

Saint John's Bible, a work of art and spirituality

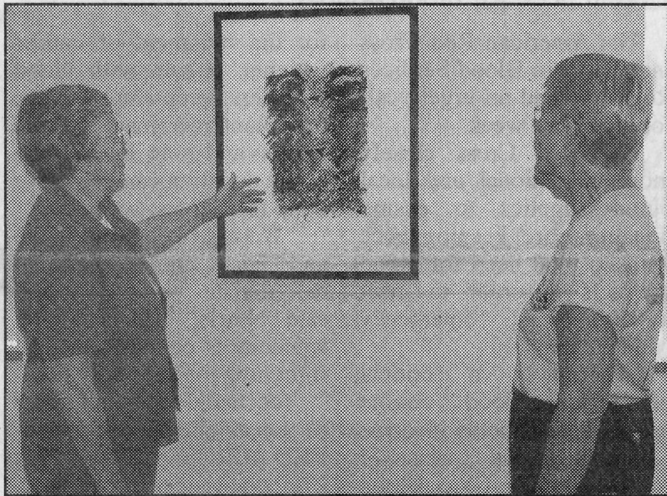
By Gretchen Bollenbacher

An exhibit of art from the first illuminated and hand-written bible to be published in 500 years is currently on display at the St. Charles Center, Carthagen, from now through September 10. Twenty-five prints from the Saint John's Bible Art Exhibit are being hosted by the center and shown in the newly-renovated Gaspar Room. The show was officially opened last Sunday, August 22, with a scripture service and exhibit introduction in the Center's Chapel of the Assumption.

Sr. Martha Bertke, C.P.P.S., manager of St. Charles Senior Living Community, who earlier saw the art on display at the Mount St. Benedict Monastery in Erie, Pennsylvania, and launched the effort to bring it to St. Charles, said, "The exhibit is an amazing and breathtaking work of art and spirituality whose depth raises it to a richer level. Seeing the exhibit is a wonderful way of experiencing the Word of God, of getting in touch, looking at, reflecting on and allowing the word to touch one's heart and soul."

Center Director Fr. James Seibert, C.P.P.S., was an enthusiastic supporter from the beginning. "When Sr. Martha brought up the idea to me, I jumped at it," he said. "I felt a cultural event like this would be an excellent way for St. Charles to touch the lives of those who appreciate art and sacred scripture. We are also taking this opportunity to share the art in our chapel."

Across the years, monasticism has fostered the arts. The earliest surviving complete Bible in Latin, the huge Codex Amiatinus from the eighth century, and ones made in the ninth and 12th centuries, have all been commis-



sioned through Benedictine monasteries.

In 1998, Benedictine monks once again showed their fostering of the arts when the monks from Saint John's Abbey and University in Collegeville, Minnesota, commissioned renowned calligrapher Donald Jackson, senior scribe to Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth's Crown Office, to produce this bible. The monks authorized Jackson and a team of artists, calligraphers and theologians to use the ancient techniques of calligraphy and illumination together with a decidedly 21st century understanding and aesthetic, without undermining the timelessness of the words and the message.

Examples of this combination of presentation methods are the images of dust clouds and supernovae, gleaned from the Hubble Telescope, that were used for inspiration in "The Creation," and a pattern of twisting helixes of DNA woven throughout another of the illuminations, "The Genealogy of Christ."

Comprised of seven volumes with 1,150 total pages, the finished bible, which will measure 15-3/4 by 23-1/2 inches when closed, reportedly cost \$4 million to produce. It takes its text from the New Revised Standard Version and

contains 160 illuminations – defined as "spiritual meditations on a text" as opposed to mere illustrations. A committee reflected on each of the volumes before they were written and illustrated.

Traditional materials such as vellum or calfskin, ancient inks, gold and silver leaf and platinum have been used, and the calligraphy has been done with quill pens fashioned from goose, turkey and swan feathers. The work, scheduled to be completed in 2011, has been done in Jackson's scriptorium in Wales. Its permanent home will be in Saint John's Abbey in Collegeville.

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The exhibition's hours are Monday through Saturday, 9:30-11:30 a.m. and 1-4 p.m. and Sundays 1-4 p.m. Additional evening hours are on Wednesdays from 6:30-8:30. Admission is free, though donations will be accepted.

The center, the motherhouse of the Cincinnati Province of the Missionaries of the Precious Blood, is located at 2860 U.S. 127 between Celina and North Star. It serves as a retirement center for priests and brothers. Newly, it is also home to St. Charles Senior Living Community, with apartments available for lay residents.

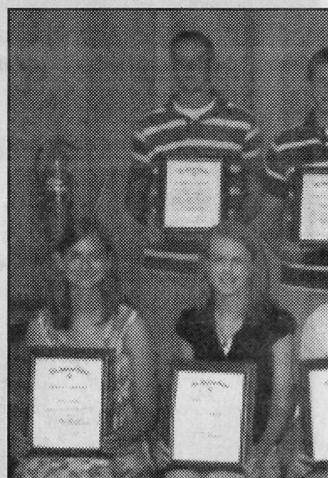
Organizers who have helped in the preparation, hope the exhibit helps reintroduce St. Charles to the public. St. Charles had been

largely closed to the public since it ceased being used as a seminary, though it regularly hosts events for the Missionaries of the Precious Blood, the St. Marys deanery and surrounding communities. Fr. Seibert said, "The art exhibit just seemed like the right fit to draw to St. Charles people of all faiths."

Said planning committee member Liz Schindler, "Attendance at the opening on Sunday was very good. People spent a good amount of time viewing the illuminations and reading the explanations, and there were many compliments made."

For more information, contact Sister Martha at 419-925-4516 or email her at smbertke@bright.net. Examples of the art can be seen at www.saintjohnsbible.org.

Coldwater American Legion Post 470 11th annual Student Appreciation Banquet



Front row, left to right: N Homan, Katherine Bruns, Gilliland, Andrew Feltz, Co Brad Gilliland.

Coldwater American Legion Post 470 held its 11th annual Student Appreciation Banquet on August 8.

