

## Monk brings his artistry to Gilbert stained-glass company

**By David M. Brown**

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Searching for a loyal, well-schooled and well-disciplined employee? Employ a monk.



**Rev. Vincent Crosby**

That's what John Phillips Jr., co-founder of Gilbert-based Associated Crafts Inc., did when he added the Rev. Vincent Crosby, a Benedictine monk from Pennsylvania, to the stained-glass company's team of design, craft, installation and repair experts.

"Father Vincent brings a fresh new dimension to the craft of stained glass and to our outstanding team," Phillips said. "Father Vincent's ability to listen to what the client wants and then capture it in compelling design is amazing. His look is fresh and simple, with well-thought-out symbolism, and his enthusiasm for stained glass — a new craft for him — is infectious."

Founded in 1997 by Phillips and his wife, Mary, Associated Crafts, 2487 S. Gilbert Road, specializes in the restoration, installation, design and preservation of church stained-glass windows nationwide, including Alaska, where the company

begins a project in April. The company also provides stained glass for public buildings.

Crosby is a member of St. Vincent Archabbey in Latrobe, Pa., the country's first Benedictine monastery founded in 1846 on the principles of the sixth-century St. Benedict.

He and Associated Crafts were brought together by two projects: the stained-glass windows for first Catholic chapel at Penn State University and four stained-glass windows for the redesigned St. Margaret Mary church in Lower Burrell, Pa., near Latrobe, both outside Pittsburgh.

"We need good art and symbols to speak eloquently and simply as we worship God together," said Monsignor James Gaston, pastor for 14 years at St. Margaret Mary. "We wanted our windows to enhance our worship, to bring bright color and to be warm and engaging. We didn't want a generic box, nor did we want to create a museum where people came to church but ignored each other."

Crosby follows the “rule of St. Benedict,” which guides the life of most Catholic monasteries in the world. “The goal is that each monk works at something that supports the whole community, not just financially but morally and spiritually as well,” he said.

Born in Buffalo, N.Y., Crosby entered the monastery in 1968 and was ordained in 1972. He achieved a bachelor’s of fine arts at Tyler School of Art in Philadelphia, then after a year studying art in Rome, he completed a master’s of fine art at Catholic University in Washington, D.C. “Working with my hands and making my environment beautiful has been part of my make up for as long as I can remember,” he said.

He calls his style part representational, part abstract. “When it comes to design for stained glass, I would prefer to let the material speak for itself, exploring the language of color, texture and form,” he said.

His work is intimately connected with his daily schedule.

“My first anchor is the regularity of the monastic life itself,” Crosby said, referring to the monks’ daily schedule of early morning to late evening prayer six to nine times a day, common meals and scheduled recreation time. “My second anchor is that I can go to the studio every day and work on something new and creative, something that will be used for worship. This is an honor and privilege, and my hope is that it leads viewers to prayer — to think of God and the beauty of creation.”

When the design was finished for St. Margaret Mary, Associated Crafts began fabrication. “We become like Father Vincent’s hands to actually craft the stained glass according to the design,” Phillips said. “This demands tremendous skill on the part of our stained-glass craftsmen — especially when you consider that windows like those for St. Margaret Mary’s are 26 feet high.”

Continuing his father’s legacy, Phillips has more than 30 years in stained-glass production. He and Mary have lived in Gilbert since 1996.

In Arizona, the company’s work can be seen at St. Alban’s Episcopal Church in Wickenburg; St. Ambrose Parish church in Tucson, where windows from a Pennsylvania church were repurposed; Grace St. Paul’s Episcopal Church and St. Augustine Cathedral in Tucson; St. Henry’s Catholic Church in Buckeye; and St. Paul Episcopal Church, Tombstone, one of the oldest Protestant churches west of the Mississippi River.

“I am happy to be part of the Associated Crafts family,” Crosby said. “Every person is skilled in his or her own area of expertise. And each person works in harmony with the others to produce an excellent product and work of art.”

Added Phillips: “It’s ... a lot of satisfaction to see the pastor’s vision and the artist’s conception come to life in a beautiful window.”