

Debra Classen

ARTIST • INSPIRER • SEEKER • ENCOURAGER



Debra Classen founded The Mute Swan Ministry in 2003 with a commitment to educating and encouraging others to live a contemplative life. The core of The Mute Swan's unique ministry is the focus on discovering the radiance of God's beauty in all its forms, including nature, art, relationships, life itself and even through great suffering. Debra's spiritual quest began in 1979 amidst incredible grief after her mother was brutally killed. About to embark upon her own art career, Debra found herself struggling to deal with her profound loss and suffering. After converting to Catholicism 10 years after her mother's death, Debra found her path from sorrow to healing in the form of art, and she began drawing swans as an expression of her recognition of God's divine beauty inside everyone.

THE ESSENCE OF THE MUTE SWAN

Healthcare and Hospice

Studies show that it matters a great deal to patients that they are being prayed for, faith heals, beauty heals. Mother Teresa healed and offered hope to those suffering and dying in poverty, she knew God's beauty was to be discovered in places seemingly devoid of beauty. Our ministry "hope and healing" prayer cards feature inspirational art and quotes from saints, mystics and poets. They are distributed to patients as part of their night time "tuck-in" rounds at the Cleveland Clinic. They are shared with patient's families, health care professionals, and hospice. Our ministry also offers "how faith and beauty can heal" workshops to health care staff.

Prison Ministry

Our Prison ministry is an essential and vital component of our ministry enabling us to "put beauty where there is none" Dostoyevsky said, "Beauty will save the world" and I believe it can. In a place devoid of beauty and hope we are able to offer some. Our first project in 2008 was 500 brightly painted Christmas cards delivered to Sing Sing Prison in upstate New York. Five hundred mother's day cards will be delivered in May for the prisoners to mail home to their mothers. Each prisoner will also receive a prayer card from the ministry. Contributions to this project go towards the cost of the printing.

Educational

Our culture frantically seeks the glamorous, but seldom discovers true 'beauty'. Our workshops/seminars/retreats and book clubs are designed for those seeking God's beauty in their life and finding hope and healing in the quiet of prayer. Debra has studied theological aesthetics, speaking at schools, civic groups, churches and colleges on this topic. See our web site for more information.

Art

Unique and custom designed stationery, prayer cards, posters, jewelry and our gallery of original watercolor and acrylics are available on our web site. All proceeds go towards the funding of our outreach programs.

Spiritual Gifts

Unique and creative gifts (all proceeds go to the ministry and mission). Original watercolors and acrylic paintings, prayer cards (the "Hope and Healing" set includes 49 different pieces of art coupled with inspiring quotes, prayers, and scripture), stationery, posters, and jewelry. All art is created to provide beauty and healing, inspiration, and comfort during difficult times.



DEBRA CLASSEN

Education & Training

- St. Mary Graduate School of Theology, M.A. Theology (Thesis, The Beauty of Christ)
- John Carroll University, M.A. Counseling
- Kent State University, B.A. Psychology & Fine Arts
- Myers/Briggs Personality Profile Qualified Experience
- Key Speaker on Theological Aesthetics for The Mute Swan Ministry (2003-present)
- Founder & Executive Director, The Mute Swan
- Keynote Speaker for International Merton Society (Cleveland Chapter). Read, studied and presented on Thomas Merton and the beauty of Contemplative Prayer for over a decade.
- Keynote Speaker, Ursuline College for Alumni Lenten Series
- New Source Counseling

Centers, Counseling Practice

- Editor, The Mute Swan Contemplative Journal (5 years)

Community Involvement

- Founded and Operated Rosary Project, St. Joan of Arc School (teaching and making rosaries for grade school)
- Spirit of Bainbridge Community Newspaper, Staff Writer
- T.O.R. Franciscan Sisters Contemplative Community, Annual

Workshops

- Our Lady of Elms High School, Junior Retreat Director

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See our prayer blog with frequent postings of art, prayers, poetry and reflections of beauty:

www.contemplative-prayer.org