

**Exhibition Re-Seeing the Permanent Collection**

**NEWS**



*The Story of Elijah* attributed to Anthuenis Claeissins

The exhibition **Re-Seeing the Permanent Collection** *The Viewer's Voice* engages individuals from the museum's campus audience in an experiment of interpretation. A work of art can elicit countless reactions and readings, depending on the perspective of the viewer. This exhibition provides a platform for Marquette University students, faculty, and staff from across the academic disciplines to share their observations about objects from the museum's permanent collection. L. Christopher Miller, Ph.D., Vice President for Student Affairs, wrote this about *The Story of Elijah* attributed to Anthuenis Claeissins:

I take this painting to be an interpretation of 1 Kings 17:8-16, in which Elijah asks the Widow of

Zarephath for a morsel of bread. There's some hesitancy on the widow's part because she has but a little meal and oil with which to make bread for herself and her son, and it is a time of drought. Elijah instructs her, "Do not be afraid; go and do as you have said; but first make me a little cake of it and bring it to me, and afterwards make something for yourself and your son. For thus says the Lord the God of Israel: The jar of meal will not be emptied and the jug of oil will not fail until the day that the Lord sends rain on the earth." (New Revised Standard Version) In many ways this passage embodies ideals I hold sacred—care for others, faith, and sharing—and indeed these ideals are part and parcel of our mission at Marquette.

Care for others is demonstrated through the widow sharing the little she has with Elijah. Both her generosity and faith are rewarded as "The jar of meal was not emptied, neither did the jug of oil fail, according to the word of the Lord that he spoke by Elijah." (NRSV) Through this act, the Lord's care for his people is shown as well. Claeissins's painting enriches what the Bible passage communicates. It depicts the child's role in this story—the child sharing bread with Elijah—and in this we can see the story of communion, people coming together to share in the bread of life. The widow must trust in the word of the Lord and in Elijah as the Lord's prophet and, more importantly, she must entrust her own child's well-being to Elijah's prophesy as well.

When I think about Marquette's role in the lives of our students, this painting resonates with me. Parents entrust their children's well-being to us, put their faith in us and our mission to provide for their children's growth on many levels (spiritual, intellectual, physical, and emotional), just as the widow trusts that she and her son will be provided for. In the same way that the widow and her son provide sustenance for Elijah, our students contribute to our own ongoing development of faith in the world as well. It is through our coming together in mission that we contribute to each other's being in the world. The things we are called to do through mission and faith are not always easy, just as it could not have been easy for the widow to give Elijah her last bit of food, but it is through our connectedness to each other that we find true sustenance.



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#### UPCOMING EVENT

Wednesday, November 6, at 6 p.m. - Concert featuring Musician-in-Residence Brett Lipshutz and Marquette Students



10.31.13