

*Joseph and Mary: Wedding Portrait*, by Jim Larson

Art selection and comment by [Lil Copan](#) in the [January 21, 2015](#) issue



During Advent and Christmas, Christians hear stories of prophets, shepherds, night skies, angel announcements, a star, traveling Magi, and wanderers. An exploration of past and future, of expected and curious symbols, and of mystery—these also are central in the work of Jim Larson. A traditional woodworker and liturgical artist at House of Mercy, a church in St. Paul, Minnesota, Larson merges Western art, biblical and historical narratives, and traditional and nontraditional symbolism. This oil-on-canvas diptych, *Joseph and Mary: Wedding Portrait* (working title), is part of a series based on Jean-François Millet's and Vincent van Gogh's *The Sower*, where the sower is transformed into Mary with the Christ-child, and the Passion is attested to by raven, goldfinch, and skull. "The narratives might remain elusive," Larson writes. "But that's OK; the stories they grow out of are pretty strange to begin with."