

## Retreating with Brother Mickey McGrath osfs



*By Bob Kloos, Cleveland OH*

The annual Faith and Sharing retreat in Cleveland last July hosted more than eighty pilgrims from near and far. We managed to squeeze all our presentations, activities, prayer, and Katimavik into the Pilla Center in the heart of the Ursuline College campus on Cleveland's east side.



Brother Mickey has been an artist all his life, but he did not fully devote his time and energy to the canvas until his mid-thirties. Since then, his brush has been moved by the Spirit, and more recently, even the stylus on his iPad has brought saints and sayings to life.

Brother Mickey had a great space to work in at Ursuline. A lecture hall that was wider than it was deep had four tiers of seating and two large projection screens on which our animated animator could share his artwork. Hundreds of brightly colored images came to life from his laptop computer.

He spoke quickly as he wandered through the lives of Mary of Magdala, Sr. Thea Bowman, and St. Pope John XXIII. He had been drawing and painting each of these holy souls for many years, so his presentations not only marked time in their lives, but revealed transitions in the artist's own style and color.

He was a marvelous storyteller, weaving the spirituality of the Salesian's founder, Saint Francis de Sales, into each session. He offered loads of helpful suggestions for prayer and appreciating the smallest of blessings. Fifty minutes with Brother Mickey and his selected subjects overflowed with scripture, sayings, laughter, and dozens of brilliantly colored creations on the screens.

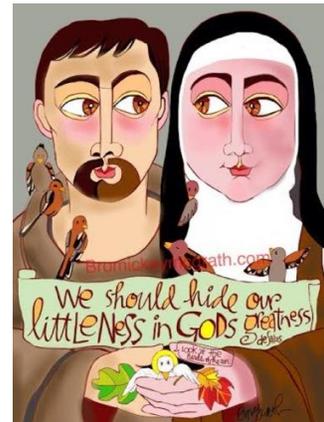
It was especially enlightening to hear so much about modern day saints Pope John XXIII and Sr. Thea Bowman. The first was recently acknowledged in Rome. Sr. Thea is waiting her turn, but is in no hurry. I had met her a few times during

her trips to Cleveland before she became too sick to travel. It was stirring to hear again the story of Sr. Thea's visit to the gathering of US Bishops just weeks before she died of cancer. No one who met her can forget her captivating gaze, her singing, and her deep, deep faith.

And there was another saint who was part of our 2014 Faith and Sharing experience, too. Kathy Cotman had been on the roster for years, accompanied always by an assistant. Her quiet presence in a motorized wheelchair guaranteed doses of wisdom, patience, good advice, and a "been-there-done-that" reassurance in her small groups. She died after a short hospital stay just a week after our retreat concluded. We pray that we were as much a blessing to her as she was for us. We miss her.



Brother Mickey travels a lot these days, and he posts a new image every week for anyone who signs up online. He most often sends an image that includes a tiny haloed dove as part of an illustration and a quote from Pope Francis. His artwork is for sale and he is offering some unique Christmas cards this year. Feel free to go to his site, sign up for weekly updates, and consider him for coloring your next canvas.



Contact Bro. Mickey:

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