

ATRIUM TOUR

San Damiano Cross

The San Damiano cross is a 12th-century Byzantine-style crucifix that is the symbol of the Franciscan tradition after St. Francis of Assisi had a vision before it, hearing God tell him to "rebuild my church." It is currently housed in the Basilica of St. Clare in Assisi, Italy, and depicts Christ as triumphant and radiant, not simply suffering, surrounded by heavenly and earthly witnesses.

The cross above the main altar was made at the Demetz Art Studio, one of the worldwide leading workshops that manufactures ecclesiastical art and continues the old tradition of woodcarving. The studio is located in Ortisei, a small Italian village nestled in the Dolomites, a famous mountain range in the northern part of Italy in the heart of the Alps. Its roots extend deep into the history of woodcarving since it is a family business that was founded in 1872 and passed on from generation to generation – the fifth generation is now running the business. During the last decades it has reached worldwide fame for its modern religious sculptures as well as its traditional art.



The cross measures 77 inches high by 57 inches wide. The three-dimensional corpus is 4 feet long.



The original painter of the San Damiano cross is unknown. It is likely to have been a Syro-Byzantine monk who traveled across Umbria fulfilling commission for sacred art in the 1100s. Since 1212 it has been in the care of the Poor Clares, a contemplative order of Franciscan nuns based in Assisi. It is made of solid walnut and stands approximately 6' 4" tall by 5' wide. Elements such as the stylized eyes show a Syrian influence. The cross was restored and repainted in 1938 and now hangs in the Chapel of St. George in the Basilica of Saint Clare in Assisi.

A replica of the cross was purchased on the second pilgrimage of Assisi Scholars in 2016 and hangs in the Carol Dauwe Fine Arts Center at Roger Bacon.

The cross was made possible by generous gifts from **Rose Doepker** and **Thomas and Patricia Bill**.

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Rose Doepker '49 is an Our Lady of the Angels (OLA) alumna. A faithful participant in First Friday Mass, her staunch support of the Franciscans is evident in her humility and commitment to her faith. Her Franciscan charism is manifested in a life of “caring for others.” Rosella was a 2024 winner of the prestigious Amaranth Award – presented to an OLA alumna who has made significant contributions to their communities while demonstrating a commitment to the school's values and mission. Rose says: *“I was raised and influenced by my Catholic faith, from parents and attending Catholic schools. I received the Amaranth Award in 2024, representing OLA High School. It is rewarding for me to contribute now, in many special ways. I am looking forward to the completion of the new, beautiful Roger Bacon chapel. The San Damiano crucifix, placed above the altar, will be an inspiration for all.”*



Thomas and Patricia Bill are westside cradle Catholics who attended Elder High School and Seton High School in the late 60's. Their children attended Catholic grades schools and high schools. Faith has always been a strong fixture throughout their lives. With Tom's involvement with the Poor Clares and the ideals and values exhibited by the Franciscans at Roger Bacon, they felt this commitment was one small way to openly express “thanks” for all the good bestowed upon them and their family.

