



In the 1980s, as I became more and more involved in the issues of peace and justice, especially during the years of our country's involvement with El Salvador, one thing kept puzzling me. Here I was, writing letters to our government leaders and speaking out from the steps of the Duluth Federal Building. What about my art? I had presumed that my images would reflect these deep feelings and concerns within me. I hoped to cry out against war, poverty, and other

forms of injustice through my art—but this did not seem to be happening—at least directly. In retrospect I am able to see that titles of my images, such as “Why?,” “Love Is Like a Ring,” “Gentle Is My Song,” “Fun Is for Free,” and “L'chayim” were speaking of gentleness, simplicity, and the spirit of children—calling for peace. Today, countless of these images reside in homes, churches of all denominations, and in the Temple. These are images, really, of the “holy ones,” inviting us to be children without guile or fear.

In 1990, beginning studies at the St. John of Damascus School of Sacred Art in Ligonier, Pennsylvania, I took a new direction. Always, it seemed, I had been distressed over the shallow, sentimental images found in most of our Catholic churches. The lack of interiority and transcendence had unnerved me, though I couldn't fully explain why.

Studying iconography in the tradition of the East, I discovered a spiritual authenticity in the images of “the holy ones,” which became a challenge for me. I soon became aware also of the burgeoning hunger among many of the faithful for something better in the depiction of Jesus, Mary, and the saints. Now Catholic churches across the country have welcomed my icons. Commissions have been abundant, workshops in demand, and a vast treasury of prototypes from ages past keeps calling me deeper into this exploration.

As a Benedictine, I should never have harbored any doubt that my art was real ministry. After all, Benedict's whole Chapter 57 of the *Rule* was devoted to “The Artisans of the Monastery.” Still, the word “ministry” had never appeared.

