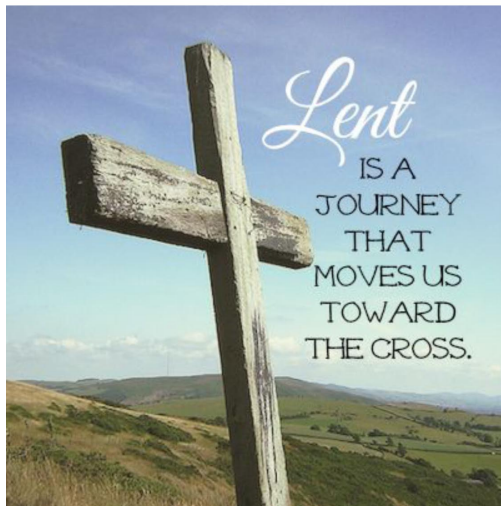


This is a speech given at the Seton Hall Prep Mothers Auxiliary Lenten Mass & Soup Supper on March 6, 2019.



*Please join us for a night of prayer, reflection and fellowship
as we begin the holy season of Lent*



**SHP Mothers
Auxiliary
Lenten Mass &
Soup Supper**

~

**Ash Wednesday -
March 6th**

**7:00 pm
Mass
Auditorium**

**8:15 pm
Soup Supper &
Guest Speaker
Dining Hall**

*Ashes will be distributed
during the Mass*

**Special Guest
Speaker
Lisa Westheimer**

*"My Sacred Art Journey: Mother
Teresa,
The Little Drummer Boy and The
Lonely Catholic"*

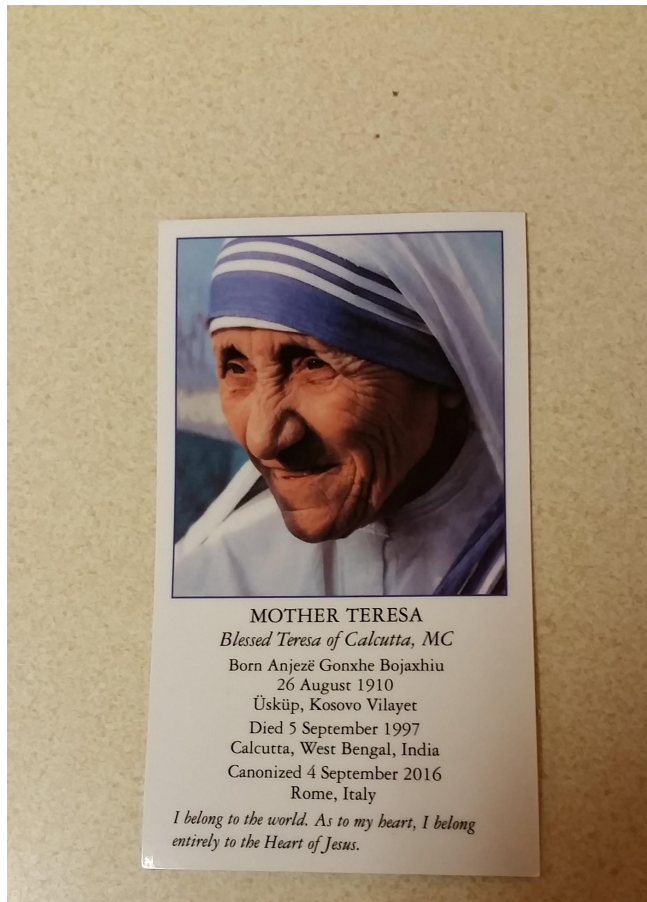
**LEARN MORE ABOUT
LISA**

My name is Lisa and I'm what's known as a second career artist which means I got a late start at it. My focus is mainly sacred art of what I call a contemplative nature- that is my projects come to me through prayer and I sometimes don't know what they are about until they are finished, or sometimes I don't even want to do them but feel called to.

I'm going to briefly touch on 3 subjects:

- Mother Teresa
- The Little Drummer Boy
- And The lonely Catholic

There is a connection, I swear.



I met Mother Teresa during a blizzard in 1994. I did NOT want to meet her. Why would I want to talk to a living saint? There were a million reasons I didn't want to meet her, mainly there was no way I was worthy enough.

At the time I was a career girl, 3 years married to a non-Catholic living and working a cosmopolitan life in Soho. I was asked to drive a carload of people from lower Manhattan to Harlem during a blizzard by my friend Father Peter Cameron who was friends with her. He first met Mother Teresa on a plane when he was sitting in coach wearing his clerical collar. Mother Theresa was on board and the stewards were terrified of her so they sat her in 1st class and asked him to sit next to her. By the time the plane landed they were fast friends. Father Peter promised Mother Teresa that whenever she was in town he would say mass for her, and here she was years later, stuck in NYC, because of this blizzard.

I figured mass would be in a cathedral, I'd sit in the back row and slip out at the end and wait in the car. In fact, mass was in a tiny room with a folding table for an altar and reed mats on the floor instead of pews. There were only about a dozen of us in the room. I swear that if I was blindfolded, I could pick out Mother Teresa right away, she was radiating a white-hot power I never felt before or since. She had this tiny little body and gnarled hands like claws but had this formidable presence like she could turn you into a pillar of salt with just a glance. Mass was said with her kneeling in front of me only 6 inches away. I tried not to faint. At the end, as I was sneaking out the door, one of the Sisters of Charity grabbed me and dragged me over to her, telling me Mother had something to tell me.

What would she have to say to ME? Maybe it had something to do with the fact that I had said a prayer that week basically questioning my existence. I asked God why I was put on this Earth? Why did he give me a husband who was not Catholic? Why did he set out that we would not have children? God could have answered me in a dream or sent me an email, but no, he sent in the big guns.

Grabbing me close to her while breaking every bone in my hand, Mother Teresa said 3 life-changing things to me:

- *Always pray to Mary*
- *Always pray for her*

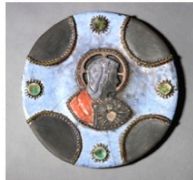
Then she pulled me to her so we were nose-to-nose, looked me dead in the eye and said:

- *NEVER interfere with God's work*

I don't argue with saints. I began to say the rosary daily. Fr. Peter said Mother Teresa asked EVERYONE to pray for her. She asked every priest she met to say a prayer for her as they added the drop of water into the wine during mass. Think about it: millions of people praying for one person on a daily basis. Those prayers gave her the power to carry out God's work in a super human way.

In the spirit of *Never Interfering with God's work* it became apparent to me that I had to leave my job and devote my life to more spiritual pursuits. I had to find out what God wanted from me.

By praying the rosary, going to mass and reading *The Magnificat* magazine almost daily, I got up the nerve to leave my lucrative career and go back to school and get my masters in ceramics.



*Lisa G Westheimer:
My Sacred Art Journey*

- *Mother Theresa*
- *The Little Drummer Boy*
- *The Lonely Catholic*

This was a true miracle to me as ever since I was 4 I wanted to be a cowgirl and a potter and my parents were having none of either. At the ripe old age of 46 I got my degree and a horse.

Since God gave me this second chance I would honor Him and Mary through my artwork, and find a way to do His work through my hands. To this day I pray for God to keep me on His path and let His will for me flow through my hands. I still find making sacred art to be very hard because it's draining and usually outside my comfort zone, but through it all I always feel that I'm not the one in charge.

Which leads me to the Little Drummer Boy.



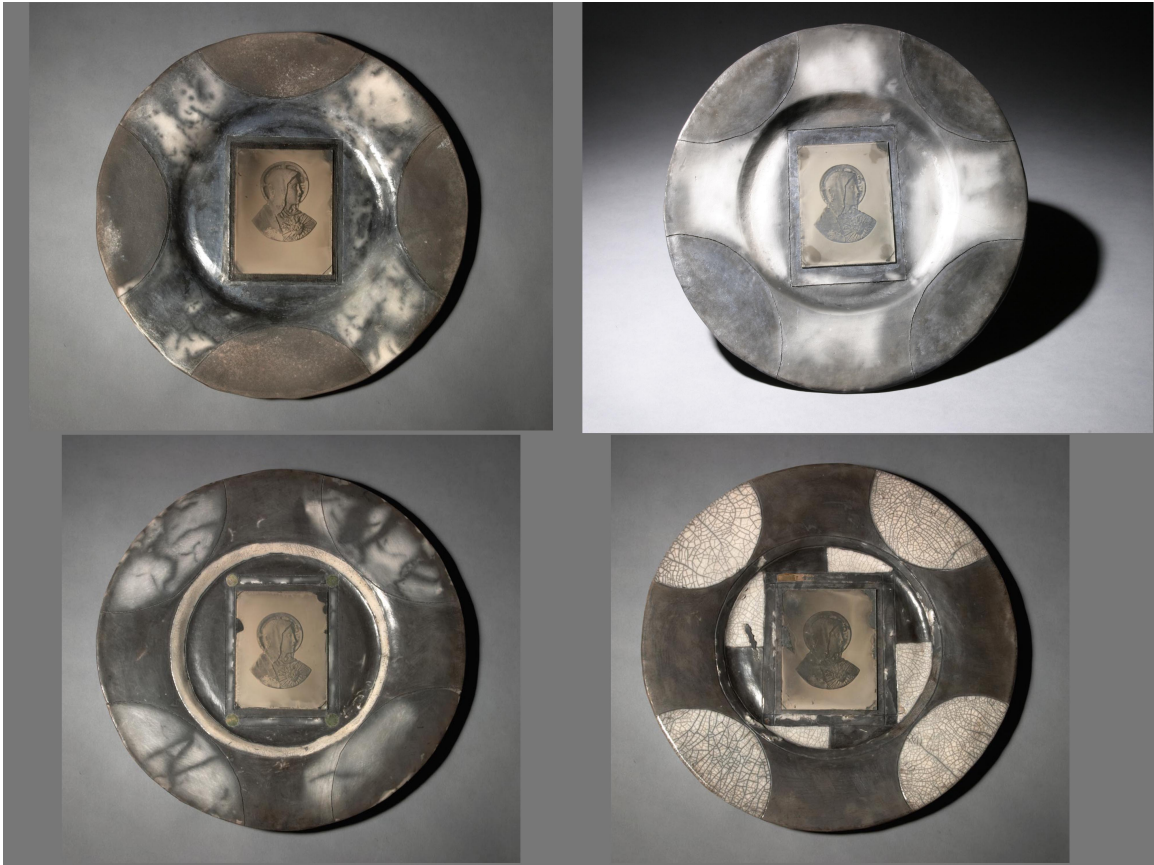
How many of you remember that Christmas show? All he had to give to baby Jesus was his music tapped out on his drum. The Little Drummer Boy is my symbol to answer God's call no matter what- a symbol of TRY. Whenever I feel a sacred art project coming on or am asked to do one I really don't want to do, I tell myself to just TRY.

Here's some of my artwork. In the mid 2000's I made sculptures of cathedrals to address my concern over the fact that churches were closing at an alarming rate. I figured that eventually there might not be any left for me to go to, so I made a set of fantasy churches to spiritually go to for different reasons. I designed them in the pilgrimage style with chapels and naves around the perimeter so pilgrims could walk around the inside without disturbing mass going on in the center. I have little areas for an altar and little pilgrims inside most of them except for one that is always empty.



The top upper left is *Purgatorium*, which is where I go spiritually during Lent to purge myself of my worldly attachments. To the right of that is *Corpus Christi* which deals with the tortures of the flesh, which is how I feel during Lent; to the right of that is a sculpture influenced by a cathedral in Rouen, France, *Ascension* which is where I would go on Easter. The bottom far left is *Perfection*, which is where one would go if one were perfect, but since nobody is perfect that is always empty. To the right of that, lower middle, is *A Mighty Fortress*, where I would go to seek refuge in times of catastrophe, like after September 11th or during Hurricane Sandy, and finally on the lower far right is *Holy Innocents*, which has a double meaning- it is my interpretation of the bible passage of the Massacre of the Innocents, but also, as I made it during the first round of sex abuse scandals, it is my expression of I what I felt to be the massacre of the innocence of the children who suffered abuse in the church.

To honor "Always pray to Mary" I made icons riffing on Our Lady of Czestochowa to decorate my fantasy cathedrals. So what you're seeing is what would be hanging inside. Our Lady of Czestochowa is the patroness of Poland, a symbol of perseverance through hardship.



I made them around the start of the Iraq war so the world seemed very unstable and I needed Mary more than ever.



I made the set above while praying *Hail Holy Queen*.

An ongoing project is my ex-voto urns. They would be at the altars of my cathedrals. I started them in 2012 and have about 6 more to go, I make only a couple a year. They're very draining. Each holds about 12 heart shaped tokens with prayers on them that are particular to the theme of the urn they are in. Most of them address national and global issues.

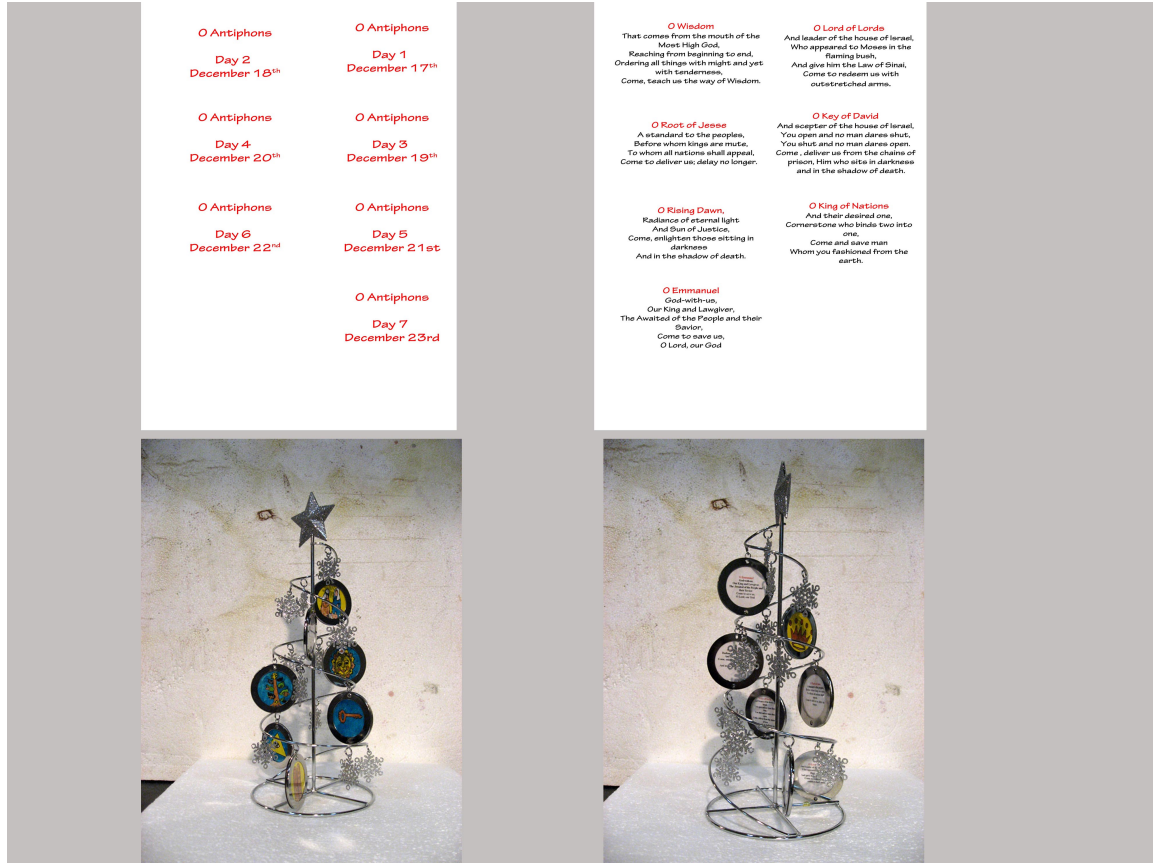


The upper left is *Private Prayers*, which contain prayers very personal to me; the blue one to the right of it is *A Peaceful soul*- in essence if you prayed over the prayers written on the tokens that went inside, you would hopefully obtain a peaceful soul. In the upper right corner is *A Healthy Body* and the prayers inside deal with personal, national and global health issues. Bottom far left is *Good Friends*. All my good friends are in there to pray over in thanksgiving. To the right of that is a prickly urn, *Go Away*, where if only all that is inside would just go away, the world would be a better place. To the right of that is one I made last year, *Peace Everywhere* which is very fragile. Finally, in the far lower right corner is *Patience and Courage*. It is my most recent and is modeled after an American pilgrimage sight outside of Santa Fe, Chimayo. In it is a room with a dirt floor that is purported to be sacred and have holy powers and there are shovels for you to take some. I brought some home with me and sprinkled it on the glass before I melted it to make the windows.

Every Lent I give myself an art project that begins on Ash Wednesday and is finished by Good Friday. They started as solitary pursuits with just me alone making them. One year I made Stations of the Cross out of clay, as I didn't have a good understanding on what they were and how to pray them.



I prayed over each station so much as I made them that by the time they were finished I felt like I had walked the Stations of the Cross! I told Msgr Joe Petrillo who was pastor of Our Lady of Lourdes at the time what I was doing and he said they'd be great in our new daily mass chapel. I hadn't figured on them being in public but I guess God had other plans. Msgr Joe then suggested I should do art projects for the church, like make interactive *O Antiphon* symbols for the chapel for Advent- I didn't even know what in the world those were or how to execute them. I'm terrible at drawing so I asked Carol Ford to help me. Basically, one gets read per day during a week in Advent, and this is what we came up with. I had no idea how those would turn out but me, Carol and the Little Drummer Boy try got it done.



This led me to interactive group projects. Working with others on public projects was not something I ever wanted to do, but God called I answered the phone. In my church attendance, I had developed an anxiety that people who went to church and prayed regularly were dying off and new people weren't replacing them at the same rate, like a wide generational gap was forming between the church of my parent's generation and subsequent ones. God's call for me began when I had inherited a lot of religious articles from my elderly relatives. Many were in terrible disrepair. I decided to restore them and in doing so realized it was happening everywhere, so during Lent, I gathered a bunch of like-minded parishioners and in 2008 *The Restoration Workshop* was born.



We began by repairing our own things- statuary, broken rosaries and such. Mind you we had no training, but pooled our skills and learned as we went. Then we began repairing things for other people. Then people donated things to us. We restored them and gifted some to celebrate people's religious milestones.



A fun project was making a set of Stations of the Cross for Sister Sandy as a present for her weekly Lenten reflections in our daily mass chapel. She admired the ones in the chapel and we decided to make a set for her as a surprise on the day of her last lecture.



We wrote the stations out on paper and put them in a bowl. We all drew one and that was the station we'd work on and pray over.

Then I received a bag full of broken objects from Msgr Bradley who ministers to the retired religious. One of these objects was a plaque that commemorating the ordination of a priest from 50 years ago. This priest had died and there was no one to give his religious effects to. It pierced my heart. How can 50 years of service wind up broken in a paper bag?



Thus in 2010 the *Priest Project* was born.



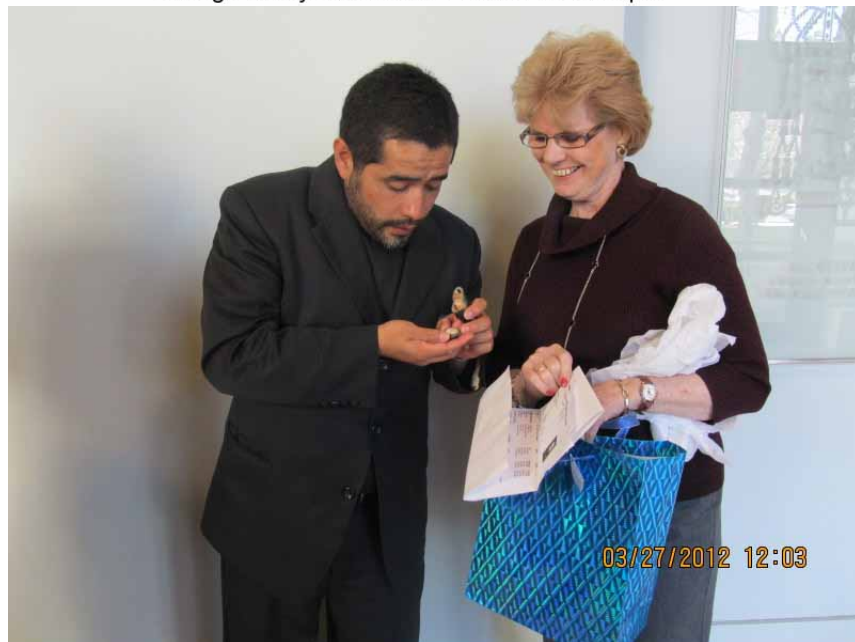
Since then, Msgr Bradley has given us effects from deceased or retired priests, along with their biographies. We fix them up and turn around and gift them and the biographies in a little informal ceremony to the about to be ordained at the Newark archdiocese offices and share lunch with them.



Carol ford with Rev. Mr. Freddy Sanchez



George Bailey with Rev. Mr. Marco T. Marroquin



Wendy Sheyka with Rev. Mr. Jose C. Garzon



Wendy Sheyka and Rev. Mr. Esteban n. Granyak



It is our Little Drummer Boy effort to pay back the priests for their life of sacrifice and service and to pay forward in thanksgiving to those about to make the commitment.

Little did we know we would be soon dispersing the effects of our beloved Msgr Joe who died suddenly on December 22, 2013.



Carol Ford with Msgr Joe Petrillo

He died in the middle of the night and none of us got to say goodbye to him. Our congregation was absolutely devastated. To collectively deal with our grief, *Dear Msgr Joe* project came to be.



Anyone who wanted to say something to him could write it on a little card and put it in a slot in a book we'd keep in our Heritage Room. If it was private it would be sealed in an

envelope, not to be opened. We kept one book with the notecards and pens in the church and one at the Archdiocese offices where Msgr Joe worked.



It helped us all heal and move on.

And now, here we all are on first night of Lent. Guess what- I have a new project, and it involves all of you. I'm asking for your Little Drummer Boy help. It's called *The Lonely Catholic*. In the spirit of the power of prayer I learned from Mother Teresa, I ask that you pray for people, and ask people to pray for you from tonight until Good Friday.

*I'm a Lonely Catholic
Pray for me*

<http://lisagw.com/sacred-art->

I especially ask you to pray for *The Lonely Catholic*, who comes in many forms: There are elderly who are sick, alone and afraid; the dead observant Catholics who have no one to pray for their souls; retired religious who have no family and no parish left; children baptized into the Catholic faith, but who are not being taught to pray regularly or go to church. People who go to church while all their family members and friends give them a hard time about it.

Then there's me: the last practicing Catholic in my immediate family. By a mere phone call to my mother, my grandmother or one of my aunts asking them to pray for me in the entire eastern seaboard would be praying for me within the hour. But they're all gone. I really feel the absence of their prayers in my life.

I have read that the matriarchs of families, that is, all of you sitting here tonight, are the engines that drive their entire households to church. You are naturals for this job. This Lent, try to be mindful of the power of prayer and its necessity in this world, especially now in our collective Catholic history. Show everyone how powerful prayer is. Ask people to pray for you and tell people you will pray for them. Get your children into the habit of asking for prayers and for praying for people, or issues beyond their control. Let them know that prayer is a valuable gift to give and receive, the ultimate act of love.

Just TRY in your Little Drummer Boy way to say a little prayer every day between now and Good Friday. I even have these key chains to help you remember.



You can say a prayer when you start the car or unlock your door. Please pray for the *Lonely Catholic*- that is anyone who needs a prayer who can't get one on their own.

I know I'm preaching to the choir here and you probably do all this already, but this Lent be mindful of the Lonely Catholics- if you see someone sitting alone in church invite them to sit with your family. If there is one, attend coffee hour after mass for lonely Catholics to share a little more time with you after mass. Invite a lonely Catholic to spend holidays at your table. Please keep God's love and power beating strong in the hearts of the living, so we can do his work, albeit imperfectly, but giving it the Little Drummer Boy try.



*Lisa G Westheimer:
My Sacred Art Journey*

- Mother Theresa
- The Little Drummer Boy
- The Lonely Catholic

Happy Lent everyone!