

Neumann University

Sacred Art and Sacred Spaces – Part I



*A guide to the beautiful art work and peaceful spaces around
Neumann University and Our Lady of Angels Convent*

Introduction to Sacred Spaces

In the book, *Enter Assisi: An Invitation to Franciscan Spirituality*, Franciscan Friar Murray Bodo notes that “without reverence, place becomes mere scenery.” For 40 years, Father Murray has led pilgrimages to Assisi, to the places made sacred by Francis and Clare. In Assisi, thousands of men and women - including Neumann’s faculty, staff, and students – have experienced the truth that reverence transforms everyday places into sacred spaces. However, it is not necessary to travel to Assisi to experience the sacred.

In the document *Strengthening Catholic Identity: Visibly Catholic*, the Association of Catholic Colleges and Universities reminds us that:

More than simply providing beautiful images or teaching opportunities, beauty through the arts is an integral and inspiring part of the Catholic view of reality. Catholic colleges and universities can celebrate this aspect of our identity by bringing an intentional focus to the visible signs and symbols of our faith...For people of all beliefs, having multi-faith meditation spaces (indoor and outdoor) on campus that are themselves beautiful and inspiring fosters an awareness of faith in God and the presence of God’s spirit.

This booklet is an invitation to enter reverently into the sacred spaces on Neumann’s campus and Our Lady of Angels Convent. We invite you to gift yourself with time and silence to reverence these sacred spaces.

[Sacred Spaces](#) – a video presentation by students on Neumann’s Sacred Spaces



[St. John Neumann Circle](#)

Saint John Neumann



John Neumann was born on March 28, 1811, in the Czech Republic. At the University of Prague he became attracted to the work of missionaries ministering among German immigrants in North America.

In March 1836 he sailed to America where he worked with the German-speaking immigrants around New York. After a few years, Neumann joined the Redemptorist community, dedicated to serving the poor and abandoned.

On March 28, 1852, his 41st birthday, Neumann became the fourth bishop of Philadelphia. During his time as bishop, Neumann introduced the Forty Hours devotion, encouraged the opening of parish elementary schools, and established a unified system of Catholic schools.

During a visit to Rome, Neumann asked Pope Pius IX to allow him to bring German speaking sisters to his diocese to serve the needs of the many immigrants. However, the Pope told Neumann to form a congregation of women in America dedicated to the ideals of St. Francis of Assisi. While still in Rome, Neumann received a letter informing him of three women who wanted to begin a Franciscan community. He became their spiritual director and providential in the formation of the Sisters of St. Francis of Philadelphia who eventually founded Our Lady of Angels College.

Neumann passed away on January 5, 1860, and was canonized on June 19, 1977. In 1980 Neumann University was renamed in his honor.

[More information on St. John Neumann](#)

Mother Francis Bachmann

Anna Maria Bachmann, born on November 14, 1824, was the foundress of the Sisters of St. Francis of Philadelphia. She came to America from Bavaria at age 24 with her 3 year old son. In 1851, Anna lost her husband in a construction accident, leaving her widowed with four children at age 27. To support her family, Anna ran a German-speaking hostel with the help of her sister, Barbara Boll, and Anna Dorn, a young novice in the Franciscan Third Order Secular. The women, under the guidance of Rev. John Hespelein C.Ss.R., asked for Bishop Neumann's approval of the religious congregation. After consulting with Pope Pius IX, Bishop Neumann accepted the women into religious life. On Easter Monday, April 9, 1855, the three women professed their vows and Anna Maria Bachmann took the name of Sister Mary Francis. Mother Francis and the sisters were devoted to serving immigrant women and nursing the sick. During the smallpox epidemic of 1858, they cared for the sick patients in their home. Mother Bachmann responded to the need for teachers in Philadelphia and eventually sent her Sisters to teach in Buffalo and Syracuse, New York. Mother Bachmann died on June 30, 1863, at age thirty-nine. Mother Francis' spiritual daughters founded Our Lady of Angels College in 1965.

[More information on the history of the Sisters of St. Francis](#)



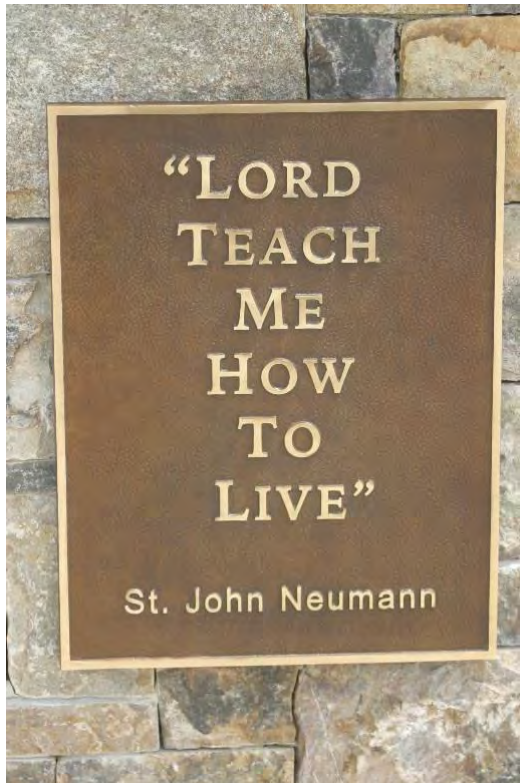
Neumann University Seal



The seal of Neumann University represents the ideals of this university and was created in anticipation of the opening of Our Lady of Angels College in 1965. The motto is "*Veritas-Caritas*," "To Live the Truth in Love." The seal is rich in symbolism. The Chi-Rho, which is the symbol of Christ rests on the Gospels. The Tau (Greek letter T) symbolizes the cross and challenges us to root our lives in Christ. Around the Tau is a crown, which symbolizes Mary, the mother of Christ, who is a model of Neumann University. The symbols are mounted on the globe which represents the scope of influence possible to those involved in the educational process. The symbols are surrounded by a knotted cord which represents the vowed commitment of the Sisters of St. Francis of Philadelphia, the founders of this University, and their continued devotion to the University.

[More background on the seal](#)

Around the circle are quotes from St. John Neumann, St. Francis, St. Clare, and Mother Bachmann. These quotes reflect the spirit of Neumann University. We invite you to read and reflect on each of the quotes as you walk around the circle.



"Lord, teach me how to live."

St. John Neumann

"Be joyful, cheerful, and gracious."

St. Francis of Assisi

"Speak courteously to everyone."

St. Francis of Assisi

"Let every creature praise God."

St. Francis of Assisi

"Preach the Gospel always; if necessary use words."

St. Francis of Assisi

"Be kind so that others may approach you."

St. Clare of Assisi

"No risk, no gain."

Mother Francis Bachmann

"Courage must guide and support us."

Mother Francis Bachmann

Peace Pole



Rose Garden

Located along the outside wall of Sacred Heart Chapel there is a quiet space among the rose bushes with a memorial bench where you can pause and reflect. From this vantage point you can look out toward the Peace Pole and the Neumann Circle.

A Peace Pole is an internationally-recognized symbol of the hopes and dreams of the entire human family. Each Peace Pole bears the message ***May Peace Prevail on Earth*** in different languages on each of its four or six sides. There are tens of thousands of Peace Poles in nearly every country in the world.

The Neumann University Peace Pole was first dedicated in October 1995 during a program which celebrated the 50th anniversary of the United Nations. The Peace Pole was originally placed among trees on the lawn between the University and Our Lady of Angels Convent. It was later repositioned in the center of the large rocks which stand between the St. John Neumann Circle and the Rose Garden.

Peace begins in the hearts and minds of each individual. As we learn to honor each other, our environment, and all creatures on earth, we pray that the vision of global peace through sincere communication will gradually become a natural way of life.

May the Peace Pole remind us of our call to be instruments of God's peace and justice in our individual lives, in our families, on this campus, in our neighborhoods, and in the world. And may we remember to pray that God's Peace may Prevail upon the Earth!

[Background on the UN Peace Pole](#)

St. Francis of Assisi

Outside the Mirenda Center



Francesco Bernardone was born during the twelfth century in Assisi, Italy to a wealthy cloth merchant and his wife. Growing up, Francis was not always the saint we know today. He lived a lavish life. He was charming, happy, loved by many, and a born leader. In his teenage years, he was the leader of a group of young men and women who loved to throw wild parties. Francis also had dreams of glory and fame, not in God, but in battle. During a battle between Assisi and Perugia, Francis was captured. After a year, he was ransomed from prison. While praying before the San Damiano Cross, Francis heard the voice of God telling him to rebuild His Church. Taking the message literally, Francis gave up his wealth, begged for stones, and eventually rebuilt three churches. After repairing these churches, Francis finally understood God's message and began to preach and repair the Church spiritually. Francis was extremely joyful; he lived a simple life as well. Francis overcame his aversion to the sick, especially those afflicted with leprosy, and ministered to them. He preached the Gospel and spread the Good News wherever he went. Francis' devotion to simplicity and service attracted many. Francis reportedly could speak to animals and performed many miracles, such as taming a wild wolf. Towards the end of his life, Francis received the Stigmata, or the wounds of Christ. He is considered one of the most influential saints in the church and is responsible for starting the Franciscan movement. His ideals of simplicity and pure joy inspire many to this day. More background on [Francis and the animals](#)

St. Clare of Assisi

Behind the Ministry House



Clare Offreduccio was born in Assisi, Italy in 1194. Clare lived a privileged and sheltered life. Although she lived a very comfortable life, Clare cared for the poor, even at a young age. Inspired by Francis, Clare decided she wanted to abandon her life and follow God. Although her family did not approve, Clare stood firm in her choice. Clare began a religious order of women known as the Poor Clare Sisters. The sisters lived their lives in silence and contemplation. Clare taught her sisters and showed them how to live a simple life. Clare had a great devotion to the Eucharist. Once, when her convent was under attack and she was very ill, Clare brought the Blessed Sacrament to the edge of the convent, displayed the monstrance, and asked God to protect her sisters. The soldiers became unexplainably afraid and fled the convent, leaving Clare and her sisters safe. This story, along with Clare's great devotion to the Eucharist, is why she is usually depicted with the monstrance. The Poor Clares spread throughout the world, living the exemplary life of St. Clare. Clare was canonized on September 26, 1255.

[More background on St. Clare](#)



The Mirenda Center for Sport, Spirituality and Character Development proudly displays five pillars that represent the values of the integration of sports, spirituality, and character development. The pillars, located in the Bayada Atrium, depict Respect, Balance, Reflection, Beauty, and Play. These five values were prominent in the lives of St. Francis and St. Clare. Each pillar has four panels containing an explanation of the values as well as related quotes, stories, and pictures. At night the illuminated pillars are a reminder that the values of respect, balance, reflection, beauty, and play are meant to light up the whole world.

[Virtual tour of the pillars](#)

St. Francis around campus

Located on the path between the Bachmann and Abessinio buildings, St. Francis is depicted resting on a bench with a deer, squirrels, and birds. The statue highlights Francis' close relationship with animals and nature. There are many stories of Francis talking to birds, quieting them when he preached, or even preaching to the birds themselves! Francis loved animals and called them brothers and sisters because we all come from the same Creator. Francis appears to be relaxing on the bench, enjoying the world around him.



This statue of St. Francis can be found several places on campus, reminding all of the students who pass of Francis and his great love for Christ and all creatures. Francis' hand is opened in such a way that live birds can actually perch on it. You can find this statue near the St. John Neumann Circle, outside of Living Learning Center I, and outside the Abessinio Building.

Our Lady of Knock

On Thursday, August 21, 1879, two women were walking by the town church in Knock, Ireland when they saw an apparition of the Blessed Virgin Mary, St. Joseph, and St. John the Evangelist, all clothed in white, and an altar with a lamb and a cross on it, surrounded by angels all in white. Several men, women, and children witnessed this apparition. Those who were near the church, but did not see the apparition, said they saw a great light coming from the Church. This statue is a depiction of how Mary was dressed in the apparition. She is said to be clothed in white robes and crowned in a white crown. On her forehead she wore a golden rose and she stood in an attitude of prayer with her hands raised, just as she is in this statue. This statue is dedicated to the memory of Michael J. Noonan, Vice President of Finance at Neumann from 1999 to 2007.

More background information:

[Our Lady of Knock Shrine](#)

[History of Our Lady of Knock](#)





Sacred Heart Chapel

The symbol of the scallop shell represents Baptism. When the practice of pouring water over the head at Baptism was accepted, the shell was used to pour water and thus represents baptism.

The fleur-de-lis is a symbol of the Blessed Virgin Mary; it represents a lily which is a symbol of purity. The fleur-de-lis is usually associated with the Annunciation.

The butterfly is a symbol of the resurrection. The butterfly begins as a caterpillar, becomes a cocoon and appears to be dead, but then appears again as a butterfly, full of life. This symbol represents Christ who was in the grave and thought to be dead, but then rose to full life.

In total these symbols represent our relationship with Mary and Jesus; the shell represents our baptism, entering a relationship with God. Mary is the next symbol because through her we come to know Christ. Christ is the last symbol just before the altar.



San Damiano Cross

The San Damiano Cross was painted for the San Damiano Church in Assisi during the 12th century by an unknown Byzantine artist. This is the icon before which St. Francis was praying when he heard the call of Christ to rebuild His Church.

The San Damiano Cross is abundant with images of Christ's Passion on the Cross. Jesus, who is the most dominant figure in this icon, is alive and appears to gaze upon the world. The icon depicts the Ascension of Christ into Heaven, the hand of God blessing Creation, fourteen angels, and six saints. On the left side of the Cross are several people; from left to right we see the Blessed Virgin Mary who is gazing upon the Cross, and St. John who is looking to Mary, his new mother. The smaller figure is said to be Longinus, the soldier who pierced Jesus's side. On the right side are Mary Magdalene, Mary Clopas, mother of St. James, and the Centurion of Capernaum. Behind the Centurion is his son whom Jesus healed. The smaller figure is Stephen the soldier who offered Jesus the sponge soaked in vinegar.

This Cross is very important to the Franciscan tradition and revered by many. At Neumann, there is a large San Damiano Cross in Sacred Heart Chapel; every classroom has a San Damiano Cross on display. Today the original San Damiano Cross hangs in the Basilica of St. Clare in Assisi.



[More information on the San Damiano Cross](#)



TAVOLAS OF FRANCIS AND CLARE

IN THE BACK OF SACRED HEART CHAPEL

Tavolas, paintings on wood, of St. Francis and St. Clare of Assisi hang in the back of Sacred Heart Chapel in Bachmann Main. The tavola of St. Clare was painted in the 13th century shortly after the death of St. Clare, possibly by a woman who knew Clare. The tavola of St. Francis was commissioned by the Conventual Franciscans in the 1990s. The tavolas reflect the iconographic style with Francis or Clare in the center surrounded by significant moments or themes in the lives of the saints. Rather than providing chronological depictions of the lives of St. Francis and St. Clare, the tavolas present the spirituality of these saints. The tavolas invite us to reflect on our own lives in light of the spiritual journeys of St. Francis and St. Clare.

For a detailed explanation of each tavola with questions for reflection, please see:

[Tavola of St. Francis of Assisi](#)

[Tavola of St. Clare of Assisi](#)



St. Rocco

Rocco Abessinio Building Lobby

Rocco was born in France around the 1300s to a noble family; it was said that he was born with a birthmark in the shape of a cross over his heart. When Rocco was 20, his parents passed away and he was made governor, but like St. Francis, Rocco wanted to live a simple life. Rocco appointed his uncle as governor, distributed his belongings to the poor, and set off for Rome. On his way to Rome, Rocco came across a city struck with the plague and devoted himself to caring for and healing the sick. He cured many people through prayer; when one town was healed, he would move on to the next infected town. He cured people in several towns until he became infected himself. For many years, Rocco lived alone in the wilderness where a dog would bring him bread. Once Rocco was healed, he went back to his hometown but was accused of being a spy and thrown in jail by his own uncle. Rocco spent much time in jail where he died. One night an angel came and placed a plaque in his jail cell stating he was St. Rocco, but it was not until his uncle saw the cross on his chest that he recognized Rocco. In this statue, the saint is depicted in his traveling clothes. He is exposing the wound on his leg which he received while he was sick with the plague. With him is the dog that miraculously brought Rocco bread.

[More about St. Rocco](#)



The Canticle

RAB lobby

[More about the Canticle Mural](#)

The Canticle Mural was created by Linda Vonderschmidt-LaStella and Sister Christopher Marie Wagner OSF, both graduates of Neumann University.



Vonderschmidt-LaStella worked on the mural for more than 18 months; in that time she sculpted and glazed more than 300 pieces. Wagner worked on the stained glass part of the mural. The inspiration behind this fire glazed and stained glass mural was the *Canticle of Creation* written by St. Francis of Assisi towards the end of his life. The poem, which praises God and attributes all creation to Him, recognizes that we are related to all of nature. The mural was originally commissioned for the Franciscan Health System, a former healthcare ministry of the Sisters of St. Francis of Philadelphia. This is why the people depicted in the mural are ill or considered weak by society. In this mural we see the figure of God in the center with a strong impression of the Tau Cross. We also find the various aspects of nature that St. Francis mentions in the *Canticle*, such as the sun, the moon and stars, the trees, wind and air, water and fire.

Credits

Created by:

Dominic Gentile

Franciscan University of Steubenville, Class of 2016

Neumann Institute for Franciscan Studies Intern

Summer 2014

Cover photo by Scott Beadenkopf

Photos by Sister Mary Ann McCarthy OSF

Labyrinth pamphlet from Franciscan Spiritual Center

Our Lady of Angels Chapel Booklet from Sisters of St. Francis Foundation

First publication September 2015

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