J.M.J.

THE ROAR OF THE LION! THE SMELL OF THE PAINT!

a biography of

BROTHER HILARION BREZIK, C.S.C.
by
Brother Gerald Muller, C.S.C.

He talked so much as a child that kids his age called him "the preacher." In later years his torrent of talk flowed on in a loud, high-pitched, raspy voice fueled by a brilliant mind, insatiable curiosity and voracious reading. He could burp and pass gas without missing a beat in his monologue. His innumerable paintings glowed as eloquently and effortlessly as his words. A boisterous, vociferous, ebullient genius, he was as unkempt and indifferent in personal habits as he was precise and perfect in rendering watercolors. In later years his students took wagers on what mismatched plaids he would wear to class that day. They were never disappointed. He had a habit of chewing on the tip of his shirt collar, and at home in St. Joseph Hall he usually strolled down the hall from his room to the shower in the nude. On one occasion, informed that women might be wandering down the same corridor, he remarked: "That doesn't bother me!" He was Brother Hilarion Brezik whose most remarkable characteristic was his enthusiasm! Everything he did was full speed ahead with joyful abandon.

Born in Houston, Texas, on August 5, 1910, Jerome Rudolph Brezik was the fourth child of eight born to Joseph F. Brezik, a Houston real estate salesman, and Frances Steffek, a native of Czechoslovakia. Jerome was baptized in the Church of the Annunciation on August 22 by Father T. Hennessey with an aunt, Albina Steffek, acting as sponsor. At the age of eight he received the Sacrament of Confirmation from Rt. Rev. C.E.Byrne, Bishop of Galveston, and added the name "Louis" to his baptismal nomenclature.

Jerome's mother, Frances Brezik, was a devout woman who attended daily Mass alone and encouraged but never forced her children to go to Saturday confession. Victor remembers that no family prayers were said in the home yet his mother encouraged religious vocations in three of her sons: Victor, Jerome and Lee. Grandfather Steffek was a farmer who sired five children and bought land near Hallettsville to support them. He was a frugal, hard-working man who provided each of his children with a 100 acre farm. Jerome's father, however, did not fare so well either as a farmer or a real estate agent. In 1927 he died of stomach cancer at the early age of 49 bankrupt because of failed business dealings with Nebraska interlopers selling fake farmland along the Rio Grande River. Jerome was then seventeen years old and a junior in Reagan High School. Even the Brezik home was lost and Joseph's widow was left with heavy debts, a rented cottage and eight young children to feed. Frank, Edward and Jerome, the three older boys, went to work to support their mother. Elinor, their sister, also found work to help provide for her four younger brothers: Victor, Albert, Lee and Wallace. A beautiful young woman who never married, Elinor once entered a beauty pageant, worked for Foley's Brothers and later Arthur Meyers Brothers and was photographed as "Miss Classified." Her picture appeared in every edition of the *Houston Chronicle* for years.

Having successfully attended All Saints and Cooley elementary schools, Jerome dropped out of Reagan High School in the middle of his junior year. For two years he worked as a clerk for C.U.Spahn & Co., a wholesale jewelry supply store and then transferred for another year to H.H.Hawley & Co. In 1930 he was hired as a watch repair apprentice with J.J.Sweeney, jewelers of Houston, After four years, Jerome would complete high school classes in Watertown, Wisconsin as a postulant preparing to become a Brother of Holy Cross. He had never seen a brother and did not know what a brother was. Friends, Joe Hoffman and his wife, had urged him not to join Holy Cross but instead to enroll in any art school of his choice. They would pay all of his expenses. He refused their generous offer even though he had little knowledge of what he was getting himself into and never regretted his decision.(1)

In early August of 1931 two of the Brezik boys were on a train chuffing toward Chicago. In the Windy City they separated: Jerome heading for Sacred Heart College in Watertown, Wisconsin and his younger brother, Victor, entraining for Toronto, Canada to begin his Basilian novitiate and studies for the priesthood. Jerome spent a year finishing his interrupted high school classes. In 1932 he was sent to Notre Dame for a year's religious training under the watchful eye of novice master, Father Kerndt Healy. On July 2 he received the tailored, black habit of a novice-Brother of Holy Cross and a new name. For the rest of his life he would be known as Brother Hilarion, C.S.C. One year later he professed temporary vows of poverty, chastity and obedience and received a black cord with two floppy tassels to gird his waist. Three years later he pronouced final vows and received a medal of St. Joseph, patron of Holy Cross Brothers. Years of study followed at Dujarie Hall, Notre Dame, culminating in 172 credit hours of English, Latin, philosophy, education, theology, history, politics, biology, speech and art. One of his art instructors was the renowned Flemish painter, Emil Jacques. As a youngster Hilarion had studied commercial art with Frank Collins, a private tutor in Houston, and took a correspondence course which prepared him for more intense art instruction at Notre Dame. Because of scarcity of Brothers, he was sent out early to teach English, Latin, art and drama at Cathedral High School in Indianapolis. It was the autumn of 1936 and two years before his college graduation. Make-up credits had to be earned during hot, humid summer sessions back at

Notre Dame. There in August, 1938, he finally graduated *cum laude* with a Bachelor of Arts degree — the first and only Holy Cross Brother ever to major in art at that time.

THE SCHOLASTIC

Brother Simon Scribner remembered those scholastic years: "Brother Hilarion and I were at Notre Dame University from 1932 to 1936. We lived in community, the community of scholastics, at Dujarie Hall. We were a big house, engaged in both the bustle of academic life and also in a rather rigorous formation regimen." In 1932 Hilarion had his first meeting with Brother John Baptist Titzer who 26 years later would ask him to serve as his Assistant Provincial of the South-West Province. "I first met Brother John," Hilarion remembered, "when I was a novice at Notre Dame. He had been put in charge of a bazaar which the scholasticate sponsored for the enjoyment of the campus Community. It really was a carnival, with booths, games, hoopla, the works. He had me draw up phony dollar bills for him on a mimeograph stencil so he could run them off and distribute them to those who came to participate." (2) Early on, John Baptist recognized the young man's artistic ability and enthusiastic service.

Brother Simon's memoir continues:

> "One has only to go back in memory to see all those blackrobes, loins girded with the cincture, and necks encircled with the Roman collar — to see them in the early hours of the morning meditating in common, participating (insofar as people participated in those pre-Vatican II days) in the celebration of the Mass, to watch them troop (the word is used of set purpose — we did troop) to a quick breakfast (taken in silence, for all were expected to listen to the public reading of some edifying book), to witness them rushing through morning housework (washing the breakfast dishes, setting for lunch, making beds, cleaning rooms, setting common rooms to rights, scrubbing toilets and showers, polishing corridors) and leaving the house in a rush to get to classes — all by eight o'clock. In the winter, eight o'clock was dark, the sky gray, the landscape frozen, the trees bare, and often, blowing and drifting snow. This got us well into the school part of our days. We sequestered ourselves in the library, attended classes, wrote papers, took exams. Very often, late afternoons, we relaxed to basketball and touch football, and in warmer weather to softball or baseball." Hilarion loved baseball all his life and was a good pitcher. "We sang with the house choir that provided the liturgical music for Sunday and holy day Masses at Sacred Heart Church on the campus."
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> Upon the death of a community member, scholastics were required to keep hour-long vigils around the clock prior to the funeral of the deceased, not that there was much chance of the dead wandering off. At times this required rising at 2 a.m. in winter, trudging across the frozen lake to what was then the Community House and praying sleepily beside the casket until 3 a.m. Hilarion and Simon had to fulfill this obligation more than once during their student days on campus.
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> "Somehow or other," Brother Simon wrote, "we found time to talk about all our intellectual 'finds.' Our days were pretty rigorously scheduled, but we managed to scrabble up time for comparing notes, and talking — favorite pastimes for both Brother Hilarion and myself. Talk we did, quoting famous authors and authorities, but only in the time we could spare (or steal) from other (and imposed) tasks.
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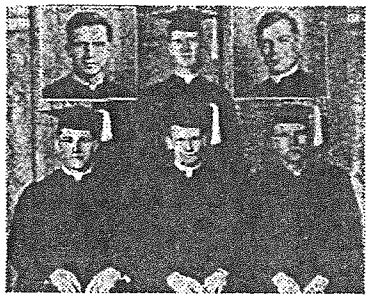
> "Brother Hilarion always believed ideas were live things — they induced us to act in certain ways, believe in certain things, do certain jobs or create (as in art) certain works. In his later years he was to talk a good deal about the dynamism of ideas. This

dynamism was responsible, he held, for individual historical events, the movement of history at large, religious beliefs, moral points of view, sculpture and painting and performing arts, to name only a few things. But he saw ideas likewise as choices that man made or had to make if he were to act at all. And that as old ideas lost their compelling force, new ones came into play to displace those that were worn out, no longer interesting or potent. It was on the basis of this renovation of ideas that he saw all history as the living out of ideasand changing ideas. It was on this basis also that he built up in his own mind an explanation for the changing face of art in all its forms and over the centuries.

"But this did not hinder either of us from going ahead and following our own paths in the classroom, in the handling of affairs, and, for Brother Hilarion, in works of art which became well-known and treasured in a wide circle of people. Brother Hilarion, with his work in boys' homes and in Community affairs, had to let his 'artistic side' (he never set things apart in this way) remain to a certain extent unexercised. It wasn't until later that he was able to give himself more fully to his art — and even then he continued to give his knowledge and perception and skills and enthusiasms to many academic classes of students. He likewise gave himself up to the production of numerous art-pieces that remain with us today. I am not certain, but it appears that there is no definitive catalog of all his works.



"If this is true, it would not greatly bother Brother Hilarion. He had a facility for finishing a work, and then getting on to something else. If he did not forget the works he had produced, neither did he greatly concern himself with them — he never gave the impression of being greatly attached to what was past. He was free to move ahead into the new, the challenging.

"He might be characterized, finally, as free, innovative, knowing in a wide variety of knowledges, able to move from one area to others by recognizing the connectedness of all things in the universe." (3)

In his later years, Hilarion asked the community to buy a Winnebago costing $27,000 so that he could cruise the southern Gulf coast in a motor home, stopping where he pleased to paint whatever caught his fancy. Not surprisingly his superiors took a dim view of his *15 page, single-spaced* proposal and did *not* approve of either the vehicle or the venture. Hilarion was then 75 years old!

Brother Simon Scribner once remembered the summer of 1939 when he and Hilarion roomed side by side in Sorin Hall. Hilarion, enrolled in a fundamentals of sculpture class, was working in clay and the hours that the art department was open for student-use were too limited for the enthusiastic sculptor. He received permission to take a supply of modeling clay back to his room. More than once Simon found him there hard at work with daubs of clay flung from hands and arms to clothes, desk and walls of the room. From the campus Huddle Simon occasionally bought frothy ice cream sodas, one for himself and one for his friend. Arriving at Hilarion's room, Simon would be told, "Just put it over there on a shelf or desk." Hours later, Simon would return to find the melted mess still puddled where he had left it and Hilarion still squeezing and pummeling the clay to the likeness he imagined but had not yet been able to create. The extra work paid off. Hilarion earned a high grade of 95 for the class and 96 for life drawing.

THE MASTERPIECE

Not until the summer sessions of 1966 through 1969 was Brother Hilarion able to continue graduate studies at Notre Dame and only then after the urging and encouragement of friends, Ted and Maisie Paulissen. His busy apostolic life in Holy Cross would include four years as a high school teacher, seventeen years as a counselor and director in three different boys' homes and twelve years as a provincial councilor.

At the advanced academic age of fifty-six, he resumed courses in watercolor, figure drawing, painting, graphics and woodcut printing. He finally earned a Master of Arts degree in 1969 and his Master of Fine Arts degree in 1971 after finishing his watercolor masterpiece — The Twelve Signs of the Zodiac. That work was described as calligraphy with process and the figures were linear. Because he was restricted in using the zodiacal figures that the whole world knows for each 38 inch by 48 inch painting, he "applied color directly from the tube to a sheet of glass without any mixing. He then pressed the watercolor board onto the glass as one would use an ink blotter. By blotting and stamping, he achieved astonishing effects. Colors mixed and blended as the two surfaces met. Shapes were produced accidentally and spontaneously. Spaces for the subject matter of each panel were blocked out by paper glued to canvas and later painted in by brush strokes. Each background contains 14 to 18 colors, [twelve stars and symbols of the sign, itself, as well as that of the month preceding and following it]. The color that predominates in each panel is the color of the environment of the sign depicted. For example, the Lion is shown against the tan color of African desert sand.The crab is set in greens and blues of the deep sea."(4)

Dr. Thomas S. Fern, Chairman of the Department of Art at the University of Notre Dame, wrote the following program notes for the first Austin showing of Hilarion's masterpiece:

"Watercolor, because of its transparent binder, is used in thin layers or washes on a white surface and achieves its characteristic luminosity because part of that whiteness is reflected through the pigment much the same as light comes through stained glass. Over the hundreds of years of its existence as an art form artists have tended to employ watercolor as a sketch medium. That is, as a fairly rapid means of recording *in situ* and on paper, scenes, events and other subject matter. Consequently, watercolors are usually small because of their need to be portable and the size limitations of watercolor paper.

"Brother Hilarion's use of watercolor diverges from that traditional path in several ways. 1) The panels comprising the signs of the zodiac are noticeably larger than traditional watercolors, 2) his subject springs from his 'mind's eye' rather than having prior physical existence, and 3) his process or technique is not only unusual but requires the facilities of a studio. Even so, his colors are rich and quite luminous.

"In a word, Brother employs a transfer technique as his basic method of applying color. Instead of painting directly on paper with a brush, color is applied to an intermediary surface which is then pressed to the paper... Aesthetically, this technique, or more properly the shapes of color that result, set the mood of these panels. The color areas ebb and flow across the surface freely and convey feelings of vitality, mystery, and immeasurable space. To me, these sensations seem appropriate to the astrological mysticism I associate with the signs of the zodiac. Moreover, they are pleasing.

"The various periods of the calendar represented by separate panels are rendered in their own hues,

and, consequently, have their own exciting moods. Even so, Brother Hilarion's work is dominated by the spirit of action painting, that facet of abstract expressionism which promulgates the idea that shape and color relationships, as well as the total composition, should happen in the act of painting without prior knowledge or preconception. I think his color field process follows the idea of painting rather well, and becomes a strong factor in these paintings.

"The symbols or signs of the zodiac are well known and more or less standardized, thus an artist has less freedom to alter their characteristic form. Brother Hilarion probably felt compelled to delineate these signs as simply as he could but without losing their recognizability. This decision, it seems to me, is artistically restricting and places the images in contrast to the inordinately free technique used in the color field, In general, however, he has taken a creative approach to this difficult subject, and I would conclude that his twelve panels, individually and collectively, are among the best and most original that I have seen." (5)

Today these magnificent panels have a permanent home in the Scarborough-Phillips Library on the campus of St. Edward's University in Austin, Texas. Their first home was the glass-enclosed lobby of the Mary Moody Northen Theatre, but on one occasion a violent storm shattered the windows and severely damaged the paintings. Hilarion had to do radical repair work, almost like starting the entire complex process from the beginning.

The zodiac, an imaginary belt around the night sky, was divided into twelve equal zones of 30 degrees each by ancient astronomers of the Middle East. Each zone or sign was named for the constellation of stars that occupied the largest portion of space within it. As the earth spun around the sun, the sun appeared to move from one constellation to the next starting with *Aries,* the ram. The twelve signs roughly corresponded to the twelve lunar months of each calendar year. Mid-March to mid-April was dominated by *Aries;* April to May brought *Taurus,* the bull into view followed by *Gemini,* the twins; *Cancer,* the crab; *Leo,* the lion — Hilarion's sign since he was born on August 5; *Virgo,* the virgin; *Libra,* the balance; *Scorpio,* the scorpion; *Sagittarius,* the archer; *Capricorn,* the goat; *Aquarius,* the water bearer, and finally *Pisces,* the fishes. As early as 150 B.C. the Greek astronomer, Hipparchus, advocated this arrangement of the zodiac which is still in use. Astronomers studied the stars and their movements while astrologers believed the movements of heavenly bodies influenced the lives of individuals and nations. Hilarion was an astronomer at heart who used the symbols of each sign in his paintings. He did not take the theories of astrologers seriously.

Why did Hilarion choose to paint the zodiac signs? "Astrology, at most," he explained, "is a myth — the oldest and most durable perhaps that man has devised. And, perhaps it is a particularly apt one for our empirical consciousness and alienation susceptibilities. So far, we have no assurances that a scientific, technological age can abolish mystery. For me, it is significant, then, that at a time when so many are apparently turned off by formal religions, there is so much concern with a reality that transcends the tangible. No doubt, some of the interest in astrology is superstition or venality; but, it might also be an authenic portent for our aspiration for tomorrow." (6) Hilarion was not an advocate of astrology as a guide for life, but he was sometimes startled to recognize similar personality traits in persons born under the same sign.

As early as 1935, Brother Hilarion was penning black and white illustrations for "The Annals of Our Lady of Lourdes," a magazine published by Ave Maria Press. Brother Ernest Ryan, founder of Dujarie Press, was so impressed by these drawings that he invited Hilarion to illustrate his book, *That Boy!* In later years he would sketch other vivid pictures for Ernest's *The Boy Who Saw the World, The Dragon Killer* and *The Happy Heart* — all stories of saints and heroes written to serve as role models for young readers. He wrote, illustrated and did layout for the booklet, "Brothers of Holy Cross," a vocational pamphlet. While working at St. Charles Boys Home he painted a three-wall mural whose theme was "God Bless America." It covered 736 square feet and contained portraits of all sixty boys then living in the home. Years later they would return as grown men with their wives and children to see what they looked like as boys. In Boysville, Michigan, he would do a much less ambitious painting only four feet by ten feet for the dining hall entitled: "Winter Wonderland." Hilarion's talent for art inspired him to become one of the founders and a charter member of the Catholic Art Association of America. Some of his paintings were exhibited in Chicago's Mundelein College with other works by fellow-members of the Association.

THE HIGH SCHOOL TEACHER — 1937–1941

As an undergraduate scholastic, Brother Hilarion initiated his high school teaching career at Cathedral High School, Indianapolis. His duties, besides rigorous adherence to the Rule and daily religious exercises, were classes in Latin, English and art. For the student theatre, he wrote the script for "March of Melody," a musical tracing the history of popular music in the United States. He designed and painted the stage set for "Beautiful Dreamer," a musical based on the life of composer, Stephen Foster. Kathryn Daniel's premier performance of this work was staged by Cathedral students to good reviews and warm applause. Sets for "New Moon" by Sigmund Romberg and "The Golden Trail" followed.

Brother Lawrence Miller, a colleague and fellow teacher at the time, remembers that Hilarion "worked far too many hours and the superior, Brother Marcian Karsky, didn't like this. Some people lived in a house on school property and he [Hilarion] became friendly with them on occasion as a way to release the school pressure. Hilarion liked to read and engage in conversation. He could get quite loud especially if the topic were of interest to him. He loved to talk about G.K.Chesteron, Hilaire Belloc, Mestrovic, Yves Simon and others. I had six classes a day and was busy Saturday and Sunday so I really did not know him personally but we had a friendly relationship. I found him to be friendly, active, even in a hurry and at times pre-occupied. Other than the house schedule, which he followed, he did not participate much." (7)

By 1939 the indefatigable artist had enough paintings and drawings for a one-man art exhibit at the school and he authored another script: "The Little Brothers of St. Francis." This was first staged with puppets in Guerin Hall, St. Mary-of-the-Woods, Terre Haute, and later with live actors at St. Charles Boys' Home in Milwaukee and Dujarie Hall at Notre Dame. His article, "The Man from Texas Sees a Parade," appeared in *The Christian Social Art Quarterly,* the official bulletin of the Catholic Art Association which he had helped found. The article which appeared as a letter to Sisters Immaculee and Esther began as a poetic tribute to his native Texas and expressed his philosophy of life as an artist. He was writing this when he was only twenty-eight years old.

"Don't be surprised by this joint letter," he wrote, "for I have been to Texas where the spaces are broad and the mind outgrows myopic views. Where the sweep of distances awes the eye; and loosens the cramped conventions of crowds. Where the cotton grows and corn curls under a blistering sun. But I like it down there that way. I like the open-at-the-collar feel round the neck; the independent air scuttling in the nostrils with historic dust — a dust kicked up by the hoofs of mustangs, and of the prairies ringing with strains of arrows and Comanche curdlings.

"On my way back to Notre Dame [from a family visit in Houston] I stopped over in St. Louis to see Emil Frei... called Frei at the glass works. He sent someone down for me and we drove then to the shop. I met the workers there, saw a number of stained glass windows and mosaics... Frei insisted that we drive out to one of the quite modern churches to see a set of windows installed lately. I am enthusiastic about them, even if they are in an Anglican church. They really belong in a Catholic church although I am sure many of our pastors would object to them... I spent the rest of the afternoon exploring the glass shop and discovering for myself the methods of making a stain[ed] glass window while Frei and Harmon, his assistant, dabbled with a design problem for another window.

"During the lunch at the museum we spent about two and a half hours solving all the problems of art. I'm sure the waitresses there thought I was mad by my wild gestures and excited flow of words. We really had a wholesome discussion however.

"Frei has a unique organization; his purpose is not to make money but to produce good windows. He insists that his workers do not work for him but with him. His first assistant, Mr. Harmon, is a Protestant but at the same time one fully conscious, it seems to me, of the Catholic tradition and spirit; and one of the designers is a former communist, Frei tells me. I met her and she appears intelligent and very sincere. She gave up communism because Frei convinced her that Catholicism incorporates much more sensibly and much more permanently all of the social aspects of communism.

"Frei attempts specifically — as far as I could judge from his conversation and work — to utilize in it the spirit of the liturgy. He therefore is something a little bit, one might say, revoluntionary to some of our complaisant and timid clergy; but he is assuredly authentic as far as doctrine is concerned. And he is not interested in repeating the efforts of the early Christian or medieval periods but he is anxious to preserve the essential Christian character in a fusion of liturgy with the modern temper of life. Therefore, his art is basically symbolic and contemplative rather than literal and narrative. One will not find the usual representations of saints and incidents in his work: it is analytic and for that reason concise and packed with vital significance, with a specific liturgical message...

"I wonder how many have seen the Christian vision.It is not so common a thing, for it knocked Paul off his horse when he got it; and Ignatius spent two years in a cave to nurture it... Once art becomes severed from the organic structure of life, it becomes isolated, [a] bastard (if you will pardon an exact word) creature that has neither contact nor relationship with man's vital activities...

"Personally I have always very religiously avoided all reading that tended to shrink my innate appreciation (appreciation meaning comprehending reality and reacting normally and sincerely to it, a function therefore of the whole organism of man); to dry it with things I had no capacity to understand. To me the faculty of appreciation is extremely important — and something so delicate and delicious that I fear to expose it to some sort of artificiality or insincerity. My philosophy or vision, if you care to call it that, may be limited but it is neither isolated nor divided. And that is the secret of childhood. Of the saints. And as a consequence, though I have not been as active in producing art as I might have been, [in 1939 he was teaching high school] I always feel that today I am more of an artist than I was some years ago. And that is not strange at all, for development is an internal phenomenon that does not necessarily have anything to do with technique. But please don't think I have not read much. On the contrary, I have done a lot of it and I am much interested in all the Catholic resurgents including Maritain, Gill, Watkin, Guardini, Adam, Gilson, Claudel, Mauriac, Pfleger, Hopkins, Bloy, Dawson and that marvel of marvels, Dostoievsky, whom I never met to my misfortune till this summer...

"A Christian is a human being in love with his God and acutely aware of His interest and concern in the affairs of men. He is never a mere lover of humanity, never. As Dostoievsky speaks of one of his characters: the more he loved humanity the less he could stand the individual at his side. Christianity particularizes love and makes it collective in that it includes each creature because of its relation to God, the object of the love, the way a man or woman may love each other and all things contributing to the happiness of the other. Love then, Christian love, is not divisible; it must always be unified in Christ. That is the simplicity of the saints, and that is the meaning of the Mystical Body: a loving of One in all and all in One. [This] does form the essential integrity of my thought and experience. Therefore, a harmony of head and heart; and this to me must be the essential harmony of life — especially for the artist whose complete powers should be employed in penetrating reality. And certainly the Catholic artist by heritage alone potentially penetrates deepest into this reality; but actually few attain the depths." (8)

BOYS' HOMES — 1941–1958

Brother Hilarion's obedience was radiacally changed during the summer of 1941. Instead of teaching high school students and painting works or art, he was sent to Milwaukee, Wisconsin to do social work as teacher and prefect at St. Charles Boys' Home, a home for juvenile delinquents. Although the home had been initiated years earlier, not until 1928 had Holy Cross Brothers been invited to staff it by its founder, Archbishop Messmer. They were following a long tradition begun as early as 1851 by their founder, Father Moreau, who accepted a similar invitation from Pope Pius IX to operate Vigna Pia, a home for neglected boys in Rome. The St. Charles property covered 48 acres of rich farmland with classrooms, dormitories, shops and barns for horses, cows, pigs and chickens. Daily rising for all was 6:15 a.m. followed by Mass, meals, chores, classes, work and recreation. Boys, aged 12 to 14, arrived at the home from juvenile court and stayed for a period of five to nine months. Most were Catholics who had neither attended a Catholic school nor received any religious instruction. Before juvenile court opened, the home's director was given a report of a given boy's criminal activity and background, attended his hearing, interviewed the youngster and then pleaded with the judge for jurisdiction of the boy until such time as the delinquent demonstrated reliable self-control. As director of the home from 1946 to 1949, Hilarion showed remarkable discernment and compassion for potential reformees. Over the years, the work of the Brothers was so successful that 90 per cent of the boys who came under their supervision never returned to the court system once they rejoined society.

For five years Hilarion illustrated books, created Christmas cards, won "Honorable Mention" for his painting "Suburban Housing," exhibited in a group art show sponsored by the Wisconsin Art Association and founded and edited a weekly school newspaper, "The Carolinian." Volume 1, No. 1 appeared in December, 1941 with a wood block masthead proclaiming, CAROLINION, in bold black letters and the portrait of one of the boys in a stocking cap. "How do you like the results of our new printing press?" Hilarion wrote in the initial article. "In order to give the boys some idea of printing, the Women's Unit, which is always trying to broaden the activities for the boys, purchased the press." Instead of sending out letters each month announcing Smokers and other fund-raising activities, the newspaper would also profile activities of both boys and benefactors. Smokers provided men with entertainment in the form of boxing matches by the boys pummeling each other — much like the Golden Glove tournaments at Notre Dame.

Other news items included a request for donations of old ice-skates, skis, toboggans, books and games. Three sergeants had volunteered their time to begin a type of military training for the boys — not to prepare them for war — but to improve physical co-ordination and psychological discipline. Rewards were given for straight marching lines and prompt obedience to commands. Demerits were issued for non-conformity observed by fellow cadet-bookkeepers. The Women's Unit held card parties to raise money for the institution and formed sewing groups to mend the boys' clothing. A yearly membership fee of one dollar gained one's entrance into the Men's Club. Each member was urged to bring one new member into the organization. Since there were 5000 members, a building fund would benefit considerably from even such a paltry yearly membership fee.

"We are gradually building up opportunities for the boys to learn some useful trade," Hilarion wrote. "Some are interested in learning to cook, others enjoy working

on our small farm. The shop is a haven for boys in the ninth and tenth grades who are interested in working with their hands. This year we have acquired six used typewriters which give twelve boys who are interested in secretarial work an opportunity to try their skill... The thing we need most is more room and better facilities to teach vocational subjects so that every boy will have an opportunity to learn a trade."

With his usual practicality the editor closed with a sale's pitch for his new publication: "If you are thinking of advertising, why not try an ad in the 'Carolinion'? It has a circulation of five thousand copies a month and reaches every part of the city and county. In this way you will benefit and we too will have an income to cover the cost of mailing." A wood cut in red ink of Christmas Season's Wishes appeared under a membership blank for the St. Charles Boy's Home Foundation. Name, address, city and year were clearly indicated with the reminder: "Annual dues one dollar, cut off here..." to be sent with the money.

By the summer of 1942 the number of ads appearing in the "Carolinion" had mutilplied and so had activities in the home. Hilarion reported finishing his monumental three-wall mural in the recreation room that covered 736 square feet and featured portraits of the sixty boys in residence. Besides putting up the first cutting of hay on the farm, the boys were taken to Greenfield Park for swimming and a picnic. Jokes were an added feature of the newspaper, some indicative of the Second World War then raging.

BIG BUSINESS

"Shine please, boy," said the 6' 5" soldier to the shoe shiner.
The boy looked down at the vast expase of foot before him.
"Bill," he called to another boy, "gimme a hand--I've got an army contract."

GRAVE SITUATION

A: My doctor could be called "Patience on a monument."
B: Are you sure he hasn't many monuments on his patients?

In October Saint Charles was one of the agencies participating in the Community War Chest Drive. Since all operating expenses for the home came from that source, Brother Hilarion was happy to prepare a window display for the drive exhibited at the Northwestern Furniture Company. He had won second prize for his display the previous year and hoped to do better in 1942.

Using all the boys from his classes and dormitory, Brother Hilarion wrote, directed, designed, built and painted the sets for the annual Christmas and Mother's Day musicals. He observed each boy's personality before writing a part specifically for him. Titles for such shows included: "A Mistletoe Christmas," "Barbershop Banter," "Stars, Stripes and Static," "Cowboy Christmas Capers," "The Lions Roar," "What Comes Naturally," and "Little Brothers of St. Francis." Another of his productions was "On This Day," a May Miscellany given to honor the boys' mothers.

"I taught English but I taught what I knew about art too," he remembered. "We put on some really wonderful theatre productions. We put on Sigmund Romberg's 'New Moon,' and it happened to be the year that Hollywood came out with it too and we really pulled it off. I built eight sets — complicated affairs. . . Whatever job you are in, you have to try to enhance it. If a teacher is creative, he is always making a newness of what he is teaching — an adventure each time." (9)

For "The Associate of St. Joseph," a Holy Cross magazine published in Watertown, he sketched illustrations and published the poem,

"Via Dolorosa."

O Mother Mary, the closing dusk
Reveals the lightning flash;
And storming winds unsheath
The sounding lash!
O Mother Mary, what distant roar
Of thunder in the clouds;
And misty skies put on
Their leaden shrouds!

O Mary, Mother, the rushing rain
Beats on the nearby hill:
Fury pushes with silver shields
To kill, to kill!

Hilarion also wrote several articles for the same magazine: "Upthrust and Grandeur" and "Art and the Catholic Artist." His criticism of contemporary Catholic artists was obvious in the first paragraph of the second article. "What is the nature and character of Catholic art?" he began.

> "This question is partly arswered when one asks another question — Can art in any strict sense be limited to a 'Catholic' label, anymore than truth can be labeled as 'Catholic truth'? But one fact quite obviously does characterize the Catholic artist today: he is not, with vitality at least, utilizing the rich sources of inspiration which his faith and his membership in the society of the Church imply.

"Many reasons for this failure have been advanced; but the conclusion one must inevitably draw is that Catholic artists, in general, and a Catholic art patronage, if there is such a thing, in particular, are not aware that these possibilities can and should be forming a tradition of expression that could have, to some extent, the effect of revivifying the religious consciousness of our contemporary Mass; for beauty is a vital need as a complement to knowledge. 'God has given men the sense of the beautiful as the flower of our knowledge,' says Don Luigi Sturzo. In a way, this failure on the part of Catholic art is equivalent to a reminder that Catholic doctrine has not permeated the soul of the Catholic public; has certainly not inebriated, even mildly, theCatholic artist with the exuberant splendour of its vibrant truth.This failure definitely reveals a lack of insight on the part of Catholics in general into the faith which alone, of all faiths, can transform the realities into significant patterns of beauty and truth and goodness. . . Catholic artists, generally speaking, are following the lead of secular art movements. They are perhaps frightened away, and rightly so, by the lack of sympathy which they encounter from a Catholic public at large which is lacking pathetically both in an understanding and appreciation of art, and likewise of Catholic doctrine; but mostly suffering from an inexcusable dread of contamination from an art which unwittingly they associate with no higher motives than commercial advertising. But to some extent the greater fault is with the Catholic artist himself, who has not bothered much to participate in a personal way in that genuine supernatural power by means of which the Church brings Christ to men. . .

"It is, therefore, quite pertinent to hope that Catholic artists will not shy clear of any and all phases of Catholic experience; for, where there is God's grace, there, certainly, is the joy and admiration which is an intimation that Christ is with us, Christ is within us and around us. But the Catholic artist must familiarize himself with this Presence before it can go out of him, through his art, to others. And Catholic art sympathy, likewise, must learn to embrace this comprehensive experience so that it can be prepared to recognize Him even in such a frosted mirror as human hands and a human mind must fashion. Only then will Catholic art be catholic enough to invigorate and sustain Catholic consciousness." (10)

Hilarion wrote these words in 1946, some twenty years before Pope John XXIII opened the sealed windows of the Church to the beauty of God's created universe by invoking Vatican Council II.

Brother Rene Lenhard remembers: "I came by his office one day as he was painting a watercolor. He was wearing his habit and as the bell rang for chapel, staring intently at his art work, he absent-mindedly reached down, grabbed a fold in his habit, and wiped the paint brush on his habit. When he realized what he had done, he laughed at himself! We used to refer to him as *Brother Hilarious.* He was one of the best men with whom I have been stationed. He was unpretentious in that what you saw was what you got! He was extremely intelligent, perceptive and compassionate. His high pitched voice and raucous laughter often masked these qualities at first meeting." (11)

In the midst of his time-consuming work with boys and staff at St. Charles, Hilarion found time to write a profound and searching article for the *Associate of St. Joseph.* Titled "Up-Thrust and Grandeur" he began:

"Often our lives are whetted with apprehensions, at no time more so than when we have important decisions to make. In a sense that is natural. Man seems to have an instinct to fear new steps, new projections into the future, because he has no way of determining their outcome... Man never enjoys absolute assurance: just when he feels most sure he is struck by fear... It is surprising to note in Scripture the number of times our Lord uses the words 'Fear not.' We never seem to lose this fear of insecurity and uncertainty unless we transcend it by faith.

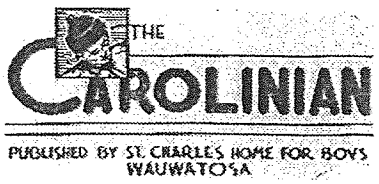
"Uncertainty from one point of view, however, is really a part of what can be called the romance of living, the poetic fact which makes life worth risking and more profoundly makes even our salvation precariously exciting. There is no doubt that in its ultimate implication uncertainty is at the heart of courage and faith, for courage is not at all a lack of fear anymore than faith is a lack of certitude. Courage, rather, can be called a corollary to fear, and faith exonerates it of foolhardiness... fear is a reality nonetheless poignant enough to draw a tautness into our hearts. There is ample reason for this apprehension, for only a fool is not aware of his helplessness to provide adequately and irrevocably for his future....

"We would be traitors to hope were we to allow our native cowardice to betray our self-interests, our ideals and our fulfillments; for all three constitute the triple fiber of our thoughts and motivations... 'Let not your heart be troubled' is the Scriptural exhortation. 'You believe in God, believe also in Me.' We need that assurance to overcome our fear and to strengthen our faith...

"We must make an effort to reach fulness. Maritain asks somewhere 'What is genius but a risk,' and we can ask the same question concerning our lives and our salvation. Do we know for certain where all our reasonings, directions and planned techniques will lead us in the end?... How often is our wisdom but a blind fury, our prattling but a pattering premonition of more pain? For in a sense we have only blindness and faith to lead us. How then are we to avoid those fears and hesitations consequent on our limitations and shortsightedness? We don't know how except, perhaps, to dare and by our daring to transcend them and by our faith belittle them; for we are harassed by them only because we do recognize them and in that act of recognition we assume a speck of humility. But recognition is not enough. Awareness of paucity usually inspires a lack of confidence, a serious obstacle to daring, if it is not substantiated by faith in God which makes it assume the position of virtue, and by trust which clothes it with the transcendent quality of grace itself. Then our fear participates in the grandeur of God, for it implicates his Wisdom and Providence. How else could we endure the sight of our myopism and not despair?

"We have no choice in the matter at all. Once we have recognized our limitations in their relation to the full grandeur of God's intentions and, in the natural point of view, in their relation to the fulness of man's necessities, we must forego all pretentiousness. There is nothing left for any of us after that but God and his Providence. We are thrown irrevocably upon His grace; we are almost forced to believe in His solicitude or else grow sullen with pessimism and despair. Even here, however, the implications deepen, for Don Sturzo says, 'There is no other alternative for man but either grace or sin...'

"We must take risks even in our advance toward God. In a manner of speaking, the saints took the risk when the promptings of grace poised for them new projections. Certainly they were still free to choose. And they did... We ought not to lose courage; for we too are confronted with those crucial tests on which depend perhaps even our salvation! Surely they involve our growth, and finally our happiness. To make effort, therefore, is not pride but the greatest prudence. We must seek counsel, we must deliberate and most of all, we must cooperate with the grace at hand.

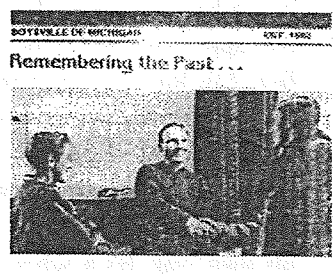


"The world is full of failures...because they lacked initiative and, above all, courage... Mediocrity is stagnation of our inherent developments. We do not choose to grow. By definition, therefore, mediocrity is already a foretaste of hell...What is more critical in our lives than the conflict between our magnanimous purpose and the pulsillanimous tendencies we have derived from the Fall? It is really a conflict between growth and complacency; because it involves change — fundamental, change of heart. We don't like to give up our security. We don't want to give up our wills. It amounts really to a conflict between acquisitiveness and poverty of spirit.

"Material comforts and material successes, with all their power and prestige and pamperings, what are they but emptiness when divested of the true glory which comes from integrity of purpose and its corresponding fulfillment? And there is only one purpose for man — finally: for God has made him for Himself. And that is by degrees our final fulfillment: the love of God; for we are happy only with His love, when we love. We do however snatch an intimation of that love when we fulfill, to whatever degree, our aspirations; but we are truly and irrevocably happy only when we remain what we are essentially intended to be — loving and confiding children of God: God our Father; Christ our Brother; and all familiarly bound together as a family through our service and solicitude. ... We must be, finally, like children; we are indeed still helpless; but through His grace, He has allowed us to participate as members of his family in the noblest function possible to creatures; and the potentialities of that participation are measured only by the infinitude of His mercy. Father; children; mercy! It is the supreme prerogative; it is exquisite Love which only a Son's expiation could require. It is all so very much more than what our minds can encompass; what poor, frail, human hearts can endure! (12)

BOYSVILLE OF MICHIGAN — 1949–1956

Boysville began in 1948 on a 400 acre plot of muddy, weed-choked land near Macon, Michigan. The land was a gift from Henry Ford II to Edward Cardinal Mooney who promptly decided it would be an ideal home and school for boys from broken homes. The Knights of Columbus would subsidize the venture to the tune of $100,000 a year and the Brothers of Holy Cross would staff it. The first sixteen boys were greeted by Boysville's first director, Brother Patrick Cain, who was not at all sure that the project would succed. "It will take a miracle," he said. The buildings were ramshakle wood frame barracks hauled in from the National Youth Administration in Detroit. After a painful year in a job for which he felt himself unqualified, Brother Patrick resigned as director and was replaced by Brother Hilarion — the charismatic, gregarious, go-getter who transformed the place in just seven years.


Remembering the Past . . .

One of Hilarion's first acts was to trade-in the school's Chevrolet station wagon for a Ford. After all, Henry Ford II was a special benefactor and the new director didn't think it was right for the boys to drive a General Motors car into the city. He convinced wealthy visitors to give large amounts of money for building a new brick dormitory, chapel and gymnasium assuring them they were contributing to the education of the next President of the United States. He refused to name other new buildings after their benefactors, choosing instead, such names as Holy Cross, Holy Rosary Chapel, Mooney, St. Joseph and St. Thomas More School. There was one exception. Dettman Hall was named to honor William Dettman, a carpenter working at Boysville.

Those early days were not easy for any of the staff. Years later Brother Alex,one of Hilarion's co-workers, would recall, "The Brothers did it all back then. We taught school by day, coached the athletic teams, cooked meals for ourselves and the boys, prefected the dormitories in the evening, and acted as parents. Each day was nearly the same. None of this TGIF stuff. Our job was 365 days a year." (13)

Hilarion once accepted the gift of a donkey as a kind of mascot for the school. As Earl Temerowski, one of the first boarders, remembered, "It had this thing about ramming us or kicking as we walked across campus. But Brother Hilarion liked the donkey. He refused to get rid of it until it struck home. During Mass we heard clomping on a porch above the chapel. Brother ran upstairs to see what was happening. We heard a loud wail and the sound of someone falling downstairs. The next day the donkey was gone." (14)

Michigan's Governor, G. Mennen Williams, was once invited to a function at the school and Hilarion lined up the boys holding big letters that were supposed to read: "HELLO, GOV. WILLIAMS." The boy carrying the O got into the wrong place so the greeing read: "OHELL GOV. WILLIAMS."

To supplement support from the Knights of Columbus, Hilarion sponsored benefits featuring personal appearances by Eddie Cantor, Edgar Gergen and "Charlie McCarthy," Ted Mack and others. Thomas M. Kavanagh, state deputy of the Knights of Columbus, made frequent appearances at these functions and soon became a State Supreme Court Justice.

Brother Hilarion's seven years as director of Boysville of Michigan were particularly fruitful. He increased enrollment from 15 boys in 1949 to 136 in 1956 and helped more than 900 boys during its first eight years of

operation. From an initial faculty of four Brothers, the energetic new director increased the number of lay faculty to fourteen and added another nine staff members. A fully-accredited high school program developed that included well-rounded extracurricular programs of varsity and intramural sports, concert and marching band, Saddle Club, photography department and wood and machine shops. Hilarion founded and edited two student publications: "The Boysville Journal" and "The Campus Info" to keep residents, their families and generous benefactors informed of the activities and needs of the boys. A close friend of Edward Cardinal Mooney, Hilarion put himself at the service of both the Archidiocese of Detroit and the Knights of Columbus. His frequent travels included much of Michigian promoting Boysville by speaking before councils of fellow Knights of Columbus. He even rose in that organization to its highest possible status, Fourth Degree Knight. He inaugurated an Annual Open House and a Knights of Columbus Field Day that attracted as many as 1500 people to view the school's programs in operation. Besides overseeing the school's fifth graduation exercises, he organized a Parent-Teacher Association and an Alumni Club so that Boysville graduates could keep in touch with their *alma mater* and hopefully send financial support in gratitude after their success in the business world.

To nourish and deepen his spiritual life, Hilarion spent five weeks during the summer of 1953 at the Dominican Institute in River Forest, Illinois. He studied the psychology of asceticism, theology of the supernatural life, history of spirituality, Canon Law for religious, basic psychiatry, vocations and spiritual direction and the lay apostolate. "The courses were neither graded nor credited," he remembered. There were no examinations, term papers, grades or credits. "You get out of them a pile of mimeograph material and all that you assimilate. At the end of the three year course a certificate will be issued to anyone so desiring it; but I suppose its main intent is to provide the opportunity of assimilating the substance of the spiritual life both from a practical and from a teaching point of view." (15)

His seven years of hard work and dedication at Boysville did not go unnoticed. When his provincial transferred him from Macon, Michigan, to Variety Boys Ranch in Bedford, Texas, a disappointed mother wrote to Hilarion's provincial, Brother Ephrem O'Dwyer:

> "The Holy Cross Order is to be commended on turning out such a wonderful Brother as is Brother Hilarion Brezik, Director of Boysville. The boys of Boysville and all people who have had the chance to meet him, in all walks of life, feel a deep loss in his transfer from Boysville to Texas. It leaves a sting in each boy's heart. This is a very bad pill to swallow. Their good shephard [sic] is leaving. His teachings and his counseling have been a great inspiration to the boys. Their deep respect for him was as to a kindly mother and father. His tireless efforts made each boy appreciate his goodness which flowed from his face. His kind look put trust and faith in his boys' hearts. He need never philosifize [sic]. The boys love him. This I observed and it put a deep faith and trust in people where ever he went. He left an indelible mark each boy's heart that they will cherish each in his own way. It's a school of golden opportunities. The boys come out with a deeper love for their faith. Brother Hilarion is as a corner stone to Boysville. In the beginning Boysville was just a vast countryside. Today it is a beautiful little city. In his tours for the benefit of Boysville, people listened and opened their hearts to his speeches, for they knew it was for a worthwhile cause. With God's help and teachings of the Holy Cross Fathers [sic] and his own unselfish goodness Brother Hilarion is an asset to the Order. God bless you. Respectfully, Mrs.Irene Rodebach."

BOYS RANCH — 1956–1958

Hilarion's brief two years in Bedford, Texas, were far less fruitful and much more frustrating than any of his previous fifteen years of working in boys' homes. Founded and funded by the Variety Club of Dallas, Boys Ranch was from the beginning a non-sectarian institution and the first of its kind managed by Holy Cross Brothers. In 1956 the entertainment industry from which the Variety Club originated was undergoing radical changes and enormous profit losses. Without its financial support the home for boys from broken homes could not long continue in spite of Hilarion's valiant efforts at fund-raising. The Ranch covered 230 acres with four stone buildings, six cottages, four houses for 21,000 chickens and several farm buildings and sheds. An outdoor swimming pool was a gift from Audie Murphy, the movie star and World War II hero, whose brother had once lived at the Ranch. Brother Hilarion was joined by Brothers Marcus Coogan and Hugh Wray along with chaplain, Fr. Joseph Rick.

Bedford, located half-way between Dallas and Fort Worth, was five miles from Ammon Carter Air Field whose helicopters and huge B-36's filled the sky with roaring aircraft that often shook buildings. The town was a predominantly non-Catholic community so at first the Holy Cross men were looked upon with suspicion which only gradually warmed into friendly acceptance. Thirty-six boys ranging in age from eight to fourteen lived at the Ranch and attended nearby public schools. Besides prefecting duties, Brothers taught moral guidance classes, crafts and even started a Boy Scout troop.

Brother Hilarion reported soon after taking over leadership of the project:

> "Only one of the boys is a Catholic and we will not set out to make converts of the rest. But we do hope to foster a Christian atmosphere and to conduct a moral guidance program. In working with these boys we hope to show them through daily association and example the ideals of the Catholic faith. By spreading understanding of the Catholic Church a great amount of unreasoning prejudice can be broken down."

To calm fears that the Ranch might *not* be kept non-sectarian, Hilarion explained, "We have staff members of every religious faith represented here. It just happened that way. We see to it that the Methodist is taken to his church, the Baptist is taken to his church and so on. Each boy has an adult member of the staff seeing to it he gets to the church that his parents or some responsible person on the outside has prescribed. Before we take a boy, we make certain there is a definite future plan for him. We have 'joint custody' of the boy, rather than full-legal custody; in this way someone on the outside continues to have a stake in the future of the boy. We try to foster this association beween the boy and his family — to get the family together again if it is at all possible. We work on the idea that whatever difficulty, whether it is money, lack of it, or something else, that those difficulties on the outside can be worked out with some help from us. And we are helping the Variety Club provide a home for the boy while this is being done." (17)

Hilarion's first letter asking for funds from benefactors shows his compassion and zeal for the boys' welfare. Under a masthead showing a line drawing of the ranch buildings and a motto, "A Texas home for homeless Texas boys." Hilarion wrote:

> "We have thirty-six reasons why VARIETY BOYS RANCH is in business. Each reason involves a different story — with the same result: a boy is try-

ing, sometimes desperately, to grow into manhood.

"I wish you could read those stories — social histories they are called; but really they are more often the record of a boy's heartaches, and his aloneness.

"Those of us who have been blessed with a good home, dutiful and loving parents, are not fully able to understand what gifts God has given us. But any one of our thirty-six stories can give us an inkling of what our life could have been without them.

"We honestly think we are preparing a good program and good home for our neglected and sometimes homeless youngsters. All of our boys attend public schools in our neighborhood and participate without discrimination in all the advantages of the school program. They play athletics with their school teams, participate in the school music program, and cooperate in civic projects of the school. And, after school hours, just like all the other Bedford children, they return to their home — here at the Ranch.

Brother Hilarion 'Favorite' At Ranch

"And that is what we are striving to make VARIETY BOYS RANCH — a home, where youngsters, to a certain extent, can 'feel at home.' No substitute can ever take the place of a boy's real home, of course; but, under the circumstances, we want ever to strive to make VARIETY BOYS RANCH the next best thing to it — if possible.

"That is why we need your help and your interest. A home not only offers a boy protection and security and love; but also growth, incentive and a hope.We want to meet these needs by giving him the opportunities — manual, cultural, worshipful — which are commensurate with their fruitful fulfillment in him.

"I know you will therefore want to help us. Making a home and maintaining it is costly. You can send whatever you wish — $1 or more, any amount will help us to give a boy the chance to prove, primarily to himself, that he can become the man he hopes to be — with only a bit of our encouragement and faith in him.

"Thank you — and God bless you!" (18)

Work went so well the first year that the Ranch earned the respect of the local community and was commended by the State Department of Public Welfare as a model for the entire department. Cost of operating the Ranch, however, averaged $2000 a week. Unfortunately neither the income from chickens nor donatons from the Variety Club could sustain the upkeep of Ranch and residents after 1958. One by one the boys were sent away and the property sold. It was a bitter disappointment for Brother Hilarion and his co-workers but he was soon appointed to an even more onerous position. Brother John Baptist Titzer, first Provincial of the the South-West Province of Brothers, named him his Assistant Provincial with the approval of Christopher J. O'Toole, Superior General of the Congregation of Holy Cross.

From a ship nearing Naples, Cardinal Mooney wrote Hilarion: "I was surprised to hear that your second job of presiding over the beginnings of an institution for boys faded out for lack of financial support and it would have been interesting to hear your comments on the possibilities of the Dallas institution [Variety Boys Ranch] — so different from Boysville. But I am glad to see that you are in the upper echelon now and I wish you well... I have a few hard weeks ahead and I know that I can count on your prayers to hold up under the strain. There will be very few youngsters [cardinals] in the conclave but not all have the same handicap!" (19)

Nov 1-2.
2006 =
50th Anniversary
of SW Prov of Bros

ASSISTANT PROVINCIAL — 1958–1968

From the 1956 inception of the South-West Province of Brothers that included twenty-seven States and 194 professed religious, Brother Hilarion served as a provincial councilor in addition to his work at the Variety Boys Ranch. "I will never forget that first council meeting we held on November 1, 1956," he wrote in 1975 recalling his admiration for Brother John Baptist. "I... drove in[to Austin] for the meeting. The members present greeted me with grim faces; they had been carefully going over all the needs and potential of the incipient province. Prospects looked bleak to all of us and all were convinced the year would be a very difficult and, perhaps, even disastrous one. As it turned out, when the end of the fiscal year came around, the anticipated deficit had not materialized and the fledgling province finances were in the black. It took ingenious planning and contriving on the part of Brother John [Baptist] to accomplish this miracle." (20)

In 1958, Hilarion was named Brother John Baptist's assistant provincial and took up residence in Sorin Hall on the St. Edward University campus in Austin. His new duties involved directing province development and public relations and serving as a proxy member of the university's Board of Lay Advisors. In 1969 he would be appointed to the Board of Trustees and serve as secretary and member of the executive council. He also worked on the design of a beautiful new provincial residence. Using Texas field stone and a natural setting on a hillside, his house plans had only one flaw. The new buiilding had hardly opened for operation when the first rainfall indicated that a *flat* roof was *not* what the edifice needed. Its first occupants had to use pots and pans to catch the water pouring down from many locations. Hilarion's sister once visited the place and found it "quite interesting."

Hilarion often recruited St. Edward's students while making provincial visits to province high schools. He served on the board of directors for Austin Diocese Catholic Charities and founded the *South-West Review* which for ten years provided bimonthly news of province members and their activities to some 4000 readers. He kept active membership in the National Association of Children's Institutions and attended workshops to improve his skill at public relations.

In 1960 he inaugurated the first-ever "CSC ART SHOW" which displayed seventy works of art by eleven Brothers, six of whom were St. Edward's alumni: Brothers Sylvester Krus, Terrence Haas, Edwin Reggio, Earl Chandler, Thomas Porfidio and Hugo Ellis. His own contributions to the show included twenty-three oil paintings, thirteen watercolors and ten mixed media offerings. In the program's "Foreward," Hilarion explained:

> "This exhibit has a practical aim: to display the occasional art work of the Brothers of Holy Cross in the South-West Province, which they achieve mostly in their spare time from teaching in our various schools....
>
> "But it also has another value — more intangible but just as real: we hope it will help us a little to become better teachers and better religious. For instance:
>
> "Most of the Brothers of Holy Cross are busy with teaching some part of the 5,000 boys who make up the enrollment of these schools. Their day for the most part is filled with papers to be graded, lesson planning, extra-curricular activities. Satisfying, zestful, crowded days, to be sure; but there are other things too, like prayer — and creativity....
>
> "So, as is evidenced here, many find cherished moments which they devote to the art of 'making

things' — a painting, perhaps, a drawing, a piece of art which betrays their aspirations, their concern with expression and beauty....

"And it is fitting that they do this; for as teachers devoted to the transmission of truth, they have the obligation of acquainting their students with the highest expression of it in the art, sculpture, literature, music and movements of mankind....

"As religious dedicated to the cultivation of the good, they have the obligation of showing others what is more enduring and substantial among values of life.....

"As Christians privileged with a glimpse of heaven, they must make the incentives of living and worship attractively inspiring....

"In the final analysis, God is Truth, Goodness and Beauty. And in preparing ourselves for a promised participation in His eternal activity, we derive a foretaste of Him in our own deepening three-fold perception of the world we live in; for the whole of creation is only 'a mirror held up to God'....

"This is the first group display of Holy Cross art. We are hopeful that it lead to more and better ones in the future." (21)

After its St. Edward's closing, the exhibit of portraits, still lifes, drawings, illustrations, collages and woodcarvings went on tour, circulating among the eight South-West Province high schools for the viewing pleasure of thousands of students.

In 1961 Hilarion designed and edited the program for the Silver Jubilee of the National Catholic Theatre conference hosted by Brother Dunstan Bowles. His booklet to promote Brothers' vocations proved so attractive that all three provinces of Brothers ordered multiple copies. In a letter to Brother John Baptist, Hilarion remarked, "Bishop Reicher [of Austin] gave all necessary permissions for the booklet, but I haven't heard from the [Superior] General yet. I wrote him that your approval for printing the booklet was sufficient, but since all three provinces... would be using the booklet, we thought best to use his permission, if possible, in the booklet rather than the name of any one of the provincials.... You also will be interested in Brother Ephrem's response to the vocation booklet. He ordered 3,000, and both he and Brother Elmo were enthusiastic about the text. Brother Ephrem remarked that the text lived up to the quality of the format. Quite a comment, coming from him!" In his role as promoter of province development, Hilarion added, "I thought you might be interested to hear that the special gifts drive at St. Ed's went over the $200,000 mark on Saturday with a $10,000 gift from Mrs. Block in Houston." (22)

As assistant provincial, Hilarion often made annual visitations for John Baptist. On one trip to Brazil he either forgot or ignored the provincial's custom of buying a couple bottles of whiskey at the duty-free counter and toasting the brothers upon his arrival. Noting this breach of custom, the superior, Brother Gerald Gates, paced the corridor cautioning: "Stay in your rooms! He didn't bring anything!" On each of these visits he sketched scenes that interested him — jungle, beach, houses. His taste was eclectic and his curiosity boundless.

Following his participation as an elected delegate to the Congregation's General Chapter in Rome, 1962, Hilarion toured Europe for three months. He visited relatives in Aachen, quaffed champagne in France and viewed art galleries in Naples, Rome, Florence, Venice, Munich, Amsterdam, The Hague, Brussels, Paris and London. He made sketches, painted watercolors and took photographs in Italy, Austria, Germany, Holland, Begium, France and England. He learned a valuable lesson early on during that summer. "I went to the tourist service office" in every city, he wrote to John Baptist, "and had cheap, good, convenient accommodations in about five minutes. That has been the story everywhere. By the way, that American Express arrangement I made with Brother Edmund and picking up mail there is my biggest headache. Usually American Express is situated in difficult areas — usually in the high-falutin', ritzy section of town. And then try to pick up mail there! It's an all-day affair, for it appears that every American on the loose in Europe is waiting in line to pick up mail... The art galleries have been wonderful and more than worthwhile. In a way, it is better that I have been able to travel alone for I have been able to adjust my schedules and arrangements to suit my plans." (23)

The second exhibition of Holy Cross Brothers' art works caused a bit of a controversy when a large oil painting by Brother Dunstan of Barbara Rolly, the fiancee of St. Edward's student, Norman De Tullio, was unveiled in the dining hall of St. Edward's University. A woman viewing the work was shocked at seeing Barbara in a strapless ball gown wearing long white gloves and showing bare shoulders. Both Hilarion and Dunstan brushed off the

irate criticism and left the painting on display for the duration of the show. Hilarion explained, "The purpose of these exhibits every two years is to provide incentive and stimulation for members of the three provinces who are interested and skilled in the various creative arts, and to establish an outlet for displaying and comparing their efforts on some professional basis." (24) For the exhibit's program, he wrote, "Art convinces man that affirmation is stronger after doubt, pleasure the more poignant after pain, and courage possible only after fear." (25)

In 1963, Hilarion attended a month-long workshop in Cuernavaca, Mexico, on "Social Change and its Impact on Education in Latin America." He continued his editorship of the *South-West Review,* urging reporters to send interesting photographs of Brothers at work. "Don't be afraid to come up with something different," he urged. Each issue specialized in some form of apostolate — even band directors!

Hilarion's mother, Frances Brezik, died on Easter Sunday morning, 1968. Her funeral Mass was celebrated the following Tuesday in All Saints Church and she was buried beside her husband who had passed on some forty-one years before.

THE PROFESSOR — 1968–1979

Knowing that his work as Assistant Provincial would end in the summer of 1968, Brother Hilarion applied for a teaching position at St. Edward's University. President Brother Raymond Fleck welcomed him saying, "It is a pleasure to invite you to the faculty for the 1968-69 school year. . . You will bring some very interesting experience to our faculty. All of us who have been deeply involved in the changes at St. Edward's in the past three or four years are pinning a great deal of our hopes on the fine arts program. Thus, you will be involved in one of the most actively developing areas." (26) The 1968 fall term found Hilarion busily at work teaching printmaking with wood and linoleum blocks, watercolor, art history and life drawing.

Commenting on his decade of service to the community as assistant provincial, he wrote, "I don't regret those years; they were broadening. I had opportunities to attend public relations seminars and mental health seminars and to work with social service agencies. I got a chance to travel in South America and to Europe. I got to attend a seminar on intercultural formation in Cuernavaca and all the time I worked and traveled I painted. I suppose you would say incidentally. I was too busy during and after my official visitation to Brazil to do more than make some sketches and on my trip to Europe I tried to make paintings of the great rivers of all the countries, but, really, I only have paintings of England and Italy and France, but after I came home from the seminar in Cuernavaca I had made sketches of each of my classmates, so I painted life-size watercolors of the sketches and sent them to each classmate." (27)

For the twentieth anniversary of Boysville of Michigan, Hilarion was invited to give the main address at the celebration. As second director, he recalled that in the early years, Boysville was known affectionately as "Mudville" before landscaping, streets and sidewalks were completed.

> "We tried hard," he admitted, "to touch the imagination of people in Michigan. We probably did not do the job completely but I think we did generate sufficient enthusiasm to pull Boysville out of the mud. Obviously we did for the reality today speaks for itself. Boysville is no longer merely a dream. Most of what we dreamed about twenty, even twelve years ago has come true. I realize that the context of Boysville — in many dimensions — has changed. So much of what you are today is grown up. You would not want to go back to what we were — a bunch of starry-eyes pioneers. But I sincerely hope you will keep on dreaming and that your enthusiasm will continue. Enthusiasm is contagious and dreams are infinite. And serving human need of any sort is a beatitude." (28)

Five years later during a gala silver anniversary celebration, a reporter wrote:

"Today Boysville is a flourishing, $4 million complex of modern brick buildings, paved roads and sidewalks. More than 4,000 young men have passed through its portals. It sent hundreds on to college and gave 60,000 K. of C. members a warm feeling of accomplishment, and indirectly moved a small town attorney to the Michigan Supreme Court. It wasn't easy. It took the ingenuity and benign con artist persuasion of the Brothers of Holy Cross, as well as the clout and interest of some of the state's most important people, to pull it off." (29)

Brother Hilarion's biography appeared in the first edition of *Who's Who in International Art and Antiques,* published in Cambridge, England, in 1972. For his distinguished work, he was awarded the Board of Editors' Certificate of Merit. Two years later, St. Edward's

University established a Bachelor of Arts degree in Art thanks to four years of tenacious planning and haranguing by Hilarion and Walle Conoly. Obstacles that had to be overcome included lack of money, little student interest and even less enthusiasm from the Academic Council who had to approve the major that required 48 academic credit hours.

For the May, 1974 St. Edward's Literary Magazine, Hillarion composed the following poem with a delicate line drawing to illustrate it:

"Nobody knows
When the movement stops,
Inertia sets in.
Nobody...
Many years can go by.
the dead rest.
And darkness glimmers
on an ocean bed.
Ships have gone down
And are laid to rest.
But, somewhere, on an ocean bed
A mast may shimmer,
A prow may shake
And wake, for a moment.
A glow-eyed paleozoic pause[s] and scurries by.
And eon, buried in the mud, may stir.
Nobody knows when the movement stops.
Many years can go by.
Explorers are rare
And strange
On the bed of an ocean:
They glide like film in slow motion;
Muted and blurred,
They do not look like men
On the bottom of the ocean.
Hardly anyone
Remembers a pebble thrown
From any rooftop,
Or any prominence, then.
And occasionally a bubble
Bounds back into the sunlight
To validate a premonition
To vindicate a predilection.
That is what the trouble is —
Hardly anyone remembers
A hill, a tree,
Or a woman's tenderness —
Hardly anyone.
And only occasionally
A molecule of air
Breaks free
Shrieking its way into our consciousness.

Nobody notices
As sunken galleons,
Stored with untold treasures,
Lie dreaming on the ocean floor,
Breathing, intermittently, with unremitting promises.

Dreams and promises.....
Men are as confounded on an ocean bed
As eyes are uncertain in the furtive darknesses. (30)

By 1979 Hilarion's paintings were hanging in homes and galleries of Wisconsin, Michigan, Indiana, Pennsylvania, Louisiana, California, Texas, Paris, Rome and West Berlin. He was listed in *Who's Who in Art, Who's Who in the Southwest, Personalities of the South* and the *Dictionary of International Biographies.*

For the St. Edward's Faculty Artists' Exhibit of 1972, Hilarion produced a number of new watercolors that evolved from his renewed interest in printmaking. "And Then the Roosters Crowed" was an evocative combination of woodblock printing, stamping and water color. "Judas Goat" was the result of several textured surfaces stamped onto watercolor paper using bold watercolor pigments. "Along the Line Even the Madonna Has Changed" showed his interest in blot printing adapted to watercolor.

He once remarked to an interviewer: "I never had a job I didn't enjoy, but I welcome the chance to get into art though 30 years behind time. Now I am better able to understand what I want to do. I believe an artist should be well-rounded. Every person has to suffer whether he wants to or not. It's not just the suffering artist, but the suffering everybody. In proportion to what a person suffers he gains in stature — if he puts his heart into it." He concluded, "Vocations bog down in utilitarian necessities sometimes but there is creativity behind every spiritual force. The two are synonymous: creativity and spirituality. Whatever job you are in, you have to try to enhance it. If a teacher is creative, he is always making a newness of what he is teaching — an adventure each time." (31)

In his 1973 article for the *Austin American-Statesman* titled,"On Display, St. Ed's Boasts U. S. Tapestry Gifts," Hilarion wrote, "A recent gift to St. Edward's University by Mrs. Louis Foussadier of Miami, Fla., recalls the earliest instance of tapestry making in America. Three mod-

erate-sized tapestries depicting classical and exotic themes are on display in the faculty lounge of Moody Hall until Feb. 25. The tapestries were woven by Louis Foussadier, a master weaver and descendent of generations of master weavers of the Aubusson tradition. Aubusson tapestries are named after the town in France where they were made and have a particular style of fine stitching. Foussadier's father helped found the tapestry industry in the United States at the turn of the century." Started in 1893 in New York City the industry grew within four years to 20 looms and 40 workmen recruited from France. The first piece of tapestry made in the United States was for a chair seat and took two weeks to weave. A second piece, exactly like it, hangs today in Chicago's Field Museum. Early on, the founder discovered that the water of the Bronx River possessed dissolved vegetable substances that were ideal for dyeing colors. (That pristine quality does not exist in today'spolluted river.) During the Depression tapestry making ceased in the United States.The works of art on display at St. Edward's "were done entirely by hand" by the founder's son who "not only wove but spun his own silk and wool threads and dyed them with vegetable dyes." Tracing the origin of the art back to Babylonian times, Hilarion remarked that Metellus Scipio, a citizen of ancient Rome, had once paid as much as $40,000 for a single piece of tapestry and Nero reputedly paid as much as $200,000 for another. "Today," Hilarion continued, "there has been a small revival of interest in tapestry making and a number of leading artists, such as Henri Matisse and Austin's Michael Frary, have had designs turned into tapestries. The designs in the current St. Edward's exhibit were done by late 19th century artists. One depicts an exotic landscape of swirling tropical plants and trees, of dancing black men and a turbaned potentate."(32) This work of art presently can be seen under glass in St. Joseph Hall, one of many exquisite legacies left to the community by a benefactress and Brother Hilarion.

A newspaper article in June, 1973 featured Brother Hilarion at work as a printmaker. He was photographed in his studio on the fourth floor of the Main Building matting a large painting made from a composite of several different wood blocks. He experimented with different materials including wotercolors on formica. He planned to spend the summer painting farm scenes in the Austin area. Many of the picturesque turn-of-the-century farm houses were slowly vanishing from the countryside. Since they reminded him of his grandfather's farm, he wanted to preserve them in watercolor. He planned to execute no less than forty to fifty country scenes and chose as his subjects forgotten and decaying buildings near the Bastrop highway. He wanted to capture a scene of Lake Travis also and a modern picnic spot on Lake Bastrop. With a few deft brush strokes, he could turn the mundane into a beautiful work of art.

His fascination with signs of the zodiac continued with variations on that theme. He decided to use the wise, mystical owl to show personality traits of each astrological sign. In one of the series he painted a blue-green Capricorn owl with a wood-cut pattern superimposed on the lower half of the painting. His vivid imagination, use of color and form and solid technique flourished until almost the end of his life.

His contract with St. Edward's University for the academic year of 1973-4 stated that half of his time would be devoted to teaching and the other half would be taken up with administrative duties in the art department and as director of the Fine Arts Exhibit Program. For these multiple obligations he was to be paid a paltry yearly salary of $7,823. He never complained about his salary but he did grouse about his academic degrees being erroneosly reported. "In the latest St. Edward's University catalog," he complained to Brother Stephen Walsh, Academic Dean, "I call your attention to the fact that my credentials are not correctly stated. I am listed as having received an A.B. Degree from the University of Notre Dame in 1938. That is not correct. I received a Bachelor of Fine Arts degree at that time. This error has been constant in any public publication of the university, in spite of the fact that it is clearly stated in my credentials file in your office. I am not concerned with my latest degree in fine arts, since I understand that the catalog no doubt was far along in preparation; but I am bringing this to your attention, since as my present credentials read in the latest catalog, I really have no distinctive degrees that are in keeping with my teaching field; yet I have a total fine arts and art qualification. So that this error is not perpetuated, I am listing my degrees for your records, so that in future publications this corrected listing can be used:

B.F.A — University of Notre Dame, 1938

M.A. — University of Notre Dame, 1969

M.F. A. — University of Notre Dame, 1971

Brother Hilarion Brezik, C.S.C." (33)

Since everything is BIG in Texas, Brother Hilarion had to create an enormous, monumental banner in 1974 to commemorate 100 years of service in Texas by Holy Cross priests, brothers and sisters. The design for the project was first rendered in watercolor. Then burlap, felt,

flannel, cotton fabric, broadcloth and curtain netting had to be assembled by the yard for the project that would measure 28 feet by 32 feet and cover the entire three-story side of the atrium in Moody Hall on St. Edward's campus. For one month three volunteers — Brother Richard Critz, Georgia Asselta and Virginia Dailey — helped Hilarion by donating 300 hours to cutting, sewing and gluing this colorful masterpiece. "The wall hanging depicts the outpourings of Christian love bestowed by the priests, brothers and sisters of Holy Cross in fulfilling their years of dedicated services as missionaries and educators in Texas," Hilarion explained. "The emanating hearts, in the upper right panel, the flames of the Fire of Love (the Holy Spirit) and the merit award in the lower right panel, are tied together compositionally and symbolically, by the figure of Christ offering his extended hand in benediction." (34) The official seal of the Congregation which incorporated the cross crisscrossed by two anchors centered the piece with the Mother Church in Le Mans depicted in the upper left panel and the religious in a boat embarking for Indiana and Notre Dame in 1841 to evangelize all the races, white, black, red and yellow. The Austin area had symbols of the Chancery Building, State Capitol and St. Edward's Main Building in front of the city's skyline. To commemorate their hard work, the four artists had their picture taken, dwarfed by the gigantic curtain behind them. Hilarion never did anything on a small scale.

The value of his watercolors continued to increase. Proof can be found in a newspaper article announcing: "Paintings whose value approaches $1,800 are missing from the St. Edward's University Art Deparment. Brother Hilarion. . . discovered the loss Tuesday. Six of his original watercolors had been taken from his studio. The burglars apparently knew what they wanted. Numerous other works were left untouched. 'And if they were looking for something to sell, they showed no interest in a lot of valuable equipment and supplies,' he added." (35) The missing works were all the same size — 30 by 40 inches — quite large for watercolors — and the thieves were discriminating. Of six visible, unframed paintings, they chose only two. The other four watercolors were framed. Access to the studio was no problem for the burglars. A lock had been missing from one of the doors for several weeks. It is not known if the paintings were ever recovered. Hilarion just dashed off a few one-a-day replacements.

THE PHILOSOPHER

On January 30, 1975, Brother Hilarion gave a lecture to the Austin Women's Club titled, "A Pertinent Culture Dynamic for Our Times." It deserves to be quoted and pondered in its entirety because it shows his profound insight into the evolution of culture.

"Man, literally, is here today and gone tomorrow. Birth and death are the two most crucial realities which he confronts. Everyone of us has to confront them; nobody can avoid them. Suddenly, we are — and then just as suddenly, no matter who we are, or how prolonged the prelude is, we are gone. And though we have catalogued all sorts of technical, physiological and psychological aspects of these two phenomena, and all sorts of explanations are forthcoming to allay and reassure us, when it comes down to the nitty-gritty, we really don't know any more how we got here and where we go afterwards than man has ever known.

"At best, we can only surmise, as he has done all along, and make choices. And because man has made choices from his very beginnings, his expression of them have [sic] vitalized, enriched, and enhanced our tradition of art. His choices have not only led to some of his finest hours but some of his finest art.

"One perhaps, can justifiably assert that all of his cultures and civilizations have been, and continue to be, in one sense or another, religious movements, since they are constructs or accommodations which will enable him to find his way in the world — according to his lights, his needs, and in conformity with his experiences in it. Whenever this construct begins to contradict his lights, needs and experiences, it becomes obsolete as a challenge, as an incentive, and begins to vitiate, repress and harass him; for it no longer seems to serve him as a viable answer to why he is here.

"History proves that when man loses credibility, (the power to believe) he also loses confidence in himself. His confusion and perplexity become mirrored in his language, his art and his behavior. One of the fascinating studies in art history is the varying images of himself which his art projects; for, somehow, his self-esteem and creativity are closely related to the degree of his self-confidence; and his self-confidence seems to depend upon the intensity and nature of his accommodation.

Alienation is not, therefore, peculiar to our age alone. One has only to look at the saddened Egyptian portraits in the transition period after the Old Kingdom collapse or the frightened eyes of the harassed Roman emperors after the second century A.D. to see what it means to be in an alien and harassed land. But man has also manifested periods of great serenity: in 5th century Greek art, for instance; in places like the portals of Chartres; and has manifested his grandeur in such places as in the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel.

"And one has only to trace the dynamics that move through the historical moments of Western Civilization — from the paleolithic to the present — to note the interlocking rise and fall, if you will, of one cultural shift to the next. In a sense, it is a drama, a human drama of man's continuous striving to find accommodation (a 'figure' that makes sense) in the world commensurate with the promise and fulfillment of his birth into it, and his aspiration to live forever. And then at, or in the very moment, of hav-

ing achieved what he believes to be an accommodation which will enable him to be at peace with himself and his world, he finds himself questioning it, he finds himself disillusioned with his achievement; for, somehow he feels the reality has changed. It is becoming inadequate. He finds himself confronting new questions, facing a new set of needs, a new set of aspirations, the necessity of starting a new quest for meaning and realization.

"As individuals, we encounter a similar dramatic sequence ('certainties') as we grow into maturation. We accept explanations — in our early years without specific choice — which become certitudes to us, just as heaven, one might say, was a reality to Emily Dickinson: 'And certain am I of the spot as if a chart were given.' And yet we all go through periods of disillusionment in varying degrees, with varying consequences. What we felt or thought would never change, imperceptibly or suddenly does. Our happy dependence changes into troubled rebellion before we begin to construct a complex and shifting maturity. We place our credibility in one explanation, which appears authentic to us at the time, only to find ourselves disbelieving, dissatisfied, and seeking a new one. We are seeking accommodation. The harassing aspect of the human condition is that we never can quite hold on to any set of credibilities once and for all. Just when we think we have done it, a fact of life comes along to challenge, contradict, or shatter that credibility completely. And no matter how we try to hold on to all that we are, somehow, even if we do, we change. The values of the old Egyptian civilization endured for 3,000 years, intact, unchanged, apparently; but, psychologically, there is a vast difference between the Egyptian of the Old and New Kingdoms, and this difference is the reason why Egyptian art is not static but dynamic. The approach to art in both periods is quite the same, but the style of art in each is quite different. So, the human condition does force changes on us, no matter how we resist them.

"And if this sort of dynamic is a perennial characteristic in our own lives, it is certainly so in the development or evolution of cultures, whichever term is preferable. For there is no doubt that permanence and change are phenomena which are directly related to our crucial concerns. A nomad, a transient, certainly surrounds himself with a different knd of accoutrement than a person who hangs up his hat with the notion of staying for a very long time.

"In the paleolithic period, man manifested an attitude toward survival, which was a matter of sustaining himself in existence here and now, and toward continuity, which was a matter of perpetuating himself beyond his lifespan. For these purposes, he developed two kinds of ritual: a kill magic which prepared him to go out and overcome the huge beasts which had to serve as his nourishment; and fertility magic which had to provide for his posterity. And there is further evidence that he practiced a veneration of the dead by giving them ceremonial burials and providing a place for their spirits to abide.

"And, so from the beginning, man was aware of the crucial issues: being born into life, and perpetuating it beyond himself. He contrived contour images of the animals on the walls of his caves, where he slew them in effigy much like the way we string up and taunt an image of an opposing team at our pep rallies. He made fertility images of his women which adorned his abodes much like the religious pictures we hang in our homes as intercessories. In these images, he learned the knack of expressing the changing aspects of the world he saw around him into a permanent format which eliminated the specific and individual. And, in so doing, he formulated the first classical art, an art of balance at any rate, by combining the existential (existence/essence), which has to do with extracting an order and meaning from the multiplicity of our sensations. And no matter how else one wants to categorize art in its various traditional manifestations, it still comes out that way, when we separate them as image and symbol; the image as confrontation, the symbol as a structure of reality. Herbert Read says that one of the ways in which the human mind functions is symbolism; the other is the direct experience of the external world, the presentational immediacy of sense perception. To simplify, rationality circumscribes the order of the first, and feeling, emotion and sensibility, of the second.

"Let us briefly examine how image specifies our confrontation with the world. We confront a tree for the first time. We are, in a sense, like a new-born child. Though we can see, touch or kick it, basically, we are born into mystery. It is a new reality to us. Our sensibilities, our emotions, our imagination respond to the image. It has shape, color, texture, size. We are awed, frightened, delighted, accordingly,

even if we don't know what it is, or rather, becuse we don't know what it is. The confrontation is a living experience, fraught with all sorts of possibilities. That is why the imagination is such an ally of the image.

"Our lives are full of living experiences. We call them sensations, impressions, experiences. By different names. But they are images. and they become a part of our consciousness. When we come back from a hurried trip to Europe, for instance, we are loaded with images. We can recount them, but it will take us a little time to be able to explain them, order them, fit them into a new pattern of thinking and expression.

"So when we start reflecting on the tree and on our experience of it, we start structuring it, making a symbol of it, by labeling, analyzing, interpreting, relating, incorporating the tree into the mainstream of our self-awareness. We put the tree into its place, so to speak — identified and extended. By understanding it, we have reduced the tree to its parts, we have extracted its essence but at the same time, we have taken away some of its mystery. But since the intelligence is an ordering faculty, we have put the tree into a framework of order too, because we have compared it with other similar images and other similar experiences of the world. Now, we are ready to copy, restructure, re-create it for our own ends, in conformity with our own expressive needs. Now it can become a red tree, a big or tiny tree, or a mere vertical and horizontal that stands for a tree. We have conceptualized it. We have incorporated the tree into our lives, identified with it, given it embodiment through our creativity. So we have transformed the tree into vision, and given it style, and a new identity.

"These are all complementary aspects of accommodation, organic rather than compartmentalized, as life itself is intended to be an integrated wholeness. Only by securing a perfect equilibrium of the sensuous and intellectual faculties, Herbert Read states in his Philosophy of Modern Art, 'shall we ensure the first requisite of a creative age.' But he also points out the basic dichotomy in modern art when he says that image and symbol have pursued parallel rather than contingent directions: 'It is the co-existence of the image and the symbol, as norms of art, which explains the apparent complexity and disunity of the modern movement.' We have only to recall our countercultures to prove that what is and has been happening in art is also happening in llfe.

"What modern art does project is an authenticated image of a new image of man, a new style of man. And, though that image is projected in art, it is also touching on all the dimensions of life, as we have so poignantly experienced in our times. 'The revolution of modern art, primarily a revolution of perception,' H.H. Arnasson says, 'was first won by certain artists and then more gradually by spectators of art.' But not all spectators and artists. 'Although the battle is over,' he continues, 'the revolution has not been completely won over after one hundred years,' for those 'devoted to the perpetuation of ancient and Renaissance ideals have steadily opposed the experimental artist and architect.'

"The so-called avant garde had its beginnings as the spearhead of that revolution, as opposed to the official academies of art; but it is a curious note that Albert Elsen is willing to concede that 'In the 1960's the phenomenon of the avant garde died.' So did the fighting in the streets. And I just read in yesterday"s newspaper that 'The sexual revolution is cooling down as some of the avant garde find that sexual variety without affection leads to 'frustration, tension and jealousy."

"I believe that is all culturally significant because our language seems to be changing. We are, in the 1970's, talking about detente between what formerly were looked upon as irreconcilable ways of life; about democratic pluralism as a means of allowing all of our ethnic and racial groups to become equally contributing factors to our society; the necessities of international cooperation, even though we seem to be a long way away from achieving that cooperation practically. But, does the language mean anything? Does it mean anything that our artists in the 1970's are working in many directions at once, but apparently without creating a stir. In the recent annual showing of current art work in the United States at the Art Institute in Chicago, a very large segment pursued highly realistic or representational trends. Ultrarealism, abstract and representational were side by side — and looked compatible.

"I think it is also significant that the two international languages, which we have developed so far in the 20th century, are science and art, though they have seemed to be contradictory to one another. A scientist can go anywhere in the world and be understood as a scientist; an artist, no matter from what

part of the globe, manifests a similar concern with abstract art. But I believe we are more and more realizing that science and art share the same vision of man from two different points of view. Polarization, which may be a necessary step in maturation, is, as Read implies, a defect, which we are now ready to recognize in all dimensions of life. Perhaps, what we are learning are international languages in the practical sciences — economics, politics and sociology.

"Perhaps, we are on the verge of reaching a significant accommodation. As a matter of fact, what has happened to art over the past 200 years reflects what has happened to our western society since 1776, or, at least, since somewhere in the 18th century. And all of our disciplines are in this together. With the end of the monarchies and absolute rule, a new insight ushered in the notion of the common man, the age of science and technology, industrialization, a balance and check of powers; but, above all, it projected a new image of man as no longer at the center but on the periphery, merely a particle of the universe. And that was a very great revolutionary insight, indeed. If matter has been atomized in science, and the representational image has been dematerialized in art, it is because Copernicus first jolted man out of his accustomed driver's seat. Everything that has happened to us, I believe, can be traced to that trauma. There have been similar break-throughs in all the disciplines.

"Our television sets only recently showed man as he really is in the 20th century: a fully-geared object, equipped in the height of sophistication against real and apparent dangers, helplessly tumbling about in the vastness of uncharted space — like a piece of debris. But different, too — in that he could test and exhilerate in his new environment, and in that a rope kept him abreast of and he could pull himself back to the safety of his spaceship whenever he wanted. This too, I believe, is significant, because it proves that man has some mastery over his destination and is not a mere buffeted particle in the universe.

"As he has been learning to adjust himself to the new demands of space, so I believe man is learning how to adjust himself to the new demands of his environment. Like image and symbol, both mystery and rationality are involved in the process of evolving a new culture. Though the union of art and science in the Renaissance made on the basis of humanistic reason, is dissolved in the 20th century, I think we are coming to the recognition that the two need not be pursued unilaterally but rather as aspects of the same direction. 'The reality of visible things is now no longer merely their visibility; the visible state of a thing, given in a single perspective as in traditional art, is an extremely limited account of it;' and 'in the highest sense, an ultimate mystery lies behind the ambiguity which the light of the intellect fails miserably to penetrate.' The mystery that modern science tries to dispel, modern art cultivates as at the heart of our human experience of reality.' In other words, what the scientist does rationally, the artist attempts to do from an opposite point of view — through his sensibilities and intuition. He uses what Mondrian characterized as a geometry of the heart. Geometry, pure rationality, he says, is never art. The modern artist's search 'depends upon his own instincts, insight, inner experience, which he expresses as a kind of personal vision — strange, sometimes, ambiguous, mystifying, impossible to communicate in words.' It hasn't always been so, but the modern artist's task is to reconstruct reality from his private experience. And that, along with all the other disciplines that man has developed, will help to articulate and construct a congenial accommodation which is specifying our particular cultural style.

"The way things are going at present, some of us are inclined to shake our heads.'This is the way the world ends, not with a bang but a whimper.' But I believe firmly that man's past is an affirmation. His cultural history and the dynamics it projects proves that he never gives up trying to grapple seriously and successfully with the basic confrontations and the mysteries which they invoke and engender in him. But his success has always presupposed an ordeal.

"We are surrounded by our new images, by the signs and sounds of a new world which we have not yet learned to sufficiently articulate and order. But we must continue to seek out the symbols which will transform our sojourn into destiny which alone will challenge our deepest energies. However, we will never be able to come to rest at any given historical moment; at best, we can only hope for respite. That is the precarious nature of cultural evolution. In the 18th century, man thought he had found the means of building the perfect world, the dream come true; but we no longer can believe that such tools as the telescope and the microscope, in themselves, will reveal an ultimate clarity. Actually, we are beginning

to realize that they seem to have led us to greater complications and complexities, and have engendered deeper mysteries, perhaps, even more frightening, projecting new unknowns, as we talk about genetic engineering and more sophisticated civilizations in the universe.

"An elusive hierarchy of perfectibility has been traded for an ever-expanding scale of infinitude. 'Far out' today boggles comprehension, as it transcends the sensible. We can't see an electron, but in a different way from Emily Dickinson's certitude, we are sure of its existence because we can measure its shape, size, its movements with instruments of our contrivance far superior to any of our senses. An old world of measurement and proportion tailored to our human faculties has been replaced by a new world of computerized relationships that are as deep as space itself. But how far can we go away from the spaceship before we run out of rope — or gas? Or how long can we continue on a space trip within the bounds of our mortality? Somehow, we must find our limits — and our accommodation within this scale of infinitude.

"In art it is a very exciting dynamic how the old pictorial space of external nature was gradually supplanted by a new inner reality. First, it was the brushstroke that changed; then it was color that got broken up; then the subject matter dissolved and became irrelevant; then the object was fragmented and eliminated; then the formal elements were so minimalized as to disappear in a black or blank canvas; finally, the canvas itself disappeared. With the advent of abstract expressionism, for many younger generation painters, there remain only possibilities. A huge nylon curtain stretched across a Rifle Gap in Wyoming gives ample evidence that now only the sky, if that, is the limit.

"An ever-expanding scale in most everything — corporations, politics, economics, sports, even in the dimension of our pollution — you name it! — now threatens to overwhelm us, threatens our very survival and humanity. How big is big, before big gets out of hand? Beyond us? Super-market, Super-bowl; World-this, World-that. Presently, our needs are intermingled with the world. Presently, we are believing as big as the world. Perhaps, that will be our limit — if man can expand to that dimensioin. And that will be our limit — until we can catch our breath. That, in a sense, is what all cultures have been for man — breath-catching moments. They are moments, when man on his journey into the unknown, has recognized his temporary limits.

"And, perhaps, that is what all the explosions, jostlings, pushing and shoving and crowding, and shouting have been about. These are some of the more painful ways man has of trying to fit himself into a new and larger dimension. He not only has to adjust but increase his stature. Without realizing it, we are trying to fit the scale of our new dimensions into our humanity and vice versa. And when we do, I believe we will have found the accommodation that we are seeking — at least for a while. And, thank God, all along we have been able to hold on to a rope — man's long tradition of living and coping with reality.

"Modern artists have always been seeking this accommodation. Mondrian, for instance, believed he had found it by reducing man's needs to the horizontal and vertical. Mark Tobey sought it in his painting attitudes: 'I have discovered whole worlds on street pavements and on the bark of trees...I have sought a 'single' world in my paintings.'

"I know very little about what is generally called 'abstraction'. For me, pure abstraction would be painting in which one could find no affinity with life, a thing I consider impossible...It is a new shaping of our religious self. Kneeling down to pray on Sunday or absolutely denying the Creator, as more expedient and better adapted to modern life, is not a solution.

PAINTER AND PATRON

In the summer of 1975, Hilarion spent weeks in Galveston with Ted and Maisie Paulissen painting old Victorian homes and beach scenes. On one occasion his glasses slipped off and fell between the rocks into the water. No matter. He simply fished them out, put them back dripping on his nose and went right on creating a picture of what he blurrily saw before him. "I like to do landscapes and old farmhouses, many of which date back to the late 1800's" he once remarked. Ancient prefabricated suburban houses were also rendered in such bright colors that observers called Hilarion, 'the Brother who paints happy houses."

With permission, Brother Hilarion gave $300 from his patrimony to a young Nigerian student in 1975. A year later he was again writing to his provincial, Brother Romard: "I committed myself to sponsoring James Mgbejume for doctoral studies at UT for this year. He had hoped he would have his subsidies from the Nigerian government by now but red tape and bureaucracy apparently is [sic] world wide. At any rate he will have to make a decision at the end of this semester to return to Nigeria if he is not able to receive the promised subsidy. As I have told him, I am unable to subsidize his whole program. Because he is a Nigerian on a student visa, he cannot find employment, at least legally, and consequently he now realizes he will have to either get his subsidy or return to Nigeria where he might be able to continue his studies under more favorable conditions. He has a wife and two small children and in a sense he probably has bitten off too much; but he was not able to fully comprehend that before. In order to give him all the time and opportunity to stabilize his situation (for he did just recently receive assurances from the Nigerian Embassy that the subsidy would come through) I feel some obligation to help him for this final semester. He needs $300 for his schooling, but I feel I should give him $500 for his family economic situation, naturally, is very bad. So I'm asking to have a check made out for $500 from my patrimony. I feel this is a definite charity which I alone am able to provide in this instance, for he cannot expect anything fom UT where rules vs foreign students are quite rigid." A note was appended to this plea for assistance by Brother Theodosius in Brother Romard's absence with full approval of the request. (37)

The spring of 1978 saw 250 prints of each Sign of the Zodiac rolling off the press to be signed, named, numbered and sold to the public at $60 each. Profits after printing costs had been covered were to be divided equally between the Brothers of Holy Cross and Addie Davis, Hilarion's hard-working partner in marketing the prints. Almost fifteen hours were spent at the printer making sure final copies were perfect. The number of rejects rose to a level of two feet before the artist was completely satisfied. Hilarion thought some of the rejects might have later value as collector's items because in one, for example, the horns of Aries the Ram were found coming out of Leo the Lion. Hilarion would not stand for such a thing since Leo was his zodiac sign. The prints sold well and were distributed widely in Dallas, San Antonio, Houston, Austin, San Francisco, New Orleans and Atlanta. At AT & T the person in charge of art acquisition requested an entire set of all twelve prints at a cost of $720 plus shipping and handling charges.

For some twenty years Hilarion hosted yearly Fine Arts Exhibit Programs on the St. Edward campus. In fact the university was the first art gallery in Austin to have a regular schedule of such events. The University of Texas and Laguna Gloria had only sporadic art shows during the 1960's. To finance traveling shows of outstanding artists like Marsden Hartley, Lionel Feininger, Manuel

Amaral and Marc Chagall, Hilarion received grants from the National Commission on the Arts and Humanities. Exhibits came from the Museum of Modern Art, The American Federation of Arts, The Smithsonian Institute, The Metropolitan Museum of Art and the National Sculpture Society. Other shows brought objects from as far away as India, Czechoslovakia, Sweden, France, Yugoslavia and molas from the San Blas Indians. Works by members of the New York School of the late 1970's were brought to Texas for the first time. "The language of contemporary art," Hilarion said, "is the same the world over." Occasionally he was accused of showing pornographic art in the finely drawn nudes of Philip Pearlstein. A faculty member once objected to woodcuts by Leonard Baskin that illustrated Dante's "Inferno." Hilarion bluntly told him that his problem was he had never read Dante or thought about the 13th century very much. "These people in the woodcuts REALLY were perverts," he shouted "and they REALLY ARE in hell!!!"

As to his own street painting in Galveston, San Francisco, New Orleans and the Virgin Islands, he explained, "There are very few street painters working now, though it grows out of a long tradition. Street painting puts the artist back in the human context. I especially enjoyed the children who came to watch, wanting to know how they too could become artists. I find myself today able to define and perceive things better than twenty years ago. *Sometimes I astound myself!*" (38)

In April, 1978 Hilarion wrote to his provincial, Brother Romard Barthel: "I have one more year on my two-year appointment to the St. Edward's Board of Trustees. I am now completing nine years as a member of the Board as it was reconstituted in 1969. During that span I have served on several committees and as Secretary for the past eight years. In view of the realignment and redefinition of the Board of Trustees, which will go into effect after the April meeting, I believe I have made my contribuion and believe it is time for me to vacate my appointment so that a new appointee in accord with the revised bylaws and Trustee policies can be appointed...I am not the resigning type (in fact, this is my first resignation ever), for I find resignations somewaht alien to my outlook; however, I feel this is the appropriate time for me to terminate my membership. Please believe I do this with some regret, for I feel I have profited from my association with the Board and hope this benefit has been mutual. Therefore....I am asking you to terminate my appointment, effective immediately after the April 28-29 Board of Turstees meeting. I thank you for the privilege you have accorded me to serve the University and the Province." (39) His resignation was accepted and he was named Trustee Emeritus at the fall meeting of the Board to show appreciation for his many years of service.

RETIREMENT

Brother Hilarion retired from teaching after the spring semester of 1979. He had seen St. Edward's University grow from a student body of 300 to 2,200. In 1946 when he first visited the campus he thought it "the most dismal looking place in the world." New buildings, new roads and new landscaping changed all that over the years. He did have one regret: he would miss personal contact with the students. "Teaching for the past eleven years has been an adventure for me," he said. "Now I'm ready for another adventure. I'm not retiring, I'm just not going to work in the classroom. Now I have a chance to do things at my own pace and not have to worry about meeting deadlines." He had no idea how the new adventure would turn out but he knew he would survive. "I'm still alive and kicking and can be as irritating and cantankerous as ever."

He had reached a real turning point in his life: an exhibition of 69 paintings in the newly renovated Cullen Administration Building on the campus of Southwestern University in Georgetown. It was the artist's personal selection of his made-in-Texas watercolors over the past 20 years. "They do not individually purpose to present a message or a portent," he said, "but 69 is symbolic of an era that is closed and perhaps a new beginning, since for the first time in my life I will be able to devote full time to painting. I have not retired; I have merely quit teaching, for a change. Both art and life are terribly uncertain. It is fitting that this exhibition is displayed in an old building that has been renovated, for having just made it to 69 myself, I need renovation, too." The works he chose for the exhibition were both representational and abstract.

He brought the same tools of composition to both kinds of art explaining, "The thoughtful planning, perhaps, or the flashing insight, the initial blueprint, the evocative gesture, the eye, the mind, the hand, the feel, the intuition must all work together if a painting is to be successful. And the intent is always the same: a wholeness, a living something, a vibrant something, a pulsating something. I believe everything ties together."

> "I like improvisation as a process," he explained, 'which most of my abstracts are all about; and I like the improvising that is necessary to restructure a landscape. I cannot call my work photographic, since it is not a literal translation but an improvised version of the scene. There are often many changes or omissions or even additions. Both of the methods often can involve hard work; but usually they both are fun. They also demand a different set of circumstances; but in the long run, they come out the same: an exercise in an equilibrium of contrasts — light-dark, warm-cool, soft-hard, horizontal-vertical, stable-dynamic, the whole gamut. Like Barbara Hepworth, I believe I have been concerned with an ultimate and total perception, a perception that is concerned with both what the inner and outer eye encounters within the human condition, for we are simultaneously both our aspirations and our realizations at any given moment in our lives."

And what about the critics? "I am not so interested in what others have to say about my work," he admitted, "as I am in being satisfied with what I am doing. As long as it satisfies my needs and I feel it has quality, I'm achieving my intent. I'm not out to become successful; I feel I have been that in a variety of ways already. What I'm doing and intend to do is merely a continuation."

After the show Hilarion looked forward to moving and painting at his own pace without having to worry about the pressures of teaching or deadlines. He kept his studio on campus and planned more major projects. "I've

actually had some of these projects in mind for several years," he said, "and God willing, I am crazy enough to believe I might be able to realize a few before arthritic pains and hardening of the arteries set in. At least I don't intend to spend my last few years or so going crazy by going quietly. I realize how tenuous and tentative life is from age one minute on, so I have no illusions; I'll need some luck and a few prayers to keep from ending in a rocker off my rocker, but I'm going to try to keep as busy as I can for I'm not retiring from life." He planned large panels of the growth cycle: birth, transfiguration, death and resurrection; triptychs of Oriental and Occidental symbols and a black and white photo mural project of twenty panels showing the 100-year sports tradition at St. Edward's as well as theatre, debating, music and art from as early as 1889.

"The horizon beckons," he concluded. "But I want to continue to pick the daisies — who said bluebonnets? — along the way. Some prefer to go quietly. I prefer to go leisurely. For somehow I have to believe that finiteness and infinity, the land and the sky, fit together and I don't want to separate them — yet. Or, perhaps, they are inseparable, analogically speaking, forever." (40)

THE LAST YEARS

The first totally thematic show that Hilarion ever attempted went on display in the atrium of Moody Hall in October, 1981. Titled "Reflections: Delimmas of Our Times," the 37 large watercolors appeared in four sequences and portrayed "the cycles which start us on new adventures of discovery which inevitably lead us to the wisdom that if we want to find life we must lose it." Hilarion used both watercolors and words to confront four human dilemmas. The first set of nine panels, "The Search for Transcendence" depicted man's serve for meaning in the universe. Man "tries to find how to get out of himself and reach out beyond himself. These stages of transition from a Ptolomaic to a Copernican world view: that is from a mythological to a scientific world view, stretched from "Confrontation" to "Assimilation." The second set, "Evolution of an Ideal," was a visual commentary on the development of the American experiment in democracy from Locke to the present by using the American flag for symbolic renderings. Man's need to "achieve freedom without sanctioning license" led citizens through such events as the American Revolution, the Civil War and the resignation of Richard Nixon. Hilarion cited historical events and leaders who had greatly influenced the history of our country. "Elements of Unification" demonstrated the human desire to avoid war and achieve universal peace by focusing on the commonalities of human existence — fire, water, land and air which touch all and and the demographics of society — the five races. Hilarion used the figure of a woman painted in different colors with different facial features to symbolize the five races. Although man constantly strove for universal peace in every age, he consistently neglected natural resources and succumbed to "differences which have kept men separated even to our day, and man in constant conflict with himself." The last set of paintings, "Exercises in Pluralism, " was a series of ten expressionistic panels exploring the *E Pluribus Unum* theme. "Man must learn how to preserve the innate uniqueness and dignity of the person in a pluralistic society," he wrote. Society has been exposed to many of the negative aspects of pluralism and Hilarion wanted to "exemplify the positive aspects of pluralism: the individual image making its unique contribution to the whole." (41) Even though each of the panels was different, there was a sense of wholeness as well as unity in a diverse society. Hilarion had painted the entire exhibit in less than a year believing his was creating some of his best art as well as giving insight and instruction. Hours were needed by a viewer to comprehend the exhibit and the few who accomplished this daunting feat were amply enriched for their effort. In the fall of 1982 the exhibit traveled to Incarnate Word College in San Antonio.

For the cover of his 1982 Christmas card, Hilarion photographed his Chinese painting with its rich colors and authentic calligraphy. Inside he printed this poem:

Yellow, black and red
Yellow for birth
Black for death
Red for resurrection
So is the story of mankind

White is for love
Green is for spring
Red is for re-birth
Gold is eternal
Such is the color wheel of redemption

The sun rises in the east
And sets in the west
In between: life, love and death
The minute we begin to live
We begin to die
The minute we begin to love
We begin to live
Such is the nativity paradox

So Christmas is white
Green is for spring
Red is for re-birth
Gold is for eternity
Blue is for God

Yellow, black and red
White for love
Yellow for birth
Black for death
Red for re-birth and resurrection

Yellow, green, white, then
Black, red, gold, blue
Thus goes my Christmas prayer
For mankind — and you

Brother Hilarion Brezik

With pictures and his own poems, Hilarion composed a lavish booklet for the dedication of the million-dollar renovated library at St. Edward's University, a gift from generous benefactors, LaVon and Vern Phillips. Under a photo of the building's exterior he wrote:

Sunbaked brick and stucco
Is the inherited character of Indian, Hispanic, and Southwest architecture.
So what is more fitting
Than to combine in our new library
The block forms and rounded corners
With the more modern cantilevered overhangs and straight lines,
And polaroid glass panes
To filter the light from without,
To preserve the vistas from within. . .

and

Hidden in the center of the building
Is the core of the past — the old library;
And the new addition, like a dimension of time,
Wraps its contemporary layer of promise
Around a century-old campus academic tradition.
The outdoor benches, of course, are for reflection and repose,
But the memorial to a faculty-scholar, Father Foik,
Is more than a landscape footnote
To what a heritage and a library are for...

Under a black and white photo of the interior atrium is this citation:

This sky-drenched corridor of light,
With its geometric wood uprights and glass panels,
Is a fitting symbol for a library, our library;
For it combines the opaque with translucence.
We, like the plants, need the light and enlightenment,
But the cross beams, like the roots,
Remind us of struggle and strife to achieve them:
Neither light nor learning come easy for us. (42)

JUBILEE

To celebrate his fifty years of religious profession in 1983, Hilarion made a 77 day painting trek through New Mexico and returned to Texas with 56 large watercolors depicting seven different segments of the state's scenery. He missed only two areas during his extensive field trip — the painted desert in the southwest and the pueblo Indian reservation near Gallup. In response to Brother James Kell's questionaire for life-planning he had some acrid observations.

> "I have come to the point," he groused, "where I somehow detest those artificial concepts called ministry and apostolate; for I believe spirituality consists primarily in confronting the mundane aspects of life where faith, hope and charity are challenged and virtues are tested. The battleground is here, not in some nebulously chosen area that may or may not be as fitting for growth as it is for extraneous pragmatic and utilitarian goals. Otherwise, Mary's and Joseph's lives were a complete spiritual flop. They never had a mission except to take care of the people God surrounded them with (including themselves). So I cannot nor wish to pursue a formal plan. To me there is a difference between being safe or saved. Dealing with my joys and sorrows, my satisfactions and frustrations and the living reality of trying to be true to myself and God and at the same time loving the people God surrounds me with from day to day is more than enough for a finite imperfect person like myself to cope with sincerely. To sit back and count up my successes and my failures, I feel, is not my business but God's. I feel I have my priorities established by my retirement and its subsequent requirements. Sorry, Brother James, if I failed to follow your directives step by step and have given a different sort of assessment. God love you." (43)

In 1984 Brother Hilarion requested and received permission from his provincial, Brother Patrick Sopher, to use some of his patrimony to help a nephew, Joe Brezik, with medical bills caused by a severe asthmatic condition. His parents had "spent a fortune trying to find a cure over these past fifteen years or more, without success," he lamented. "Joe has been sustained on steroids which creates problems in itself but so far have done very little to remedy the condition. He has had numerous jobs... but his continuous illnesses make his holding a job extremely tenuous. I feel I can do a lot not only toward bettering his financial situation, but mostly lending him encouragement and restoring his confidence by making this gift to him at this time. It will also relieve some of the burden which his parents have continuously have [sic] to bear." He added: "I want to thank you for sending me to St. Crois. I believe we all profited. I came back with 41 watercolors. But mostly I enjoyed living with the Brothers whom I got to know quite well. Brother William Dooling no doubt did wonders for that school, and all over the island he is both respected and well-known and admired. Brother William Verstraite will continue the improvement in the school. I do wish however that some SW Brother could have been found to replace Brother William Dooling for I believe running the school was an asset for the SW province." (44)

That Hilarion was having health problems of his own was confirmed in a letter from Jerry L. Hood, M.D. in June, 1984. "You have chronic active hepatitis which has led to nodular cirrhosis," the doctor wrote."This means that you have an inflammatory condition of the liver, which has led to some scarring. Your liver disease, even though it causes you no disability, is fairly far advanced. As secondary consequences of your liver disease, you have an enlarged spleen... I do not feel that you have any con-

dition which could be communicable or a danger to another person." Hilarion passed this information on to Brother Patrick Sopher with the note: "The doctor assures me that at this time at least there seems to be no need to abrogate any activities or plans I have to keep painting." (45)

Ellie Rucker's column in the Austin American Statesman carried this heading: "Rare book blown away." "Q. Feb 14, (1985) As I reached into my pocket to get my car keys, I set a book on the roof of my car. Sudden traffic distracted me, I drove off with the book still on the roof. I'm sure it fell off but I never heard it fall. Unfortunately the book, Larousse's History of Modern Art is out of print and, hence difficult and expensive to replace. I retraced my route but the book was gone. This all happened in a parking space in front of the main entrance to Montgomery Ward in Capitol Plaza. I'm hoping the kind soul who found the book will return it to me as I am in some desperate need of it presently. My signature is inside the cover, I believe. — Brother Hilarion Brezik, St. Edward's University.

"A. Cross your fingers the right person is reading today. We'd say 'Pray the right person is reading' but we assume you already did that. At least you remember where you put the book. We lose thiings all the time and never remember where we last put them." (46) A few days later Ms Rucker could report the book Hilarion had lost was no longer out of print and that a new copy was on order at a local bookstore.

One of Hilarion's last creative projects was a drawing of a young boy which he titled, "Growing Together." The LEGEND he sent to many friends explained the origin of the drawing:

> "Enclosed is a print which I call GROWING TOGETHER because it is an excerpt from a poster I designed for the Diocese of Austin's annual fund-raising drive last November [1985]. It is a charcoal drawing I sketched from life of an Hispanic eighth grader from St. Ignatius School. Growing together was the theme of the poster and brochure which stressed the need for generous giving to maintain and strengthen our faith in ourselves, in our children, parents, parish, Austin, the diocese and the Church — all of whose efforts and resources are needed to achieve our hope for a better tomorrow. I spent the better part of three days helping the diocesan program director plan and develop the format for this theme, which, besides the poster and the boldly spelled out message thereon [FAITH & HOPE THROUGH GENEROUS GIVING], also included a coordinated brochure that accurately listed all the diocesan programs that would benefit from this campaign and honestly show[ed] how and how much of the collected money needed would be allocated to each program in order to enable it to grow and expand into a better service for the people of the diocese. The layout was a neat package that made it easy for the pastors and the parishoners to grasp the message clearly and convincingly that their individual participation was necessary to achieve this goal. There is no doubt that the message got through for the amount collected during this drive jumped dramatically from the modest $150,000 previous high to $600.000.
>
> "In recalling the huge debt of gratitude that I feel I owe to my many friends who keep coming to my aid during my present ordeal [illness], I suggested to the diocesan program director some time ago that he expedite for me, at my expense, the printing of a separate limited edition of just the symbolic figure of the boy on the poster as a gift I could send my friends of varied denominations as a personal gesture of my deep and abiding gratitude, love, and appreciation.
>
> "So this print is a thank you note for your continued friendship, your continuing support and concern as manifested by your many letters and cards to me, which continue to be a delight and of much solace and along with your prayers, account, I believe, in no small way for my apparent rapid recovery. I hope this small gift of myself will represent my sincere love for each and every one of you, with the further cherished hope that, framed, it will adorn some wall of your home as a reminder that I will continue to depend upon your love, concern, support, and prayers; for, as Raissa Maritain once put it: we are all friends together.* As I recall, she died shortly after the publication of her book under that title. Now she is awaiting the arrival, at God's own pace, of all of her friends where they will continue to be friends — forever.
>
> "St. Thomas Aquinas, in his famous Summa I think, defines friendship as 'wishing well to another.' That is my sincere wish — that all of us will forever remain friends together. I cherish your friendship and pledge my daily prayers for you.
>
> Gratefully and affectionately,
>
> "*Raissa's book was published in 1942 when she was sixty years old. The exact title of the book: We've been Friends Together. She died, I was told, thirty-

one years later. So many of her friends, apparently, had to wait for her to arrive!" (47)

Late in 1985 Hilarion complained to his provincial, Brother Patrick Sopher, of a prolonged bout of chronic active hepatitis. He was physically and mentally exhausted and reduced to washing dishes and scrubbing floors in St. Joseph Hall rather than painting income-bearing watercolors. "I never came to the community to be a problem," he confessed. Income from his art sales had reached a total of $50,000 in five years with single pictures fetching as much as $1000 apiece. He had agreed to illustrate a book of poems for Father Richard Teall, who "was not a patient man," but because of lack of physical energy, he had trouble completing the project.

Added to his suffering was the fact that one of his brothers was having financial and legal problems in Indiana. Hilarion wrote an urgent personal letter to President Ronald Reagan and got immediate results from the Department of Justice. He also helped his brother financially. In spite of ill health, he planned to paint 300 watercolors at St. Joseph Farm near Notre Dame and in the Amish community near Goshen.

There is a hint of self-pity in his appraisal of his apostolate.

> "I appear to some as maverick," he wrote. "I don't in any way think of myself in that way. I have to be myself, warts and all. Besides, a maverick....is a calf that has lost its mother. I am not looking for a mother but a place in the family of God and mostly who I am in the plan of Holy Cross. I actually look upon my painting expeditions as an apostolate as authentic as doing missionary work in Brazil, for I confront God's people across the board — the poor and bereft, as well as the affluent, religiously oriented or not, but in all cases somehow in need. Invariably, because they trust me, I get to them, and invariably religion and counsel become involved. . . There are a lot of those people out there who are looking for a line to hang their experiences on. What else is an apostolate? My painting is only a gimmick to attract them, like a hawker announcing a circus. I easily become a part of the zoo.
>
> "My intention," he claimed "has never been to build at art career and make a lot of money for the Community... Nor am I motivated by immortality. I have merely wanted to pull my load, so to speak, as long as I am able, and I have dedicated the work to the service of the Lord." His works were scattered over various parts of the United States and Europe where he received considerably more attention than at home. "I am no Rembrant. . . but I feel I have done some decent work along the line. I have had a desiccated art career for I did many things in the service of the Community; but over my 50 years I probably have done around 800 paintings of varying merit." (48)

While returning from a visit with his sister, Elinor, in south Texas, Hilarion was stopped by a highway patrolman for weaving back and forth on the highway near Lockhart. The officer thought he was drunk but the real cause of his erratic behavior was failure to take proper dosages of his medications. He was escorted to the local hospital for four hours of observation and then he called his agent, Addie Davis, to come and drive him back to Austin. Brothers Lou Coe and Keric Dever returned his Escort station wagon to St. Joseph Hall the next day and the provincial was notified that Hilarion could have been killed or killed someone else in his condition. He was sent to a hospital for further observation and for a time he was forbidden to drive.

Five months later, Brother Hilarion was again hospitalized and his doctor recommended that he be sent to Dujarie House at Notre Dame for assisted living care. In early 1986, Brother Pedro Haring, director of Dujarie House, welcomed him and thus began the troubled last year and a half of Hilarion's life. He was very ill and the director wrote: "I understand Brother Hilarion's history of being unable to follow a regular regimen, especially regarding eating and taking medicine." (49) Five months later Pedro was writing Brother Patrick Sopher, the provincial: " I am dealing with something that could explode and I would prefer you know about it BEFORE it does so... Hilarion's attitude has degenerated a great deal..(which) he brings to the table three times a day... Hilarion gets ticked off any time he notices someone getting attention from the nurses or from me. 'My provincial pays just as much for my being here as anyone else pays and I am not going to be neglected or overlooked'" were his daily comments. (50)

Late in the year, his condition improved to the point of his being able to return to Austin for a week's "open house" with relatives and friends in St. Joseph Hall. Even Bishop John McCarthy came to visit and cheer him up. He then returned to Notre Dame to await death. It finally came on June 4, 1987 after he received the Eucharist, said the prayers for the dying and lapsed into unconsciousness. His funeral eulogy in Austin prior to burial in Assumption Cemetery was delivered by his old friend and

colleague, Brother Edmund Hunt.

"Brother Hilarion and I were dual catalysts in the early '60's for our wonderful provincial, Brother John Baptist, to keep him on the right track." Edmund began. "A marvelously skilled draftsman and water colorist, he avoided religious kitsch. . . When I took over his art history class, he let me know that I would not do as well as he since I lacked all his practice in doing studio work. I let him get away with that because. . . it was true. Once when we were in Italy he made sketches of many scenes. We had the camera in common and over a quarter of a century we built up a huge [3000] slide collection for art history. . . He put out the first publicity brochure for Rancho San Antonio. . . He was a well informed man in many fields, a fair catcher in baseball and befuddled me with statistics on coaches and players and reasons why they were a flop, if and when they were. . . . Lest he return to contradict me for exaggerations, I limit myself to two further virtues. The first, his loyalty to friends. There are people here that he cultivated by cards, letters, favors and visitis long after others had left them for new friends. And the second is this: his devotion to anything concerning the well-being of the progress of Holy Cross." (51).

On the occasion of Brother Hilarion's 50th anniversary of religious profession, Brother Patrick Sopher wrote him a letter of congratulation that pretty well summaries the contributions Hilarion made to the community: "You and I both know how much you have given to Holy Cross over the years. Suffice it for me to say that very few men have given the community so much, in so many different areas of ministry, as you. You have every reason to be proud of these past fifty years. Hilarion, you are one of the most unique people I have ever known. You combined an amazing administrative ability with a true artistic temperament. I can honestly say that I have never met anybody who has both of these gifts to the degree that you have them. You have made every use of them for your fellowmen, for the Chuirch, for the Congregation, and for the institutions you have served. You have retained a vitality and an interest in life all through the years. You have given, given, given..." (52) — high praise for this generous genius. His legacy lives on in his paintings and the lives of the people he knew, served and loved.

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