

Artist: Divine Mercy work is ‘particularly meaningful’

written by Malea Hargett |



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George Hoezleman has designed liturgical art for 34 years, but his carving of the Divine Mercy for a new diocesan shrine was a first for him.

“It was a first, but that has never stopped me from doing something,” he said. “The basic direction was to follow the image of Divine Mercy and that is what is most relatable to people. That is the direction they wanted to go, and that is the direction I went.”

He said this art will stand out among his many creations.

“The fact that this is the Diocesan Shrine to the Divine Mercy is particularly meaningful,” he said. “It means I’ve done something that people will be able to experience God’s presence, grace, the Divine Mercy, for years to come, hopefully.”

The member of Sacred Heart Church in Morrilton was called upon to create a mixed media relief to fit into an existing side altar. Bishop Anthony B. Taylor blessed the art in St. Edward Church in Little Rock on Corpus Christi Sunday, June 11.

Over two months, Hoezleman said he carved Jesus with one hand raised in benediction and one hand on his heart from a piece of basswood. The colored rays are made of plexiglass, and the medallion on his chest is formed from clay.

In the center of the medallion is a heart.

“Everything comes from the heart of Jesus,” he said.

His 19-year-old daughter Heidi painted Jesus’ robe.

“I knew she would do a good job with it, and it freed me up to do some details,” he said.

Hoezleman is most known for his carvings. His first liturgical piece — a set of Afro-centric Stations of the Cross — was installed in St. Augustine Church in North Little Rock in 1989.

“I’ve done a lot of relief carvings over the years, Stations of the Cross,” he said. “I’ve done three-dimensional stuff, crucifixes, free-standing altars and ambos. This (Divine Mercy carving) is definitely a devotional image like Stations of the Cross. All statuary is devotional. I was happy with it. I hope they are happy with it.”

When he isn’t carving the likeness of Jesus and the saints, Hoezleman is working toward his master’s degree in theological studies from St. John University in Collegeville, Minn. He hopes to complete his degree in 2024 or 2025.

“I have promised myself I will write the thesis to get this complete,” he said.