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**THE CO-CATHEDRAL OF ST. JOHN THE EVANGELIST CELEBRATES THE INSTALLATION OF
MAJOR SCULPTURES CREATED BY INTERNATIONAL ARTIST SIMON TOPAROVSKY**

ROCHESTER, MN—The Co-Cathedral of St. John the Evangelist this month will celebrate the installation of major sculptures in a newly designed devotional space created by internationally acclaimed contemporary artist **Simon Toparovsky** for the Church in Rochester, Minnesota, the Diocese of Winona-Rochester announced today.

The Toparovsky commission—life-size cast bronze portrait busts of St. John the Evangelist and Mary, the Mother of Jesus, for liturgical instruction and spiritual inspiration united in an intimate shrine for private meditation—will become an important sanctuary in the new Co-Cathedral, designated last year by Pope Francis. The commission continues to foster the rich tradition of channeling creativity in this Parish specifically and aligns with the Vatican’s confirmation of the Church’s historical role as a major patron, re-affirming its commitment to work with contemporary artists to harness the evangelizing power of art.

Both public and private events to view and learn more about the Toparovsky installation are scheduled for July 26, 27, and 28, 2019 at the Co-Cathedral of St. John the Evangelist, 11 4th Avenue, S.W., Rochester, MN 55902. Public events will occur at Mass on Saturday, July 27th at 4:30pm and Sunday, July 28th at 9:30am and 11:15am. Additional details are available at www.sj.org.

Using his narrative skills as a visual poet, Mr. Toparovsky’s sculptures depict John the Apostle and Evangelist, and Mary, the Mother of Jesus, together after the Resurrection, with a focus on the closeness of their relationship as they lived together, taking care of one another as Christ had called for them to do from the Cross. The elements of Mr. Toparovsky’s work in the newly constructed shrine include free-standing sculpture, architectural components of native stone, digital imagery, wall art and theater lighting. A ceiling oculus represents the portal to heaven, a path from the Source that illuminates John and Mary.

The idea for Mr. Toparovsky to create a mixed-media commission was initially conceived over ten years ago when the Reverend Monsignor Gerald Mahon and Parish Administrator Margaret Kelsey of the Co-Cathedral of St. John the Evangelist in Rochester, Minnesota, were in Los Angeles and witnessed Mr. Toparovsky’s life-size bronze Main Altar Crucifix at the Cathedral of Our Lady of the Angels.

Mr. Toparovsky had been selected from a worldwide search to design and create the Crucifix for what was then the new Cathedral in Los Angeles. The Crucifix, Mr. Toparovsky’s first liturgical commission, has become a beloved icon, celebrated for its artistry and evocation of compassion in the devotional practice of the Cathedral’s hundreds of thousands of annual visitors and parishioners.

Msgr. Mahon kept Mr. Toparovsky’s contact information close, knowing at some point he would reach out to him to commission a work of art. That time came in May 2016 when Msgr. Mahon and Ms. Kelsey



knew that Mr. Toparovsky's sensitivity to spiritual aspects as well as his artistic recognition made him the perfect artist to create John and Mary for the Church and its parishioners who hail from Rochester and surrounding communities, as well as visitors to and employees of the neighboring top-ranked Mayo Clinic, which cares for more than one million patients a year.

After the commissioning of the project and during the creative process of making the vision a reality, the Church of St. John the Evangelist was elevated to Co-Cathedral in the Diocese of Winona-Rochester. The Most Rev. John M. Quinn led a study and after considerable consultation sent a request to Pope Francis and it was accepted. On June 24, 2018, the church was elevated to a Co-Cathedral in the presence of the Apostolic Nuncio, Archbishop Christophe Pierre. The Co-Cathedral has created a new home for John and Mary as profound witnesses of the Resurrection of Jesus.

"John and Mary are a model for all of us on the journey," explains Msgr. Mahon. "We do not become a Light in isolation, but through a relational order of trust, love, peace and the depth of our humanity alive in an experience of being surprised in front of the Mystery, in front of reality. We are always searching on the path; otherwise, Christ is no longer interesting and dynamic. John and Mary show us how to be available in their way to yearn for companionship and they invite and embrace others to join them in community.

"The powerful gift of this work will be a call to be vulnerable and know our limitations, our fragility—to stand in front of these companions who call us to a new life of resting in His presence with enormous expectation," said Msgr. Mahon.

Added Mr. Toparovsky: "It is a privilege and joy to create a new liturgical work, to portray a compelling story in the Christian tradition that bears witness to courage and vulnerability, and whose mandate is demonstrating love. For Mary, the mother of God and John, the beloved apostle, 'the preferred of Christ,' carrying the weight of the world, sharing the ecstasy of the Presence of the Light, reflecting the Light for the world—this shared Love is the answer."

During nearly four decades as a sculptor and visual poet, Mr. Toparovsky has been praised as "an individual voice" and an "adventurer"; his work described as "eloquent and noble," noteworthy "for its powerful evocation of spirituality, joy and the hope it bears." Mr. Toparovsky's diverse practice of sculpture, photography and digital imaging explores ephemeral narratives of the human condition.

Simon Toparovsky was born in Philadelphia in 1951. After attending art school at the California College of Arts and Crafts and the University of California, Berkeley, he first became known for making one-of-a-kind books as works of art. His craftsmanship and innovation with materials pushed the conceptual boundaries of the field; these works are included in many public collections. His *Tikal Codex* was acquired by the Cooper-Hewitt, National Design Museum of the Smithsonian Institution in New York and awarded the special designation: "first book as art for the permanent collection."

Working principally in Los Angeles since 1981, Mr. Toparovsky has primarily focused on narrative sculpture. His work has been exhibited internationally and acquired by such important collections as the Museum of Modern Art and the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York; Centre Pompidou, Beaubourg and the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris; and the J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles County Museum of Art, and Pepperdine University's Frederick R. Weisman Museum of Art and The Cathedral of



Our Lady of the Angels in Los Angeles. Among his distinguished awards, Mr. Toparovsky has received seven grants from the National Endowment for the Arts, including two Visual Artist Fellowships.

Mr. Toparovsky has also lived and worked in Milan since 2000. In 2002, he began a collaboration with the Italian painter Ariel Soulé. While each of them has maintained their independent careers, together, they developed a project, *Chiasmo*—in which painting and sculpture are combined as unique works of art. From this research, Mr. Toparovsky and Mr. Soulé have made a series of works for galleries (*Combos* and *Tabulae*) and installations for public spaces and museums with patronage and exhibition sponsorship from the Ministries of Culture of Italy, Russia and the United States, including: *La Costituzione Americana* in Milan; *Evita's Perfect Fall* in the Palazzo Comunale di Teglio; *Qui, del Dicibile* in a 9,000-square-foot deconsecrated Gothic church in the oldest center of Naples; *A Letter from the Renaissance* at the UCLA Library, Department of Special Collections in Los Angeles; and *La Colonna Infame*, which debuted at the Museum of Contemporary Art, Erarta, in St. Petersburg and continued to travel to museums in Russia and the Baltic States.

Mr. Toparovsky's most recent major solo exhibition of new artwork and installations, *Vessels and Channels*, was on view at The Cathedral of Our Lady of the Angels in Los Angeles, and was accompanied by a rich series of public and private tours, a University-sponsored academic conference, dance and theater programs, and ancillary exhibitions in Los Angeles and Italy. More information about Mr. Toparovsky's work is available at: www.simontoparovsky.com

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About the Co-Cathedral of St. John the Evangelist

The Church of Saint John the Evangelist was the first Catholic Church in Rochester, Minnesota, founded in 1863 by the Rev. James Morris. In 2018 Pope Francis elevated the Church to Co-Cathedral of the Diocese of Winona-Rochester, the sixteenth Co-Cathedral in the country. The Co-Cathedral of St. John the Evangelist is located at 11 4th Avenue, S.W., Rochester, MN 55902. Mass is Monday–Friday at 12:10pm; Saturday at 4:30pm and Sunday at 9:30am, 11:15am and 5:00pm.

A schedule of events and liturgical celebrations as well as additional information regarding the Co-Cathedral, its history, parish community, ministries and physical structure is available at www.sj.org