



For Immediate Release
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Exhibition *Homage to St. Joseph* opens at Clare Gallery

Hartford, CT — The Clare Gallery is pleased to present *Homage to St. Joseph*, a sculptural exhibition by Connecticut artist, Stephen J. Balkun. Wood is the medium of Stephen's work. He considers himself an artist and a craftsman. When carving, he thinks of Saint Joseph (the patron saint of craftsmen) and likens the activity to a form of prayer and meditation. The exhibition is from November 3 through December 31, 2018. **A reception and artist talk will be held on Thursday, November 15th from 6 to 8 p.m. A hands-on artist workshop will be held on Saturday, December 1st from 10–11:30 a.m.**, during which Stephen will demonstrate his method of woodcarving and teach participants about wood selection, types of tools, and how to use them to create carvings of their own. Registration is free, but required. To register call 860-756-4034, or email pcurtis@spsact.org.

Wood has a scent, grain, texture and warmth. It comes in diverse colors. It changes over time. Once it is no longer growing, Stephen believes it is still alive. Light, as well as touching the wood, can change it. He has worked with wood for over twenty-five years making choices—which wood to use for what purpose, or how to communicate an idea. Using various tools such as knives, gouges and chisels, Stephen connects to the spirit of all those who've worked with the wood before him. He believes he will continue to advance the spirit forward and give the wood new life by transforming it into something beautiful.

In this exhibition, Stephen chose to focus on Saint Joseph because of his connection to the craft of woodcarving. Saint Joseph created utilitarian objects for daily use. He passed his knowledge onto his son, Jesus. Like Saint Joseph, Stephen shared his love for wood with his son, and they presently share a workshop. While he creates art, or utilitarian objects (e.g. bowls or spoons), his son creates custom guitars. Additionally, Stephen makes and carves ornamental details for his son's guitars.

Stephen J. Balkun teaches woodcarving lessons and has studied wood and stone carving with Connecticut artists, George Hanover and Elizabeth Rafael. His professional life included being a basketball player, a chiropractor, and an educator. Many of his works integrate human and organic forms inspired by anatomy. Presently, he lives with his wife, Anita, who is also an artist and teacher in West Hartford, Connecticut. If you would like to contact him please email doctorb30@gmail.com

The Clare Gallery primarily features exhibitions that emphasize world religions or interfaith themes, as well as social justice themes, on either a global or local level. The Gallery is housed in the Franciscan Center for Urban Ministry at 285 Church Street, Hartford, CT. The Center is part of St. Patrick – St. Anthony Church, a vibrant and active downtown faith community.

The Clare Gallery's hours are from 8:30 a.m. to 7 p.m. Mondays through Thursdays; 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. on Fridays; Saturdays from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m.; and Sundays from 9 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. The Gallery and all related events are open to the public. Free parking is available directly across from the church, and the facility is handicapped accessible. More information may be found at www.spsact.org/clare2.