



Impact Statement

Presley Loosen, Grade 8

What You Know is Right, 2026

Acrylic, colored pencil on paper, 22 x 16 inches

West Middle School, Oak Creek, WI

Unsung Hero: Mother Matylda Getter

When I'd been looking for an Unsung Hero, I knew I had to find and research someone who was truly inspiring and personal to me. What is art from your hands and from your talent, if it doesn't also come from your heart? If it doesn't reflect on, not only the physical appearance, but also a part of yourself, your own morals and beliefs, in between each brush stroke? Why do you make art? Why did I choose Mother Matylda Getter? She went through so much in her life to help the people. She proved her bravery and resilience repeatedly, even though it could have got her murdered. She did it because it was right, and she let nothing stop her. She saw everyone who came to her door for help as, not what they looked like, not what they believed in, not their past, or their social status; she saw them as humans. Human beings asking for help—humans who all bleed the same color blood, and who are all children of God.

Mother Matylda Getter was 17 when she joined the congregation of the Sisters of the Family of Mary, a Catholic congregation founded in 1857, which still operates today. Though in Matylda Getter's time, the sisters of the family of Mary had to live in secrecy, due to religious persecution in Russia and the former kingdom of Poland. Matylda and the other sisters in the house had to constantly live in secret, hiding their ways. Not only did they practice an illegal religion, but they also hid, schooled, cared for, and gave new identities to Jewish children. Which, as most know, could have had her, all the children, all the 120 sisters, and everyone involved, severely punished. Here, Matylda Getter fulfilled her duties of being a guardian of the girls, an educator, and superior of the shelter in Moldvanka. By the time she had been there for around thirty years, WWII had broken out, and she was almost 70 years old. Matylda Getter had already been a part of establishing dozens of schools, orphanages, and care facilities. Her work already had her recognized across the country, but her greatest acts came during the Holocaust.

After World War II hit, Matylda Getter decided to help all who were threatened with persecution—mostly children. When sending a child to an orphanage, she would say to the superior, “will you accept God's blessing, sister?” She trusted that God would protect them, showed the people that all children were God's beautiful creations. Lia Balint, a child rescued by the sisters and Matylda, was only four years old when a German soldier paid an unexpected “visit”. Her guardian, a sister named Helena, hid Lia in a basket and covered it with a pile of straw holding eggs on top. The Nazi insisted on confiscating the eggs, but Helena begged him not to, saying they were for the sick children. All the while, Little Lia thought it was a game of hide and seek.

It is estimated that Matylda and the sisters rescued several hundred who were threatened with persecution, and all who came to them lived to see the end of the war. What do Matylda Getter's achievements in her time mean to me? Why was I drawn to her biographies, infatuated with her story? I was moved by her bravery and resilience. Inspired by her devotion to her beliefs. In a time of so much racial persecution, she ignored the worldly beliefs of others and focused on what God wanted. What he put her on this earth to do. She knew that every human on this planet was a creation of God, made in his image, she knew, contrary to common belief, that everyone was worth the same. No one was better than anyone else for something that they can't control, like their skin color. She showed me that through life, it shouldn't matter what everyone else thinks or believes, it shouldn't matter what they say to you, or the things they do. They can't take away what you believe in. What you know is right. She showed me the importance of standing up for what you believe in no matter what. While planning my painting, I knew I had to capture the symbolism of safety. The children in the painting are scared but they look to Mother Matylda Getter with hope. The dove in the stained-glass window further embodies the hope that she gave to hundreds, and the light shining through the other side represents the light they looked to through all the danger and destruction. The sister holding the toddler faces toward the outside in dread. She knows the truth of the world, but she holds the toddler close, protecting her from ever witnessing the things so many others suffered through. On the other side we see Mother Matylda Getter in the center. She is after all the center of the painting, yet she is facing the children, giving them comfort and reassurance. The left side shows the darkness of the world, and the right side shows the beauty and hope of being taken in by Mother Matylda Getter and the sisters. The flag flying clearly shows that the events of Mother Matylda's story take place in Poland.

Making this painting was a wonderful experience. It took me about a month. While I painted their clothes and most of the background, I used colored pencils to get precise details like their faces and the stained-glass window. Their faces were very important because I really wanted their expressions to tell the story. I want whoever lays their eyes on my work to feel what the people are feeling. To understand the look in their eyes. I think I grew as an artist because this project showed me the importance of meaning and storytelling through art. And Mother Matylda Getter's story taught me the importance of fighting for what you believe is right.