NATIONAL COLLEGE OF ART AND DESIGN.
DEPARTMENT OF FASHION AND TEXTILES.

INTERPRETING THE SACRED IN CHRISTIAN ART;

A FOCUS ON THE ROLE AND SCOPE OF THE ARTIST REPRESENTING THE SACRED IN THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH WITH A FOCUS ON THE MODERN LITURGICAL ARTIST.

BY: LUCIA MC CAUGHEY

SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF HISTORY OF ART AND DESIGN AND COMPLEMENTARY STUDIES IN CANDIDACY FOR THE DEGREE OF

B.A. IN PRINTED TEXTILE DESIGN

1996

Acknowledgements:

I wish to thank all who have aided my research for this thesis. Thanks to Imogen Stuart and Patrick Pye who gave up their time to be interviewed and for all the information supplied. Thanks to Fr. Paddy Jones of the National Centre for Pastoral Liturgy, Carlow, for the use of the Library, Archives and Research Facilities and his interest. Thanks to Fr. Diarmuid Connolly, P.P. of Castleknock for his time and interest. Thanks to my sister Mary Mc Caughey for helping with the theological background to the project. Thanks also to the librarians of the Central Catholic Library, Merrion Square, Maynooth Pontifical College, and The National College of Art and Design . Thanks finally to my tutor Hilary O' Kelly who guided my research.

Lucia Mc Caughey,
February, 1996.

Introduction:

My interest in the chosen subject:

I have chosen to look at the role and the scope of the artist interpreting Christian themes and symbols of 'the sacred'. I wanted to focus on the work of two Irish artists in particular, Patrick Pye and Imogen Stuart, having been particularly impressed by their innovative use of symbolism in Church Art. Having spent a semester on an Erasmus programme to a Finland during 1995, I became interested in Church Art in Orthodox (Icons) and Lutheran Churches (where the use of Christian symbolism is minimalistic). On return to Ireland during my final year of college I decided to research into the corresponding use of images in Irish Church Art. I was also interested in the restrictions that the Church might place on a contemporary modern artist attempting to portray Christian symbols and wanted to investigate this.

There has been much written on the theoretical idea of the 'sacred' in the Church and many books on the History of Art in general will focus on various eras of art which correspond to eras in the life of the Church. Most guidelines for the artist are from Church documents and Canon laws of the Church, many of which pre-date the Second Vatican Council of 1963. While the same Church laws are still applicable today, much of the current Church documentation is in the form of 'Pastoral directories or guidelines'. Pastoral Directories are more on the practical settings, use of and lay out of the interiors of Catholic Churches. They are useful and up to date sources of reference for the Christian artist attempting to understand their role in contributing to the liturgy and life of the Church but are not very detailed. Not much has been written by artists or art critics on this role and its interpretation for the Christian artist. The main written references in this area were suggested by Fr. Paddy Jones of the Irish Centre for Liturgy based in Carlow. Most references were obtained in the Irish Centre for Liturgy Carlow, the Catholic Central Library and Maynooth College.

In light of the above my main source of reference was the Irish Pastoral Directory as guidelines for the artist. In order to fully appreciate the role for the artist and how they perceive their responsibilities to portray their images correctly it was necessary to do alot of direct research through interviews. Not only did I interview the

artists concerned, Patrick Pye and Imogen Stuart, but followed up the main interviews with numerous telephone calls and received suggested reference sources and other information by post from them both.

Outline of Thesis:

In this thesis I have firstly looked at the definition of Christian Art and looked at various styles and forms of symbolism in Christian art of the past giving examples from the Eastern Icons of the seventh centuries. I then look at symbolism and styles of the later Middle ages and also question briefly what the Church at that time wanted to communicate to the people. Similarly I give examples of altarpieces from the Renaissance. I then look at the style of Modern art and ask whether the Church finds this modern style of symbolism acceptable.

To answer the above I look at Church documentation and show that the Church does welcome modern art styles. I then examine in the last section how two modern Irish liturgical artists have succeeded in working successfully within Church guidelines and in communication with Church members, designers and architects in achieving an effective form of sacred symbolism for the modern Church of today, each unique and in harmony with their Church building.

List of Plates:

Contents:

Sections:

Interpreting the Sacred in Christian Art : A Focus on the Role and Scope of the Artist representing the Sacred in the Christian Church with a focus on the Modern Liturgical Artist.

Section One:

Defining the Sacred:

According to the Oxford English Dictionary, '**Sacred is something that inspires devotion or is held especially acceptable to a deity, dedicated or reserved or appropriated to some person or purpose'**(Oxford Dictionary, 1985).

We might ask ourselves in this context, what is the purpose of sacred art in the Church. Surely sacred art in the Church is the something reserved for the Church alone something to inspire devotion among Christians to their God and their saints, the sacred people in the Church. There have always been tensions in the history of religion and religious art between the worship of God in and for himself and what may become the worship of religious icons or statues in and for themselves.

In this thesis I propose to look at how the understanding of what is sacred has broadened to encompass not only something that obviously inspires devotion to God , but that recognises the fact that even the everyday things of creation can be seen as sacred too. The documents of the Council of Vatican Two reflected the change in the whole definition of the Church with more of a focus on the role of the laity and their participation in the Church[1]. Along with this many of the differences between the sacred and the secular began to be eroded. The role of the liturgical artist had to reflect this broader understanding of the Church. This has occurred after Vatican Two. Artists began to be encouraged to take a greater role in the liturgy and they became bolder in their use of their own individual styles and interpretations of common and familiar Gospel scenes.

[1] see Christifideles Laici : The Vocation and Mission of the Lay Faithful in the Church and the World, 1989: Veritas.

I will firstly give some examples of Christian Art in the various main phases in the history of art in the Church. I will show the significance of symbolism in some of the different styles of painting in Church Art. I will then look at more modern styles of art, which are also acceptable in Church art provided they conform to the various Church requirements and guidelines of Canon Law. I will look at what Church tradition has to say on adopting the more modern styles and also how it sees the modern liturgical artist. Finally I will give examples of modern liturgical art in Ireland and the importance of colours, symbolism and the media used to integrate with the liturgy.

What do we mean by Christian Art?

According to the Irish Episcopal Commission for Liturgy, IECL (1994), 'Christian Art depicts Christ in his mysteries'.

What do we mean by Christian art? Do we mean art with a Christian theme or art whose style or method of depiction is in some sense Christian? Is it true to say that there is a style which is in some sense Christian?. How can and should Christian images be portrayed? How can we reconcile the theme and guidelines given to the artist when he/she is given the commission with the individuality of the artist? In this thesis I will attempt to look at and address some of these questions.

Representing the image of God:

It is true that in the Church especially when Biblical subjects are or were portrayed, feelings are apt to run high as Gombrich points out (Gombrich, 1984, p 12), 'Though we all know that the Scriptures tell us nothing about the appearance of Jesus, and that God himself cannot be visualised in Human form, and though we know that it was the artists of the past who first created the images that we have become accustomed to, some are still inclined to think that to depart from these traditional forms amounts to blasphemy.'

Henze and Filtaut point out that 'a Christian work of art presupposes a legitimate artist and the intention and desire on his part of taking his theme

seriously'(Henze and Filtaut,1956, p17). Moreover they point out that 'there is a type of art that is incapable of religious expression; and Realism, Naturalism and Impressionism, belong to it'. However the writers seem to take the view that when it comes to Symbolism and Expressionism, things are somehow different, 'No longer seeking to obtain mastery of things, the painter's eyes became tools for projecting an interior landscape'.Later in the paper I will show how some contemporary Irish artists have used various types of symbolism to achieve the purpose of expressing their Christian themes.

In this thesis, I propose to look at Church art as distinct from Christian art in general. Henze and Filtaut describe the difference "Church art consists of those things which are made directly for use in the Church". The Church itself and the liturgical vessels and vestments can be accepted without hesitation as Church art, since they are exclusively for Church use. However, on the other hand it is difficult to apply the distinction to pictures and statues. While Christian pictures do have a place in the Church, the home, the cemetery and the street, when these pictures are for use within the Church buildings there are criteria for suitability laid down to the use and depiction of religious images which I propose to examine.

> WHAT WE SHOULD REQUIRE OF AN ECCLESIASTICAL IMAGE WOULD BE A CERTAIN DISCIPLINED, SYMBOLIC AND MONUMENTAL QUALITY, SACRIFICING INDIVIDUALITY TO OBJECTIVITY. THE ECCLESIASTICAL, AS OPPOSED TO THE CHRISTIAN IMAGE WOULD THEN NOT BE FREE ART, BUT FOR THE FULFILLMENT OF A SPECIFIC TASK; NOT ONLY WOULD THE THEME BE LAID DOWN, BUT THE WORK WOULD BE SUBORDINATED TO THE PURPOSES AND REQUIREMENTS OF ITS ALLOTTED PLACE WITHIN THE CHURCH(Henze and Filtaut,1956, p19).

Thus there are always objective guidelines laid down for the artist by the Church, but since 1963 and Vatican Two there has been less of a requirement to sacrifice the individuality of the artist to any objective norms and styles required by the Church.

I will examine to what extent the artist is given freedom of expression within the context of Church art and Liturgical guidelines and requirements in the modern context by taking as my examples, Churches in Ireland and Irish Liturgical artists who have depicted sacred Christian images in these buildings but very much have integrated their own styles with these guidelines. There are many tensions artists face in on the one hand representing the sacred in a worthy and respectful manner and on the other, attempting to progress further as artists and use their talents and imaginations to the

best of their ability. Most importantly, we must never forget that in sacred Church art, the artist must seek to understand the contemporary society and the people there and must represent his Christian subjects in a manner which encourages the worshipping community to grow in participation in the liturgy and also to grow together as a community in their love for God and for each other.

Firstly however I will look at some of the artistic styles that the Church has recognised as legitimate for artists throughout history. I will emphasise the fact that the symbolism in these different styles of art was apparent to the people and that art constituted a very important part of the liturgy.

The Origins of Christian Art:

In this section I wish to look at how Christian Art and imagery such as one might see in galleries and museums once hung in Churches and Basilicas and as such Christian Art had a very obvious role in the liturgy of the Church. Nowadays looking at these pictures in galleries, one is inclined to forget that in order to fully understand the meanings behind these pictures, one must keep in mind their purpose in the liturgy of the Church itself. For example an altarpiece would contain immense symbolism as would icons or other pieces of work to inspire devotion, prayer and participation in the liturgy.

One can see by briefly looking through the various periods of artistic symbolism and styles in Church art that each fulfilled the above purpose but not necessarily using the same styles or artistic techniques. For example in the very early Christian Church when Christian artists were first called upon to represent Christ and his apostles at the beginning, it was the Greek style of art that came to their aid as with most other forms of cultural expression at that time. At the time of the catacombs during the period of the Christian persecutions in Rome (300 AD), **'The main purpose of Christian art was to remind the faithful of God's mercy and power'** (Gombrich,1984, p 90). An example of this is one of the earliest representations of a Christian image in Rome, 'Namely the three men in a fiery furnace' where 'the Lord sent his angels to deliver his servants. Everything which was not strictly relevant in this

representation was left out. Ideas of clarity and simplicity began to outweigh ideals of faithful imitation (Gombrich, p 91)'.

The whole question of the proper purpose of art in Churches proved of immense importance for the whole history of Europe. For it was one of the principal issues on which the Eastern, Greek speaking parts of the Roman Empire whose capital was Byzantium or Constantinople, refused to accept the lead of the Latin Pope.

Iconoclasts were against the whole use of images of a religious nature. In **745, all religious art was forbidden in the eastern Churches** and most icons were destroyed. However those who defended the use of these icons in the churches argued that they did not worship these images themselves as the pagans did, rather they worshipped God and the saints through and across these images. The artist of the icon did have to follow a certain tradition of symbolism and colour, but this was to aid people's interpretation of the symbolism of the work. The people in the culture of the time participating in the Eastern liturgy understood the symbolic conventions for icons. While the form and the style of figures in the icon could be seen as similar to the work of modernist painters like Matisse and Picasso who seem to have rediscovered the abstraction and purity involved in this form, there is a vast difference. As pointed out by Mary Elizabeth Podles (1996:53),

> THE ICONS AND IN FACT ANY WORKS OF ART MUST BE REGARDED AS A LIVING PART OF THE CULTURE WHICH PRODUCED THEM. TO UNDERSTAND THE PURPOSE FUNCTION AND MEANING OF A LITURGICAL ICON OR A LITURGICAL PIECE OF ART, ONE MUST FIRST UNDERSTAND THE LITURGY.

In the next section, I will begin to examine the liturgy and the liturgical requirements for Christian art, however first I wish to look at two examples of this symbolism at work to help inspire devotion and participation in the liturgy.

The Rublev Icon:

Andrei Rublev painted this image of 'The Trinity', for the monastery of the Trinity and St Sergius, somewhere between 1408 and 1425 (**see fig 1**). From a simple first glance and analysis one can see that their are three divine persons arranged in a circle, which denotes perfection and unity: the three persons with a single nature.

Fig 1) The Trinity, Icon by Andrei Rublev, 1408 -1425.

However there is much more theological significance behind the picture which distinguishes it greatly from a picture like Picasso's which uses a similar symbolic style or a picture of Van Gogh's which uses similar bright colours.

The theological symbolism is as follows:

The central figure rests his hands on the table with two fingers extended in the traditional gesture of blessing. According to Mary Elizabeth Podles (1996, p54), the two fingers of Christ's hand serve a two fold purpose: to remind us of his dual nature (fully human and fully divine), and to bless and offer the sacrificial meal in the chalice. Christ turns his eyes towards the Father as if to offer him the cup and the sacrifice as he does in the Eucharist. Also the negative shapes between the three figures are arranged in the shape of a chalice which encloses the central figure of Christ:- showing Christ as the living Eucharist, Christ's complete sacrifice of his own nature to the Father. Thus overall we see here that Rublev's abstract treatment of form and space are not only a simple style of folk art used at the time, but in fact a building up of layers of theological meaning into the panel.

The colours of the Icon are also very significant and have a theological basis. The Deep purple colour, signifies divine love, dense blue is a symbol of divine life and glowing gold a symbol of divine abundance. The Holy Spirit is represented and clothed in green as a symbol of spiritual regeneration and of life. The Red garment on Christ the son, symbolises the son becoming human and also his body and blood offered for us in the Eucharist.[2]

Sacred art in the Middle Ages:

In the Middle ages artists set out not to create a convincing **likeness of nature** or to make beautiful things, but rather because they wanted to convey to their brothers and sisters in faith the content and the message of the sacred story. According to Gombrich they were 'perhaps more successful than most artists of earlier or later times

[2] see Dulles, The Craft of Theology , Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 1992, 90-100.

(Gombrich, p121)'. Most of the representations of Gospel scenes in the various manuscripts and Gospel books, popular at that time, showed only the most principal figures, stylised and on a flat background. "The exchange alone (between Jesus and the people) is what mattered to the artist. He saw no reason to represent the room in which the scene occurred: it might merely have diverted attention from the inner meaning of the event (ibid)".

At no other time did European art approach the ideals of Eastern art and the Icon more closely than at the height of the **Romanesque style** (Gombrich, p139). Artists began to discard all ambitions to represent things as they were seen. It was this freedom from the need to imitate the natural world that was to enable them to convey the idea of the supernatural like the idea of symbolism in the icon. The Romanesque style, however did not even outlast the twelfth century . The new style that emerged was the Gothic style which emerged in Northern France. The older Romanesque churches would have conveyed something of the 'church militant' that offered shelter against the onslaught of evil', whereas the new Gothic cathedrals gave the faithful a glimpse of a different, heavenly world.

> THE FAITHFUL WOULD HAVE HEARD IN SERMONS AND HYMNS OF THE HEAVENLY JERUSALEM WITH ITS GATES OF PEARL , ITS PRICELESS JEWELS , ITS STREETS OF PURE GOLD AND TRANSPARENT GLASS (REVELATION XXI). NOW THIS VISION HAD DESCENDED FROM HEAVEN TO EARTH. THE WALLS OF THESE BUILDINGS WERE NOT COLD AND FOREBODING. THEY WERE FORMED OF STAINED GLASS THAT SHONE LIKE RUBIES AND EMERALDS. THE PILLARS, RIBS AND TRACERY WERE GLISTENING WITH GOLD. EVERYTHING THAT WAS HEAVY, EARTHY OR HUMDRUM WAS ELIMINATED. THE FAITHFUL WHO SURRENDERED THEMSELVES TO THE CONTEMPLATION OF ALL THIS BEAUTY COULD FEEL HE HAD COME CLOSER TO UNDERSTANDING A REALM BEYOND THE REACH OF MATTER (Gombrich, p141).

Thus the Gothic period attempted to capture the whole supernatural nature of the Church in its architecture and the interior designs of the Church, which were often quite overdecorative.

Thus the Gothic period attempted to capture the whole supernatural nature of the Church in its architecture and the interior designs of the Church, which were often quite overdecorative.

The Renaissance:

Giotto, was the great Italian artist who rediscovered the art of creating the illusion of depth on a flat surface. The beginning of the Renaissance is often accredited to him with his emphasis on the more life like portrayal of religious subjects in his pictures and Gospel scenes.

In his representations of Biblical scenes he strayed from the more stylised representation of Jesus and other Biblical figures and followed the advice of the Franciscan friars at that time who advised the people to visualise in their minds , when reading the Bible and the legends of the saints what the scene must have looked like.

One of the earliest uses of these new forms of religious representation using these new styles was that of Fra Angelico a friar of the Dominican order. He painted a sacred scene in each of the monk's cells in the monastery of San Marco in Florence. One could sense from his work some of the spirit with which they were conceived. In his picture of the Annunciation (1440) one can see that the art of perspective represented no difficulty to him. The cloister where the Virgin Mary kneels is represented as convincingly as the vault in Masaccio's famous fresco . Yet it was not Fra Angelico's intention to show his artistic genius and create great illusions. **He only wanted to represent the sacred story in all its beauty and simplicity (see fig 2)**. There is hardly any movement in his pictures and hardly any suggestions of real bodies. Gombrich (1984, p 188), points out that Fra Angelico, had a profound understanding of the art of perspective that Brunelleschi and Masaccio had introduced into art but he did not become a slave to these new forms. He was first and foremost a Christian artist rather than an artist who displayed the skill of the day and used it to portray Christian subjects.

Fig 2) The Annunciation, by Fra Angelico, O.P.,1440

Later during the high Renaissance, the work of Michelangelo on the **roof of the Sistine chapel of the Vatican** penetrated the world of the ancient sculptors who knew how to represent the human body in motion with all its muscles and sinews. This work gave a whole new meaning and life to the story of creation and the relationship of covenant between humanity and God. Michelangelo was, depicting the sacred story in a way relevant to the people and the culture of this very creative period of history.

Others outside of Italy like Matthias **Grunewald** of Germany understood and was familiar with the new discoveries in Italian Renaissance art but used them only as far as they suited his ideas of what art may do. For Grunewald '**art did not consist in the search for hidden laws of beauty - for him it could have only one aim - that of providing a sermon in pictures, of proclaiming the sacred truths as taught by the Church**. The centre panel of the Isenheim altar, shows for example that he sacrificed all other considerations in order to show the cruelty of the grotesque act of the crucifixion .

> CHRIST'S DYING BODY IS DISTORTED BY THE TORTURE OF THE CROSS; THE THORNS OF THE SCOURGES STICK IN THE FESTERING WOUNDS WHICH COVER THE WHOLE FIGURE. THE DARK RED BLOOD FORMS A GLARING CONTRAST TO THE SICKLY GREEN OF THE FLESH. BY HIS FEATURES AND THE IMPRESSIVE GESTURE OF HIS HANDS, THE MAN OF SORROWS SPEAKS TO US OF THE MEANING OF HIS CALVARY.(GOMBRICH, P 270).

Grunewald rejected the realism and the glorification of the human figure of the Renaissance painters especially in terms of the size and composition of the figures. He deliberately returned to the principles of the medieval and primitive painters who varied the size of their figures according to their importance in the picture. He expressed the real truth of the message of St. John the Baptist, 'He must increase and I must decrease', by depicting St. John in much smaller proportions than Christ, the central figure **(see fig 3)**

Just because the Renaissance saw a commitment to naturalism and realism in their Church paintings, that did not mean that they did not contain immense symbolism and theological explanations. For example, take the Northern European painter , Hugh Van der Goes painting, 'The Portinari Altarpiece (1486)'**(see fig 4)**. On first glance it is the artistic realism which merits praise for the picture. However the artist achieved his theological meaning by the use of different layers of space. The Nativity itself or the adoration of the Holy Child, occupies the middle ground. The centre of the picture is clearly demarcated as holy space : Joseph has removed his sandals and the three shepherds fall to their knees in reverence. At the centre of the space lies the baby Jesus

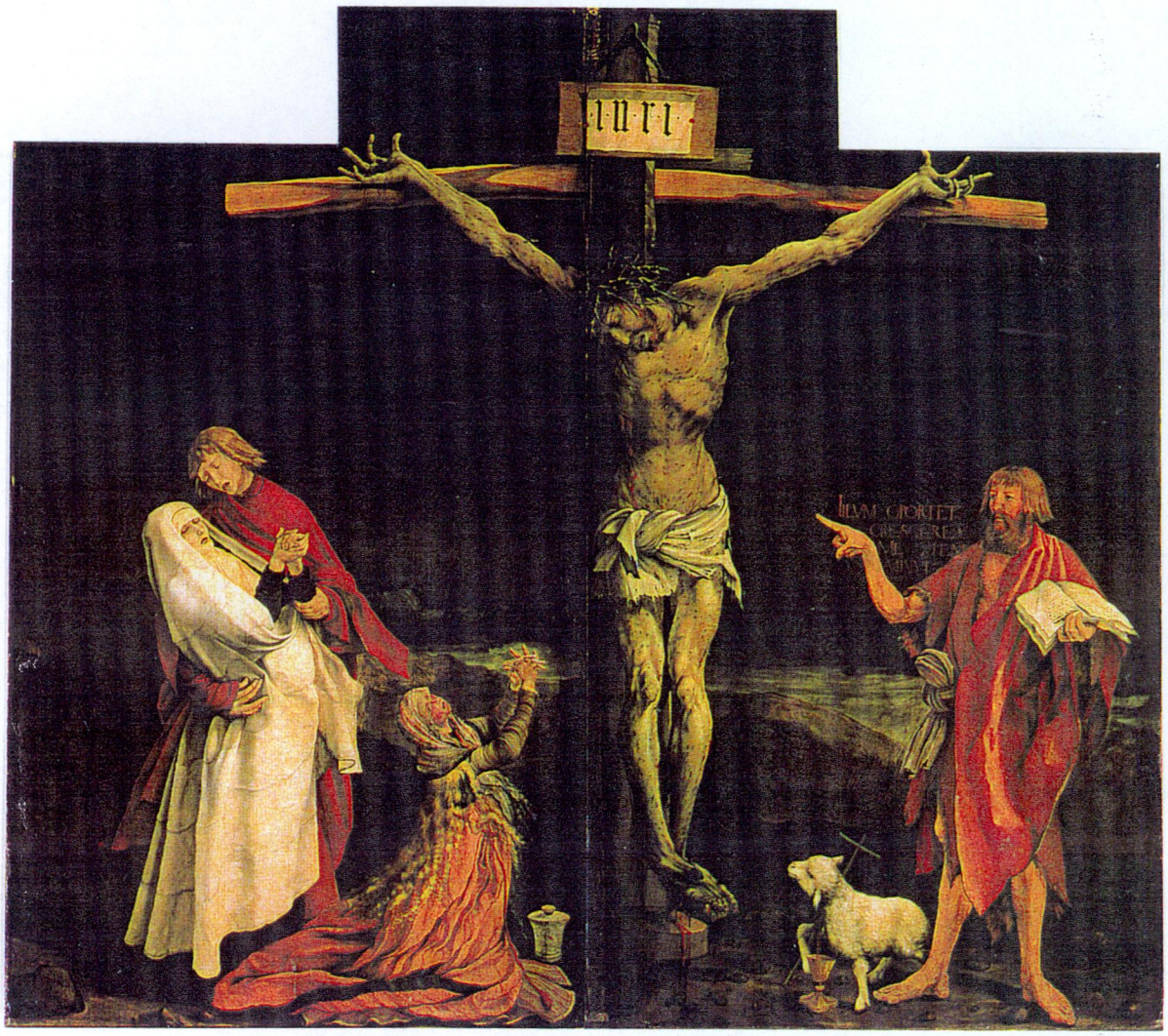


Fig 3) The Isenheim Altarpiece, by Matthias Grunewald, 1515.

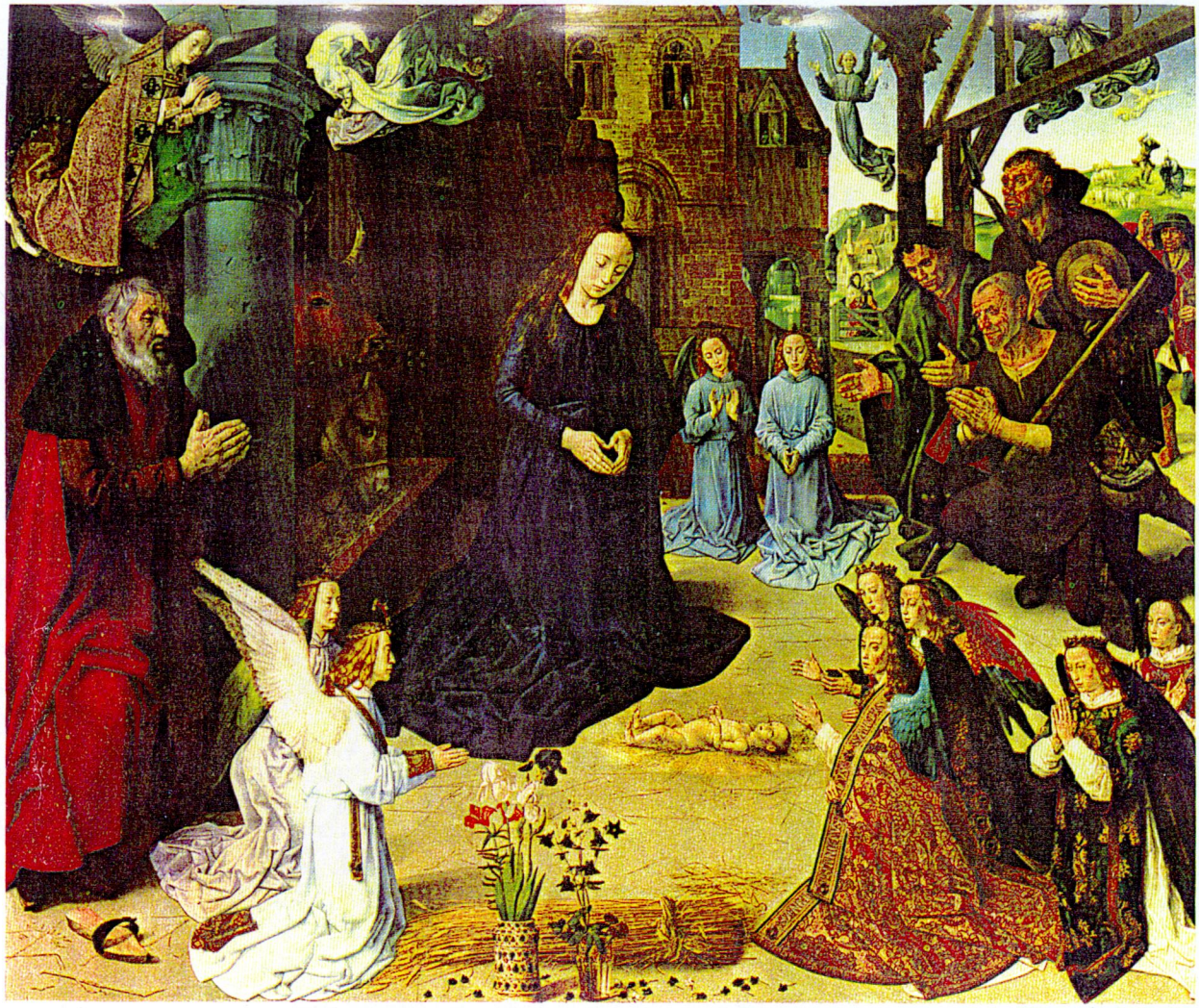


Fig 4) The Portinari Altarpiece, by Hugo Van der Goes, 1476

but Mary has laid him on a simple hard stone cold floor. This is not a simple nativity picture however. The stone floor actually represents a foreshadowing of the anointing, where Jesus was laid in the tomb after the crucifixion. In the picture the donors and the saints are oddly out of scale with each other. The saints belong to the Holy, heavenly realm and they share the central holy place in the picture. The donors however inhabit a lesser kingdom, a diminished earthly space.

Mary Elizabeth Podles, draws the comparison between the Rublev Icon and Van der Goes' work, in that they both '*are a window into the eternal realm, even though they are masked in naturalistic appearances*'.

She points out that in its own time people would have understood the significance behind the symbolism and as such both paintings would have functioned as 'a living part of the Eucharistic liturgy and of its participants prayer'.

She reminds us that almost all of the religious art in museums and galleries today once hung in churches and served to enhance and explain the liturgy.

> 'CHRISTIAN ART IN ITS OWN TIME NEVER EXISTED IN A VACUUM, NOR SHOULD IT CONTINUE TO LIVE UNDER A BELL JAR FOR US IN THE TWENTIETH CENTURY. THE ALTARPIECE IS INCOMPLETE WITHOUT THE ALTAR'(IBID:57).

In the next part of this thesis I will go on to look at how modern pieces of art work are also best explained when their the current movements in art, the current guidelines in Church liturgy and the architectural design of the Churches in which they are placed is examined. The artist must be able to work as a theologian and a designer and also work in close communication with the architects.

Impressionism:

Most of the themes of the Impressionist period were termed 'secular' and 'modern'. However the themes chosen reflect an emphasis on the movement to portraying the simple world of everyday -life and creation. The work of Van Gogh for example was humble and simple and symbolic and the subjects he choose in their very simplicity showed that Impressionism was the movement which finally broke with all traditional Renaissance interpretations of the subjects in a realistic and naturalistic way

Artists like Van Gogh did not want to be restricted to the use of real or near real colours or representations of human beings, instead they sought to experiment.

The Impressionists were even more true to nature than these great masters had been in that they captured the form and the colour of nature and looked at each object anew as they saw them and not what they knew was there scientifically or what looked right as a form of composition. Van Gogh changed the appearance and the colours of objects as they suited his aim and let his emotions loose as he sought to express himself using quick , loose brushstrokes. Being of humble nature, he also chose humble and homely objects to paint which no one had ever thought of as being worthy of the artists attention: his chair, bedroom, sunflowers.

Thus the 'sacred' world of God's creation was being expressed in their work in a thoroughly fresh and creative manner. He embodied a spirit of Christianity which in the Church was beginning to find expression again - a freer, more creation centred spirituality. Of course there was no theological symbolism behind Van Gogh's work, and it was not 'Church Art', but the style of painting he chose which was so free and expressive along with the other modernist artists broke lots of conventional barriers in the way subjects had to be realistically portrayed.

Paul Gaugain too was an artist who longed for the simplicity and directness in art to be restored. While some of his contemporaries were finding their subjects in the humble everyday objects and country peasants, he felt the need to get away from Europe and all its deeply embedded notions of high culture and art. He went to the south Seas to live among the natives and to work out his own Salvation .His works there appeared savage, primitive and barbaric, but this is exactly what his sought to express. He wanted to do justice to these 'children of nature' (Gombrich, p 439).'

Modern Art', thus grew out of these feelings of dissatisfaction with life and art as it expressed the grandeur of Europe. Van Gogh's solution led to the movement of Expressionism and Gaugain's led to the various forms of Primitivism. following from the solution of Cezanne to these problems was a Spanish painter, Pablo Picasso (1881-1973), who felt that the real aim of art was not to copy something but to construct something. He sought to conjure up the image of objects that might be represented 'in the mind's eye', **picking out from the object the characteristics which would stand out most prominently and representing them from the best angle.**

These movements which emphasised the 'perfection ' of the simple and the uncomplicated as possessing the most truth or being the most real did go so far as to attempt to go beyond and **express something more than reality itself.**(Gombrich, p 470) **Art became a tool to attempt to express the surreal, the dream world beyond the conscious and the rational.** Contemporary modern artists like Kandinsky, Klee and Mondrian were according to Gombrich 'mystics who wanted to break through the veil of appearances to a higher truth and surrealists courted a 'divine madness'(Gombrich, p 470).It is part of the doctrine of Zen Buddhism(though not its most important part), that no one who has not been shocked out of his rational habits of thought can become enlightened. But in the Christian Church too after Vatican Two the greater freedom and flexibility given to baptised Christians to express themselves in the Church also encouraged artists to attempt to use these modern styles of art to attempt to express the surreal and the mystical world; the more spiritual side of Christianity using a surreal and creative art style introduced by the various branches of the modernist art movement.

Are Modern Art Styles and Symbolism appropriate for Church Art and images?

What was common to all the previous 'traditional ' forms of religious art in the Church , from the early icons to the Renaissance and Baroque periods was the fact that they all used figural representations of characters in the Old and New Testament. Modern styles of art however allowed Christian image makers to be more fluid in their depiction of figures and sometimes excluding figures at all, instead opting for the very simple, symbolic images like the early Christian images in the catacombs. There is of course always the danger that the artist will go to far in that they will discard all figurative representations of Christ, the apostles, the prophets and other Gospel scenes. Because Christianity is concerned very much with God revealing himself through a human being (Christ), Christianity can portray its history through figurative representations unlike other forms of spirituality like modern New Age forms or Buddhism. In Christianity God took human flesh so the portrayal of the 'image of God' is possible by representing the figure of Christ. Christian art then is more than simply sacred Art. Christian Art, expressing the story and message of a God who

chose to become human, has some specific meanings and figures to be enfleshed and expressed- these meanings are part of the truths of Christianity relevant to the salvation and the meaning of human life for all mankind , not only Christians.

The Iconoclasts had fallen into the heresy of believing that no image of God or the 'heavenly realm' was possible so any attempt must be offensive to God. For Christianity, the Christian artist has the very important task of ensuring that he or she will use their talents to represent scenes fro the Bible with a new sense of symbolism and hidden meaning suitable of the liturgy of today's Church and the culture of the people of that Church. Before looking at examples of how this has been done in a modern context among Irish Christian artist , I will examine some of the Church's past documents and current pastoral guidelines for Christian artists.

Section Two:

Church Tradition and guidelines on symbolising the sacred.

'The old Church was an enemy of life, the whore of the powerful and the rich! What was there about it that shocked me?....the sense of the sacred! For even when the sacred had not been formulated in my mind, I had an inkling of its true nature. It does not consist, as is often thought of detaching something from reality to elevate it to some ideal , but in discovering the eternal dimension in the real. So the Church and Church art, seemed secular to me though it only spoke of Heaven. I sought the sacred elsewhere, below at ground level: on faces, hands , in a word, a cry, but never in rites and in art cut off from all that surrounded me and as derisory as the traditions of the theatre and the gallery - below an earth and people; and above, this vain representation'

Morvan Lebesque, le Carnard Enchaine, 4 February, 1970..(Lebon, 1991, p64)

As Jean Lebon (Lebon, 1991, p65) points out,

> NOTHING IS FURTHER FROM THE GOSPEL THAN A NATURAL OR PAGAN CONCEPTION OF THE SACRED: THE SACRED WHICH SETS ASIDE THINGS, PLACES, TIMES, OBJECTS AND PEOPLE, AS THE OBJECT OF TABOO , THE REST OF THE UNIVERSE BEING SECULAR AND THUS ESCAPING RELIGION; A SACRED WHICH THROUGH ITS RITUALS CLAIMS TO CONTROL THE POWER OF THE DEITY.

Thus he calls for a definition of the sacred whereby the ordinary or even the secular could too be seen as sacred in some way.

The Church is a fellowship and as such **centred on the Gospel messages of love and Charity must reflect that and so show itself as attractive to all men , bestowing on them the experience of divine love.**

Regamey emphasises the point that if we could only restore Christian charity to its proper place in Christian lives, the whole outlook of religious art would be transformed. We would have no more ostentation, for Christians would realise that at a

time when there are men living in less than human conditions , it is scandalous to undertake costly and extravagant projects for 'the greater glory of God'.

Regamey points out that we are presented with two types of Church, one reaching Heavenward, full of mystery with a vast sanctuary, the full participation of the faithful being only a secondary consideration (which was expressed during the Gothic period in the history of art with its magnificent, heaven-inspired cathedrals), and the other type with an accent on people and community , where good visibility has been the chief consideration, with the sanctuary being lost more or less in a vast auditorium.. According to Regamey it is difficult to get the balance between the two however he does see it as possible (see Regamey,1980, p30). There is a danger that the artist would fall into the trap of selecting one or other of these approaches: for example a style that is over decorative with no apparent symbolism or meaning (Gothic cathedrals) or (2) a style that is so simple and symbolic that the message is not explicitly apparent to the Christian community. The Christian man or woman ' lay person' must be familiar with the forms of symbolism used to interpret the Bible scenes otherwise the artist use of creativity will be of no use at all to help in the liturgy of the Church.

While it may seem that the Church can only be criticised in its understanding of the sacred as something 'eternal and cut off from the people' in actual case this is not true as an examination of the Church laws will show. In the context of Vatican Two there is a new Concept of Church expressed or rather expanded upon. The Code of Canon Law (25, Jan 1983) (CIC 1214) clarifies the meaning and the significance of Church:

> A CHURCH BUILDING IN THE OFFICIAL LANGUAGE OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH, IS A SACRED BUILDING INTENDED FOR DIVINE WORSHIP TO WHICH THE FAITHFUL HAVE THE RIGHT OF ACCESS FOR THE EXERCISE, ESPECIALLY THE PUBLIC EXERCISES OF DIVINE WORSHIP.

The Bishops Pastoral Document in Ireland clarifies for us that the Church building is seen now as both (1)The house of God (which is the sacred and eternal dimension) and (2) the house of the people of God'(IECl:1994: 8). The New

Liturgical guidelines focus on all the people participating and united in worship of God, the God of Majesty, Glory and of all of Creation'.

According to this document, by 'sacred' is meant art that is set apart for or dedicated to some religious purpose and so made Holy by association with God, or with any other objects of worship. However in no way is the Church's concept of sacred something which is separated from the people, their worship or the liturgy.

> SACRED ART IS DEDICATED - PROXIMATELY OR REMOTELY - TO DIVINE WORSHIP, AND IS ALMOST IN ITS ENTIRETY, PART OF THE SACRED LITURGY, WHICH INTEGRATES THE ARTS INTO THE SERVICE OF GOD'(CODE OF CANON LAW 1983).

Under Church Law thus the artist must be aware of the dual nature of the liturgy and must create the right liturgical environment incorporating through his artistic style and method (one) a sense of reverence for God and the sacred and (two), create a sense among the faithful of participation as a worshipping community.

Under Church Law, Sacred art must be Orthodox and conforming to the truths of Church tradition and teaching and the pictures or images should help enlighten or inform the people of these truths. Sacred Art must also be in conformity with the moral law and as such it must not 'degrade and shock', as its purpose is to edify God.
As pointed out by the IECL (1994, p10), 'Poorly designed furnishings, shoddy vestments and tasteless decor militate against a climate of wonder and awe and impede good liturgical celebration'. By **tasteless** it means something which is not in harmony with its environment or the purpose of its environment.

Sacred art is art used in a sacred place for a sacred purpose and so must be characterised by the note of holiness and spirituality. It "**is a vehicle of divine grace- not a mere ornament- it is a language speaking to men's souls through eye and ear" (ibid:1983).** It is through their use of colour, symbolism and meaning that the artist achieves the spirituality of the message they are trying to convey.

As well as being fully in accordance with Canon Law, it must be fully in accordance with liturgical law (see the Pastoral Directory 1994)

Sacred art **is** subject to Ecclesiastical control if it is not in conformity with the Canon or Pastoral laws. Pius xii writes in Mediator Dei (207), 1947:

> ON CONDITION THAT THESE MODERN ARTS, ARCHITECTURE, SCULPTURE AND PAINTING, STEER A **MIDDLE COURSE** BETWEEN AN EXCESSIVE NATURALISM ON THE ONE HAND AND AN EXAGGERATED SYMBOLISM ON THE OTHER, AND TAKE INTO ACCOUNT, **MORE THE NEEDS OF THE CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY THAN THE PERSONS TASTES AND JUDGEMENT OF THE ARTIST**, THEY SHOULD BE ALLOWED FULL SCOPE , IF WITH DUE REVERENCE AND HONOUR THEY PUT THEMSELVES AT THE SERVICE OF OUR CHURCHES AND SACRED RITES.

This is still the case after the Vatican Two Council of 1963. However as I will show the Church is more open now to what it calls 'true forms of modernity'.

Sacred art must be **social in character**, in the service of the community in the peoples house of prayer. It must be universal in its appeal and not just individualistic, using a symbolism that no one understands. It must give its message clearly and intelligibly.

Church Tradition as a guideline:

Church tradition gives the artist an idea of what is permanent in the message of art obscures the Christian message of the picture or image. Keeping informed of Church Tradition is not a type of restricted conservatism, but rather it helps the artist when they come to highlight certain issues or messages of Christianity in their work which is of importance to the people.

If we affirm that there is **tradition in the Church**, we are claiming that the Church is always the same, despite all the superficial changes in its history. Tradition is the memory, it is the permanence of the personality, always identical with itself , in the passing ages through which it lives. **The Word** of Life, the truth in the person of Jesus Christ has come into time and will remain until the end of the world. When we apply this principle to the arts, we can see that tradition must be the vital principle by virtue of which they manifest the homogeneity of their development in time.

Pius XI, pointed out, "***The fine arts are truly in conformity with religion when, 'like noble handmaids, they enter the service of divine worship".*** Thus the role of the Christian artist is a theological one and it must be so or the work cannot be called sacred or Christian. Pope Pius XII points out, the fact that an art form belongs to one of the golden ages of the past does not give it the authority of tradition , although it is a common misapprehension among artists that it does'.

Both Regamey (1980, p96) and O'Connell(1955, p,48), point out this fact that the Church does not want artists to interpret this as a form of control or it does not 'keeping or copying any religious style of art in churches of the past'. Regamey points out that God is eternally present and using Church Tradition as a guideline must bring the artist right into the very heart of our own present day.

"The Church in her art assimilates slowly what is good from the spirit of the times". The artist must learn from the past: from both its successes and failures.

> TODAY IN KEEPING WITH WHAT IS REALLY GOOD IN MODERN IDEAS, CHURCH BUILDERS ARE NOW SHOWING GREATER APPRECIATION OF THE VALUE OF PLAIN SURFACES AND OF THE RIGHT USE OF COLOUR AND THE DISLIKE OF THE SUPERFLUOUS, THE OVER-ORNATE, THE FAKE , THE TAWDRY AND THE PRETENTIOUS.

(This can be seen in the examples of Churches and their interiors chosen in the next section). Overall they emphasise that "fidelity to Church tradition does not impose any unreasonable restraint on the liberty of the artist, on his originality or inventiveness".

Most importantly as O Connell(1955: 46) points out

> TRADITION IS A PROTECTION AGAINST ALL EXTREMES IN RELIGIOUS ART, AGAINST THE BIZARRE AND THE DEGRADED. IT EXERCISES A RESTRAINING INFLUENCE ON UNDUE MODERNITY AND ORIGINALITY - ON THE THIRST FOR THE NEW AT ANY PRICE, FOR THE SENSATIONAL AND FOSTERS A REASONABLE CONSERVATISM. IT HELPS TOWARDS THE EXPRESSION OF AUTHENTIC RELIGIOUS THOUGHT AND FEELING, NOT MERELY THE PERSONAL REACTIONS OF THE ARTIST.

By adhering to the Church's guidelines on Tradition the artist focuses on what is the essential Christian message in the idea or scene to be depicted and must do so in a way that harmonises with liturgical guidelines (Pastoral Directory) and Canon Law. By doing this the artist's work takes on a 'sacred' quality automatically and naturally even though the figurative styles and symbolism, colours can be as modern as most secular styles.

Section Three:

The Mission of The Christian Artist:

According to De Reynold (1938,p 97), 'The Mission of the Christian Artist is as important and as necessary today as that of the statesman , or even of a great theologian or a great preacher'. With them, the artist must act as a constructor and an apostle. In order to attain this,

> HE MUST POSSESS TWO ANTENNAE, AS IT WERE, ONE TO KEEP HIM IN CONTACT WITH THE CHURCH, WITH HER CULTURE AND INSPIRATION, AND THE OTHER TO KEEP HIM IN TOUCH WITH THE CONTEMPORARY WORLD, ITS REQUIREMENTS AND INSPIRATIONS- THE ANTENNAE OF OBEDIENCE AND THE ANTENNAE OF CHARITY (IBID,97).

The Church welcomes True Modernity:

True modernity make the arts more effective in the service of religion makes use of a diversity of styles and fashions **without becoming its slave**, employs the **living art** and the living creative intelligence of our own day as the great artists of the past used the art and intelligence of their day.

"True modernity means efficacy and freshness of expression, means living and popular language, but this must be correct and intelligible , not esoteric and repulsive" (De Reynold, p102).This as pointed out earlier is exactly what Christian artists like Fra Angelico sought to do. While he absorbed the very best of the new techniques and insights of Renaissance art he did not become a slave to these techniques but kept his freshness and originality.

What are the implications for the Christian artist?

Regamey (1980, p,45) summarises that there are three levels of what constitutes the sacred in art.

1) There is the level of the immediately sacred

2) There is the level whereby we accept what is sacred out of habit.

3)There is the intermediate level. It is neither too 'deep' , metaphorical or abstract and at the same time is not too superficial or common (i.e./ not the everyday notion of the sacred).

Thus it has to have 'a correspondence between the physical and the spiritual realities'.

According to Regamey, the artist's task is to make the sacred, religious, moral and Christian combine. He points out rightly that:

> IT IS ONLY CHRIST THAT CAN MAKE THE SACRED COINCIDE EXACTLY WITH THE MORAL , FOR HE BY HIS INCARNATION HAS MADE THE TRANSCENDENT INTO SOMETHING INTERIOR TO OURSELVES. IN CHRISTIANITY, THE HIGHEST VIRTUE IS LOVE, WHICH IS BOTH DIVINE AND BROTHERLY. (1980, p 46)

Thus the sacred artist in the Christian tradition must try to express both the divine and the brotherly (everyday) love of Christ for all peoples. The best way to do this is through a style of art which is appropriate for the culture of the people and a form of symbolism which represents the hidden supernatural element of the picture. The sacred character for use in a Church must be **Christian** and the artist must **have a good understanding of the life of the Christian community.**

Church preferences on the style of the artist:

For Regamey (1980, p103) the very heart of tradition in sacred art was summed up by Fra Angelico "when he demanded more calm in the artist's life with a view to living in harmony with Christ. The artists wisdom comes from a soul that is naturally Christian" According to the instruction of the Holy office, June 30, 1952, on the choice of the 'sacred' artist,

> WORKS OF PAINTING, SCULPTURE AND ARCHITECTURE SHOULD BE ENTRUSTED FOR THEIR EXECUTION ONLY TO ARTISTS WHO ARE OUTSTANDING FOR THEIR TECHNIQUE AND WHO ARE CAPABLE OF EXPRESSING SINCERE FAITH AND PIETY, WHICH IS THE PURPOSE OF ANY SACRED ART.

The Bishop's Pastoral Document (IECl:1994), points out, that because so much depends on the choice of the artist , a decision on the choice of artist should be made only after as much study of his/her work as possible. All artistic styles are acceptable to the Church authorities and as Donal O' Sullivan (1980) points out, about the constitution of the Liturgy,

> THE CHURCH HAS NOT ADOPTED ANY PARTICULAR STYLE OF ART AS HER VERY OWN. 'SHE HAS ADMITTED STYLES FROM EVERY PERIOD ACCORDING TO THE NATURAL DISPOSITIONS AND CIRCUMSTANCES OF HER PEOPLES AND THE NEED

> OF THE VARIOUS RITES. THUS IN THE COURSE OF THE CENTURIES SHE HAS AMASSED A TREASURY OF ART WHICH MUST BE VERY CAREFULLY PRESERVED (O' SULLIVAN: 1980:84).

The Church documents do suggest that because the artist of the present understands the people of the present he will communicate to them using the artistic styles of the present (O' Sullivan, 1980:84).

The Artist as Theologian:

The IECL(1994), point out that artists can exercise an enormous influence for good if the statements made by their work are in harmony with the faith of the Church.

> SACRED ART HAS TO ATTEMPT TO REPRESENT VISUALLY AND THROUGH MATERIAL THINGS, GOD HIMSELF WHO CHOSE TO COME AMONG US IN THE FORM OF MATTER AND TO SAVE US THROUGH THE MATERIAL WORLD.(DS 11).

The vitally important work of the artist who expresses truly Christian virtues of joy and hope are expressed by the Council; "The world in which we live has need of beauty in order not to loose hope. Beauty like truth , fills the heart with joy, and this is thanks to your hands as artists!"(Message of the Fathers of the Second Vatican Council to artists, 8, Dec, 1965)

Where the artist is choosing to portray symbols which are well known to the Christian assembly it is important that he does so in a manner with life and vitality. The IECL point out that ornamentation can be used as long as it is in harmony with the overall environment and style (ie/ periodicity of the Church). For example a Greek Orthodox Church would create an ephemeral atmosphere with many candles and lighting that is dim to create the sense of awe and mystery.

The IECL point out that **ornamentation does not contradict the Christian virtue of Poverty** . In the twelfth century when the Cistercian abbeys were built the emphasis in their liturgy (and still today) was on a minimalistic and simplistic Christian environment with **no Christian art** at all to inspire worship on the part of the worshipping people of God . This radical non-use of Icons or pictures stemmed from the 'supposed Christian virtue of poverty' which did not seem to coincide with lots of decoration and ornamentation.

However this idea that minimalism and austerity somehow equals Christian poverty is not true as the IECL(1994, p 14) point out.

> THE USE OF ORNAMENT EXPRESSES RATHER A SPIRIT OF GENEROSITY IN THE SERVICE OF THE LITURGY. IT IMPLIES SACRIFICE IN SPENDING TALENTS, ENERGIES AND MATERIAL RESOURCES TO GIVE THANKS AND GLORY TO GOD. AND THIS IS FULLY CONSONANT WITH THE CHRISTIAN SPIRIT OF POVERTY.

The Artist as designer:

As the IECL point out the Church building should reflect the traditions and history of the people of the area. Usually studies of the local environment will be made by the architect and the designers with whom the artist will work. Thus the artist will usually be informed as to these sociological factors before he/ she commences the work. The same document (IECL,p15), points out, that:

> THE SUCCESS OF A CHURCH BUILDING PROJECT DEPENDS MORE ON THE CO-OPERATION BETWEEN, CLIENT, ARTIST AND ARCHITECT THAN ON ANY SINGLE FACTOR. FOR A SUCCESSFUL WORKING RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN CLIENT , ARCHITECT AND ARTIST, IT IS ESSENTIAL THAT EACH SHOULD HAVE A SYMPATHETIC APPRECIATION OF THE AIMS OF THE OTHERS IN THE DESIGN AND CONSTRUCTION OF THE CHURCH AND A REAL CONFIDENCE IN THEIR INTEGRITY(IECL,1994, P15).

The place of worship for the faithful should be planned to facilitate the **full conscious and active participation** of the faithful. According to the Pastoral document, the entire arrangement is to help the faithful become 'one Body, hearing the Word of God and joining together in prayer and song , and offering sacrifice and sharing the Lord's table together' (IECL, pg 62).

Section Four:

Case Studies:

In this final section I will illustrate with case studies of Churches in Ireland how the artist can fulfill the above conditions as designer and theologian in a very practical way which does not compromise on their ability to express themselves in their own particular style of modern symbolism.

(One) '***Our Lady Mother of the Church Castleknock'***:

The artist must thus ensure that the use of images and their position fit in with the Church itself and the liturgy. For example in the Parish Church of Castleknock. 'Our Lady Mother of the Church'(**see fig 5 a),** the Church is in a pyramidal shape architecturally with a steel cross on the outside at the highest point. The exterior of the Church is quite low in height, although the interior design gives the illusion of height. The front porch of the Church resembles a Greek temple, with four pillar columns and a pediment. The steeple of the Church is glass, which allows alot of natural light into the Church . Both these exterior architecture elements makes the church a building which stands out from an ordinary secular building, one of the requirements as indicated in the Pastoral Directory. 'The design of the Church should indicate its unique character , differentiating it from buildings of a purely secular nature. Careful studies should be made of the environmental conditions so as to ensure that the building is sensitively related to the spirit and topography of the location'(IECL,p17).

The Interior of The Church:

On entering the Church ones eyes are immediately drawn towards the sanctuary. The interior of the Church is quite plain and simple without ornamentation, yet it is bright and airy due to the white walls and natural light filtering through from the glass panel under the steeple. The brightness of the Church emphasises its

Fig 5) (a) Our Lady Mother of the Church, Castleknock, exterior

Fig 5(b) Sanctuary Area: Our Lady Mother of the Church..

spaciousness and simplicity. Directly above the tabernacle is the main work of Christian art in the Church. This is a tapestry of the crucifixion which was commissioned for the Church by the artists Imogen Stuart and Cathy Mac Aleavy.

Imogen Stuart was chosen as the art director of the Church. The job of the art director is to select artists best suited to the work required and to liase with the architects, artists and the clergy. Imogen Stuart was selected based on her reputation and skill in the art of representing Christian figures clearly and symbolically. As the pastoral directory points out:

> THE SUCCESS OF THE CHURCH BUILDING PROJECT DEPENDS MORE ON THE CO-OPERATION BETWEEN THE CLIENT, ARTISTS AND ARCHITECT THAN ON ANY OTHER SINGLE FACTOR. THE GREATEST CARE SHOULD THEREFORE BE TAKEN IN THE SELECTION OF THE CLIENT/ DESIGN TEAM TO ACHIEVE THE BEST RESULTS. FOR A SUCCESSFUL WORKING RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN CLIENT, ARCHITECT AND ARTISTS IT IS ESSENTIAL THAT EACH SHOULD HAVE A SYMPATHETIC APPRECIATION OF THE AIMS OF THE OTHERS IN THE DESIGN AND CONSTRUCTION OF THE CHURCH AND A REAL CONFIDENCE IN THEIR INTEGRITY (IECL, P15).

The figures used by Stuart and Mac Aleavy are in complete harmony with the Church's architecture and design interiorly. A crucifix was need for the sanctuary area as required by Liturgical laws of the Church and in the case of Castleknock, the use of a wall hanging in fabric rather than a wooden cross was chosen (**see fig 6a and b**). "The cross itself like the altar, is a reminder of Christ Sacrifice and should be clearly visible to the congregation so that it may be easily venerated" (IECL, p31). "The cross must be large enough to be visible to the congregation without at the same time blocking the view of the ministers at the altar or the gifts upon it (ibid)" . Stuart and Mac Aleavy have achieved this by elevating it over and above the altar.

In a personal interview with Imogen Stuart , I questioned her as to her reasons for using a wall hanging for the crucifix rather than a three dimensional one. She said that she deliberately chose tapestry as the medium here because

> IT CREATED THE SOFTNESS AND THE WARMTH THAT THE CHURCH NEEDED. BECAUSE OF THE PLAIN AND COLD INTERIOR WALLS OF THE CHURCH , WARMTH IN ORNAMENTATION WAS NEEDED. A METAL OR WOODEN CRUCIFIX WOULD HAVE BEEN TOO HARD ON THE EYE. THE USE OF TAPESTRY WAS 'THE FEATHER IN THE HAT' (Interview Wed Jan 3rd 1996)

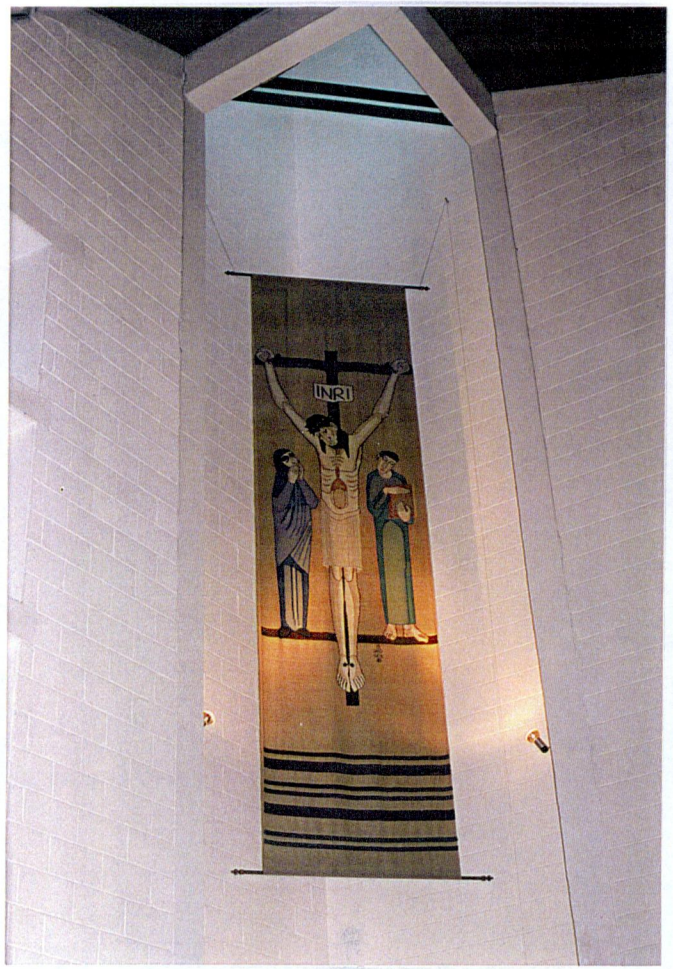


Fig 6) The Crucifixion: Imogen Stuart and Cathy Mac Aleavy.


INRI

Under the code of Canon Law (1983:ibid), this Cross would be defined as liturgical because it is the main crucifix on the altar and thus is essential to the symbolism of the liturgy of the Mass.

According to Stuart, when the Church first opened in 1982, there was a full-size pastel cartoon drawing of the crucifixion hanging in the sanctuary area. Imogen Stuart still hadn't decided what medium to work with until she saw the cartoon suspended over the altar and then she decided on the tapestry. Then as art director, she commissioned the weaver Cathy Mac Aleavy under her supervision and instruction to weave the tapestry of the crucifixion. Another practical limitation for the weavers here was that the loom on which they were working was the widest possible loom available.

Figures, Symbolism and Meaning:

Stuart and Mac Aleavy exploit the qualities of their medium which allows them to work in a simple, minimalist way. Also in accordance with Church instructions (under Mediator Dei, 1947), it does take into account the needs of the Christian community in that its message is clear, direct, intelligible and universal. The definitions and the clarity of shape they achieve through their medium is quite amazing. Brain Fallon (1992), describes Imogen Stuart's work as containing 'a strength that that lies in the simplicity of its form and the directness of its imagery'. Her work does not make use of exaggerated symbolism which can be too individualistic. The composition is simple and clear, made up of three elongated figures: The central figure is Christ on the cross , purposefully slightly longer than the other figures. The blessed mother of Jesus, Mary , stands to the left and St. John stands to his right, making the composition balanced and symmetrical overall. Although they have chosen to use cool colours in the tapestry, when they are placed against the white walls , their softness and warmth becomes apparent. considering , the constraints of the dimensions of the nave, the limited size of the loom available and the financial restrictions within which Stuart and Mac Aleavy worked. My opinion is that they handled the Commission well harmonising the scale, the medium , the composition and the style of the tapestry with its surrounding environment. I agree with Brian Fallon when he describes Imogen

Stuart as being 'fearless and energetic in coping with large scale commissions'(Fallon, June 1992).

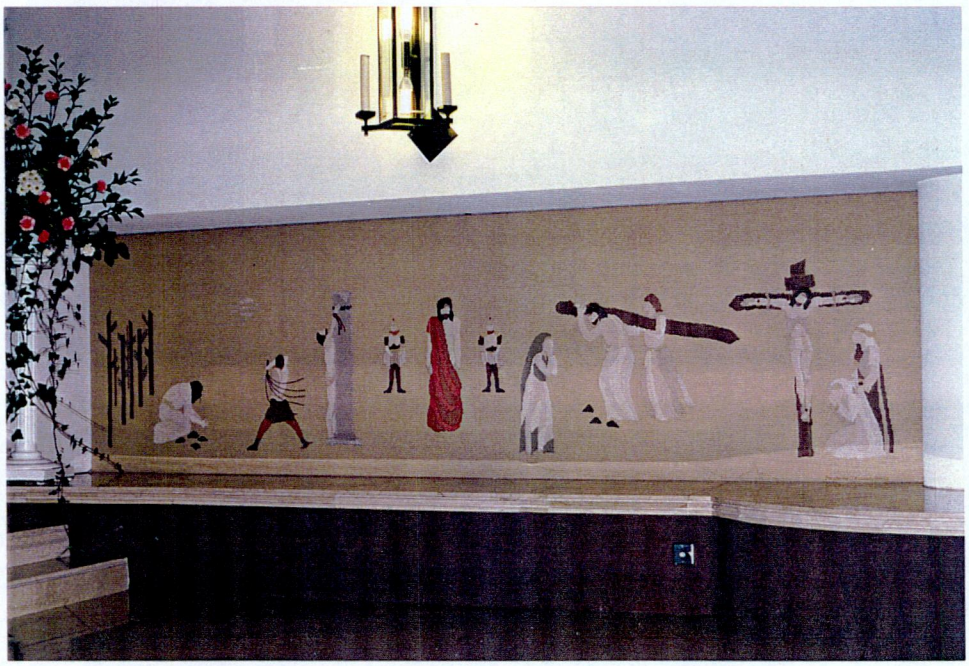
As art director, Imogen Stuart worked quite closely with the architects, Campbell and Corcoran'. She had to work within certain constraints of a practical and financial dimension. Imogen Stuart pointed out that the narrow width of the nave limited her somewhat , and that she had to concentrate more on the length of the tapestry that the width. this affected the imagery 'the figures came elongated instead of small and fat'.

Other Work in the Sanctuary Area:

The textiles to both sides of the tabernacle were commissioned and Cathy Mac Aleavy was again chosen**.** The Parish priest at the time, Monsignor Fehily chose the subject of the Rosary, because the Church is dedicated to 'Our Lady, Mother of the Church'. Mac Aleavy's work depicts the five joyful mysteries of the Rosary on one side in tapestry interwoven with gold thread and to the left hand side of the tabernacle, a tapestry depicting the five sorrowful mysteries of the life of Christ **(see fig 7 and 5(b)).**

The main colours in the piece are muted ochres, browns, and brick reds and the use of gold threads adds life and vitality to the scenes. The figures are even simpler than those in the crucifix and there are no facial details. Our Lady is very simply portrayed in a light cream thread on the ochre background , but this is effective in communicating a certain serenity and grace in her movements and gestures. She is similarly depicted in all of the scenes. Saint Joseph does not wear the same garments in the third (birth) and fourth (presentation) scenes. The scenes flow smoothly like a narrative and yet there is no cluttered detail of background or setting which would take away from the directness of the message in each scene or each mystery.

According to the IECL's directives on the design of the sanctuary '***normally images such as paintings or statues should be located in a church where they will not distract from liturgical action, and therefore outside the sanctuary'*** (IECL, p125). In the case of a very decorative Church like St. John's Lane, Thomas Street ,Dublin, there are many statues and small shrines located throughout the Church which



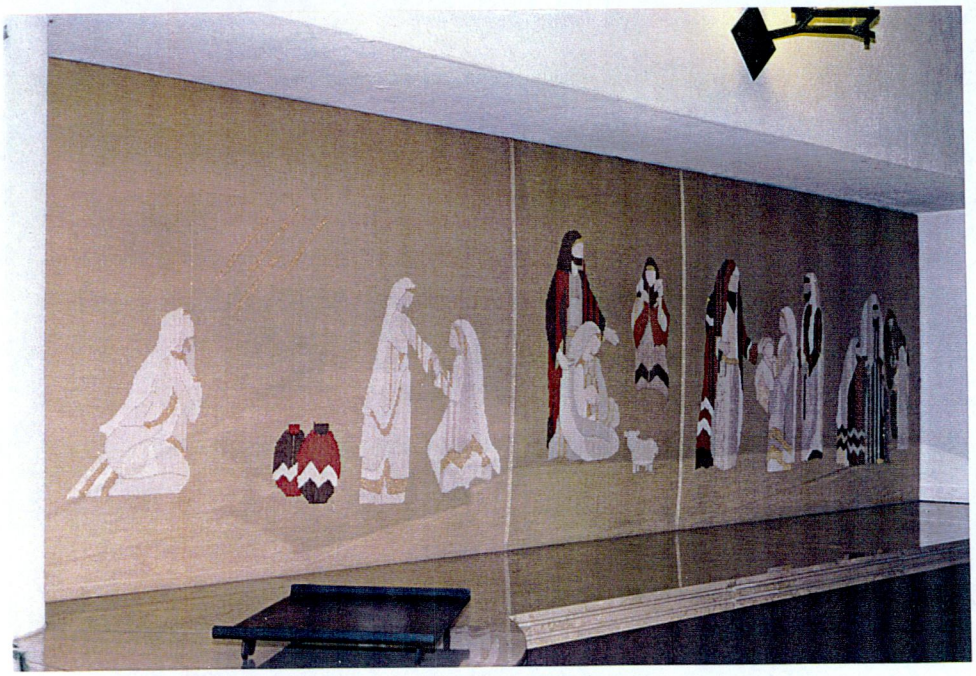


Fig 7)'The Five Sorrowful Mysteries of the Rosary', Cathy Mac Aleavy and Imogen Stuart, Castleknock: interior.

may not be in the main sanctuary area, but still by their sheer decorative nature in some way detract form the altar as the main focal point of worship. In many of the older churches like St. John's Lane there are usually represented on the altar, the main saints associated with the Church or the particular religious order **(see fig 8)**

In the case of Castleknock Church however, the use of textiles (rather than statues or paintings which might cause distraction and detract from the liturgical celebration itself), enabled figural representations of the life of Christ and Mary's involvement in and participation of that life to be represented in the sanctuary itself. As the ICEL document states:

> IMAGES WHICH RELATE *DIRECTLY* TO THE LITURGY MAY BE APPROPRIATE IN THE SANCTUARY , PROVIDED THEY FORM AN INTEGRAL PART OF THE ARCHITECTURAL CONCEPT AND DO NOT CLUTTER OR CONFUSE THE SPACE (:25).

In the case of Castleknock, although the images of the Rosary do not relate directly to the liturgy of the Mass, they are in no way distracting to the worshippers and because of the particular muted colours used they add warmth to the sanctuary area, forming ***'part of the architectural concept'*** **(see fig 5b)**. In the parish Church of Castleknock, the tabernacle is in the sanctuary area of the Church and is behind the altar, which according to the Church guidelines is the central focal point of the worshippers eye.

In some more modern Churches the Blessed Sacrament is not reserved behind the altar, but rather in a side chapel in the Church itself. This can solve some of the problems for the artist in that in a smaller chapel the artist has maximum scope for creating a particular 'prayerful , warm and contemplative environment', without having to worry so much about large scale which is a consideration for work centered near the main altar. The Pastoral Directory points out , ***'the sacred character of the tabernacle can be expressed only by means of a true and contemplative art'***(IECL, p, 33). Mac Aleavy's tapestries around the sanctuary (which in Castleknock includes both the altar and the tabernacle) are of a contemplative nature and are not explicitly there in order that people can see them from a distance but rather as explained above are for ornamentation and to provide warmth.

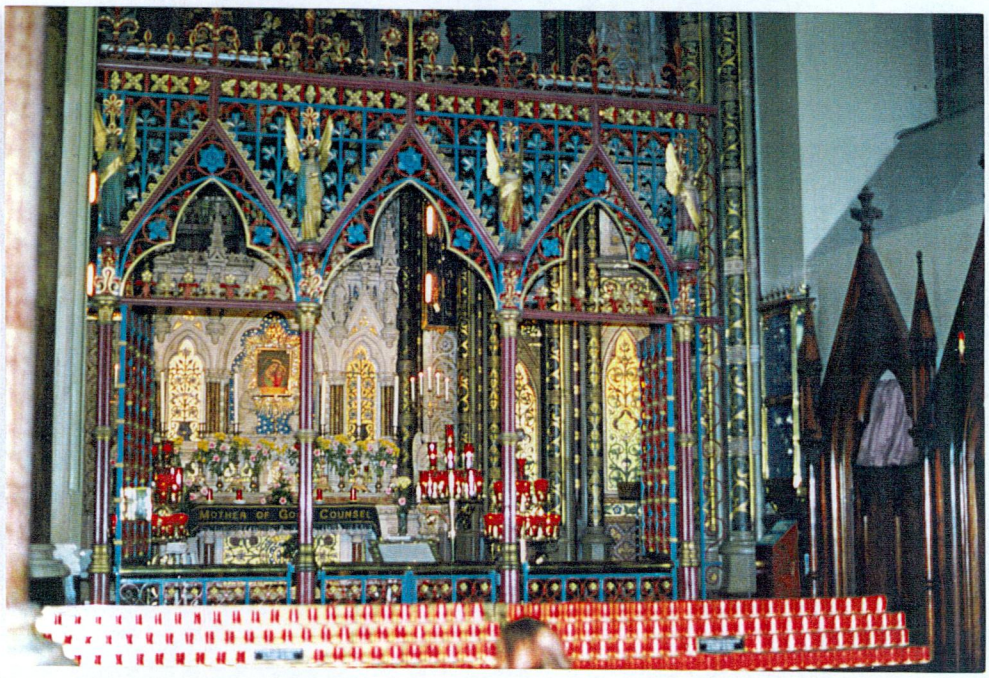


Fig 8) St. John's Lane, Augustinian Church, Thomas Street, Altars and Shrines.

The artistic work which is possible around or behind the tabernacle must again be **sensitive** to the eyes of the worshippers and **not detract** from the liturgy of worship itself which is centred on the altar but merely be conducive to drawing the onlooker to focus on the presence of Christ . The Artist must understand the theology of worship which occurs before the tabernacle either in the main chapel or the small chapel.

> THE COMMUNITY SHARE IN THE MYSTERY OF THE EUCHARIST. ABIDING WITH CHRIST THE LORD, THEY ENJOY HIS INTIMATE FRIENDSHIP AND POUR OUT THEIR HEARTS BEFORE HIM FOR THEMSELVES AND THOSE DEAR TO THEM, AND THEY PRAY FOR THE PEACE AND THE SALVATION OF THE WORLD (IECL, P32).

The artist must be very sensitive to this area in the Church reserved for contemplative prayer and worship **by the style of figures he depicts, the colours and tones of colours used.**

I believe that Imogen Stuart and Cathy Mac Aleavy have lived out their theological role as artists contributing to and animating the liturgy. They have brought both joy and vitality to the Church and the worshipping community as recommended by the Pastoral guidelines for the role of the artist. They have also acted well in their capacities as designers by the careful choice of their use of colour especially through Imogen Stuart's liaisons with the architect and interior designers as art director. They are also working within the various pastoral guidelines and within the Tradition of the Church on art style, in that the symbolism in their work is clear and intelligible.

Case Study Two : Fossa Church 'The Prince of Peace': Killarney, Co. Kerry.

As pointed out by the Pastoral Directory,

> CAREFUL STUDY SHOULD BE MADE OF THE ENVIRONMENTAL CONDITIONS ON WHICH A CHURCH IS SITED SO AS TO ENSURE THAT THE BUILDING IS SENSITIVELY RELATED TO THE SPIRIT AND TOPOGRAPHY OF THE LOCATION'(IECL:17).

This is exactly what the architects of Fossa Church took on board. The architects, Liam Mc Cormack and partners made full use of the beautiful site of Fossa. The slope of the chapel walls on the outside for example mirrors the slope of the rolling Kerry hills behind, thus integrating the Church into its surroundings and location (**see fig9**).

The Church is octagonal in design and is made in wood and tiled with Bangor slate .Twin spires pierce the skyline, each rising from an octagonal plan form (**see fig 9**).

Interior of Fossa Church:

The most notable feature of the interior of this Church is the large plate glass window directly behind the sanctuary area, which allows a magnificent view of the landscape with the symbolic crosses in the foreground.

Design and colour scheme:

To the right of the sanctuary is the Blessed Sacrament Chapel which is set apart for private prayer and adoration and contains the tabernacle. The artist must attempt to add to this contemplative atmosphere of quiet, calm and withdrawal. Thus because the Blessed Sacrament chapel is a much smaller area, the use of large and simple symbols is not as necessary. Achieving visibility and impact for the work is not the main requirement of this space, rather the main aim is to create an atmosphere of intimacy.

In this Church the design of the Tabernacle is the work of John Behan and the murals depict 'Scenes from the Resurrection' by Patrick Pye. The main, overall colour in the chapel is white, with the tabernacle lamp suspended from the ceiling and illuminating the work of Pye (**see fig 10**) . The tones of colour in his work are very muted and of a fresco-like colour quality. His main colours range from ochre and tangerine, a pale coffee and cream and beiges to a muted greens and white. The warm ochre colours complement well the simple pine furnishings of the Chapel.

Patrick Pye has commented on how people have often remarked how like tapestry the paintings are, which he accepts gratefully as they are easy to be near and yet provide a total decoration . He seems to achieve a great range of textures and warm tones through his medium of paint and this does seem to give it this tapestry-like effect.

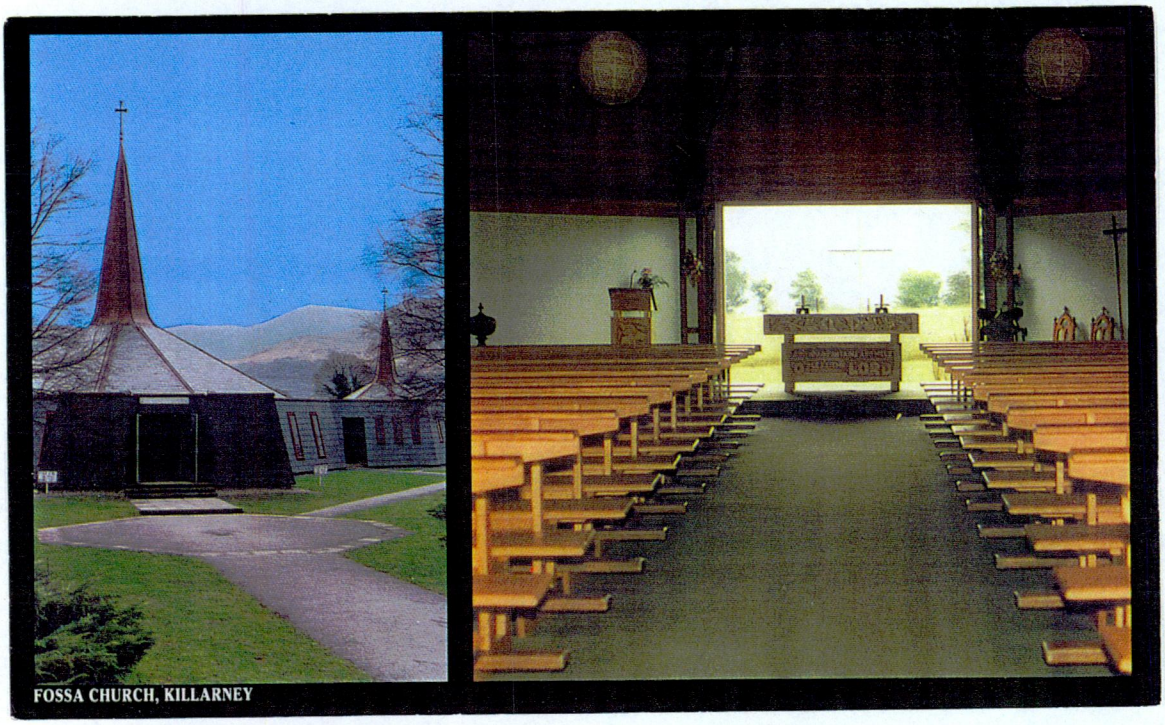


Fig 9)'Prince of Peace', Fossa Church , Killarney , Co. Kerry: exterior.

Fig 10)Prince of Peace, 'Blessed Sacrament Chapel' :interior.

The tones of colour are conducive to prayer and contemplation and the overall effect is achieved in harmony with the furnishings and the lighting is one of calmness, serenity, comfort and welcome. His murals extend to the ceiling which also create a feeling of intimacy and a closed off -quiet environment which is appropriate to the requirements of the Blessed Sacrament Chapel

Figures, Identity and Meaning:

Patrick Pye's figures are stylised but obviously can be seen clearly to represent the figure of Jesus and other individuals. He deliberately chooses white figures on a tangerine background which for him signifies the peace that only Christ can give us... 'It is the peace of accord with him that he gives us and this was what finally directed me to use the white figures on a tangerine background' (**see fig 11**).

On first viewing these murals in Fossa church, my understanding of any deeper meaning that he was trying to convey was superficial and limited. While I was familiar with the story of Christ and in I partly understood the significance of the setting of the murals as a background to the central tabernacle in the Church, I did not appreciate firstly the significance of the black and white figures running through the murals, secondly, I did not appreciate the importance of a 'lead in ' for the artist and finally I did not understand the importance of the deeper context of the overall panorama.

It was only after talking to Patrick Pye that my understanding was clarified. He commented as follows:

> THE POST- RESURRECTION SCENE IN FOSSA WAS MADE IN 1977. I WAS QUITE EXCITED BY THE JOB BUT WARY OF HAVING TO FILL SUCH LARGE AREAS IN SUCH A SMALL ROOM. AS ARTIST ALWAYS NEEDS A 'LEAD IN', SOME SORT OF IMAGINATIVE CORRELATIVE THAT BRINGS HOME TO HIM THE REALITY OF HIS SUBJECT MATTER. I DID NOT UNDERSTAND THIS UNTIL I SUDDENLY REALISED THAT CHRIST HAD NEVER PROMISED PEACE TO HIS FOLLOWERS UNTIL HE WAS RISEN. THE PEACE THAT HE OFFERS IS NOT A CIRCUMSTANTIAL PEACE; IT IS RATHER THE PEACE 'THAT PASSETH UNDERSTANDING AND CANNOT BE TAKEN FROM YOU'; IT IS NOT THE PEACE THAT WE WANT IN NORTHERN IRELAND OR BOSNIA, REAL AND URGENT THOUGH THAT NEED FOR PEACE IS. IT IS NOT EVEN THE PEACE THAT WE NEED TO DEVELOP OUR ART OR TO SET UP BUSINESS. IT IS THE PEACE OF ACCORD WITH HIM WHICH HE GIVES US.
> (Pye, Interview, Dec. 1995)

Fig 11)Figures/ Symbolism .'Scenes from the Resurrection', Fossa Church, interior.

According to Pye, this lead in helped him in several ways, including the establishment of his colour scheme. REALISM WOULD HAVE MISSED THE POINT OF THE TRANSCENDENCE OF THE PEACE THAT WE ARE BEING OFFERED. THE WORLD THAT THE FIGURES MOVE IN IS A TRANSUBSTANTIAL WORLD CONCEIVED BY POETIC ANALOGIES. I ALLOWED THE DRAMA OF THE STORY ITS VARIETY OF ACTION BUT THE WHITE IS THE MOST POWERFUL COLOUR BY ITS CLARITY AND TAKES OVER. (Phone Interview: Dec. 18th 1995).

The scenes from left to right are:

1) The women lamenting the loss of Christ.

2) Peter and John, finding the Temple empty.

3) The supper at Emmaus.

4) Christ giving the keys of Heaven to Peter.

5) Jesus finding the disciples in the Upper room.

Overall Patrick Pye's work in Fossa Church is full of Theological symbolism. His symbolism could be criticised as it is not automatically apparent and could be seen as very individualistic and not universally appealing (see Mediator Dei, 1947: ibid). It certainly would have been frowned upon in a Church building prior to Vatican Two, but in the context of today's liturgy it is acceptable, especially in its suitability to the small space of the Blessed Sacrament side Chapel.

Comparison of Pye's Work with that of Stuart/ Mac Aleavy:

When we compare the work of Stuart and Mac Aleavy with that of Patrick Pye, we see that both styles are very appropriate to the Liturgical environment of the pieces and their liturgical purpose. Both use a stylised narrative style yet in my own opinion, Stuart and Mac Aleavy's work speaks to us directly, whereas Patrick Pye's imagery speaks more symbolically and theologically. for example, the significance of the white figure being Christ, representing Peace, and the black figures representing Pye himself or 'every man', thus creates Pyes's own visual imagery of meaning.

On first viewing Stuart and Mac Aleavy's work, I understood clearly what was going on in each of the scenes from the crucifixion, to the joyful and sorrowful mysteries, whereas on viewing Patrick Pye's work, I was immediately drawn to the colours and the textures of his work and how like tapestry the murals were. It was only

after this that I tried to understand the significance of the murals . While I was familiar with the story of the Resurrection, I could not identify the other individuals apart from Christ, the central figure in the mural depicted in white. For example in scenes three and four the figure of Christ is obvious and recognisable and so one can tell the context of the picture and the actual scene from the Gospel based on the figure of Christ and his movements in the picture. Patrick Pye admits himself that most visitors to the chapel will not recognise the scene, but would be enticed and attracted to dwell on the picture, trying to understand its meaning and significance and this would encourage people to remain in the chapel.

Pye's aim as an artist is not so much to paint a realistic picture of the scene but through the use of his colour- tones to draw the viewer to spend time dwelling on the picture, realising that Jesus is the main and central figure in each. His murals are perfectly suited to the small, intimate environment of the side chapel, encouraging people to stay and contemplate the presence of Jesus. If Pye had opted for a more figurative style , choosing to clearly identify each figure, this would not have fostered the atmosphere of peace and contemplation.

The Church recognises both of the above styles once they satisfy other Liturgical requirements as outlined earlier. As the ICEL(1994;40) point out

> IMAGES ARE SPECIFICALLY CHRISTIAN WHEN THEY ARE LINKED TO THE PASCHAL MYSTERY (THE MYSTERY OF THE RESURRECTION) AND ONCE THIS IS OBVIOUS, THE STYLE BECOMES SOMEWHAT SECONDARY, ONCE IT IS NOT 'TASTELESS'

The true Christian image can speak either directly or symbolically.' The work of Patrick Pye and Imogen Stuart and Cathy Mac Aleavy is undoubtedly Christian from this point of view in itself. And secondly because it is in no way profane or tasteless ie/ it is perfectly in tune with its environment liturgically. Both Imogen Stuart and Patrick Pye are familiar with the Pastoral guidelines and agree that they are good in that they were not too restrictive as both artists were allowed to use their own style (they found that the guidelines can be applied and adapted to any Church.)

But both artists while recognised for the professionalism and quality of all their work are first and foremost Christian artists. They bring their natural creativity and fluidity of interpretation to their Christian subject. As the pastoral Directory points out , 'what is needed is creative flair on the part of a committed and theologically informed artist (IECL, 54).' As Patrick Pye says, he feels 'it very important to have faith and conviction as a Christian artist'. Patrick Pye is quite theological in describing his use of and choice of colour. The colours he uses in the post-Resurrection scenes are in his view very meaningful. "It's not a case of identifying the figures, but of knowing through the colours who the important figures are."

Could their work be defined as 'sacred'? In the context of Vatican Two their work is indeed sacred in that it is also universal in appeal and is not merely individualistic because it accounts for the purposes of the work and the people of God whom it is to inspire. Their works are truly modern in the good sense of the word inspiring by their beauty and simplicity. Visually they are conducive to prayer and contemplation because they are uncluttered and not over decorative and this is the original purpose of Christian works of Art, rather than mere decoration in itself of the spirit of sacrifice and generosity of the Artist.

Before Vatican Two allowed this freer more expressive style to be used, most of the Christian images in Churches were either stained glass images which tended towards the realistic , or they were in the form of icons or statues, which were often scattered throughout the Church regardless of the architectural style of the Church. For examples of Church Interiors in this style see St. John's lane Thomas Street or St. Theresa's Clarendon Street, Dublin (**see fig12 (a) and fig 12(b)).**

Now however the emphasis for the Christian artist has become the Liturgy and in conforming to the liturgical requirements of the Church, he or she must work in harmony with and alongside, architects, interior designers and must approach their work from the point of reverence and worship to God but also from a more sociological view, taking into account the worshipping Christian community.

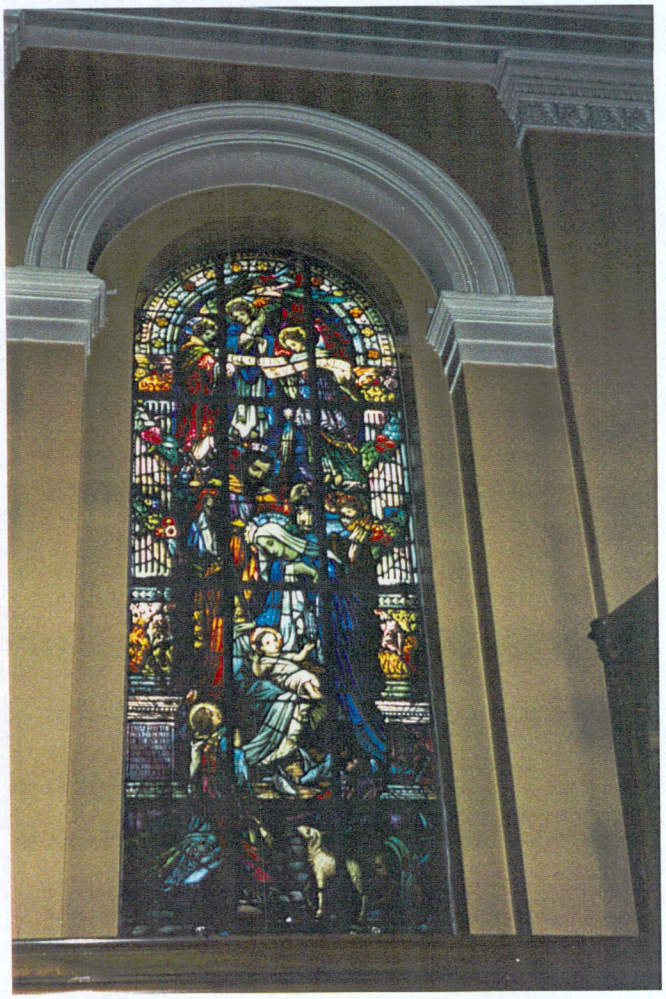
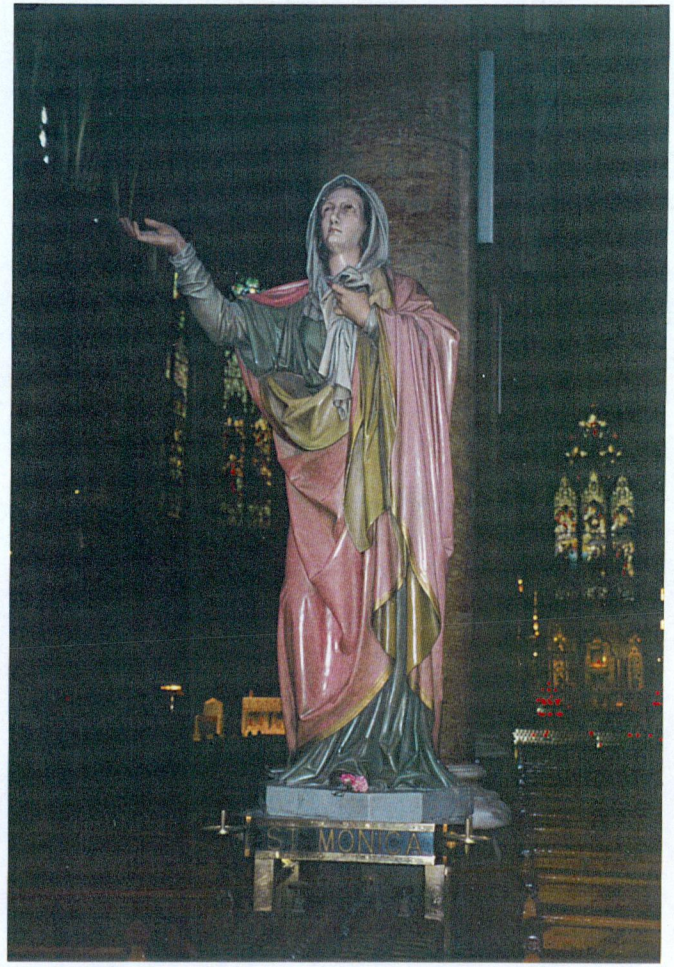


Fig 12)(a) St. Theresa's Carmelite Church, Clarendon Street, Dublin: Interior



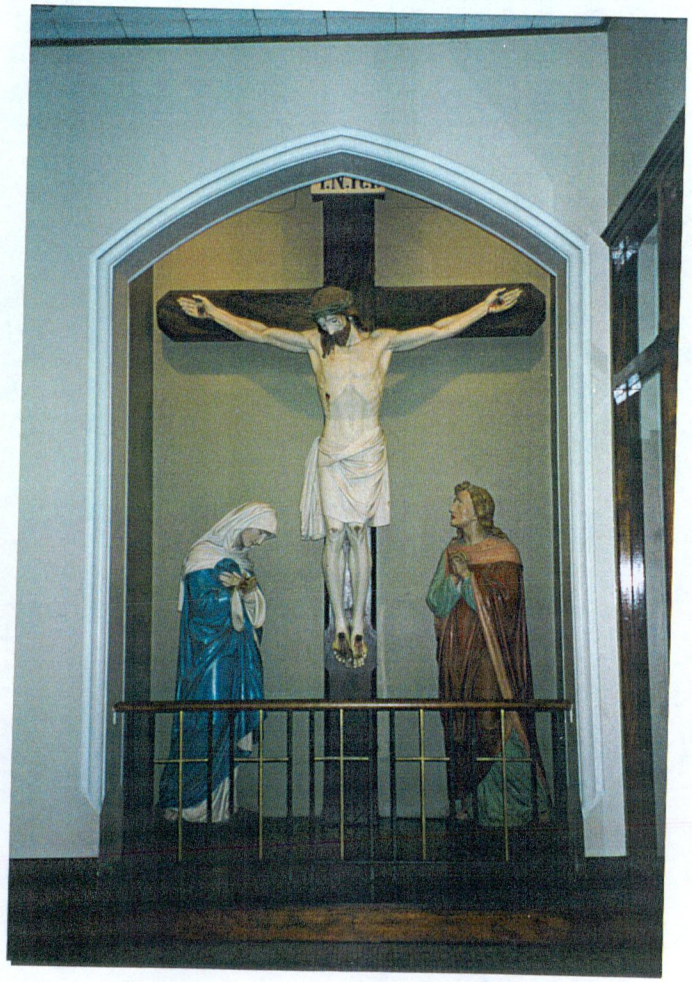


Fig 12 (b)St John's Lane, Statues and Crucifix.

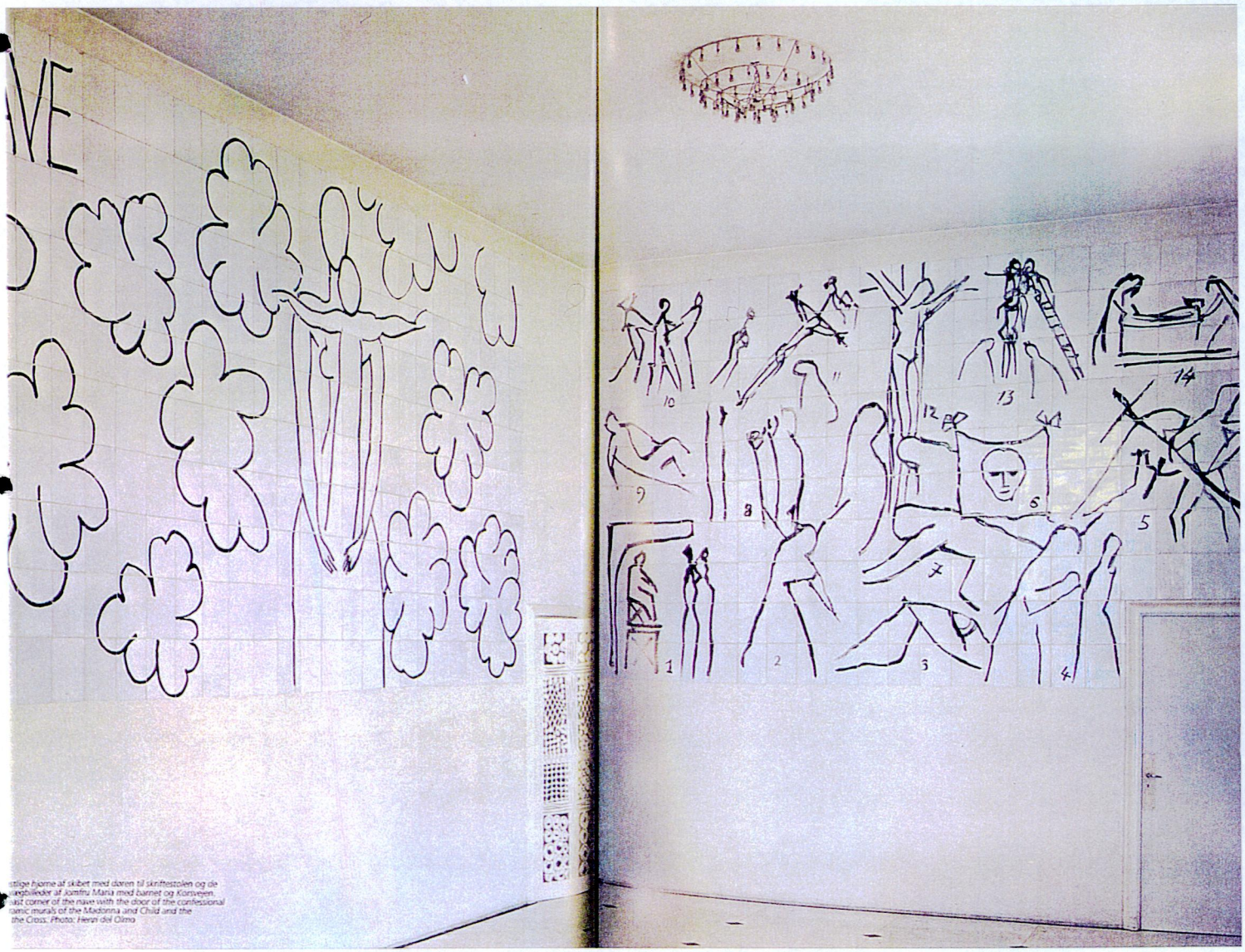
Conclusion:

Symbolism and the Christian Artist: Inspiring all to enter into relationship with God.

In conclusion we must ask the question , whether modernism and its symbolism has really had any influence on the portrayal of the 'sacred' in Christian Art in the Church. Overall we see that as the history of art has developed so too has the use of the current techniques in art been used as a form of expression in Church art. However all styles have their own form of symbolism. The Church has not objected to this, rather it has welcomed 'modernity' when it has rendered itself in 'tasteful' liturgical art which has been in harmony with the liturgy and the liturgical environment of the Church. We must remember that each style of art whether realistic or more expressive and impressionistic, each is perfectly acceptable to the people and the culture of the time, because the people can understand and interpret its form of expression. Every new and popular style of art was 'modern' for its time.

Once the liturgical art satisfies the criterion of the various Church Canon laws and the Pastoral Constitution of the Church, this is the basis for its acceptability. However the artist is also given alot of freedom for individual expression in the use of media and styles.

No doubt , there has been extremes in the use of the modernist style, as for example the work of Matisse in the Dominican Church of Vence (**see fig 13**). However his rendering of the crucifixion and the stations of the cross could still be classified as 'sacred' simply because of the portrayal of their subject matter. The illustrations are line drawings of Christ and while they are simple and very modern and in some sense annoying because of their lack of detail and somehow unfinished nature, in another sense they are acceptable only because of the setting of the Church where they are placed. Many would argue though that in themselves there is no sense of the sacred about these drawings.



stlige hjørne af skibet med døren til skriftestolen og de
ægbilleder af Jomfru Maria med barnet og Korsvejen.
ast corner of the nave with the door of the confessional
amic murals of the Madonna and Child and the
the Cross. Photo: Henri del Olmo

Fig 13) Stations of the Cross, Henri Matisse, Vence Dominican Church,Nice, France

We must ask the question, whether as well as 'fitting in with their liturgical environment', the pictures actually inspires the Christian Community to participation and to worship. In many of the older Churches from a by-gone era, where the emphasis was more on the artistic quality of the pictures in the Churches themselves as for example, the Renaissance, the realistic quality of the paintings did inspire one to devotion and veneration of the saints they were depicting. Nowadays and especially in the liturgical climate of Vatican Two, there is less of an emphasis on the artistic quality of Church paintings in a fine art style and more on the role of the artist as designer. This is most obvious in the case of many textile designers who have been commissioned for Churches

The work of Kristiina Nyrhinen, **(fig 14)** a Finnish designer for Lutheran Churches in Finland shows how symbolism in textile design can be overruled by 'design' itself and the work of the artist is not obviously Christian Art as there is no use of Christian Symbolism. Under the Pastoral Directory of the Catholic Church it is doubtful that this work would be acceptable as the sole use of the work of a Christian Artist in the Church. In the Catholic Church the artist must be able to represent Christian symbols to facilitate the Liturgy, the participation of the people of the Church in the community life of the Church and to inspire private prayer and contemplation.

The role of the artist must always be one in of helping in the symbolism of the liturgy of the Church *of its time* (Lebon,1993, p7). The good Christian artist must be capable of theologically correct symbolism by the use of his or her colours and figurative style and composition to express meaning

> A SYMBOL TAKES OVER THE WHOLE PERSON - OUR INTELLIGENCE CERTAINLY, BUT ALSO OUR SENSES, OUR EMOTIONS, OUR IMAGINATION. IT HAS TO DO WITH THE WHOLE PERSON AND IT IS A LINK, A RECOGNITION OF A PACT WHICH IN THE CASE OF THE LITURGY IS THE PACT BETWEEN HUMAN BEINGS AND GOD. A SYMBOL IS AN EXPERIENCE OF RELATIONSHIP. UNLIKE A SIGN ONE CAN NEVER FULLY GRASP THE EFFECTS OF A SYMBOL. IT IS MORE LIKELY TO BE A SYMBOL WHICH GRASPS US- IT IS AN OPPORTUNITY WHICH IS BEING OFFERED TO US TO ENTER INTO A RELATIONSHIP

M Y Y R M Ä K I C H U R C H

Fig 14) Interior of Myyrmaki Church, Finland, textiles by Kristiina Nyrhinen

This relationship to which we are all called through the liturgy of the Church and its expression in Christian Art, is a relationship with Christ and the world.

Patrick Pye has this symbolic quality in his work which makes it both theological and inviting and thus art can enter into the liturgy itself like the Rublev Icon or equally one of the realistic triptychs of the Renaissance like Van der Goes.

Thus the future for sacred art in the Church sees a more individual form of expression being permitted with the emphasis on the artist as designer harmonising his or her work with the efforts of the architect, the interior designer and the theologian in order to make the place of worship somewhere that combines the reverence and the wonder and awe due to the house of God, with the sense of the place of God as a place for Christian assembly and maximum involvement on behalf of the people.

According to Lebon (1991, p.69), the "essential landmark in aesthetic questions is still ritual ":

> THE PRIME CONDITION WHICH A PAINTING MUST FULFILL IN ORDER TO BE LITURGICAL IS THAT IT MUST ***PERFORM A SERVICE FOR RITUAL***. THE OPPOSITE OF BEAUTY IS NOT UGLINESS, BUT SHAPELESNESS. IT IS BY SEARCHING OUT THE ***BEST POSSIBLE FORM*** IN WHICH TO SERVE THE RITUAL THAT THE ARTIST HAS THE BEST CHANCE OF MAKING THE MOST BEAUTIFUL SHAPE. FIND THE MOST BEAUTIFUL FORM AND BEAUTY WILL COME AS A BONUS.
> ***IN THIS CONTEXT ART IS NOT SO MUCH A MATTER OF 'WORK' AS OF 'ACTION'. THE MISUNDERSTANDING STEMS FROM THE FACT THAT THE ARTIST WANTS TO MAKE A WORK: HIS OWN WORK, WHEN WHILE REMAINING HIMSELF, HE SHOULD GO OUTSIDE OF HIMSELF AND ENTER INTO THE PERSPECTIVE OF THE LITURGICAL ACT.*** ***(*** *LEBON, 1991, P.69* ***)***

Bibliography:

*DAVIES, S, HORTON, G AND HUGHES, S: Sacred Art in a Secular Century, Minnesota, The Liturgical Press, Collegeville, 1978.

*De BREFNI, Brian, Churches and Abbeys of Ireland, Gill and Macmillan, Dublin,1990

De REYNOLD, G: " The Mission of the Christian Artist " pp97-110 in MORRIS , Joan Modern Sacred Art, London: Sands and Co.,1938.

FALLON, B: Imogen Stuart, Exhibition Catalogue, Alternative Entertainments, Community Art Group, The Square Tallaght, June- July,1992.

FOWLER, H. W. and FOWLER, F.G Oxford Dictionary ,Oxford :Clarendon Press, 1985.

*GERVIS, Frere Cook, The Decorative Arts of the Christian Church. Cassell and Co. Ltd, London, 1972.

GOMBRICH: The Story of Art. Phaidon Press, Limited, Oxford 1984.

HENZE, Anton and FILTHAUT, Theodore; Contemporary Church Art, New York: Paulus Verlag, Recklinghausen, 1956.

HURLEY, Richard and CANTWELL, Wilfred: Contemporary Irish Church Architecture. Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 1985.

*IRELAND, Marion, Textile Art in the Church. Abingdon Press: New York, 1971.

JOHN PAUL II, Christifideles Laici: The Vocation and mission of the Lay Faithful in the Church and the World, Veritas, Dublin, 1989.

LEBON, Jean, How to Understand the Liturgy. London, SCM Press, 1991.

NYTHINNEN, Kristiina: 'Myyramaki Church Brochure'. Keski -Uusimaa Oy: Tuusula, 1993

O' SULLIVAN, Donal , "Sacred Art" pp85-87 in FLANNERY, Austin ,O.P Liturgy Renewal and Adaptation :Scepter Books , Dublin, 1980.

O'COLLINS, Gerard, SJ.: Fundamental Moral Theology, Dublin: Paulist Press,1981.

O'CONNELL, Joe: Church buildings and Furnishings : the Church's Way, London: Burns and Oates, 1955.

PASTORAL Directory on the Building and The Re-ordering of Churches: The Place of Worship , Dublin: Veritas, 1994.

PODLES, Mary Elizabeth, "Symbolism in Christian Art", in Position Papers, vol 266, Feb 1996, pp 53-58, Four Courts Press.

REGAMEY, Pie Raymond: Religious Art in the Twentieth Century , London, Herder and Herder, 1980.

* *Items indicated with asterisk used for background reading only.*

P I P E R S T O W N T A L L A G H T D U B L I N 2 4

12. xii

Dear Ms. McGaughey,

Thank you for your letter.Time is rather precious: I am trying to pa paint when, no doubt, I should be helping to prepare for a happy family Christmas so I will forego meeting you for the present.

The post-Resurrection cycle in Fossa was made in 1977. I was quite excited by the job, but wary of having to fill such large ~~spaces~~ areas in such a small room.

An artist always needs a 'lead in', some sort of imaginative correlative that brings home to him the reality of his subject matter. I did not get this till I suddenly realized that Christ had never promised peace to his followers untill he was risen. The peace that he offers is not a circumstantial peace: it is the peace that "passeth understanding, that cannot be taken from you." It is not the peace that we want in Northern Ireland or Bosnia real and urgent though the need for that peace is. It is not even the peace we need to develope our art or to set up businness. It is the peace of accord with Him that he gives us.

That was what finally directed me to white figures on a pink ground. Realism would have missed the point of the transcendence of the peace that was being offered. The world the figures move in is a transsubstansiated world conceived by poetic analogy. I allowed the drama of the story its variety of action but the white rules. As I understand the scenes from left to right they flow, 1, Loss: 2, Suspense: 3 Amazement: 4 Hope for the Church: 5, Christ, who, for me, is always the surprise of grace.

People have often remarked to me how like tapestry these paintings are and I accept that gratefully as they are easy to be near and yet provide a total decoration.

If you would be curious to see a totally different treatment of another subject matter you could call to Ballycasheen church on the Cork road out of Killarney where they have Stations of the Cross by my hand.

I hope this has been helpful; Good luck with your Thesis !

Yours sincerely

Patrick Pye