialty Iron Works, Inc. of Great Falls constructed the gate.

Whirry also designed the altar, the ambo, the ambry, the pews and the baptismal font.

In the Day Chapel, he designed the tabernacle stand and ambo.

The tabernacle stand was constructed by parishioner and master cabinet maker, Bob Palmer.



Altar and Ambo

The altar and the ambo were constructed by parishioner and industrial arts teacher, Joe Wilkins. They are made of red oak and copper. When Wilkins delivered the 400 pound altar, he backed his truck up to a large aluminum cart parked in the church driveway. The cart was the perfect dimension for the altar and the only way he and two helpers could have carried the altar into the church. Once the task was accomplished, Wilkins put the cart back in its original place. When he returned fifteen minutes later with the ambo, the cart was gone. No one has ever seen the cart since or knows where it came from. Wilkins feels the good Lord had a hand in that.



John August Swanson Colored Serigraphs

Los Angeles artist John August Swanson's colored serigraphs portraying scenes from the Gospels and today's church, are located in the parish hallways:

1. The Multiplication of Loaves and Fishes
2. The Washing of the Feet
3. The Procession
4. The Last Supper (in the parish office)



The Airdance Mobile

Created by Joel Hotchkiss of Stockbridge, Massachusetts, Hotchkiss considers his kinetic art mobiles as "sculpture in air." Since wind is one of the symbols of the Holy Spirit as well as a prominent feature of native environment, it also is incorporated in the design features of the church, particularly here, where the movement of the mobile gathers the wind over the baptismal font. The Holy Spirit and the wind come together and share the same space. Motion is the physical expression of the wind. The mobile is approximately 10' to 12' in height and 6' to 7' in width. The crescent shapes are brass and copper. The three individual mobile sections are 2.5' to 3' in height and also made of copper and brass.

Other Art Objects

1. The Pietà, to the left of the sanctuary, is from Holy Family Church.
2. The statues of Mary, Joseph, Peter, and Paul, to the right of the sanctuary, are from Sts. Peter and Paul Church.
3. The tabernacle and the Mother of Perpetual Help picture in the Day Chapel came from St. Gerard's Church.
4. The wood carving of Jesus in the Day Chapel portraying Jesus' suffering with the crown of thorns is by Bob Langevin, a local artist.
5. The Madonna collection in the parish hall was donated by Dr. Harry Power in memory of his wife, Elsie.
6. The scroll saw work of the "Our Father" in the parish hall was fashioned by deceased parishioner, Leonard Betts.
7. The tatted Lord's Prayer on the back wall of the church gathering area was handmade by deceased parishioner, Bert Kaul.

