

Reflecting Heaven

Notes on the OLMC Sanctuary Renovation

Pt. 17: The Stations of the Cross 2

Last week we explored the history and background of the devotion of the Stations of the Cross. We traced the history from Mary, the Mother of Jesus through the Crusades and on to the Franciscan order, who promoted the devotion through all of Europe. We were also introduced to Leonard Porter, a highly respected New York artist who crafted the Stations that are slated to grace the walls of the nave at Our Lady of Mt. Carmel.



The Stations we will have are high-quality *giclée* copies from the originals that were commissioned by a Catholic church in New Vernon, New Jersey. The *giclée* process replicates not only color and texture, but also brushstrokes – so much so that these prints are almost indistinguishable from original

paintings. Mr. Porter's style has been referred to in liturgical and artistic journals as neo-classic. His style is a refreshing contrast to the mass-produced stations found in religious goods catalogs. On the website *Traditional Building*, Mr. Porter is quoted as saying of such stations: "They're typically very minimal and abstracted, to the point where they don't have meaning anymore. They don't speak to people. Or they're very literal, sentimental and kitschy, in sugarcoated colors. In that way they lose their power, too. The drama of the story is treated superficially."

Porter's stations, on the other hand, feature bold colors, stark contrasts, and dramatic, rich symbolism. His attention to detail extends even to the accurate depiction of Roman provincial plumbing pipes, as pictured in the lower right-hand corner of the station of Veronica wiping the face of Jesus (left).

There are also several levels of progression through the stations. For instance, the sky gets steadily darker and more foreboding as we



progress through the day on that Good Friday. With each of Jesus's falls, the cross picks up more scars and blemishes. And in the last few stations, we see the cross

beginning to sprout roots. In the artist's words, "It's becoming the tree of life."

One of the most intriguing progressions is that of Longinus, the traditional name given to the Roman centurion who pierces Jesus's side with a lance and later becomes Christian by virtue of his experience at the foot of the cross. Through the progression of the stations, we see his face become more and more pained as he witnesses Christ's suffering.

There are other recurring characters in the Stations, and more levels of symbolism to explore. As with all quality art, there is more to discover each time we contemplate it, a fertile field of reflection and prayer each time we walk the stations.



These excellent stations will be housed in exquisite, handmade wooden frames from the Weberding Carving Shop in Batesville, Indiana, in fine Hoosier craftsmanship.



This image shows the frame design with a different style station, but it helps us get the idea of what to expect.

I have long believed there is a fundamental difference between entertainment and art, whether it be in the visual, theatrical, literary, or musical realm. Entertainment is nice, it's fun, and there's nothing wrong with it. *But art is different.* It can be all those same things, or it can be disturbing, challenging, and painful. But the fundamental difference is that, if we enter into it, art *changes* us. It reaches to our core and brings to heart and mind truths that would never sink in if presented prosaically. So may it be when we pray these Stations of our Lord's Cross. By contemplating them, may we be drawn closer into relationship with Jesus Christ; may we be *changed!*

All the installments of this series, written by Rex Rund, our Director of Music and Liturgy, are found on the parish website at <http://www.olmc1.org/reflecting-heaven-notes-on-the-renovation/>