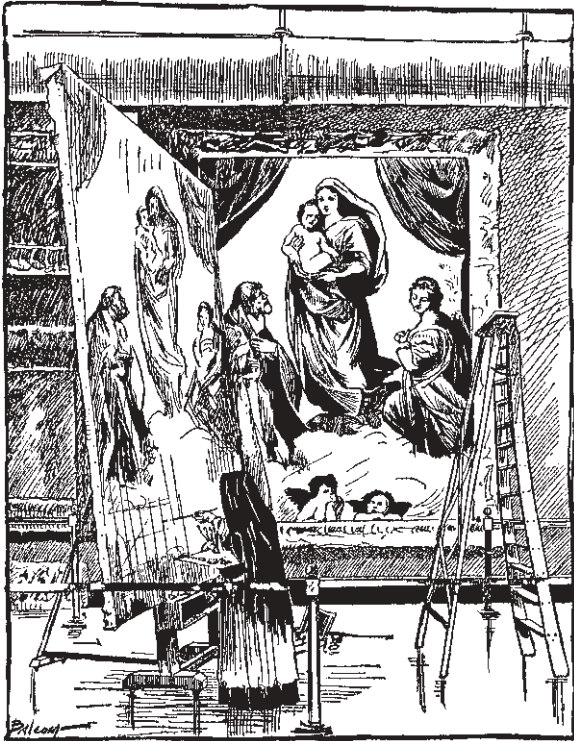


Sister Catharine



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Sister Catharine Wall, O.P.

*Her Paintings in the Dominican University
Archives and Special Collections*



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Foreword

This booklet was created to honor the legacy of artwork left to this University by one of its most accomplished and influential Founding Sisters, Sister Catharine Wall, O.P.

Sister Catharine, or “Kitty” as she was known to her friends and relatives, came to live with the Sinsinawa Dominicans at the age of four. She was accepted into and raised by the community (along with her older sibling, in time herself Sister Aimee, O.S.D.) after her parents unexpectedly died and Father Cashman of Saint Jarlath’s Parish recommended Saint Clara Academy care for the orphaned girls. Early on Sister Catharine exhibited her artistic talents and was encouraged to pursue them. At her graduation she earned the highest honors in oil painting, watercolor, pastels, decorative arts, and harp. After spending time with her relatives in New York Catharine returned to Wisconsin and entered Saint Clara as a postulant.

Sister Catharine numbered among the first residents of “Rosary House” on the campus of the yet-to-be-built Rosary College, arriving on July 17, 1917 and serving as the community’s Superioress from 1917-1918. Sister Catharine was in attendance of the first ever Mass held at Rosary College in October of 1922 when she was assigned to the school to serve as the founder and director of Rosary College’s art department, a position she held until her passing in 1938.

Before and throughout her time at Rosary, Sister Catharine travelled extensively, honing her skills and, in her early travels, studying drawing and painting in Europe under Italian master Lucchesi. She created graphite drawings and oil paintings in Munich, Florence, Rome, and Brussels, as well as Kansas City and New York City. Mother Emily Power herself frequently stated that sending Sister Catharine “to Europe [to study painting] was one of the best investments our Congregation has ever made.”

Simply put, Sister Catharine Wall's contributions to Dominican University (née Rosary College) cannot be overstated. Sister gifted approximately 40 paintings to Rosary College during her lifetime, according to our records. Records also indicate that Sister designed furniture for the College, and created in collaboration with Sister Teresita Hession a set of altar cards which are no longer extant. Catharine also painted numerous works as gifts for parishes and individuals, and in fact her final painting in 1938 was a gift for Reverend Eugene J. McGuinness, a copy of a Pietro Perugino painting in honor of Reverend McGuinness' elevation to the Episcopacy. The Sinsinawa Dominican Motherhouse in Sinsinawa, Wisconsin meanwhile possesses 11 paintings, 107 charcoal and pencil sketches, and 2 painted ceramics by Sister Catharine. A further 12 sketches and 9 paintings of Catharine's are known to have been sold or gifted by the Sinsinawa community, and various paintings have been recorded in sales from public and private auctions in the past 20 years. In all Sister Catharine created at least 70 paintings, 120 sketches, and a dozen painted ceramics during her lifetime.

The contribution of Sister Catharine to the spiritual, aesthetic, and cultural education of her students and her community of Sisters was profound. Her dedication to her craft, her selfless and tireless efforts to elevate and enhance colleges, churches, convents and parishes across America represents the apotheosis of her life of service and ministry. Her unwavering humility, and her desire to keep any focus on the artworks themselves and not her own name or artistry, are what resonate so strongly, captivating the interest and devotion of those who are fortunate enough to encounter her works to this day.

In the early 2000s four of Sister's paintings were restored by the late conservator Barry Bauman, his own work an act of devotion itself. Rosary College alumnae Dorothy Shields De Spain sponsored this work and continues to contribute to the care and preservation of Sister Catharine's paintings, and I wish to acknowledge her dedication and love for Dominican University's art collection nearly seven decades

after her graduation from Rosary College. In 2016 Edgewood College hosted an exhibition, *Reflecting the Art of their Time*, which featured over a dozen of Sister Catharine's original sketches. Today you can find her works on display here at Dominican University as well as at St. Basil's Church in Chicago, Stair Crest Senior Living in Muskego, Wisconsin, and the Apostolic Nunciature to the U.S. in Washington D.C.

This short text was created to honor Sister Catharine's artwork and the few paintings that remain in our collections as we approach the hundredth anniversary of her death. We seek not to elevate her as an individual (however much we may believe she deserves it) but instead to draw attention to the works of art themselves and their silent, spiritual testimony. We hope that this booklet serves as an invitation to pause for a moment in contemplation, reflection and reverie.

Steven Szegedi
December 2025

Introduction

Sister Catharine Wall is an elusive figure within Dominican University's history. In dedication to piety, she did her best to remove herself from the historical record. She kept no diaries or personal documents that we are aware of, and often neglected to sign her paintings. However, she may be glimpsed in fragments and footnotes, and some facts of Sister Catharine's life are revealed in the testimony of others. What she did not record in her own words is expressed in her paintings, where the most intimate view into her character and devotions endure.

The nine paintings you will find in this booklet represent a small fraction of Sister Catharine's body of work. This selection is presented in the order by which they were created, with one exception where there is insufficient evidence to determine an approximate date. To accompany photos of Sister Catharine's work, I have chosen either artistic commentary contemporary to her lifetime or excerpts which provide insight into the significance of the painting's subject to the Sinsinawa Dominican community.

The first four Madonnas date to Sister Catharine's 1903-1906 trip to Italy. Of the four, only the *Granduca* (Plate 1) is signed and dated, but a 1905 shipping manifest confirms that the *Seggiola* (Plate 2), *Magnificat* (Plate 3), and *Arpie* (Plate 4) are also from this period. Beyond their aesthetic beauty, Sister Catharine's masterwork copies are especially distinctive due to the political conditions in which they were made. When Sister Catharine was painting in the galleries of Rome and Florence, Italy was still establishing itself in the aftermath of the revolution that united the country forty years prior. As the Post-Risorgimento Italian government dealt with more pressing matters, laws surrounding national art and cultural heritage were left unrestricted. Sister Catharine had the unique opportunity to make her copies with the originals directly before her and to exact scale, a practice which is

now heavily regulated or outright illegal. It is no easy feat to mimic the brushstrokes of the Old Masters, yet Sister Catharine recreated Raphaels and Botticellis with accuracy and elegance that delighted her contemporaries.

Displayed next is the *Lacordaire* portrait (Plate 5), the most mysterious of the paintings in this booklet as there is nothing to indicate an approximate date of creation. Louis Janmot painted at least two versions of his portrait of Lacordaire, one which resides in the Château de Versailles, and another which is displayed in the Paris's Bibliothèque du Saulchoir. There is insufficient documentation to determine when Sister Catharine would have visited France to make her reproduction or which original she viewed to make her copy, but it is more likely that she went to Paris than Versailles; the Bibliothèque du Saulchoir is the library of the Dominican Province of France.

In 1920-21 Sister Catharine traveled to New York, where she had friends and relatives, and made her *Madonna of the Rose* (Plate 7) and *Saint Dominic* (Plate 8) copies. Along with her signature and the date, the verso of each canvas also bears a faded stamp from the Metropolitan Museum of Art, where the original paintings still reside in storage. Unlike the Italian art museums, the MET continues to host copyists in their galleries today, albeit with greater restrictions.

During the same period, the *Mother Power* portrait (Plate 8) was made for Rosary College. As Mother Emily Power died in 1909, Sr. Catharine painted using a photographic portrait. The piece is a tribute to a much-adored leader, whose loss was felt deeply by the Dominican community. For many years the portrait of the beloved Mother Superior was displayed in the eponymous Power Hall.

Only a few years after visiting New York, Sister Catharine returned to Italy. In the early 1920's, Pope Pius XI was interested in establishing a college in Rome, and the Sinsinawa Dominican Sisters were tasked by the Holy See to find a suitable location. As the chosen representative, Sister Catharine spent 1925-26 in pursuit of a sister

campus to Rosary College abroad. It was during this period that she copied the portrait of *Cardinal Mundelein* (Plate 9), of which the original hangs in Rome's Basilica of Santa Maria del Popollo. On the verso, Sister Catharine signed her name with the suffix "OSD" (Order of St. Dominic).

Our selection of artwork ends here, but Sister Catharine continued to paint until her death in 1938. The total number of her works is unknown; she produced a wealth of paintings that have been gifted to parishes, religious figures, and friends of the church throughout the United States. Her artistic talent and thoughtful demeanor had a significant impact on her students, friends, and community. In the days following her death, reflections on Sister Catharine's influence were recorded within the annals of the Sinsinawa Dominican Sisters:

*"Of her unusual artistic gifts it seems almost presumptuous to attempt to write – expression in words seems so very inadequate. But all through Rosary there are evidences of the beautiful and generous use she made of this marvelous gift of hers – that gift which for many of the Sisters set standards of taste in art with which they would never willingly part...Her interest in the College, her desire that it should continue in the best of the St. Clara traditions by standing for all that is high and fine, lives and will live at Rosary, for here, as at St. Clara, Sister Catharine left not only her memory, but much of the best in herself."*¹

Though all who knew her have since passed, Sister Catharine's memory endures at Dominican University. She exists in the fine arts program she created, the oldest degree program offered at this school, and she is present in the rooms and halls where her paintings are displayed and admired. Eighty-seven years after her lifetime, Sister Catharine's work inspires reflection on the rich heritage of this institution and continues to evoke contemplation of the most profound aspects of human nature. Her paintings are an extraordinary treasure, and Sister Catharine Wall is Dominican history worth honoring.

Gabrielle Hammarlund
November 2025

Plate 1

Painted 1904

Restored 2002 by Barry Bauman

Madonna del Granduca

after Raffaello Sanzio da Urbino (1483-1520)

45 1/2" x 34 1/2" framed

“He gives to the Virgin that beauteous sentiment of love allied to absolute purity of feature, and to the child that depth of thought in the eye, which raise the master’s creation at once from daily life into ideal regions...

With what ease the boy sits on the Virgin’s hand; how prettily twisted the sash round his body. How safe he feels as he leans against his mother’s bosom; what serenity and fullness of joy in the Virgin, who stands with her veiled head slightly bent, her downward glance beaming on the face of the babe. The true ideal of proportion seems obtained between mother and child; and great technical perfection is revealed in the brilliancy which overspreads the regular oval of the Virgin’s face, thrown into light on the dark green ground of the panel.”²

J. A. Crowe & G. B. Cavalacaselle, 1882

Raphael: His Life and Works



Plate 2

Painted 1905

Restored 200[5] by Barry Bauman

Madonna della Seggiola

after Raffaello Sanzio da Urbino (1483-1520)

35 3/8" x 35 1/4" framed

“The ‘Madonna della Sedia,’ or ‘della Seggiola,’ in the Pitti (painted about 1516), a circular picture – the Virgin, seated on a chair, whence the name, holds the Child on her lap; he leans on her bosom in a happy, child-like attitude; at her side is the little St. John, with folded hands. She wears a gay striped handkerchief on her shoulders, and another on her head, after the manner of Italian women, and appears as a beautiful and blooming mother, looking out of the picture in the tranquil enjoyment of maternal love. The Child, full and strong in form, has an ingenious and grand expression. The colouring is warm and beautiful. This is perhaps the most celebrated and most universally admired of all Raphael’s Madonnas.”³

Franz Kugler & Austen Henry Layard, 1907

The Italian Schools of Painting



Plate 3

Painted 1905

Restored 2003 by Barry Bauman

Madonna del Magnificat

after Sandro Botticelli (1445-1510)

54 1/2" x 54 1/2" framed

“Here the Madonna sits at one side, holding the Child in her lap, and engaged in writing in a book held by an angel the words of the Magnificat; ‘My soul doth magnify the Lord, and my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour.’ As she leans forward to dip the pen in the ink, the Child, His gaze directed toward heaven, puts out His tiny hand to guide hers in the writing, a symbol of the divine inspiration of Mary’s reply to the Salutation of Elizabeth. The words are recorded by Saint Luke in the first chapter of his Gospel. The face of the Virgin in this picture is evidently from the same model as that in the [Madonna of the Pomegranate], but this is much finer and more delicately lovely. Over her head two angels hold a crown of little stars, while from the banded vault of heaven shines a spiritual radiance. As before, the attendant angels are Medici portraits, the clothing of one of them, at the left, being dotted with little units of design composed of interlaced rings, an heraldic device of Lorenzo the Magnificent. The hand of the Child grasps the symbolic pomegranate, with the seeds displayed. The face of the angel at the right is divinely sweet and full of tenderest expression. In the distant background is a dainty landscape.”⁴

Charles C. Heyl, 1912

The Art of the Uffizi Palace and the Florence Academy



Plate 4

Painted 1905

Restored 2006 by Barry Bauman

Madonna delle Arpie

after Andrea del Sarto (1486-1530)

91" x 78" framed

“Alike in graceful composition, in soft, glowing, and exquisitely blended colour, in restful dignity, and in religious sentiment, it is a work of the highest merit, well deserving of its steady and increasing popularity. It is a Franciscan picture, painted for one of the brothers of Santa Croce, who was Intendent of the local Franciscan Convent in the Via Pentolini...It was painted in 1517, four years after the painter’s marriage to Lucrezia del Fede, who was the model for the face and figure of the Madonna. This figure is thus one of the most charming portraits of his haughty and faithless wife that Andrea has given us. The painter’s own portrait appears in the splendid figure of Saint John at the right. The figure at the left is Saint Francis. The Madonna is elevated upon a pedestal, on the corners of which are carved two small figures of harpies, from which the picture takes its name. The two little angels that stand beside the pedestal are most delightful, and reminiscent of Bartolomeo. The playfulness of the Child strikes a Leonardesque note. In mass and detail, in figure and line and soft flow of drapery, in rich colourful beauty and intellectual satisfaction, this picture is well nigh all that could be desired of it. The wonderful impression created by it lingers long in the mind of even the most casual visitor to the Uffizi Gallery. It is the undoubted pearl of the rich collection.”⁴

Charles C. Heyl, 1912

The Art of the Uffizi Palace and the Florence Academy



Plate 5

Paint date unknown

Restored 2021 by Malgorzata Sawczuk

Portrait of Jean-Baptiste Henri-Dominique
Lacordaire

after Anne-François-Louis Janmot (1814-1892)

39 1/4" x 32" framed

“Let every stroke of the brush, chisel or bow that you give be
a stroke of the sword for the salvation of the human race.”⁵

Jean-Baptiste Henri-Dominique Lacordaire, 1840
Letter to the Society of Saint John for the Development of Christian Art



Plate 6

Painted 1920

Madonna of the Rose

after Pascal-Adolphe-Jean Dagnan-Bouveret (1852-1929)

39 1/4" x 32" framed

“The picture that will probably attract the greatest amount of attention is P. A. J. Dagnan-Bouveret’s ‘The Madonna of the Rose.’ This represents the Madonna seated, and in her lap the infant Christ is nestled close to the breast, with his head on the right forearm. There is a beam of light from where the child’s head rests, and so impressive is the effect that one can scarcely pass by. So vivid is it that other pictures near it are unnoticed except by the artist who examines minutely into everything. The face of the Madonna has the same expression as others, but the features show more strength, and in them there is no suggestion of weariness or longing. It presents a thoughtful and contented appearance.”⁶

The Pittsburg Post, 1896

Treasures in High Art



Plate 7

Painted 1921

Saint Dominic

after Carlo Crivelli (1435-1495)

42 1/4" x 17 1/4" framed

“Dominic he was called. I speak of him
As of the husbandman whom Christ ordained
To aid Him as a laborer in His garden.
Both messenger and friend of Christ he proved:
The first love that was manifest in him
Was for that counsel which the Christ placed first...
Now, fortified by doctrine and firm will,
Together with the apostolic office,
Like mountain torrent from a lofty source
He started forward; and his onset struck
Among the sprouting shoots of heresy,
With greatest fury in those very places
Where resistance was most obstinate.
From him there sprang thereafter various rills
By which the garden of the church is watered,
So that its bushes grow with greater strength.”⁷

Dante Alighieri, 1321

The Divine Comedy, Paradiso, Canto XII



Plate 8

Painted 1922

Portrait of Mother Emily Power

49 1/2" x 41 1/2" framed

“If you wish to be true, noble women, women who are going to do something worth while in the world, going to do something for the uplifting and the welfare and the happiness of you fellowmen, something for God – to further His interests and His glory, something for your own souls, – if you wish to make your home lives happy, if you wish to be loved and venerated after death, – you must strive to acquire those qualities of mind and heart which made Mother Emily so powerful for good, so admirable, so revered, so beloved.”⁸

Father McShane, O.P., 1909

Address of Father McShane at the funeral of Mother Power



Plate 9

Painted 1926

Restored 2021 by Malgorzata Sawczuk

Portrait of George Cardinal Mundelein

51" x 35" framed

“At the invitation of His Eminence, the Dominican Sisters transferred in 1922, St. Clara College, formerly of Sinsinawa, Wisconsin, to the present site in River Forest where its name was changed to Rosary College.

On Rosary Sunday, 1922, the Cardinal visited Rosary and blessed Mother Emily Power Hall which had just been completed. His Eminence was present at the commencements of the classes of 1923, 1924, and 1927. One June 1, 1932, the Cardinal dedicated Lewis Memorial Hall. Up to the time of his death, Cardinal Mundelein retained the title of Chancellor of Rosary College and each degree conferred by the college bore his signature.”⁹

The Rosarian, 1939

Rosary College Mourns Sudden Death of George Cardinal Mundelein



Photographs & Notes



ID No. 112808



ID No. 1003100

Left: Rosary College students in the Noonan Library, circa 1960. *Portrait of Jean-Baptiste Henri-Dominique Lacordaire* left.

Above: The National Hispanic Society and Sigma Delta Pi in Lewis Hall Lounge, 1948. *Madonna del Magnificat* center.

Following Page: The Art Studio at St. Clara College and Academy, 1912. Many of the works pictured are Sister Catharine's, including *Madonna del Magnificat* center left and another version of *Madonna del Granduca* left.





Fifty-eighth Catalogue of Saint Clara College and Academy



ID No. 1134119

Above: Power Hall, circa 1920. *Madonna di San Sisto* center.

Below: Power Hall, circa 1930. *Portrait of Mother Emily Power* right.



ID No. 113438

Below: Sisters Peter Doyle and Albertus Magnus with guests in unknown room, circa 1950. Portrait of George Cardinal Mundelein right.



ID No. 073611

Locations of Original Paintings

Plate 1	<i>Madonna del Granduca</i>	Palazzo Pitti Florence, Italy
Plate 2	<i>Madonna della Seggiola</i>	Palazzo Pitti Florence, Italy
Plate 3	<i>Madonna del Magnificat</i>	Gallerie degli Uffizi Florence, Italy
Plate 4	<i>Madonna del Arpie</i>	Gallerie degli Uffizi Florence, Italy
Plate 5	<i>Portrait of Jean-Baptiste Henri-Dominique Lacordaire</i>	Bibliothèque du Saulchoir Paris, France
Plate 6	<i>Madonna of the Rose</i>	The Metropolitan Museum of Art New York, New York
Plate 7	<i>Saint Dominic</i>	The Metropolitan Museum of Art New York, New York
Plate 8	<i>Portrait of Mother Emily Power</i>	from photograph
Plate 9	<i>Portrait of George Cardinal Mundelein</i>	Basilica of Santa Maria del Popolo Rome, Italy

Biographical Notes

- 1867 Catharine Wall is born on April 5th in Chicago, Illinois to Mary and Dennis Wall of Ireland. ^{1, 10}
- 1871 Orphaned. Enters Saint Clara Academy at Sinsinawa, Wisconsin. ^{10, 11}
- 18[85] Graduates from St. Clara Academy.
- 1885-90 Studies art in New York. ^{11, 12}
- 1891 Returns to Wisconsin to enter Saint Clara as a postulant. ¹¹
- 189[3] Takes official vows. Teaches painting and drawing at St. Clara College. ^{10, 11, 12}
- 1895-96 Travels to Germany. ^{13, 14}
- 1903-06 Studies art in Florence, Rome, and Munich with Sister Angelico Dolan. Copies *Madonna del Granduca*, *Madonna della Seggiola*, *Madonna del Magnificat*, and *Madonna dell'Arpie* at Gallerie degli Uffizi and Palazzo Pitti. 50+ artworks by Wall and Dolan are shipped from Italy to St. Clara. ^{11, 15, 16, 17}
- 1912 Visits Kansas City to copy a full-scale reproduction of Raphael's *Sistine Madonna*, displayed in the Western Gallery of Art of the Public Library. ¹⁸

Biographical Notes

- 1917 Goes to River Forest, Illinois to serve as Superioress at Rosary House. ^{1, 12}
- 1920-21 Visits New York. Copies *Madonna of the Rose* and *Saint Dominic* at the Metropolitan Museum of Art. ^{19, 20}
- 1922 Paints *Portrait of Mother Emily Power*. ²¹ Becomes “Director of the Department of Art” when Rosary College is established. ¹²
- 1925-26 Travels to Italy at the request of the Holy See to find a possible house of studies in Rome. Copies *Portrait of George Cardinal Mundelein* in Rome’s Church of Santa Maria del Popolo. ^{10, 11, 12, 17}
- 1934 Begins 4-year correspondence with Myron Taylor, President Roosevelt’s representative at the Vatican, to inquire about possible sites for academic art study in Italy. ¹²
- 1938 Dies on January 17 in Oak Park, Illinois. Buried in Saint Clara Cemetery. ^{1, 10, 11}
- 1944 Myron Taylor donates Villa Schifanoia to Pope Pius XII with instruction that it be used as a School of Fine Arts and operated by the Dominican Sisters of Sinsinawa. ^{22, 23}
- 1948 Villa Schifanoia opens to fine arts graduate students. ¹⁷

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