

Rick Cermak, Christian Sculpture Artist

Born in Cleveland in 1946, Rick was a construction worker by trade who feels he has been blessed by God with some very special talents. His life story includes one living immersed in drinking, prescription drugs, and running around destroying two marriages and his family life. He speaks of hitting rock bottom in 1991 and considering suicide. It was at this point when he prayed to God for help and later received a message he explains as his



miracle. While sitting at home in front of TV he heard a voice saying, “This is a sign from God,” and then became very hot on his head which then spread through his entire body. This overwhelming experience was the beginning of his incredible story of being free of his addictions without any outside help or set backs and sharing the Lord’s mission through his artwork. Although his artistic background involved art studio courses at community college and oil painting, he had never sculpted anything before. Rick explains that the Lord orchestrates his craft, guiding him and challenging his faith. He continues to be inspired and says he is merely a tool being controlled by the Master Sculptor. Believing that “He began to lead the way”, this talented man shares his amazing creations with others only asking for reimbursement for materials or generously giving them as gifts. Throughout the entire process of each piece, from being in the right place at the right time, to providing materials, funds, knowledge, skill, and connections, Rick says, “The Lord teaches me patience, humility, and, most of all, trust in Him.” This trust and acceptance inspires and guides him each step of the way.

He begins crafting by making a clay mock-up that is one-third of the piece’s completed size. After being provided with just the right wood, with chainsaw, a 4” grinder, both aggressive and finer Dremel tools, and plenty of sanding, his creations come to life. Preferring to work with butternut wood, Rick conveys that each piece takes on a life of its own evolving from the unique aspects of the materials and orchestrated by the Lord. As you study his pieces, you can’t help but be awed by the incredible detail that are a part of every inch of these inspired sculptures. He takes pride in the life-like aspect of the eyes which he places a bit of color and coats to make them shine. Humbly he puts a value of just \$9.50 per hour for his time (plus his tools and materials). Pieces take hundreds if not thousands of hours to complete.

Rick and his wife, Char, have been a part of St. Joseph Church since early 2017. We are truly blessed to have his beautiful creations as a part of our environment. At Easter in 2017, he presented the parish with a new Saint Joseph sculpture replacing a piece from 1983 that had been badly deteriorating for years. It holds a place of honor in the southeast corner of the church (where the tabernacle used to be located) with the original carpenter's bench enhancing this altar. In addition in 2018, parishioner Char Baumbick generously crafted a votive candle table and a beautiful folding screen to act as a backdrop and cleverly hide the cold air return grate in that area.

For Christmas in 2018, a second piece, The Holy Family, was lovingly crafted and presented to bless the parish once again. Gracing the northeast corner of the Narthex, this sculpture greets everyone as they enter our worship space. Rick explains that he wanted to make a scene that everyone could relate to personally and depicts the Holy Family in a happy, fun environment. You'll experience a young Jesus holding hands with Mary & Joseph and being lifted up, joyfully swinging between his parents.

To learn more about his amazing story of divine inspiration, specifically the story of the three-piece collection *Our Salvation*, gifted to Our Lady of Guadalupe Church in Santa Fe, New Mexico in 1995, please visit <http://www.oursalvation.org>.