

# FLORIDACatholic

## ORLANDO DIOCESE



Artist Robert Wertz at the installation of his Rock of Our Salvation fountain at Queen of Angels Cemetery, Sept. 9, 2024. The igneous rock that forms the fountain is 45 million years old and is part of the Gospel Gardens in Phase 2. (GLENDA MEEKINS | FC)



The 45-million-year-old stones grace the Rock of Our Salvation fountain at Queen of Angels Cemetery. (GLENDA MEEKINS | FC)



This 2019 photo shows the Beaver Canyon quarry in Washington from where the basalt stones for the Rock of Our Salvation fountain originated. (COURTESY | GREG PRESCOTT)

## Ancient rocks radiate symbol of eternal love

**GLENDA MEEKINS**  
of the Florida Catholic staff

**WINTER PARK** | Forty-five-million-year-old igneous rocks now stand surrounded by four Marian statues and hundreds of gravesites at Queen of Angels Cemetery, Phase Two, in Winter Park. The Rock of Our Salvation fountain is a symbol of God's omnipresence, from creation through eternity.

Installation began Sept. 9, 2024, and took several days of meticulous positioning by artist Robert Wertz and geologist Greg Prescott despite being saturated by frequent rainfall. But Wertz and Prescott began selecting the rocks well before that. Over several weeks, the two visited the Beaver Canyon quarry in the Okanogan Highlands of Washington state numerous times, selecting ideal pieces.

Prescott, a veteran geologist of more than 40 years, was first captivated by the aesthetic of the rocks when he discovered them through his late business partner, Bob Jewett. Both seasoned geologists had seen thousands of columns of ba-

salt across the Pacific Northwest and beyond, but none so distinct in shape and coloration. Prescott explained the columns are usually dark and symmetrical, but these tell the story of their formation.

"I've never seen anything like it," Prescott said. "And I know of no other occurrence in the world."

In a simplified summary, the rock was formed from the lava flow of the Klondike Mountain Formation which poured into a caved in, faulted block of earth near the end of the Tertiary Period, the first age of the Cenozoic Era. "As is typical at the changing of the great geologic eras there was widespread crustal violence," he explained. "The Mesozoic Era, the age of the reptiles, had just ended, and the Earth was rocked by great upheavals."

Multiple volcanic eruptions took place, filling the valley. Over thousands of years, the pile of lava flows cooled and in Beaver Canyon, began crystallizing, creating the vibrant colors for which these columns are noted.

The crystallized minerals contain magnesium oxides that create dark

swathes, along with iron oxides that create orange and red earth tones that become encapsulated in silica. It is this detail that prevents the rocks from discoloration. Otherwise, you could simply rub the color off. Like human beings, each rock is unique.

"There is a story written there," Prescott said. Observing how people are drawn to the rock structures, he believes they are "searching for something lasting, permanent, and beautiful" and find elements of that in the rocks.

Each rock has water springing from its center, spilling into a pool beneath it. In Christianity, water represents life and purification. Although many metaphors can be drawn from the fountain beginning with the waters of Baptism bringing new and eternal life, cemetery director for the diocese David Branson had something specific in mind. The idea is that hope springs eternal, calling back to Moses and the Exodus. This stone too harkens back to the creation of the world.

PLEASE SEE **FOUNTAIN, 2**



Geologist Greg Prescott stands atop the Beaver Canyon quarry in 2019. Prescott refined the art of drilling through the stones to enable beautiful fountains. (COURTESY | GREG PRESCOTT)





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# Think of ourselves as God's craftsman

My Sisters and Brothers in Christ:

Today on the Solemnity of the Most Holy Trinity, we also praise God for the gift of fathers — human-kind, born of God to serve God. These holy men guide us to faith in God by their example of daily living, introducing us to the Sacraments and leading us to receive Jesus the Eucharist, that we craft all our labor to God. The pilgrimage of our heart journeys to St. Joseph, the father of Jesus, whose very fiat brought forth great love of our Blessed Mother and opened wide the pages of salvation history as Jesus is born to us through this Holy Family.

Pope Leo XIII wrote a short encyclical, *Quamquam Pluries*, on devotion to St. Joseph. The opening paragraph of this encyclical, written Aug. 18, 1889, offers a description of a world mimicking what many

of us echo today. "We see faith, the root of all the Christian virtues, lessening in many souls; we see charity growing cold; the young generation daily growing in depravity of morals and views; the Church of Jesus Christ attacked on every side by open force or by craft. . . . In circumstances so unhappy and troublous, human remedies are insufficient, and it becomes necessary, as a sole resource, to beg for assistance from the Divine power." Pope Leo XIII invites all people of good will to prayer, to bring our focus back to God. He suggests a greater devotion to St. Joseph, to see his attentiveness toward God and his desire to serve God, as we unite our thoughts with Mary our Mother, our blessed advocate guiding us always toward her Son, Jesus.

"Thus, in giving Joseph the Blessed Virgin as spouse, God ap-

pointed him to be not only her life's companion, the witness of her maidenhood, the protector of her honor, but also, by virtue of the conjugal tie, a participator in her sublime dignity. And Joseph shines among all mankind by the most august dignity, since by divine will, he was the guardian of the Son of God and reputed as His father among men. . . . He set himself to protect with a mighty love and a daily solicitude his spouse and the Divine Infant; regularly by his work he earned what was necessary for the one and the other for nourishment and clothing; he guarded from death the Child threatened by a monarch's jealousy, and found for Him a refuge; in the miseries of the journey and in the bitternesses of exile he was ever the companion, the assistance, and the upholder of the Virgin and of Jesus. . . . It is, then, natural and worthy that as the Blessed Joseph ministered to all the needs of the family at Nazareth and girt

it about with his protection, he should now cover with the cloak of his heavenly patronage and defend the Church of Jesus Christ."

May we each think of ourselves as God's craftsman, as St. Joseph lived, bringing all the people to God by our daily living as His holy people. May we emulate St. Joseph as guardian of God's treasure upon the earth, that we have Peace with God through Jesus Christ. May we serve as pilgrims of hope because the love of God has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit that has been given to us.

I invite you to join me on Saturday, June 21, 10 a.m. at the Basilica of the National Shrine of Mary, Queen of the Universe for The Eucharistic Pilgrimage: Gift of Sacred Mystery with keynote speaker Father Miguel González followed by the celebration of Mass and Corpus Christi Procession. This celebration will align our heart with God's through a greater understanding of the Sacred Gift of the Eucharist. ■



**Bishop  
John  
Noonan**

## FOUNTAIN

FROM 1

The Rock of Our Salvation fountain recalls the moment God told Moses to strike the rock in the desert to quench the thirst of the Israelites during the Exodus — who thirsted physically and spiritually. Ex 17:6 reads, "I will be standing there in front of you on the rock in Horeb. Strike the rock, and the water will flow from it for the people to drink. Moses did this, in the sight of the elders of Israel."

The visual effect of these ancient rocks pouring forth water also makes Christ present, immersing visitors into the New Testament recalling 1 Cor 10:4, "and they drank the same spiritual drink, for they drank from a spiritual rock that followed them, and the rock was the Christ." Both verses will be inscribed on a plaque by the fountain.

The connection is not lost on Wertz. "I'm a believer and when I go out to the quarry, I feel closer to God there than 16 sermons. I look at it as something God created. He created the earth, the universe, beautiful things like this on the planet - most people don't get to lay their eyes on," he said.



As the florist at his church, he makes bouquets using the same design principles he uses in designing his structures, considering the elevations, variations, and continuity. "To me it's a devotional thing in the morning, in the garden, saying, 'This is for you, Lord. What do you see? Help me see what's beautiful here. I carry the same thing into this,'" he said.

He recalled a day during the installation. As he and Prescott were leaving, they saw a man standing, staring at a headstone in the cem-

etery. They both commented they hoped he hadn't lost a child. Forty-five minutes later, after they returned, he was still standing there. "People are processing some pretty heavy stuff when they're here," Wertz said. "For someone like that man, a place like this is important. If people can come here and have something beautiful touch them in that moment, that's a worthwhile contribution."

"I look at God as being the ultimate designer and creator. So, what I'm doing is just taking something

He made and presenting it so people can see it. That's important to me," he continued. "Life is chaotic, hectic, stressful. There are losses, there's grief, and there's all kinds of negativity. When we can stop and see beauty, and truly relax, I think we ought to have a beautiful setting and focal point to do that." ■

*Queen of Angels Cemetery Phase 2 is open. For information, visit <https://catholicceteriescfl.org/our-cemeteries/queen-of-angels-cemetery/>*

The 45-million-year-old stones grace the Rock of Our Salvation fountain at Queen of Angels Cemetery. It is the first structure of its kind to be placed in a cemetery. (GLENDA MEEKINS | FC)