

Father Frans van der Lugt, by Jordan Denari Duffner

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During the civil war in Syria, when many left the country to escape violence and hunger, Dutch Jesuit priest Frans van der Lugt insisted on remaining in the city of Hom, where he ministered to the disabled and to sought to foster harmony between Muslims and Christians. After a Catholic church was bombed, Father Frans asked the local imam to come to mass and read from the Qur'an. Soon thereafter, in April 2014, Father Frans was murdered. Jordan Denari Duffner uses the form of an icon to pay homage to him. The painting includes the *bismillah*, a well-known Arabic phrase from the Qur'an: "In the name of God, the Most Compassionate, the Most Merciful." Duffner writes, "Many might wonder how God's kingdom could be built in a city

devastated by war. . . . But as Jesus says in the Gospel of Luke, the kingdom of God is not simply a place we can see or that we reach at the end of time. Rather it is something that can be built 'among us.' . . . This is a truth that Father Frans's life and legacy made known to me." Among the priest's last words were these: "Shall I never again share in the suffering of all these beloved people around me? Shall I offer them comfort and hope no more? With no more voice to encourage them. . . . No ears to listen to them?"