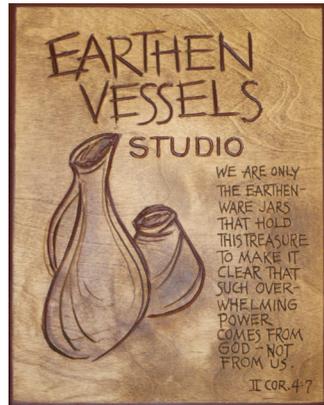




SMK



She created community in the instinctive knowledge that sharing life, sharing talents, is life-giving, a way to praise God.

explains how she came gradually to understand that her art—her paintings, carvings, prints, and icons—were a form of ministry as important as teaching and nursing the sick.

St. Benedict’s intent in founding his monasteries was to provide a place where those who wished to translate Christ’s holy teachings into action could do so without worldly distraction. While monasteries offered the possibility of retreat from the world, St. Benedict did not intend those communities to shun the world; in his *Rule* he makes frequent provision for monks to interact with people and communities in the area around the monastery. For centuries Benedictine monastics have been guided by those provisions; theirs has been an ongoing tradition of service.

Sister Mary Charles lived such a life. In the 1950s and 60s she taught elementary school for six years and then,

while completing her MFA at Notre Dame, was an assistant professor and chair of the Art Department at The College of St. Scholastica. But what she really wanted to do was teach art to children of elementary school age. She wrote “this is the place where art training should begin.” The Barn and its setting afforded her a space where she could not only do commissioned artwork but also teach children. She is best known for the summer programs there. She was intent on setting free the creative energies of children who, with enthusiastic teachers, explored, wrote, sang, and created art together. Participants fondly recall those days as vibrant, activity-filled communal time.

In her long residence at the Barn and later at her Subiaco studio, Sister Mary Charles practiced her art and, by the force of her personality, welcomed one and all, sharing her life and hopes with them as they shared theirs with her.