



I Lift Up My Eyes

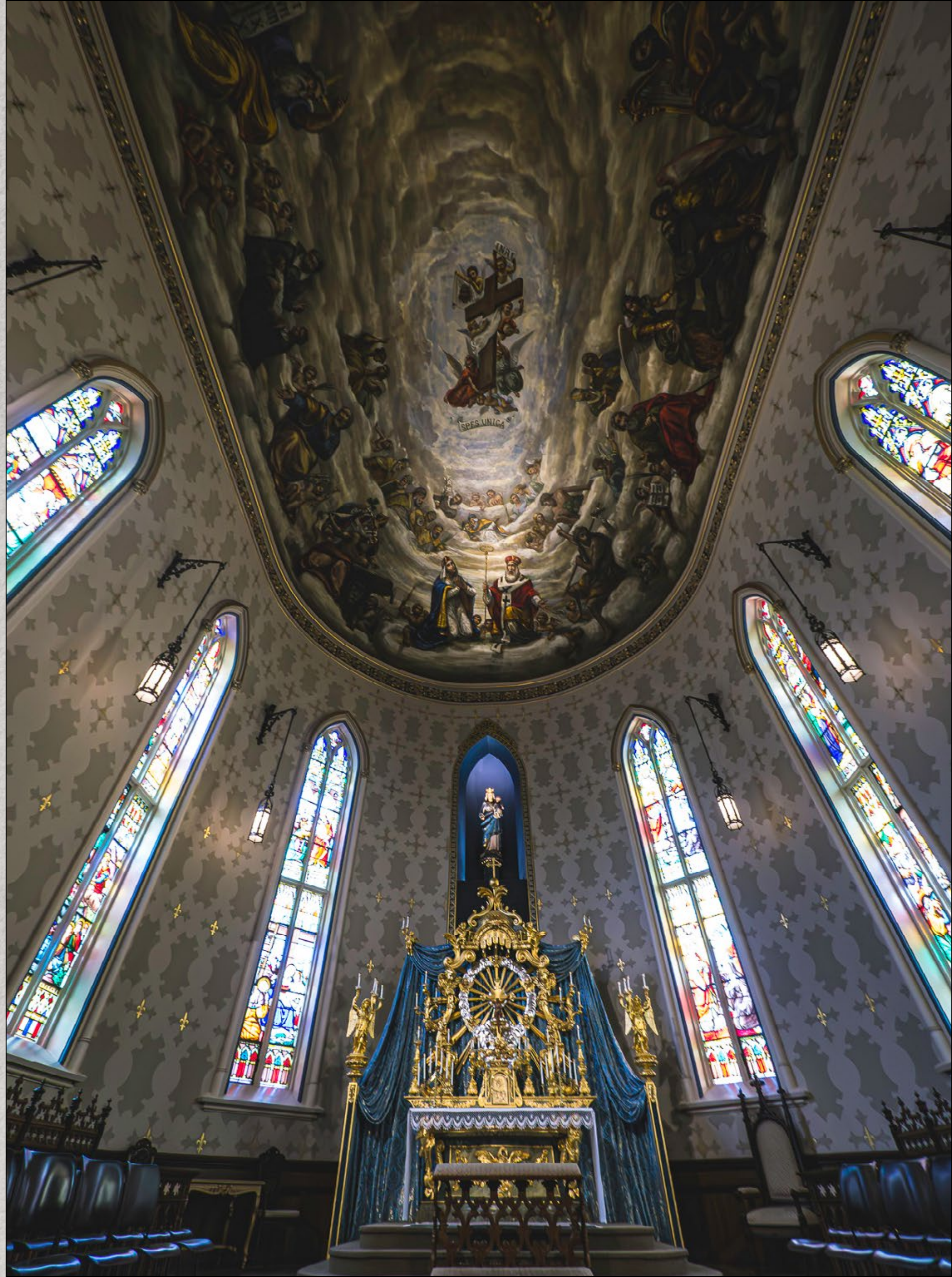
Joe Lipka

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The East Entry to the Basilica of the Sacred Heart is officially known as the World War I Memorial. The entry is best known for the four words, "God, Country, Notre Dame" above the double doors.

It was a cold, crisp winter day. The strong sunshine conveyed an intense clear light, but little heat. I sought warmth from the Indiana winter inside the Basilica.





I sought to photograph Ivan Meštrović's Pieta. I was not happy with the initial results because there was a kneeler directly in front of the statue. I approached the statue, knelt and raised my eyes.



It was then I understood the genius of Meštrović. One had to kneel and raise their eyes to experience the beauty and power of the sculpture. The details that one could not see while standing are only revealed when the viewer has lifted up their eyes.

From the time I made that personal discovery, I had trouble attending Mass. As I knelt, (supposedly) in prayer, I succumbed to temptation and paid more attention to the building rather than spiritual matters.







I was mesmerized by the beauty of the Basilica. During Mass I ducked, bobbed and twisted my head to compose imaginary photographs. The congregation must have thought I was afflicted with palsy because of my continuous odd head movements.

In truth, I was either possessed by photographic demons or afflicted with the curse of photography. I could not enter the Basilica without creating mental photographs.

Later, I returned with my camera to exorcise the photographic demons by running through them.













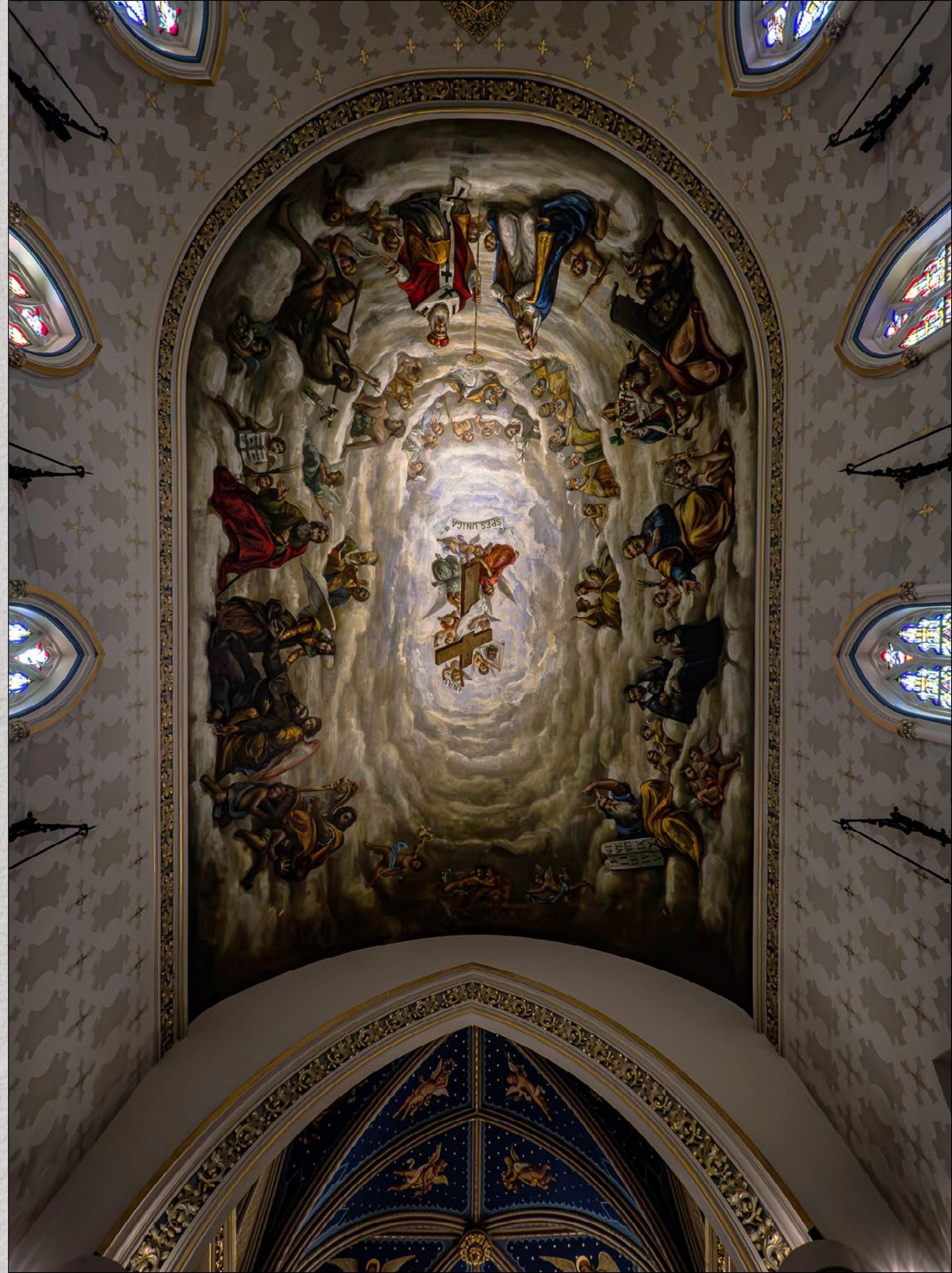


Epilogue

Meštrović and Me

Ivan Meštrović was invited to Notre Dame in the 1950's. The University built him a studio where he taught classes and created art until his death in 1962. After his death, Meštrović's studio became a classroom for metal sculpture classes. My attempts to create metal sculptures in that same studio were judged by all to be abject failures.

After failing in three-dimensional art I felt that the two dimensional art of photography was more suitable for my artistic capabilities. The spirit of Meštrović taught me two important lessons in art: first in his studio and a second in the Basilica.



Have a Listen:

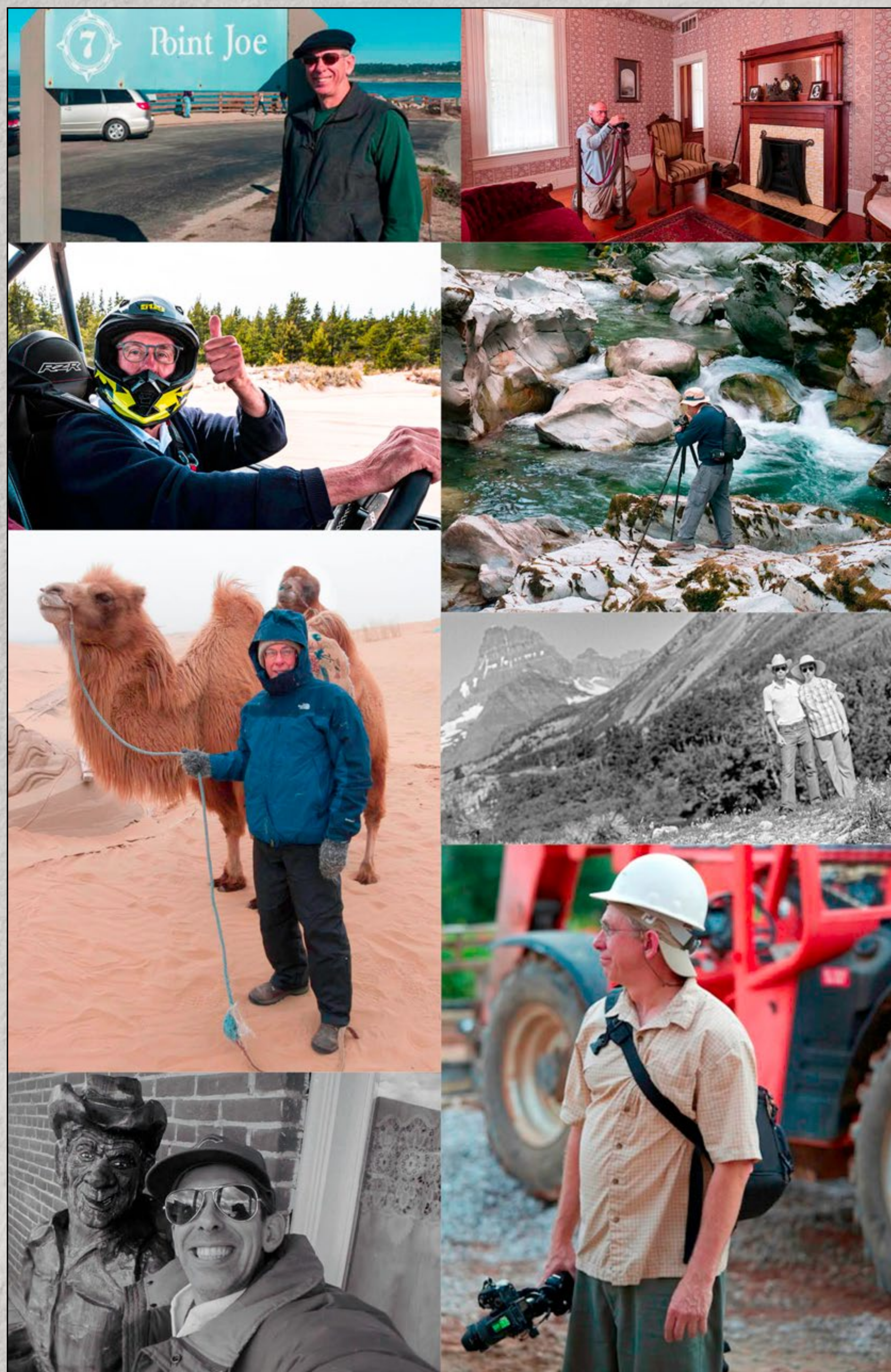
Some of these images were included in LensWork's 2017 edition of "Seeing in Sixes" Community Publishing Project. This group of photographs has received some appreciation recently, being the subject of an audio commentary at the LensWork Online web site. This recognition prompted me to update this Folio with additional images and some peripheral material.

While we usually think of Churches as being places of meditative silence the last day of field photography was anything but quiet. The brand new Murdy Family Organ (right) was just a few days from its dedication in the Basilica. While I was photographing the Basilica, the Organ was being put through its final testing. I made a video record of a segment of the rehearsal.

The audio file that prompted me to undertake the revision of this publication is also available. Brooks Jensen, Publisher of LensWork has a short audio commentary on this project.

[Have a Listen.](#)





Joe Lipka has shared his vision since he began photographing.

In the last forty years, his photographs have appeared in over one hundred and twenty juried exhibitions, and twenty five solo exhibitions. His images have been published in *LensWork*, *Black & White Photography* (UK) and *F-Stop Magazines*. His recent book project, *Mostly True Stories*, was featured as a LensWork Bonus Edition Publication in February 2024.

His website www.joelipkaphoto.com has continuously evolved since it was launched in 2004. His blog *Postcards from the Creative Journey*, published weekly since 2010, is now published each month as part of *The Lipka Journal*.

His newest blog, *The Daily Photograph*, is simply that. A new and interesting image is posted every morning at 8:00 AM.