

Linthicum parishioner's art celebrates sacraments

LINTHICUM – Many Americans struggle to balance their religious life and job responsibilities. A local mother of four, however, has had no trouble embracing that challenge.

Danielle Turner, 30, a parishioner of St. Philip Neri in Linthicum Heights, found an outlet for her art on Etsy.com, an e-commerce site specializing in handmade goods. ChrismShop, her web page, sells watercolor paintings and prints for special occasions such as weddings, baptisms and births.

Her artwork reflects the Catholic faith that has been a lifelong influence on Turner, a graduate of **Mount de Sales Academy** in Catonsville who spent a college semester in Florence, Italy, studying art history.

“For as long as I’ve remembered, I loved art,” she said. “The time I spend doing it I enjoy, not only for the creative aspect, but for the meaning behind it.”

Turner met her husband, Phil, an English teacher and running coach formerly at Mount St. Joseph High School in Irvington, when both were students at American University in Washington, D.C.

After graduating from Towson University in 2009, she made a hobby of creating watercolor gifts for friends’ special occasions. The positive reception to those pieces inspired her to create ChrismShop in 2016.

Turner explained that the name of her store stems from the use of chrism oil in the sacraments. Many of her gifts celebrate the sacraments, hence the name of her shop.

Turner said that the mission of ChrismShop is to be “a celebration of the sacraments, and of God in our lives. It’s a sharing of faith.”

Almost all of her products are custom orders, personalized at the buyer’s request.

They typically take two-to-three weeks to complete and ship.

Recently, Turner has begun to expand the offerings on ChrismShop. Non-religious quotes can now be ordered as prints, and she intends to expand on more wedding-related pieces, such as invitations and menus.

Turner's friends and family have been supportive of her business venture, spreading word of her shop and ordering her products.

"A lot of my first customers and repeat customers are Mount de Sales alumnae," Turner said. "It's an awesome way to connect with people. You feel like you have a connection to someone's life-changing event."

ChrismShop has also developed a following among clergy and worshipers at her home parish. Father Michael DeAscanis, the pastor of St. Philip Neri, said he was happy that Turner, whom he describes as "faithful, generous and personable," was using her talent and style to produce religious works of art.

"Pope Benedict said that beauty is one of the greatest proofs of Catholicism," he said. "Faith in God and love for Him inspires humans to create great works of beauty: art, music, architecture, literature."

Although she has no monetary goal for ChrismShop, Turner said that she has been satisfied with the reach and success of the shop so far.

"It's pretty successful for being my side thing," she said. "We'll see what comes of it."

Turner does not intend to open any more online shops other than ChrismShop, but would like to further expand her product selections and attend more Catholic events to promote her goods.

"I'm optimistic," Turner said. "After a year of having my shop open, I would have never imagined (being where she is now). If that's where I'm at after a year, I know that a year from now, I'll probably be in a place very similar, that I'm like, 'Wow, I wouldn't have expected to be doing this!' "

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