

First Friday Reflections



Imagine my surprise walking into the Clinical Center at the National Institutes of Health and seeing this piece of art on display. Of course I was immediately drawn to the Sacred Heart, particularly this rendition showing both the strength of the flame resting on metal and the vulnerability of the vein-crossed heart formed from fragile glass (at least that's how I interpret it). When you go to a research institution like NIH, either for yourself or with someone you love, you are embarking on an uncharted path, often as the pioneer for a new treatment that may or may not work. And many of the people who have the courage to set out on this journey die without ever knowing that months or maybe years later the experiment begun with them has benefitted countless people.

As I gazed at this Heart in its case in a *government* hospital, I thought as I often do of Philippine and her journey across vast waters into an uncharted life. Think how brave she and her intrepid little band of women had to be as they crossed the ocean, traveled in the heat of summer up the Mississippi (wearing long black silk habits!) to be greeted by a bishop who had no appreciation for

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the mission Philippine wanted to fulfill. And she died thinking she was a failure. Instead she became the saint whose courageous journey continues centuries later to benefit all of us educated and encouraged by the Society of the Sacred Heart.

Reflection and Photograph: Cokie Roberts

Sculptor: Tim Tate
