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"The Windsock Visitation" by Oblate of St. Francis de Sales Br. Mickey McGrath, commissioned by the Sisters of the Visitation in Minneapolis (Mickey McGrath)



by Mickey McGrath

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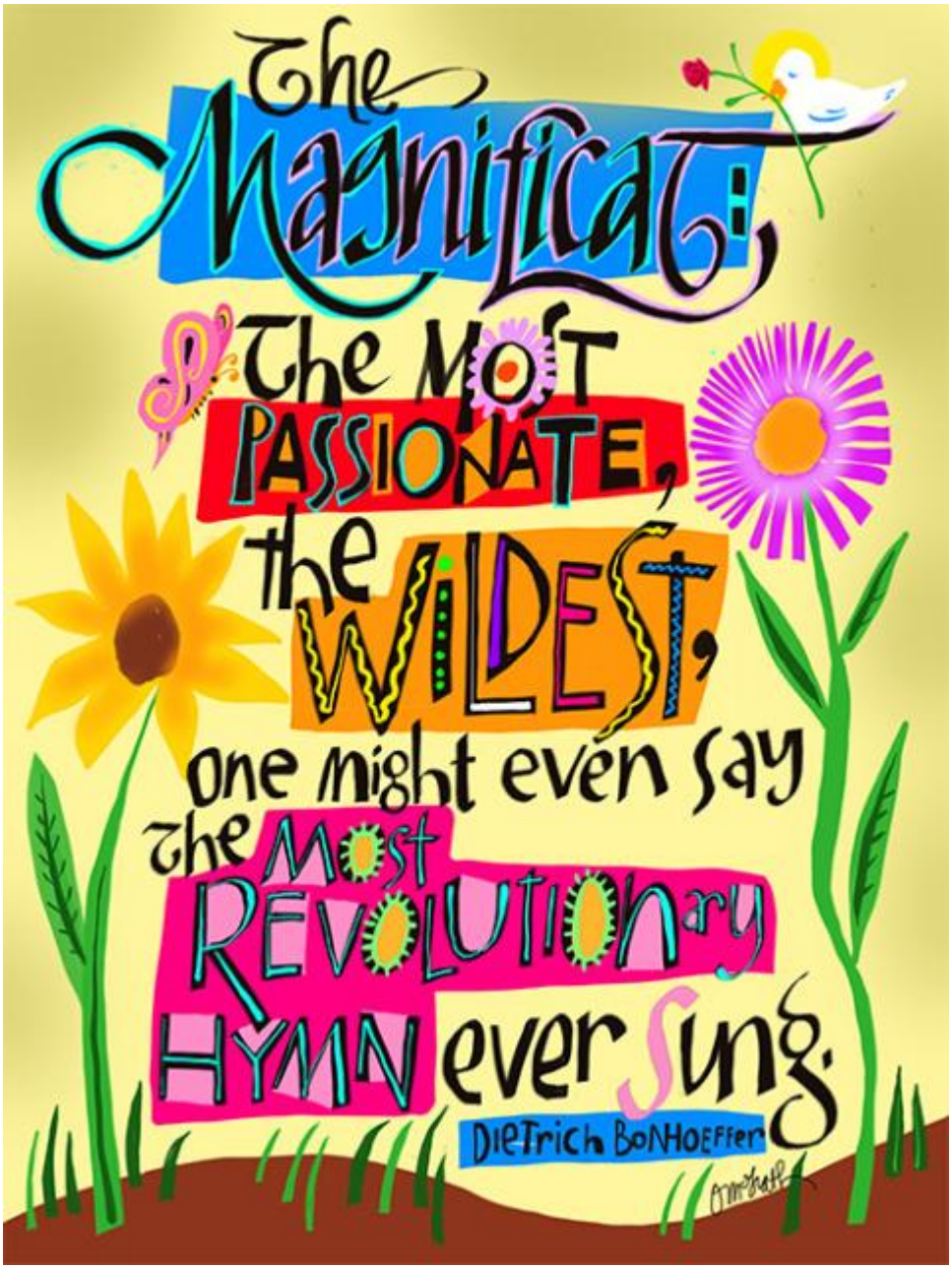
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In Minneapolis, my painting of "The Windsock Visitation" hangs prominently in the monastery of the Sisters of the Visitation, where it has been since the congregation commissioned it in 1993. The sisters and I share a love for St. Francis de Sales, who cofounded their order with his friend St. Jane de Chantal in 1610, a time of religious and political turmoil not unlike our own. It was my first real commission as an artist and affirmed my decision to pursue art as my full-time ministry after more than a decade of teaching.

Over the past decades, I have come to consider the religious there my soul sisters, and the city of Minneapolis, my second home, a treasured place for spiritual retreat as well as fun and relaxation. There I have witnessed countless occasions of the sisters' generosity and kindness to their neighbors in the north side of town, as well as the love and dedication they themselves have received from friends and followers all over the Twin Cities.



(Mickey McGrath)

The spirit of Mary and Elizabeth, and the joyful mystery of the Visitation, are alive and well in Minnesota. God does indeed "cast down the mighty from their thrones and lifts up the lowly" — but God needs our cooperation to do it.

One cold wintry day in 2021, two of the sisters took me to Cup Foods in south Minneapolis, where George Floyd had died at the hands of a police officer the year before. There I saw bouquets of flowers resting on banks of ice and snow, and signs painted with messages of sympathy and remembrance.

I recalled marching and sketching the previous May on Pentecost Sunday in a Black Lives Matter rally back home in Camden, New Jersey, alongside my friend Father John, the rector of the cathedral at the time. We wanted to bear witness to the words of Mary's Magnificat: "God has shown the strength of his arm and scattered the proud in their conceit."

When the mass shooting happened at Annunciation School in south Minneapolis, resulting in the murder of two children, I followed the news as closely as if it were my own hometown. I felt the pain and grief deeply, thinking about the city I know as home to peaceful lakes and gentle people. I heard Mary's prophetic words with new meaning: "He has mercy on those who fear him in every generation."

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And now, once again, we witness incidents of violent and historic relevance in Minneapolis, the home of my very own Mary and Elizabeth. I ponder the words of Dietrich Bonhoeffer, the Lutheran pastor executed by Nazis: "The Magnificat is the most passionate, the wildest, one might even say the most revolutionary hymn ever sung."

May Mary proclaim once again to Elizabeth — and to all of us — those familiar and powerful words from her heart. And just as she carried Jesus in her womb, may each of us learn to carry him in our hearts so that we can fill the hungry, not just the rich, with good things.

This story appears in the **Immigration Protests in Minneapolis** feature series. View the full series.