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Death Notice No. 15 (To all Unit Administrations):



The Province of the United States of America recommends to our fraternal prayers our dear brother, **CLETUS BEHLMANN**, of the Marianist Residence, San Antonio, Texas, USA, who died in the service of the Blessed Virgin Mary on July 12, 2016 in San Antonio, Texas, USA, at the age of 82 with 62 years of religious profession.

Brother Cletus was a commercially successful artist whose joy in life poured out bold, bright works. A native of Missouri, Brother Cletus' adopted hometown was San Antonio, Texas, where he operated a studio and gallery on the campus of St. Mary's University for nearly four decades.

Cletus George Behlmann was born on November 3, 1933, in Florissant, Missouri, which was then a farm community on the outskirts of St. Louis. He was the penultimate of 12 children in the family of John and Mary (Gettemeier) Behlmann.

He attended Sacred Heart Grade School in his hometown, and went on to William Cullen McBride High School in St. Louis. Inspired by the Marianists at McBride, Brother Cletus entered the Marynook novitiate in Galesville, Wisconsin, in 1952. He professed first vows there on August 15, 1953.

Brother Cletus earned a bachelor's degree in English from St. Mary's University in San Antonio in 1956, and began teaching at the elementary level that autumn at St. Joseph School in Victoria, Texas. He professed perpetual vows on July 13, 1958, at Our Lady of the Pillar Parish in St. Louis. He continued teaching in Victoria until 1959, and then moved to teach at another St. Joseph School – this one in El Paso, Texas – through 1962.

In these early years of his ministry, Brother Cletus pursued his interest in art tentatively, taking classes in mechanical drawing during the summers of 1957 and 1958. In 1960, with encouragement from his superiors, he began taking evening art classes in El Paso. Then, in the summer of 1961, he worked alongside an already-blossoming Marianist artist, Bro. Mel Meyer. The two became fast friends and would spend many summers together, traveling and painting.

From 1962 to 1966, Brother Cletus served at the Maryhurst novitiate in St. Louis as director of postulants. During the summers of 1962 and 1963, he studied at the Chicago Institute of Art. In subsequent summers, he took art classes at Washington University and Webster University, both in St. Louis.

Brother Cletus' path into the art world continued to broaden. From 1966 to 1977, Brother Cletus taught art at St. John Vianney High School in St. Louis while serving as director of the community there. During this time, he renovated an old chicken coop on the Vianney grounds and dubbed it the "Rooster Gallery." It served as a studio for art students and a gallery to exhibit his work.

Father Jim Tobin became friends with Brother Cletus in the 1960s, when both were young brothers serving in El Paso. He recalled Brother Cletus' keen sense of humor and joyful disposition. "Cletus was

blessed by God not only with a vocation to be a Marianist, but with unique artistic gifts,” said Father Jim. “He expressed his faith through art that radiated gospel joy and the beauty of God's creation.”

In 1977, Brother Cletus was invited to return to San Antonio and devote himself to art. Less than a year later, he opened the St. Mary's University Art Center. He would be the celebrated and prolific artist-in-residence there for nearly 40 years.

“God Bless Brother Cletus for the many ways in which men and women experienced God's grace, joy and sense of humor through his art,” said Thomas Mengler, St. Mary's University president.

Brother Cletus' artistic legacy includes metal sculptures, ceramics, linoleum prints, handmade paper and his most familiar – acrylics and watercolors. Many of his paintings depict scenes from his travels around the world.

“I'm a happy person, very upbeat, very positive,” Brother Cletus said in a 1994 interview with the *San Antonio Express-News*. “I have an unusual sense of color. I don't think I could paint with drab colors.” His work confirms this. Oranges, pinks, bright blues and yellows collide joyfully on his canvases, which often include birds, fish and others of God's creatures.

Brother Brian Zampier, who worked closely with fellow artist Brother Mel Meyer, said Mel and Cletus shared a sunny outlook “They had a mutual love of simply creating things – lots of things! – and not worrying whether they sold or not.”

But, like the work of his friend Brother Mel, Brother Cletus' work did sell. His creations hang in churches, offices, hospitals and homes across the country, and particularly in south Texas.

In 1999, Brother Cletus received the *Friends Award* from the Friends of the San Antonio Public Library, recognizing him as an “outstanding member of San Antonio's arts and letters community.” In 2010, he was chosen as the main artist to paint an outdoor mural 8 feet tall and 440 feet long at Haven for Hope, a San Antonio shelter for the homeless. He also regularly contributed paintings to be auctioned at charity events across south Texas.

One of Brother Cletus' final commissions was a poster for San Antonio's fabled annual Fiesta Oyster Bake in April 2016. The poster helped commemorate the event's 100th anniversary, and in typical Cletus fashion, it is bold, bright and playful.

Erin McGinnis, a San Antonio artist and Lay Marianist, was a friend of Brother Cletus for nearly 30 years. She promised him that she would share this on Facebook when the time came:

“He said to let you know he had a wonderful life. He loved his life as a Marianist brother. He loved his family. He loved his friends. He said he had so much gratitude for those who loved him. He asked me, when the time came, to ask each of you for continued prayers.”

May he rest in peace.