THE EXECUTION OF THE STATIONS OF THE CROSS FOR ST. FRANCIS XAVIER CONVENT CHAPEL WILMETTE, ILLINOIS

A Thesis

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Sister Edith Pfau, S. P.

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Committee on thesis:

Charles W. Hardaway

E. J. Porter, Chairman

Representative of English Department:

Sara Kisig Harvey

Date of Acceptance Aug 1, 1951

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CHAPTER I

THE PROBLEM AND DEFINITIONS OF TERMS USED

A common complaint among students of art who have gone into the working field is that the knowledge given them has been too theoretical and far removed from the problems they meet. Blame for this is often laid on teachers who have never met or solved such problems in actual practice. If the accusation is justified, the teacher who produces an original creative work for a client should improve her teaching by gaining first hand acquaintance with these problems. Such a creative work should also prove inspirational to students who have the opportunity of viewing it in progress. With this in mind the problem herein reported was undertaken.

I. THE PROBLEM

Statement of the problem. The work consisted in the execution in a permanent and suitable medium of a series of fourteen paintings illustrating the Christian exercise known as the Way of the Cross. The paintings were to fit definite places in the decorative scheme of the small convent chapel of Saint Francis Xavier in Wilmette, Illinois. Their execution involved (1) the determination of the medium and ground to be used, (2) consideration of the color

and style in relation to setting, (3) preparation of the supporting panels, (4) composition and drawing of the pictures, (5) the actual painting, and (6) the final finish.

Importance of the work. In the Fortieth Yearbook of the National Society for the Study of Education which was devoted to a study of art in American life and education, Ernest Horn reported on graduate work for the art teacher. Mr. Horn said,

> The writing of a scholarly thesis in art history, in art theory, or in art education is time consuming, and if the creative artist must meet this requirement, he must of necessity leave off his creative work for one or more years while his research and writing are under way. The neglect of creative work for so long a period may prove to be a very serious matter.[1]

He suggested that recognition of the interdependence of the theory of art and art history with creative art would be a far better thing than setting them in opposition to each other and went on to state that "it would be a fine thing if more students seeking a career in art education would be able to demonstrate the type of proficiency required for the creative thesis."[2]

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[1] Ernest Horn, "Graduate Work for the Art Teacher," Fortieth Yearbook of the National Society for the Study of Education (Bloomington, Illinois: Public School Publishing Company, 1941), p. 769.

[2] Ibid., p. 770.

It is to be hoped that in this respect the present thesis will prove of some value and demonstrate clearly that for the able art teacher there should be no cleavage between her creative art and her teaching of art.

II. DEFINITIONS OF TERMS USED

Stations of the Cross. The term as used in connection with the title of this thesis is taken in its wider sense to mean the pictures illustrating the devotional exercise known as the "Way of the Cross" or "Stations of the Cross."

Tempera painting. The term when employed in this thesis is understood in its modern usage as defined by Mayer.

> Tempera painting is painting that employs a medium which may be freely diluted with water but which upon drying becomes sufficiently insoluble to allow over-painting with more tempera or with oil and varnish mediums.[3]

It excludes the opaque water color or showcard colors often labeled tempera by manufacturers and so-called by commercial artists.

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[3] Ralph Mayer, The Artist's Handbook of Materials and Techniques (New York: The Viking Press, 1948), p. 180.

III. ORGANIZATION OF THE REMAINDER OF THE THESIS

As a help to a better understanding of these paintings and their purpose, this work will first give some slight historical background on the devotion itself. Chapter III will be an examination of the subject as interpreted by other artists. The chapter following will consider the factors that influenced the style and materials of the paintings. Chapter V will describe the actual execution of the work with pictures of the steps involved and a color print showing the general color scheme. Chapter VI will be an analysis of the paintings as to meaning and composition with photographs of the finished works, and Chapter VII will summarize the work and give conclusions.

CHAPTER II

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND FOR THE PAINTINGS

Regarding the execution of a work of art whether it be painting, sculpture, architecture or one of the minor arts, the best modern critics agree in practical theory, if not in scholastic terminology, with the great medieval philosopher, Thomas Aquinas. According to him, every work of art is concerned with four causes: the final, the material, the efficient, and the formal: in other words, the purpose for which it is intended, the materials used, the tools employed, and the mental image or form.[1] Other chapters will consider the materials, the tools, and to some extent the mental image in the description of the actual execution of the work of this thesis. Some knowledge of their historical background is necessary, however, if the purpose of the paintings is to be understood and a clearer mental image formed.

History of the devotion. The pictures known as the Stations of the cross are a part of the furnishings of almost every Catholic church today. The devotion for which

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[1] A. Graham Carey, "Four Causes," Christian Social Art Quarterly, III (Summer, 1940), 13-14.

they are used can be traced to the earliest times of Christendom when the Via Dolorosa or sorrowful way of Christ to Calvary was marked out and became the goal of pious pilgrims from the time of Constantine.

Especially after the Mohammedan conquests, it became increasingly difficult to visit the Holy Places. Then at various churches in Europe shrines reproducing the Holy Places were erected and devotions in honor of the passion of Christ were inaugurated. It was from the pious devotional manuals used at these shrines that the stations as they are known today probably developed. The number of stations or halts on the way to Calvary is now set at fourteen, although earlier as few as eleven and as many as fifteen were used, not all identical with the titles or in the sequence of the present time.

The fourteen stations of today are as follows: (1) Jesus is condemned to death, (2) Jesus receives the Cross, (3) Jesus falls the first time under the weight of the Cross, (4) Jesus is met by His Blessed Mother, (5) the Cross is laid upon Simon of Cyrene, (6) the Face of Jesus is wiped by Veronica, (7) Jesus falls a second time, (8) the women of Jerusalem mourn for our Lord, (9) Jesus falls the third time under the Cross, (10) Jesus is stripped of His garments, (11) Jesus is nailed to the Cross, (12) Jesus dies upon the Cross, (13) Jesus is laid

in the arms of His Mother, (14) Jesus is laid in the Sepulchre.

Essence of the devotion. The devotion, approved in 1694 for use in their churches by the Franciscan guardians of the Holy Places in Palestine, was extended to all the Catholic Church in 1726, but the pictures themselves have never been an integral part of the devotion. The essence of the devotion is prayerful meditation on the passion of Christ as the one performing the exercise passes symbolically from place to place indicating the stops on the way to Calvary. The ecclesiastical requirement is that these stops be marked by a wooden cross. Pictorial representations have been added as an aid to meditation and have become an accepted part of the devotion.

CHAPTER III

REVIEW OF WORKS BY OTHER ARTISTS

Because of the appeal of the subject, the popularity of the devotion, and the challenge of the problem, all media have been used in producing sets of Stations of the Cross. A few typical examples with which the writer is familiar either through first-hand acquaintance, photographs, or both will be considered briefly here.

I. EARLIEST WORKS

The devotion, although essentially the same as that of the time of Constantine, did not take definite form until the comparatively late date of 1726 mentioned in the preceding chapter. It was only in 1731 that the number of the stations was finally set at fourteen by a decree of Pope Clement XII. In 1742, Benedict XIV exhorted all priests to enrich their churches by the installation of this treasure.[1] Representations of the stations exactly as we know them today did not form part of the original structures in the architectural triumphs of the great periods of religious art, the Byzantine, the Romanesque,

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[1] G. Cyprian Alston, "Way of the Cross," Catholic Encyclopedia, XV, 571.

and the Gothic, nor of the churches of the classical revival of the Renaissance. In many of these the Stations have since been added in productions of questionable artistic merit. The mediocrity of these works is easily understood, however, when one realizes, that the popularity of the devotion reached and continued at its height in a period when art in general had reached a low ebb and except for the regrettably bad "art" of the commercial religious supply houses had ceased to render its traditional service to religion.

II. RECENT WORKS

Revival of interest by artists. Of recent years there has been a genuine revival of interest in good religious art as evidenced by the growing number of patrons of the best work, and the first rate artists who have turned their attention to this field. The production of the Stations of the Cross has received the attention of many such artists. Each one in his own way has tried to create as aids to meditation representations which would show something of the timelessness of the event portrayed and also give a picture of the actual historical occurrence. The diversity of interpretations and techniques within the limitations of the subject disprove the theory that has been advanced by some that restrictions in style

or subject matter on the part of the church have had a repressive influence on the creativity of artists.

Eric Gill. In England, Eric Gill produced stone carvings of a set of stations of unquestionable artistic merit. They are in simple low relief with a minimum of figures and the stylization that is typical of Gill. Because at the time of their erection they were such a departure from the realism of the decadent post-Renaissance types with which the people were familiar in commercial copies, these Stations of the Cross created something of a furor. They remained in Westminster Cathedral, however, and Gill did a similar set for the church of St. Cuthbert in Sheffield.

Alfeo Faggi. In this country Alfeo Faggi made a notable contribution with a set of bronze stations for the church of St. Thomas the Apostle in Chicago. Still thoroughly modern today, they harmonize with the church as originally planned and decorated in the twenties. Later decorative additions, particularly in the baptistry, unfortunately mar the harmony of the whole. The church also possesses another work by the same sculptor, a bronze "Pieta" dedicated to the memory of the dead sons of the parish. A copy of this is in the Art Institute of Chicago.

Andre Girard. A more recent work is that of Andre Girard, an artist active in the French underground in World War II. He has painted a set of stations in his own vigorour manner. Drawings for them were made during the German occupation. Of these he says,

> It seems imperative to me that the Way of the Cross avoid any legendary character and should rather appear to us as the cruel reality which threw the entire world into confusion. And so, in church after church, I was led to compose, for myself, drawings in which I endeavored to eliminate superficial beauty so that I might produce something which would really tell what happened on the road to Calvary and on Calvary itself.[2]

Purchased by an American patron of art, Girard's Way of the Cross was contributed to the very modern little church in Stowe, Vermont, which is the family parish of the noted concert artists, "The Trapp Family Singers." Girard was further commissioned to do the decorations of the church. In this way an unusually harmonious and unified whole was produced.

Melville Steinfels. In the beautiful chapel of Madonna della Strada erected on the Loyola University campus on the shore of Lake Michigan in Chicago, Melville Steinfels, a Chicago artist, painted in vivid fresco tech-

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[2] Andre Girard, "Via Dolorosa," Liturgical Arts, III (February, 1945), 29.

nique illustrations for the stations. They are here presented as a continuous mural with each stop marked by the required cross.

Dom Gregory de Witt, O.S.B. Dom Gregory de Witt, an artist-monk of Holland brought to this country by Abbot Ignatius Esser of Saint Meinrad's Abbey in Indiana, painted an unusual set of stations for a little attic chapel he designed for the major seminary. They are painted directly on dark wood panels in a medium of his own formulation. The figures have a beautifully stylized construction which shows a thorough knowledge of anatomy. An appropriate scriptural quotation and the figure of a seminarian making his sorrowful way with Christ form part of the composition of each. Halos of silver, which appear almost luminous, and strong whites, in contrast to the dark grained wood, make a very striking effect. The whole set blends with the gray walls, the plain altar, and the wrought iron tabernacle and altar appointments of Dom Gregory's designing.

Emil Raes. Wood carving too has its place in modern versions for this ancient devotion. Emil Raes created for the church of the Dominicans in Zoute, Belgium what, from the poignancy and expressiveness of the photographs, must be in the reality most moving. Through the use only of heads and hands, hands powerful, brutal, suffering, and

compassionate, he creates a remarkable impression. The very texture of the wood is used to heighten the effect.

Enid Fenton-Smith. Using the same restricted compositional matter as Raes, Enid Fenton-Smith composed woodcuts of an exquisite series of the Stations of the Cross. They were shown at the Guild of Catholic Artists' Exhibition in London in 1948.

Luigi Martinotti. The splendid exhibit "Italy at Work," presented at the Art Institute of Chicago during April and May of 1951, contained a beautiful set of Stations in yet another medium, that of enamel on copper. They were the work of Luigi Martinotti of Milan who was represented in the exhibit by several other works in the same medium, including a large altar crucifix. This set was part of the furnishings of a small family chapel planned by the architect Roberto Menghi of the same city. Perhaps five by seven inches in size, the stations, beautiful in composition and coloring, were mounted simply on blocks of gilt wood.

Our Lady of Providence Church, Brownstown, Indiana. At the request of the Archbishop of Indianapolis who wished the Sisters of Providence to take part in the decoration of the church, the writer in the summer of 1948 painted a set

of Stations of the Cross for the church of Our Lady of Providence in Brownstown, Indiana. The church, a mission of the Seymour parish, was to be constructed of St. Meinrad sandstone. At the request of the architect the paintings were in oil on copper panels which were set in the wall. The artist felt that most of the stations with which she was familiar were filled with many unnecessary figures. She composed these then as simple close-ups of the head of Christ, of His Mother where she appeared, and of the hands of others. At the time, being unfamiliar with such treatment, it seemed a bit daring although there was nothing to prohibit it. Since then and in the course of executing the work herein reported, she has found ample justification and some precedent.

CHAPTER IV

FACTORS INFLUENCING THE WORK

There are many factors, subjective and objective, which have their influence on every work of art. The purpose and subject matter being predetermined in the particular problem herein reported, many elements had, nevertheless, to be considered before the medium used, the color scheme employed, the style and composition of the paintings were finally decided upon.

I. INFLUENCES IN THE CHOICE OF MEDIUM USED

Desire for experiment. In choosing the medium for the work, one influential element was the desire for experiment. As far as the pictures themselves were concerned, nothing in their purpose favored one medium more than another. The one commissioning them had expressed a preference for oil, and oil with which the artist was familiar would have answered the purpose satisfactorily. In one or other of its forms, tempera would also serve. Two points were in its favor as far as the artist was concerned. It has been the subject of a strong contemporary revival of interest, and it was one with which through actual use she was as yet unfamiliar.

The time element. Another factor to be considered in the choice of medium was the time element. Work at night was impractical because of the difficulty of color judgment under artificial light. A great part of the painting, then, would have to be done in the short daylight periods before and after school hours. Under these circumstances it would be advantageous to use a medium that demanded little preparation for use in painting, could be cleaned up quickly and easily, and would not entail great waste if long delays intervened between painting periods.

Geographical location of the finished works. The convent is located a few blocks from Lake Michigan in Wilmette, Illinois, a residential suburb north of Chicago with little of the dirt from smoke ordinarily found in urban centers. Work was possible in a medium which exposed to the ordinary urban dirt and grime would quickly show discoloration and surface deterioration.

II. INFLUENCES ON THE COLOR OF THE PAINTINGS

Color and furnishings in the chapel. The walls of the chapel were to be rough plaster, off-white with a warm cast. The dark wood beamed ceiling was to be decorated in a simple stencil pattern with the primary

colors and green. The woodwork would be of bleached birch; the prie-dieus, organ, and sanctuary furnishings of Appalachian oak, both very light woods. The crucifix over the altar and the statues on brackets at either side were all to be handcarved of the same material. Covering on the kneelers of communion rail and prie-dieus would be natural leather of much the same tone as the wood, but the drapery behind the altar and the sanctuary carpeting were to be deep red. It was planned to have the floor of a medium gray, mottled rubber tile. The bright reds, yellows, and blues of the stained glass windows when finished would contribute additional strong color. These were the colors the paintings would carry out.

Lighting in the chapel. Before the paintings were begun, the chapel was far enough under construction to give a somewhat clearer picture of the lighting than would otherwise have been possible.

Natural lighting, coming from three directions, was rather strong before the installation of the stained glass windows. Three large windows faced north; one very long window taking up part of the height of the gable faced west; a third, a small rose window, was located above the altar on the east wall. The direction of this lighting was considered in painting, although the subduing

effect of the stained glass permitted stronger colors than might otherwise have been advisable.

Artificial lighting was to be centered in three large hanging fixtures of very adequate capacity. They would create an even distribution of light that would have little effect on the pictures.

III. INFLUENCES ON STYLE AND COMPOSITION

The congregation. The congregation using these Stations of the Cross through the years would be religious women of various ages. Among them even the youngest would have spent considerable time in meditation on the passion of Christ and would be accustomed to perform the exercise of the Way of the Cross daily. In such circumstances little pictorial setting would really be needed.

The type of art to which the congregation was accustomed was another matter. In the parishes where they had grown up or taught and in other convent chapels, the Sisters would have been surrounded by the usual commercial examples, sometimes of the best and often as not of the worst. The church of the motherhouse at St. Mary-of-the-Woods has some of the best, but in a late Renaissance or Baroque tradition. Familiar as they were with this, any painting which savored too much of modernist extremes would be disturbing, unwelcome, or distasteful. The work would have to find a "happy

medium" of representation, a naturalistic treatment that would not sacrifice sound artistic principles.

Placement in the chapel. The finished stations, twelve by sixteen inches in size, were to be hung at about eye level in a gabled room a story and a half in height. This close placement to the one making her way along the aisle had some influence on the technique. Finish of detail had to be complete enough for close inspection, and yet it was necessary to consider the effect of the whole grouping when viewed from across the chapel.

Half of the paintings would be hung on the north wall between the three stained glass windows, the other seven on the wall opposite in balanced positions. There is no regulation prescribing where in the church the stations must begin. The side generally preferred, the gospel or right side of the altar as it faces the congregation, was chosen. This would place the first station on the eastern end of the north wall with the last opposite it on the south wall. The figure of Christ had, then, to move toward the left in the paintings.

The original plan was to set the paintings directly in the wall, but as work on the building progressed, it was found that plastering on the outer wall was too thin to accommodate them. Plans were accordingly changed to

Figure 1

INTERIOR OF THE CHAPEL

SHOWING THE FIRST SIX STATIONS

plain wooden frames painted the color of the wall. As this change was made after the paintings were well along, adaptations in the composition could no longer be made. Because of this, the finished pictures shown later in this thesis may appear somewhat cramped in places where the frame overlap cuts the picture.

The medium used. The style of the painting was naturally influenced considerably by the medium used. While demanding a somewhat flatter handling than oil, egg-oil tempera has some of the characteristics of the oil technique. Among other things, it allows a freer handling of light and shade and greater depth than the pure egg tempera. This likeness to oil can be to some disadvantage in that the characteristic light crispness of the pure egg tempera may be too easily lost, but for an artist whose training and experience has been largely in oils it is likely to be the most adaptable of the tempera media.[1]

The artist's inclinations. Style and composition were, naturally enough, in the final analysis largely dependent on that quality which is the artist's own individual expression. While admiring the beautifully stylized

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[1] Ralph Mayer, The Artist's Handbook of Materials and Techniques (New York: The Viking Press, 1946), p. 187.

and semi-abstract work of many contemporary artists, the writer had found that her natural talents lay in the more naturalistic treatment of subject matter. In using this treatment, however, her tendency, strengthened by personal experience in performing the Way of the Cross, was for the simplest sort of statement. Artistic quality aside, only too often details of background and figures in the usual commercial products for this devotion had proved irrelevant and distracting rather than helpful to meditation.

CHAPTER V

PROCEDURE IN EXECUTING THE PAINTINGS

The influences present before and during the actual execution of these paintings having been considered at some length, the work itself will now be described.

I. DETERMINATION OF THE MEDIUM AND SUPPORT

Advantages of egg-oil tempera. Before other phases in executing the paintings could be carried out the medium had definitely to be decided upon. As noted, personal inclination and the desire for experiment favored a tempera technique. Of these, egg-oil was the most practical for several reasons. The artist was familiar with both the oil and water-color technique, and egg-oil as far as could be determined from reading and observation had some of the characteristics and advantages of both. It could be used with ease in laying on underpaintings with water as a thinner. It could be finished to much the appearance of and the permanency of oil. Its color, if anything, would become more brilliant with age rather than less. The artist, although unfamiliar with the medium, should through her experience with oil and water-color find a certain facility in its handling and, with the amount of work required for the completion of the fourteen paintings,

become something of a master of the technique.

The time factor was another weighty argument in favor of egg-oil tempera, for it had considerable advantages over oil in this respect. Because, for the most part, one color at a time would be mixed, there would be very little waste even if painting should have to be discontinued for a lengthy period. The water-color characteristics of the medium would simplify cleaning of brushes and palette. This would be a time-saving factor in short painting periods.

A number of formulae for egg-oil tempera are available in various sources. The great difficulty in using them, however, is not so much in their preparation as in their preservation. In this particular project, unless there could be some means of preservation for the medium there would be no advantage over the use of oil. The vinegar preservative used by some artists could not be recommended because it reacts badly with ultramarine blue particularly. A commercial preparation of whole hen egg and pure stand oil with an alcohol preservative was finally selected for an experimental painting. It was chosen because it could be procured readily; it fitted very nearly the egg-oil formulae of the best authorities, and it was the product of a reputable American firm which has received the commendation of many famous American painters.

The gesso ground. Oil and tempera paintings are applied to a ground. This in its turn covers a support which may be a panel of wood or composition board, textile stretched on a wooden frame or, as in the case of the set of stations previously painted by the author, a sheet of thin metal.

The ground for tempera has always been gesso. Gesso is a liquid coating composed of an inert ingredient such as whiting and an aqueous binder of glue, gelatin, or casein. Although simple enough in its constituents, it is rather delicately balanced and for good effect requires great care in mixing. Preparation of this ground could have provided an opportunity for wide experimentation, but the time set for the finished paintings did not allow this. A satisfactorily balanced, ready mixed gesso formula in powder form was chosen for the experimental painting. It was the product of the manufacturer of the emulsion and the powdered pigments which would be used.

Advantages of the presdwood support. As gesso on a flexible surface cracks readily, the logical support for it is a solid panel to which the gesso will adhere. Wood panels have been traditional. But even plywood which is much more resistant to warping than other panels would have been endangered in this case. The close proximity

of the convent to Lake Michigan means a normally high humidity with frequent rises that might cause expansion and contraction of the panels with consequent cracking of the gesso ground.

Presdwood, a brown building board made by exploding wood fibers and subjecting to heavy pressure under heat, is highly recommended by Mayer among others.[1] It is a product of the Masonite Corporation of Chicago and is widely used by artists. The author herself had used and seen it used for oil paintings and had found it satisfactory. She had seen only a very negligible warpage in larger panels subjected to much more severe conditions than those her paintings would meet. A panel of the ordinary 1/8 inch thickness was chosen for the experimental painting.

The trial painting. The presdwood panel was covered with the gesso ground selected, and the fourteenth station previously used for the Brownstown church was quickly adjusted to the new panel for a trial painting. Using dry pigments ground in the prepared emulsion and thinned with distilled water, painting was done in a trial color scheme that would harmonize with the color scheme of the chapel as planned. The artist found the medium very pleasing and

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[1] Ralph Mayer, The Artist's Handbook of Materials and Techniques (New York: The Viking Press, 1946), p. 215.

much freer than she had anticipated.

This trial painting was shown to the client for approval of the medium and technique and consideration of the color scheme. Except for the suggestion of a blue background in place of the gray used, the picture was approved and plans were made to continue the paintings. The trial painting was later used as an experimental base for various varnishes before a decision was made on the final protective coating to be applied.

II. PREPARATION OF THE PANELS

Preparing the surface for the gesso. Possibly the most tedious, time-consuming, and least satisfying, but none the less important, part of the painting was the preparation of the panels. Eighteen panels of presdwood were cut to size by a carpenter, four extra to be prepared for emergency use. The panels were small enough not to require cradling or bracing.

The panels were first scrubbed with a mixture of three parts of denatured alcohol to one part of pure ammonia. This removed the slight oiliness of the smooth side. They were then sanded slightly and coated with a ten percent solution of rabbit skin glue. When this was dry they were again sanded to remove fuzziness.

To be assured of an even tension in the panels, it

is advisable to coat both sides. On the back, which needed no preparation for this, several coats of undiluted white casein house-paint were applied to about the thickness the gesso would have on the surface.

Application of the gesso. The panels were then ready to receive their gesso coating, and it was here that the greatest care was necessary. An experienced applicator could probably have finished all in one day's work. As best results, however, are secured if the same consistency of gesso is used throughout each panel, only half were attempted at a time.

The gesso in powder form was measured out with the water according to directions, mixed thoroughly to a heavy paste, and allowed to stand in a covered container overnight. The next morning, the glue having dissolved, the gesso was again stirred slowly until completely mixed. The jar containing it was placed in hot water over a double boiler to thin to spreading consistency. Applied with a wide bristle brush panel by panel, the first coat was rubbed in with the fingers to prevent the formation of dangerous air bubbles.

In successive coats, the brush was loaded with enough gesso for one stroke. Effort was made to avoid overlapping, and the gesso was pulled out smoothly while

watch was kept to avoid air bubbles. Six to eight coats were applied to each panel, alternating the directions lengthwise and across. By the time the last panel in each coat was reached the first one was usually dry enough for the next layer.

Sanding. After all were finished and had been allowed to dry for some days, the dirtiest, longest, and most tiring part of the preparation began. This was the sanding. Triple M garnet cabinet paper was used, and the panels were sanded to the smoothest finish possible.

The sanding process disclosed that five panels had serious air bubbles. They were pin point in size but would be seriously magnified by the application of paint. The difficulty had probably been caused by an unavoidable interruption while the first set was being coated. Hurried application at this time had evidently caused the air bubbles. During application of the remaining coats on these panels, the air bubbles became noticeable, but the panels were finished in the hope that sanding would reach below the bubbles. It did not, and consultation of authorities gave no solution.

A method of smoothing the surface by rubbing over small areas with a pad of moistened cloth was next tried. A somewhat harder surface resulted, but it cleared the

least affected of the panels of the bubbles. The others were scrubbed with hot water and ammonia and resurfaced. The mishap proved indirectly useful by showing beyond doubt the durability and practicality of the presdwood panels. They withstood the soaking and scrubbing without warpage and in the end could not be distinguished from the others.

II. DRAWING AND COMPOSITION

The drawings. Drawings for two of the stations were made using a minimum of full length figures. The idea behind the set of stations she had made previously, however, had a great appeal to the artist. She now realized improvements in drawing, composition, and expressiveness that could be made. With slight adjustment the earlier drawings could be fitted to the new panels. Comparison in the use of the two media for the same subject would also be interesting. As the client's liking for the first set had been part of the reason for the commission, her approval for this plan was readily secured.

No models had been available for the first set of stations. The drawings had been made from the artist's knowledge of anatomy, from anatomical drawings, sketches she had made, and an occasional pose for position by some willing friend. With these drawings as a basis and with the same procedure, improvements in drawing and composi-

tion were made. The three which had originally been the most satisfactory in composition, the fifth, the sixth, and eighth, suffered least change.

The 12 by 16 inch drawings were made on sheets of newsprint and tracings were made on transparent paper. From these tracings the transfer to the panels was made.

Dark and light pattern. The newsprint drawings were used to plan the dark and light pattern. This was needed to help establish emphasis and to control the color value when painting. Emphasis was laid mainly on the face and hands in all the pictures by contrasting light areas on dark background. More time might have been spent on a very careful rendering of these value patterns, but it did not seem necessary. In the tempera medium colors dry out lighter, and value adjustments would have to be made while painting.

Transfer of the drawings to the panels. As the gesso surface is readily marred, the practice of tempera artists generally is to transfer drawings to it rather than to draw directly on the panel. The back of the tracing paper was rubbed with sanguine crayon, and the surplus removed by going over it with a soft cloth. The tracing was then laid carefully, back down, on the gesso panel and drawn over lightly. The resulting pale red lines were

Figure 2

TRACING OF THE LINE DRAWING

ON THE GESSO PANEL

sufficiently clear without causing any harm to the surface.

III. PAINTING

Before any of the paintings were begun the gesso ground was isolated by coating with a solution of half emulsion and half distilled water. Distilled water was used throughout the paintings in order to avoid any reaction with the pigments that might be caused by chemically treated water.

The palette used consisted of titanium oxide white, ivory black, cerulean blue in very small quantity, cobalt and ultramarine blue, cadmium red medium and cadmium red light, alizarin crimson, cadmium yellow medium and cadmium yellow light, and the earth colors: yellow ochre, terra verde, burnt sienna, and raw umber.

In regard to the actual painting, whether the procedure here described is the most satisfactory may be questioned, but faced with the problem of continuity and consistent treatment of the paintings it seemed to the artist the most practical approach.

Without regard for the order of the series, the drawings were transferred to three or four panels at a time by the means already described. Figure 2, page 32, shows the tracing for the sixth station.

The next step was the outlining with a fine brush.

CADMIUM YELLOW, LIGHT

CADMIUM YELLOW, MEDIUM

CADMIUM RED, LIGHT

CADMIUM RED, MEDIUM

ALIZARIN CRIMSON

CERULEAN BLUE

COBALT BLUE

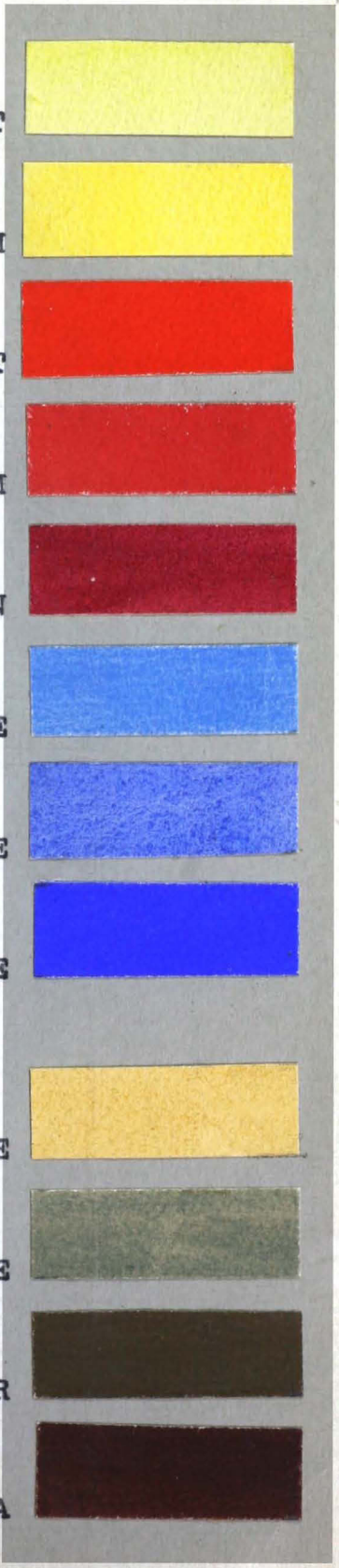
ULTRAMARINE BLUE

YELLOW OCHRE

TERRA VERDE

RAW UMBER

BURNT SIENNA



The dull green earth color, terra verde, was used for this and for laying in of shadows on the flesh tones, shadows on the whites, and under the browns at the same time. Soft red sable brushes ranging from hair line to half an inch in width were used for this and for most of the painting throughout. Figure 4 shows the thirteenth station with these steps completed.

Next, an underpainting in pure yellow ochre was laid over all flesh areas. In order to reduce the glare of the white and establish something of the finished value and color scheme, all colors were then laid on in what would be about middle value. For the red garments, cadmium red medium was used, and, for the background, ultramarine blue was quickly laid in with large round bristle brushes of about a quarter inch radius. Figure 5 shows the eighth station in this stage.

Similarly the cross and the hair were laid on using a mixture of burnt sienna, terra verde, and black. Cobalt blue was used in our Lady's garments where she appeared. All of these colors were used rather lean, that is, ground with just enough medium to keep them from powdering off, and thinned with water to a rather considerable transparency. Consequent layers employed more of the medium. The requisite for good binding power in tempera is to paint fat over lean.

Figure 4

TERRA VERDE UNDERPAINTING

Figure 5

UNDERPAINTING -- THE SECOND STAGE

Most of the paintings were carried along to this stage before finishing on any of them was begun, as the painter felt that this would maintain a more consistent treatment throughout. Creatively it was not always the most satisfying method, but with the unified end in view it seemed the most advisable. In point of economy of time and paint it was also the most practical. Sufficient quantities of a color could be prepared at one time to cover the area on several pictures. As sometimes happened in later steps, when more was prepared for one painting than was needed it could be used on another.

After the underpainting stage, the work was continued, laying on detail and light and shade with finer strokes. In the reds, shadows were made for the most part by the use of alizarin crimson pure and mixed with black for the deepest tones. As alizarin is a more transparent color than the others, certain effects could be secured through utilization of the transparency. Light tones on the red garments were of cadmium red light and of cadmium red light mixed with white. Flesh tones were made almost exclusively with gradations of yellow ochre and white. Shadows on flesh tones were made with terra verde and a mixture of terra verde and raw umber. Some of the shadows on the white went toward green with terra verde as the base; others turned toward the purples. The browns

were variously compounded of burnt sienna, yellow ochre, cadmium red, and black. The dull greens of the crown of thorns were made with terra verde, black, and white. The halos of cadmium yellow light and white were laid on at the end with a quarter inch red sable.

As work progressed, all the paintings were outlined and reoutlined with a fine brush using a mixture of alizarin and ivory black. This rather free outlining tended to flatten the paintings somewhat, but it also helped toward detail and finish.

The fact that the colors dry out to a light tone nearer the value of the original dry pigments made it sometimes difficult to judge the darker colors properly. The result gives a greater brilliance and luminosity than in oil colors, however. Another satisfying feature was the rapidity with which the paintings dried and the knowledge that as long as there was no cracking or peeling within a week or two there would be none with ordinary care. This assurance is not always possible with an oil painting.

The accompanying color print of the sixth station gives an idea of the general coloring in the finished works. Good as a color photograph, it is not completely satisfactory, however, in that the yellow tones are lost to a great extent.

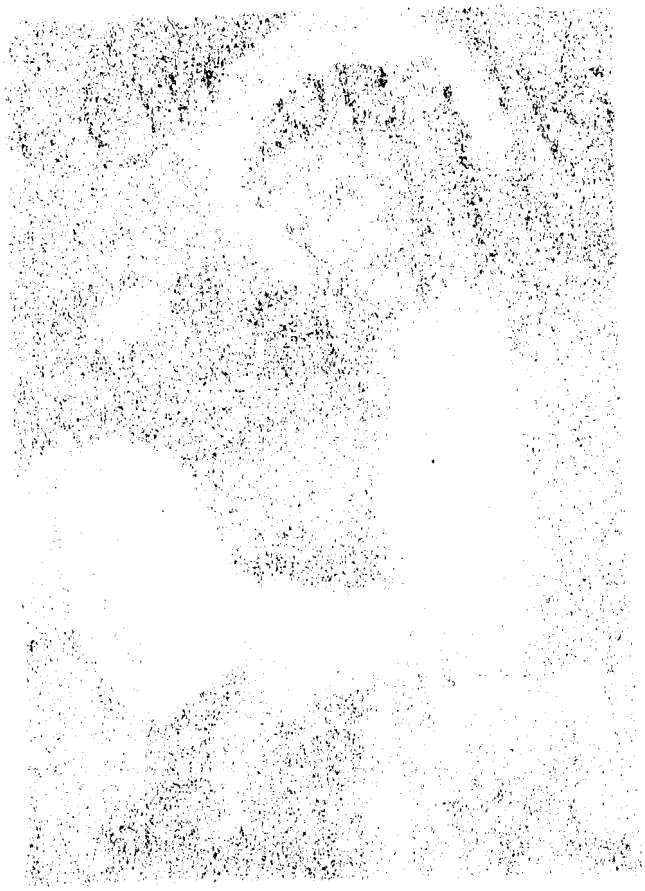
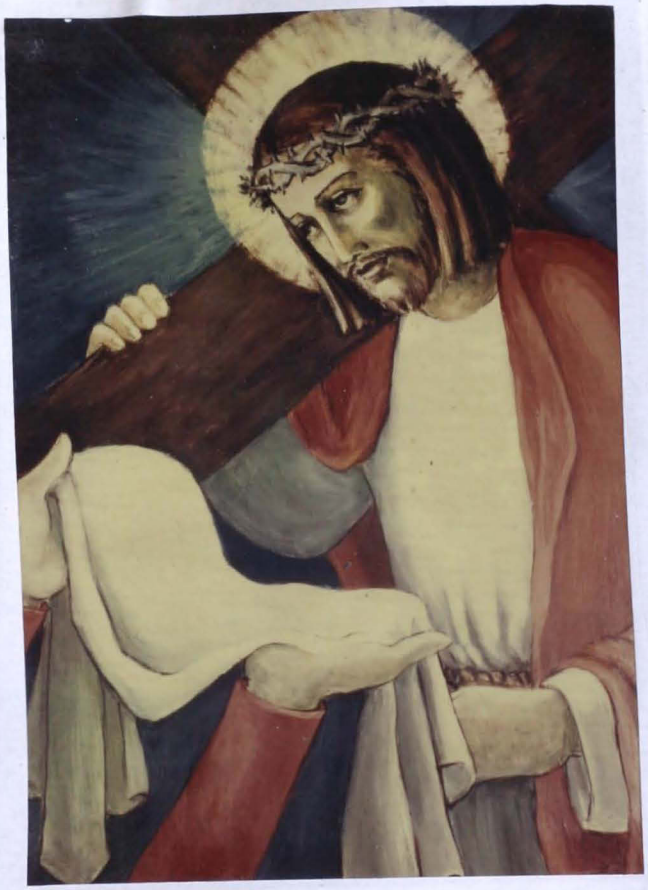


Figure 6

COLOR PHOTOGRAPH OF THE SIXTH STATION



IV. VARNISHING

Unlike oil, tempera dries out completely within several days and can be varnished at once if desired. The pleasant mat finish of unglazed tempera is one of its attractive features as there is no glare to break the coloring in any light. It seemed advisable, however, to give the paintings some protective coating. The trial painting was used to experiment for this. Mastic varnish and damar varnish were both tried, but the resultant high gloss was unpleasant. They were removed with acetone, a little retouching done where too vigorous rubbing had disturbed the painting, and another experiment tried. An isolating varnish of a very thin, highly volatile copal varnish was applied. This gave some gloss but not as high as that of the damar or the mastic. One of the few reliable mat varnishes available was applied over this. Its slight beeswax content dissolved easily with a little warming, and an even application was comparatively simple. The painting under it kept its original mat finish and color.

The layer of copal varnish followed by the mat varnish, both applied as carefully as possible and with all precautions to prevent dust settling in the coating while it was being done, were the final steps. Whether

this final finish was actually necessary may be a point to question. It does, however, eliminate the danger of dissolving any of the surface by accidental contact with moisture.

CHAPTER VI

ANALYSIS OF THE STATIONS

The background of the paintings with its various influences, historical and technical, having been dealt with, the finished paintings shown in accompanying photographs will be explained individually. They are all composed as close-ups showing the head of Christ and of His Mother where she appears. Other actors in the scenes, with whom the one making the Way of the Cross will identify himself, are represented only by their hands. These hands serve as particularly fitting symbols of man and his deeds since it is with them that he executes much of his work of evil destruction and of constructive good.

THE FIRST STATION

The first station is Christ's condemnation to death by Pilate. Christ stands there as the "Ecce Homo," thorn-crowned and with a reed-sceptre between His bound hands. Pilate is represented by the hands dipping into the bowl in a vain attempt to wash away innocent blood. The hands of a serving boy hold the bowl and towel for the futile gesture as Christ looks out into the face of Pilate.

In this first station as in the others the halo around the head of Christ is used not only symbolically

to show His divinity but also as a compositional device to center interest on the head of Christ. Carrying the color pattern, its golden yellow, the color of divinity, is picked up and repeated in the head of the reed and on the brass bowl. A brilliant glowing red is used in the cloak thrown about the shoulders of Christ. The color of blood, it is symbolic of martyrdom, of suffering, and of love, all intimately connected with each other and with Christ's passion. Deeper and duller reds also appear in the folds of the garment, in the cords binding His hands, fastening His cloak, and around His waist.

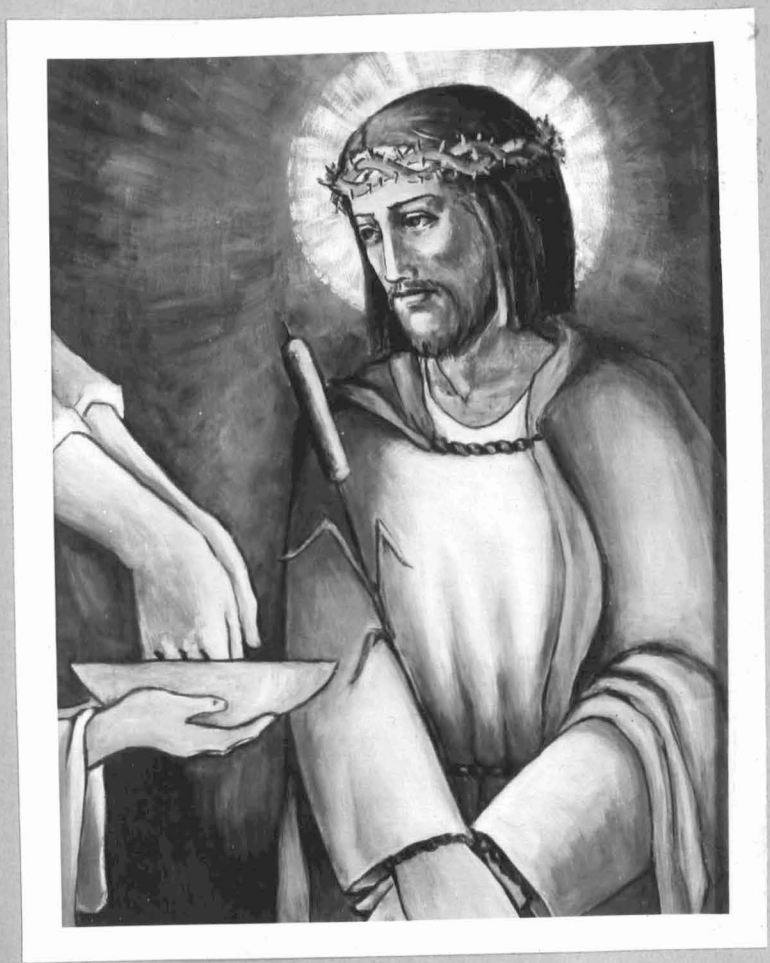
The rather dull blue of the background appears more vivid by reason of the yellow and red used in the picture. It radiates from the halo, darkening and dulling as it nears the edges thus helping confine the picture within its space. The naturally receding quality of blue also gives the painting a slight depth.

From the lower right hand side of the picture the light along the right sleeve of Christ's garment is carried up by the diagonal of the reed and the light of the garment to the face of Christ. His eyes carry the attention of the viewer across to the figure of Pilate whose hands and arms show at the left. Their diagonal movement into the picture and the upward curve of the bowl and the hands holding it carry the eye back into the light pattern

originally followed. The folds of Christ's cloak as they fall across His arm radiate from the smoothly flowing curve of the fold that encircles His neck. Thus the eye is held within the pictorial composition while the symbolic purpose of the picture is accomplished.

STATION I

JESUS IS CONDEMNED TO DEATH



THE SECOND STATION

The second station shows Christ taking up His cross. No other hands are shown here, for while it is true that the cross was laid upon Him by the sins of men still it was only because out of His love for them He willed to take it up, and as St. Peter said "delivered Himself."[1]

A deep curved line movement in the fold of the cloak carries the eye up to the head of Christ. Again His eyes with their thoughtful look carry the eyes of the spectator down to the hand that grasps the cross, and here the light value of the arm carries the eye back to repeat the circular movement of the composition. Both hands and arms stand out against the dark background, emphasizing the embracing movement toward the cross.

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[1] I Peter, 2, 23.

STATION II

JESUS RECEIVES THE CROSS

THE THIRD STATION

The first fall is depicted in the third station. This like the other falls is not found in the scriptural account but is based on long-standing pious tradition which, taking into account Christ's previous suffering and weakened condition, is entirely in accord with reason.

Beginning with the hand braced against the fall, the eye is led from the lower left hand corner up the sleeve and arm to the face on which attention is again concentrated by the halo. The right hand, still grasping the cross, stands out in its lightness as a secondary spot of interest. The lines of the garments create a rhythmic swing of movement radiating from the head of Christ.

In this background the blue is darker and duller. The earth is a dull gray-green, barren sort of earth that befits the scene. The same color in modified forms appears in the shadows of the flesh tone, on parts of the white garment, and in the crown of thorns.

STATION III

JESUS FALLS THE FIRST TIME

UNDER THE WEIGHT OF THE CROSS

THE FOURTH STATION

The fourth station shows another scene from tradition, the meeting on the way with His Mother. As Scripture records that "there followed Him a great multitude of people, and women, who bewailed and lamented Him"[2] and that "there stood by the cross of Jesus, His Mother,"[3] it is not unlikely that at the cross street pointed out from ancient times she did come face to face with Him.

In this painting the light pattern, beginning with Christ's hand in the right corner of the picture, carries the eye up along the white of His garment to His face where it is held momentarily. From there it moves across the light of the halo and other hand to the face of Mary and down the light of her veil to her hands which carry the movement back to His figure.

The blue of the background is repeated by a variant blue in the Virgin Mother's cloak. The colors in her garments are the traditional ones used by artists through the centuries. The white of the veil is symbolic of her purity, the blue of the cloak of her fidelity and constancy, and the red showing in the sleeves is the symbol of her love.

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[2] Luke 23, 27.

[3] John 19, 26.

STATION IV

JESUS IS MET BY HIS BLESSED MOTHER

THE FIFTH STATION

"And going out, they found a man of Cyrene, named Simon; him they forced to take up His cross"[4] is the textual basis for the fifth station.

In this station in addition to the halo there is a very decided secondary circular movement around the head of Christ through the light value pattern created by the hands of Simon and of Christ. Effort was made to keep a harmonious movement of line as well as of light. The head of Christ turned back towards Simon breaks the monotony of the leftward movement of the figures in the stations.

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[4] Matthew 24, 32.

STATION V

THE CROSS IS LAID UPON SIMON OF CYRENE

THE SIXTH STATION

In the sixth station the compassionate Veronica of tradition presents her veil to wipe the sweat and blood from His face. She too may well have been one of the group of women following. Her name we have from the "veron Ikon" of "true image" of His countenance which Christ left imprinted on her veil as a reward for her service.

The painting which is possibly the most satisfactory from a compositional point of view also uses the device of a circular or oval movement. The eye is carried from the lower right by the line movement and folds of light on Veronica's veil, across the veil, to the light spot of Christ's right hand on the cross, to His face, down the strongly lighted front of His garment and back to the veil.

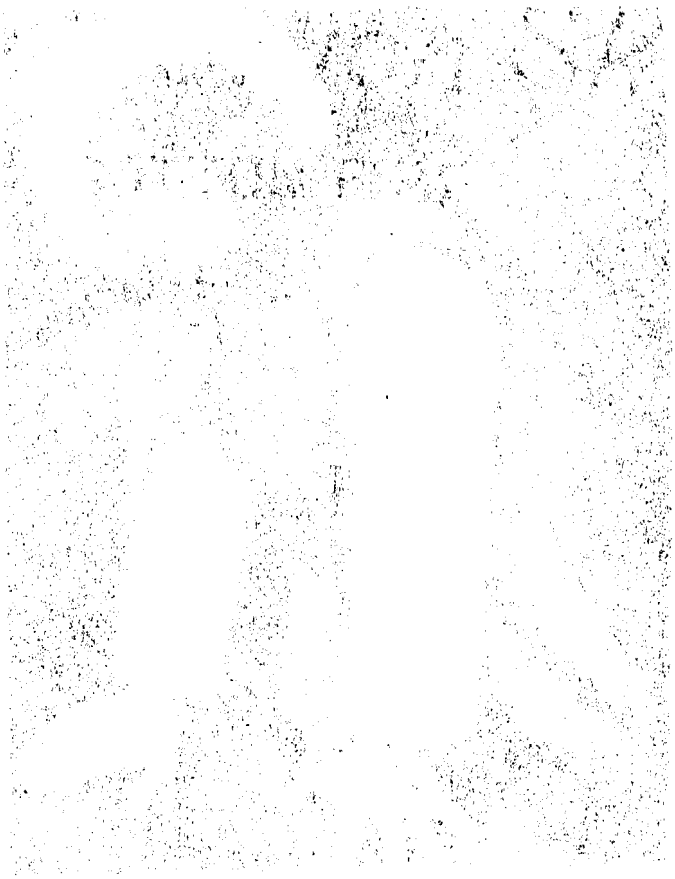
The red in Christ's cloak is carried to the left by the red sleeves of Veronica. Highlights on the veil carry bits of the yellow tone.

STATION VI

THE FACE OF JESUS IS WIPED BY VERONICA

THE SEVENTH STATION

The second fall, depicted in the seventh station, shows a somewhat more prostrate Christ, as He makes the effort to push Himself to His feet. The coloring of the earth and sky is the same as that of the first fall shown in the third station. The browns of the cross showing behind are repeated in the hair. The push of the arms and their light pattern carry the eye to the face and back again. The line movement of folds in cloak and garment radiate from the head where attention is again secured by the halo.



STATION VII

JESUS FALLS A SECOND TIME

THE EIGHTH STATION

In the eighth station Christ is seen, halting and with compassionate gaze looking at the group of women who offer Him their sympathy. Accepting in their persons the compassion of womankind, in self-forgetfulness He says, "Weep not over me; but weep for yourselves and for your children."[5]

Here the eye is led up by a sort of S movement to the compassionate gaze of Christ. The glance enters by the light hands at the lower left, follows their movement upward to the left hand of Christ on the cross, down the light of His sleeve and up to His face. There is a secondary movement encircling His head in the movement from the shoulder down through the hand and up to the right hand on the cross.

The color pattern of this picture follows the others. The red of the cloak is repeated in the mantle of the woman at the extreme left, but unfortunately much of it was cut off by the framing.

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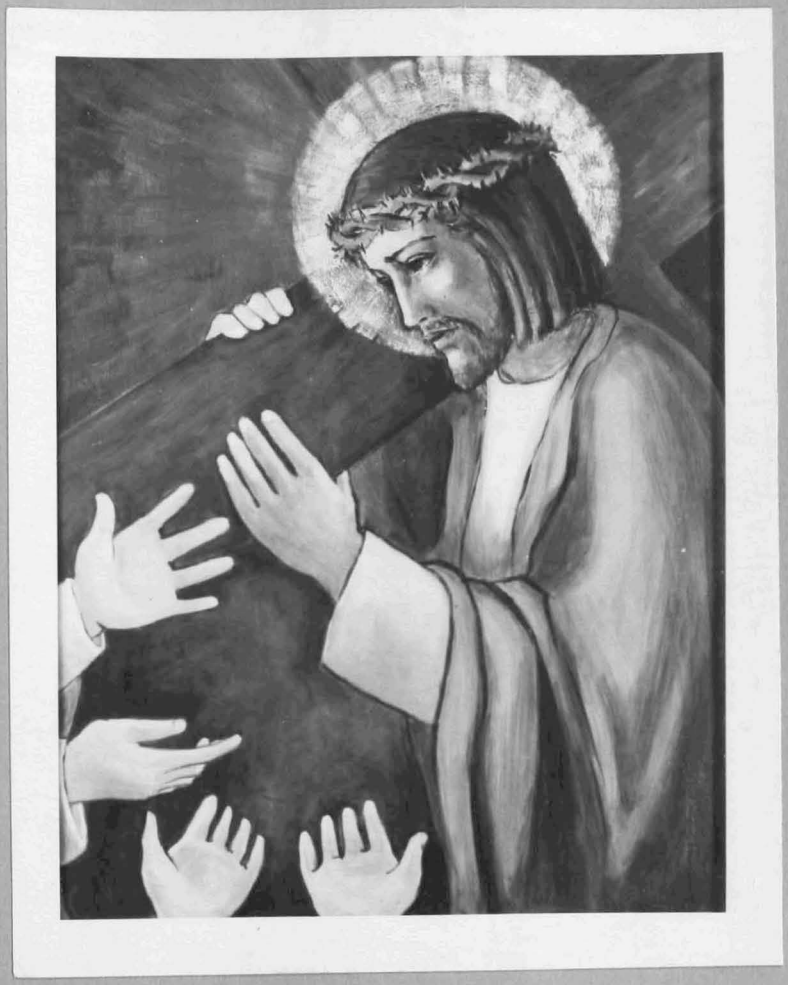
[5] Luke 23, 28.

STATION VIII

THE WOMEN OF JERUSALEM MOURN FOR OUR LORD



THE NINTH STATION

The ninth station shows an utterly prostrate Christ fallen for the last time at the foot of Calvary. With His head resting on His right arm, He strives to push Himself up with His left hand.

Perhaps the least successful, it was of all the most difficult in composition and drawing. While occupying the same space and shape as the others, the figure had to be drawn in an entirely different position. In the photograph shown there is some loss of form through the slight changes produced in the values by photography. Because of the position of the body the halo presented certain peculiar difficulties. As it is, it tends to hide somewhat a more explanatory construction of head and shoulders.

The slightly left center foreground is lightened to carry the eye into the right hand of Christ. From here it is led by the light of the forearm to the head, around it by the halo, across the shoulder and down the arm, enclosing the head in a sort of rectangle. The deep red of the cloak filling the foreground in an irregular curve presents a rather pleasant contrast to the gray green of the earth. The sky is a somewhat darker blue, lightened only enough for the edges of the cross to stand out.

STATION IX

JESUS FALLS THE THIRD TIME UNDER THE CROSS

THE TENTH STATION

The tenth station shows Christ partially stripped as He waits for the rest of His garments to be torn roughly from His bruised and bleeding form. He stands with hand held out in ready acceptance of this stripping of clothing, of reputation, of honor, and of all man holds dear.

The greatest difficulty in this painting was in color composition. The warm flesh tones stand out against the blue background and the white garment is subdued against it by comparatively deep shadow except for the fold rolled down over one shoulder and around the waist. Red was introduced by allowing the cloak to remain as if caught on Christ's left and bringing a portion of it around below His outstretched right hand.

STATION X

JESUS IS STRIPPED OF HIS GARMENTS

THE ELEVENTH STATION

In the eleventh station, with His right hand already nailed, Christ waits in painfully questioning expectancy for the other hand to be seized. It is for the devout pilgrim making his Way of the Cross to answer this questioning look.

The composition is another of the more successful. The eye is led in by the light area at the left corner and diagonally up to the face where attention is again concentrated by the halo. The zig-zag movement of white along the arms and across the shoulder fits well into the shape. Red is introduced by the cloak upon which the left arm rests and is repeated in the flow of blood from the already nailed right hand. The background is almost completely gray green with some deep shadows tending toward blue. Shadows on the loin cloth, also toward blues, help tie the color to that of the other pictures.

STATION XI

JESUS IS NAILED TO THE CROSS

THE TWELFTH STATION

"There stood by the cross of Jesus His Mother."[6] Her hands are represented in the position of a priest offering sacrifice, for she is united in Christ's offering by her willing submission. In her, too, man is represented making his offering in union with Christ.

This station also presented a difficult compositional problem, that of showing the nailed hands within the narrow space of the others while keeping the same scale in the figure and filling the space adequately. To help solve this, the figure of Mary was placed in the foreground and the view of the cross taken as though from its right side. The uplifted hands of the Mother carry attention from the light veil up to the face of Christ. Strong light on the face, upper torso, and arms of Christ help fix the attention. The white of the loin cloth is subdued by deep shadow. To brighten the picture, there are small touches of red in the sleeves of Mary's garment and the two streams of blood flowing from the nail wounds. The sky is the midnight blue of the darkness that overspread the earth.

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[6] John 19, 26.

STATION XII

JESUS DIES UPON THE CROSS

THE THIRTEENTH STATION

Tradition says that when they took the body of Christ from the cross they laid it first in the arms of His Mother. In the thirteenth station she holds Him as once she held the Babe in her arms and looks with grief-stricken gaze at the pierced Hand she holds out.

In this painting the light pattern follows a somewhat elliptical movement. From the elbow on the lower right hand side, it moves up to the head of Christ, is carried around it by the Mother's hand and the halo, moves up the veil to her face and travels from here down the light of the veil on the opposite side to the wounded hand and the arm. Major emphasis is on the Mother's face. The dark background immediately behind and the light encircling blue help in fixing it.

The upper portion of Mary's figure and her left arm form a large red area. On the right arm a small part of red sleeve shows to break the blue area. Bits of duller red appear in the thorn marks on Christ's forehead, the nail wound in the hand, and the spear wound in His side. Mary holds the folds of her blue mantle against His back. The curve of light in it carries the movement to her hand. This area balances the other blues and breaks what would otherwise be too large an expanse of flesh color.

STATION XIII

JESUS IS LAID IN THE ARMS OF HIS MOTHER

THE FOURTEENTH STATION

The fourteenth station is the entombment. Only two pairs of hands are shown bearing the figure. The strong light diagonal of the inert body and the limp left arm carry attention to the calm face of the dead Christ where it is held by the halo. The background is broken by the tomb entrance and a dull blue-gray Calvary on the top of which the crosses still keep sentinel. Enlivening bits of red are again introduced in the sleeves of the bearers and in the wound marks. The earth repeats the bluish gray cast of the hill.

STATION XIV

JESUS IS LAID IN THE SEPULCHRE

CHAPTER VII

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

The work involved in this thesis was the execution of a set of Stations of the Cross for St. Francis Xavier Chapel in Wilmette, Illinois. Executed in egg-oil tempera after all the practical aspects of the medium had been considered, it involved the use of background knowledge of the purpose of the Stations and of their place of installation. The execution itself included not only the drawing and painting of the pictures but also preparation of the panel supports and a final finish.

Besides the small part the paintings play in beautifying their surroundings and giving inspiration to others, the writer feels they have made a very solid contribution to her work as a teacher. First, they have given her considerable experience in a new medium. Secondly, they have helped enlarge her horizon as a teacher by increasing her knowledge of and sympathy with the circumstances under which the professional artist must work and by the challenge they presented to her powers of creation and adaptability. Thirdly, not only did the new medium develop a new skill but the technique also opened to her an immense field of possibilities for experiment for herself and her students.

The use of various true tempera media, especially with more gifted students would bear considerable investigation. Even in its simpler forms, using as a base gesso coatings on paper surfaces, or a casein substitute for gesso, it offers an almost inexhaustible source of experiment.

In connection with art appreciation, tempera is also of value, for with the adoption of the term "tempera" by the manufacturers of showcard colors its true meaning has been lost to the vast majority of students. Today with the decline of the exaggerated esteem for Renaissance art and a consequent appreciation of earlier artists an understanding of true tempera painting should be valuable as a means of developing a better understanding and greater appreciation of the older masters who excelled in this medium. It would also help as an introduction to the moderns who work in it.

In conclusion, the writer feels that not only was the primary purpose of executing the paintings themselves fulfilled, but secondarily, they have proved more than adequate as an inspiration and a source of interest to herself and her students and a means of opening new fields of experiment and practical demonstration.

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