

Marianist Brother Colors Life with *Love*



The colors explode off the canvases. Orange and blue. Violet and yellow. Red and green. These are the hues of the tropics and of children's imaginations. Look closer, though, and familiar Dayton landmarks assert themselves—the Old County

By Debbie M. Price

Courthouse, the Five Rivers Fountain of Lights, Good Samaritan Hospital, Victorian houses.

The jaunty rectangles beneath a candy-colored rainbow? That's downtown Dayton, of course.

This is the world of Joseph Barrish, Marianist brother, artist and teacher. Sometimes in Brother Joe's world, the sky is magenta and the ground is lime green. Sometimes the forms are precise and geometric, sometimes naïve, abstract or flattened. But always, this world, Brother Joe's world, is alive.



Brother Joe Barrish's depictions of various Dayton scenes make up the "Friends of the Clinic" piece that hangs in the lobby of the Samaritan Homeless Clinic.

"I want to say 'yes' to life," Brother Joe said. "Not 'no,' not 'maybe.' Yes!"

There are days when the Great Miami River is a leaden ribbon and gray clouds hang over a gray Dayton skyline. The homeless men outside the gray walls of the St. Vincent de Paul Family store are gray, too.

But inside the Samaritan Homeless Clinic where his artwork hangs, Brother Joe's Dayton is a sunny, witty place full of fun. It is impossible to look at these paintings without feeling a surge of happiness.

The Good Samaritan Hospital Foundation asked Brother Joe to paint Dayton scenes for the new clinic that homeless people would recognize—a "bus-rider's view," as former clinic Executive Director Judith Barr said.



"I WANT TO SAY 'YES' TO LIFE," BROTHER JOE SAID. "NOT 'NO,' NOT 'MAYBE.' YES!"

"I like to be positive," Brother Joe said. "I didn't show the garbage cans and cigarette butts. I showed the beautiful buildings."

Religious from a young age, Brother Joe joined the Society of Mary, a congregation of the Roman Catholic Church, when he was 17 years old. The brothers who taught

BROTHER JOE BARRISH

- Artist
- Marianist Brother
- Joined the Society of Mary at age 17

at his Cleveland Catholic high school were nice guys, and the Marianist life of teaching and service appealed to him. He has not once, he said, had a second thought since he took his vows more than 60 years ago.

Likewise, art has been with him since boyhood when he painted a welder with sparks spraying all around and knew that it was good. An assistant professor at the University of Dayton for 20 years, he still teaches continuing education art classes there. His commissions include artwork and chapel designs for Catholic and Protestant Churches, a public mural, and book illustrations. Galleries from New York to Dublin, Ireland, have shown his work. The awards are too many to mention.

Influenced by Georges Rouault and Pablo Picasso, Brother Joe moves effortlessly between mediums—oil, watercolor, acrylic, etchings, serigraphs and silk screens, stained glass and banners. He is a busy man, managing the Gallery Mount Saint John and the Sun and Stars Artworks Design Studio, both on the grounds of the Bergamo Center, a Catholic retreat and conference center in Beavercreek. And every day, he draws, for in art, he says, he finds affirmation of life and God's love.