

## Local artist restores crucifix at St. Josaphat Church

*100-year-old crucifix receives makeover after effects of deterioration and damage*

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Staff Reporter

A 100-year-old crucifix in St. Josaphat Parish in Cheektowaga saw the completion of a much-needed facelift with the help of some artistic talent.

John Bryans of Bryans Brothers Painting Inc. in Tonawanda and Timothy Englert, an artist affiliated with ArtSpace Buffalo, were associated with the restoration of the crucifix that has been in the parish for years. Over the years, the crucifix has deteriorated and in need attention.

"It was in a position where people were knocking into it," Bryans said. "They would go up for Communion and they would knock into it. Over the years, it just got abused because of people being so close to it. We took it down a few years ago when the church got restored. During the course of those few years, it was in the basement, and it started crumbling in areas, almost like it got dropped."

Parishioners began asking about the crucifix since they missed having it. Father Richard Poblacki, pastor of St. Josaphat, hired the team of artists to work on restoring the crucifix. Bryans Brothers specializes in historical and church restoration and Englert regularly restores devotional statues.

In order to begin the project,

the artists had to gather all the pieces since parts of the crucifix were missing. Bryans hired Englert because he felt he was the best person for the task.

"I hired Tim Englert from Englert's Art Studios, which does a lot of my work," Bryans said. "He just did a magnificent job on it. He rebuilt it, a lot of the clothing and the hands and fingers and stuff. It just turned out really, really sharp. Father felt pleased with it, so he put it back in the church and they put it on a pedestal on wheels so he could wheel it around for Good Friday and special events. He has candles so people can pray."

According to Englert, the restoration project involved a very old, plaster crucifix. When he received it, not only were the hands broken off, but part of the cloth Jesus wore was broken as well.

In order to avoid having to move it and potentially do more damage, he went to the basement of the church and worked on it there, surrounding the statue with cushions to keep anything else from getting broken.

Englert's first step was to epoxy broken parts such as the limbs and loincloth to the crucifix.

"After that, I did some finishing, filling with some Durabond, sanding that down," Englert said. "After that I primed it and began to paint. That went off and on for a while, and then the final step was



COURTESY OF TIMOTHY ENGLERT

Artist Timothy Englert works on the damaged crucifix at St. Josaphat Parish in Cheektowaga.

getting the crucifix ready. We had to get some hardware fixed so it would hang right."

The longest part of the process involved gluing the limbs together and repainting. As an artist, Englert tried to convey the emotion of suffering in a realistic way in Jesus' face and on His body. Englert said many artists make Jesus look "pretty" rather than like a suffering victim.

"I'm not with the pretty Jesus school of crucifixes, where He looks like He just came from the spa," Englert said. "I thought about torture victims to convey suffering. That is basically what a crucifix is for, mediating on the suffering of Jesus. I thought of my audience for this religious icon, and as an artist, I had a responsibility to convey this heavy emotion in an artistic

manner. It has been one of the most interesting jobs I have had yet, and one I am most proud of. My clients were enthralled with my results, so it was a very rewarding project for me."

Englert studied art at Buffalo State College and Humboldt State University in California. He has done work for Nardin Academy in Buffalo and Holy Angels Church in Buffalo. In 2013, he completed the restoration of murals in St. Josaphat Church, and in 2014, a painting at St. Adalbert Church in Buffalo.

Englert has also worked on many religious sculptures and statues.

"Right now, I'm painting Jesus laying in His tomb," he said. "I just try to think of the suffering and the audience. An artist should always think of the audience."