

Art Imitating Life Villanova Magazine Summer 2018

By Marian Butcher

In 1914, Corr Hall opened as the new Augustinian seminary in the center of Villanova's campus. Its chapel was constructed with 10 tall, arching windows, two of which were immediately installed with stained glass depictions of St. Augustine, St. Monica, the Virgin Mary and St. Joseph. But through two world wars, the Great Depression and decades of change on campus and in the world, the other eight windows were left as simple frosted glass.

Now, more than a century later, an effort is underway to complete the remaining stained glass windows in Corr Chapel. The saints and other figures selected for the new windows represent both recent and ancient church history, and their lives and teachings can inform and inspire all who gather in the chapel.

"The goal is to be enveloped in the space by the sacred windows," says Barbara Wall, PhD, vice president for Mission and Ministry, who is leading the project. "Through the windows, we want to show our commitment to Augustinian traditions and to inspire particularly the young people who come here."

Three new windows, designed by the Rev. Richard Cannuli, OSA, MFA, '73 CLAS, professor of Studio Art, have already been installed. The first, a commemoration of the 15 Villanovans who died in the terrorist attacks Sept. 11, 2001, was installed in 2006.

Two others were installed earlier this year. One depicts St. Rita of Cascia, a 14th-century Augustinian nun in Italy who was known as an advocate for peace, and St. Nicholas of Tolentine, a 13th-century Augustinian friar known for his devotion to poor souls in purgatory. Opposite those saints is a window dedicated to Blessed Oscar Romero, a Salvadoran archbishop who was martyred in 1980 and will be canonized later this year; and to Servant of God

Dorothy Day, a staunch pacifist and advocate for the poor who founded the Catholic Worker Movement.

Father Cannuli begins each window by searching for inspiration in the lives of the people to be depicted — what they were passionate about, where and how they lived, and how they expressed their faith. He sketches the figures and chooses the symbols and colors that will add depth and detail to the window.

Once his sketch is finalized, he creates a small-scale watercolor and sends it to Vetrare Artistiche Toscane, a stained glass studio in Siena, Italy, where artists labor for as long as a year to turn the small sketch into a painting, and then to piece together the window.

From there, it is shipped back to Philadelphia in a custom-made box, and, like the most precious souvenir ever brought back from Italy, has to pass through customs, a process that can take as long as a month.

Once the window has arrived safely on campus, a team of specialists carefully piece together the intricate artwork and set it in place. The entire process — from sketch to installation — is long, exacting and arduous. But the moment when sunlight first streams through the window, casting vivid pools of color onto the brick floor of the chapel, is worth the wait.

“In the long tradition of the church, we are creating a sacred space where we can feel inspired to be like these holy people in teaching, caring for others and grappling with special challenges,” says Dr. Wall. “We are all called to imitate them in some way.”

Support This Project

Villanovans are supporting the effort to bring these brilliant windows to their rightful station. John '63 VSB and Anne Gartland and Barbara Wall, PhD, vice president, Mission and Ministry, donated the funds for the windows shown here, respectively. These commitments are among the many ways in which gifts made during the Villanova Campaign to Ignite Change continue to transform the University. For

information on how to support this project, contact Tim McMahon, senior associate vice president for University Advancement, at tim.mcmahon@villanova.edu.

Seen in a New Light

For centuries and still today, preaching and teaching have often been done through religious art. Each window tells a story about the pursuit of holiness as portrayed in the lives of the holy people of the Catholic tradition. Other windows that will be produced over the coming years will depict:

Servant of God the Rev. Bill Atkinson, OSA, '73 CLAS, the first quadriplegic to be ordained a Catholic priest, who is now being considered for sainthood

--Servant of God Thea Bowman, a Franciscan nun, teacher and accomplished liturgical musician who advocated for the breaking down of racial and cultural barriers

St. Kateri Tekakwitha, a 17th-century Mohawk woman who converted to Catholicism and worked with Jesuit missionaries in upstate New York

Blessed Thomas Jihyoe of St. Augustine, a 17th-century Japanese Augustinian who was martyred for his faith during the persecution of Christians in Japan

St. Teresa Benedicta of the Cross, also known as Edith Stein, who converted from Judaism and was a Carmelite nun and a philosopher before she was killed in the Holocaust

St. Thomas of Villanova, a 16th-century Spanish bishop and philosopher known for his care for the poor, and Villanova University's patron

St. Francis Xavier Cabrini, founder of the Institute of the Missionary Sisters of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, who worked with Italian immigrants in New York

Servant of God the Rev. John McKniff, OSA, a missionary to Peru, Cuba and the Philippines

**Corr Chapel
Envisions Sister Thea Bowman
in a New Light**

This summer specialists installed a new stained glass window in Villanova's Corr Chapel depicting Servant of God Sister Thea Bowman.

The Rev. Richard Cannuli, OSA, MFA, '73 CLAS, professor of Studio Art, designed the window highlighting the Franciscan nun, who is one of the six black Catholics who are being considered for canonization.

Sister Thea changed the fabric of the American Catholic Church in the late 20th century, but her story is not well-known, says Shannen Dee Williams, PhD, assistant professor of History. The granddaughter of slaves and the only African American member of the Franciscan Sisters of Perpetual Adoration in the Diocese of La Crosse in Wisconsin, Sister Thea was known for her powerful preaching and singing at Church gatherings across the country.

“Even if they never become saints, the fact that their causes have been formally opened means we’ll have an opportunity to tell their stories in a host of new ways,” Dr. Williams says.

Villanova University Magazine Summer 2019