

Reinhardt, Barnett Newman, and Mark Rothko. The same discussion easily applies to contemplation of an icon; it is, after all, the viewer's intense concentration which creates the connection.

Like any artwork, an icon might be active or passive, relative to its circumstances and to its users. It is not a relic, a *memento mori*, or a talisman. It may be beautiful, disfigured beyond recognition, hidden away in storage, on view among other works in museums, or in a private home—it doesn't matter. Its spiritual qualities are engaged when there is someone looking at it, meditating on it, and desiring a spiritual dialogue with it.

The icons Sister Mary Charles wrote were of traditional subjects, familiar figures including the Virgin of Vladimir, St. Michael the Archangel, Christ Pantocrator, the Trinity. Occasionally she did choose a subject out



of personal or intuitive interest; the *Transfiguration* is one such work. Considered a pivotal moment in Christian teachings,

Transfiguration, 2005,
16" x 12"
St. Scholastica
Monastery

the Transfiguration is presented as the point where human nature meets God, where the eternal meets the temporal, with Jesus as the connecting point. She wrote the icon two years before her death.

CONCLUSION

Any discourse about an artist, especially a first overview, necessarily moves between the details of the individual's life and the longer view of what they have created. There is the present in which the art is made, fueled by a range of instincts, intentions, biases, influences, and experiments. On the other side of that fleeting moment is the long history which attaches itself to the art object: the stories told about it, its changes of ownership, its travel, display, physical decay and repair, and the scope of our regard, or lack thereof.

Sister Mary Charles spent her life teaching others that art, beauty, and creativity were not really difficult to access. Because she willingly accepted the making and teaching of art as her ministry and stayed that course for over sixty years, she created a stronger community for everyone.

"...I truly believe that everyone has within them some ability to create beauty. If God and beauty are synonymous in your heart, then you have great reverence for all forms of creation" (Lucero).

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