

CARDINAL RITTER MONUMENT

By Guy Tedesco - Sculptor

Sculptor's Conceptual Approach

The 20th century was a time of great upheaval and revolution in the world. Long standing local, regional and worldwide traditional societal beliefs, ideals, values, and practices were challenged. Joseph Elmer Ritter was born a humble human soul who answered a calling from God to be a catalyst and peacemaking warrior in that societal revolution. As a child he recognized and answered a calling to live a life of faith as a Priest in the Roman Catholic Church. He continued his entire lifetime to honor that calling and quickly rose through priestly ranks to become one of the most important Prelates of the Catholic Church in 20th century America. He used his offices from priest to Cardinal as a platform on the world stage to further Godly and Christ like living in all human society regardless of Church or religious affiliation. Guided and strengthened by his deep, unwavering faith in God and man alike, he not only served humankind but truly led society through monumental changes.

This Monument to his life is being created not simply to honor his accomplishments but also to further his ideals and his mission. It is being created to ever inspire society to embrace all that is best in our humanity and our faith.

Cardinal Ritter was a builder of a greater enlightenment in human society. He recognized that many barriers existed within society that hindered and often completely barricaded social and spiritual advancement for everyone regardless of which side they found themselves standing upon. He also recognized that those barriers though extremely formidable went unrecognized and often were imperceptible to most people including himself at times. He boldly and at his own peril dedicated his life to removing those barriers. He led others to recognize and to surmount or remove such barriers and inspires us to build pathways to the greater enlightened and Godly living of all human life.

Physical Description

There will be several components to this monument beginning with 5 life sized cast bronze figures as follows.

1. Cardinal Ritter will be depicted in the vestments of a Roman Catholic Cardinal representing his status as a prominent figure within the Church as well as the prominence, responsibility and potential that office holds as a world force. This brings light to the fact that despite very common and

humble beginnings as a member of an immigrant family of small social standing that even the humblest of people can rise to great accomplishments.

2. An African American Mother will be shown assisting Cardinal Ritter in his efforts. She will be costumed in appropriate attire for mid-1930's Indianapolis and will be of appropriate age for a mother of an elementary school child. She will show both anxiousness and fear in her face and posture that has been overcome by courage, hope, and above all faith and love for her child shown in her actions.



Figure 1- Maquette, or miniature model, of the Cardinal Ritter Monument. Each figure will be life-size and cast in bronze, to be installed on the grounds of the Cardinal Ritter House located at 13th and Oak Streets, in New Albany, IN

3. An elementary school age African American girl in appropriate costume like her mother. She will wear a small crucifix necklace to show her Roman Catholic faith.
4. An elementary school age Jewish boy wearing a Kippah making him immediately recognizable as being of the Hebrew faith.
5. An elementary school age Caucasian Christian girl wearing a simple cross pendant necklace symbolizing her Protestant faith.

The adult figures will be separated from the child figures by a barrier constructed of large glass blocks. The blocks will be fabricated of heavy glass for durability and assembled using an industrial UV cured epoxy. They will be approximately 2' wide by 1' high and 1' thick. Each block will have a word etched into a panel suspended in the center of the block. The words will represent both positive and negative aspects and actions of human character. The assembled barrier will be approximately 4' tall and 14' wide.

Placed in various locations about the sculpture and deck will be bronze books and symbols of many religious faiths to honor Cardinal Ritter's belief and life-long monumental efforts to live in support of and harmony with those of all religious beliefs. In his words, "Our brothers and sisters in faith".

Sidewalks suitable to the grounds will lead to the deck providing full accessibility.

Action and Interpretation

The glass blocks represent both positive and negative aspects of human character. Human character will always exist as long as human beings exist. We as a species will forever act according to our character. One of the most powerful of those elements is the free will of choice. The glass structure represents a barrier built by society. Whether we chose to build the barrier or simply allow it to exist and ignore it, it's an extremely formidable blockade to all humanity becoming it's best self. The words will be fully accessible, visible and quite legible from both sides. The negative words will face the adult or "past and present" side. The positive words will face the children or "future" side.

The figure of Cardinal Ritter will be pushing over or disassembling the barrier. He'll be pushing against the negative side. Resulting from his action, part of the structure will be crumbled with blocks strewn about the ground. None of the blocks will be damaged or destroyed, as all elements of human character will potentially exist within us as long as we exist. The figure of the mother will be assisting Cardinal

Ritter in disassembling the barrier by handing a block containing the word “Love” over its top to her child. The Jewish boy will be walking, carrying a block containing the word “Faith” in the direction of the remaining child. The Christian girl will be embedding a block into the ground using it as a stepping-stone instead of a barrier.

In the overall action of the sculpture, for whatever reasons, humanity had allowed barriers created by our character to be built and to exist forming a blockade of the ultimate spiritual and practical advancement of the entire species. Cardinal Ritter recognized this and began peaceably removing the barriers. The action is simple however it does take great effort. The mother shows fear and trepidation, concern for her child, as well as great strength, love and faith by handing a block over the barrier to her daughter. The children labor together, in equality and solidarity. They labor freely and joyfully with the blocks of human character using them in a common task to build a pathway to a bright and glorious future as God intends and hopes for us all.

The bronze books and symbols acknowledge the broad ecumenical outreach that was Cardinal Ritter’s policy and at the heart of his belief that we are all equal brothers and sisters in faith.

So long as we exist, by our inherent character as human beings, we will forever face the world we exist in. In some Eastern Faiths it is believed that artists are created by God to manifest heaven on earth. It is my belief that we simply open doors and windows to heavenly existence. Each individual then must choose of their free will to pass through those doors and windows to create heavenly existence.

Art is a means of communication. I believe that artists are created by God to sing of things that can’t be spoken. Each of us that choose to participate in the creation of this monument is acting as an artist. Together we have the opportunity to create a wonderful gateway, to inspire the ever-existent need to create and maintain heavenly, Godly existence for us all.

Guy Tedesco – February 2020



Bonded bronze bust of Joseph Cardinal Ritter created by Guy Tedesco; completed in October 2017.