



STATION OF THE CROSS # 7

TREASURES OF THE ROSEAU CATHEDRAL:

STATIONS OF THE CROSS.

By Bernard Lauwyck

As we mentioned before in a previous article, Our Lady of Fair Haven Cathedral, as any other catholic cathedral in the world vibrates with intentionality, it is rich with symbolic meaning. This building was constructed to communicate with the faithful. The building “speaks” to our mind and soul!

Today, we look at the 14 beautiful Stations of the Cross.

Jesus said “ *I am the way, the truth, and the life*” John 14:6.

A Christian life should be a following or imitation of Jesus and the way of Jesus Christ is the way of the cross. Jesus’ resurrection could only happen after His journey to his crucifixion: He was forced to carry the instrument of his own torture and death to the hill called Skull, Golgotha in Hebrew, Calvary in Latin. The follower of Christ is asked to take up his or her cross and walk the journey of life.

As Thomas à Kempis wrote:

Without the Way,
there is no going,
Without the Truth,
there is no knowing,
Without the Life,
there is no living."

This journey of the cross (“*via dolorosa*”) is commemorated in every Catholic Church building by 14 images or crosses. They may be of stone, wood, or metal, sculptured or carved, or they may be paintings or engravings. The fourteen episodes were developed in the early 14th century by the order of St. Francis of Assisi. As not everybody was able to visit the Holy Land, especially after Saladin conquered Jerusalem, it became possible to follow the journey to Calvary “in spirit” The stations are:

1. Jesus before Pontius Pilate and condemned to death
2. The wooden cross is laid upon Jesus;
3. Jesus falls the first time;
4. Jesus meets His Mother;
5. Simon of Cyrene is made to bear the cross;
6. Jesus’ face is wiped by Veronica;
7. Jesus falls a second time (see picture);
8. Jesus meets the women of Jerusalem
9. Jesus falls a third time;
10. Jesus is stripped of His garments;
11. Jesus’ crucifixion;
12. Jesus’ death on the cross;
13. Jesus’ body is taken down from the cross;
14. Jesus is laid in the grave.

There is a physical space between each station and these are important: they allow people to “walk the distance” making their own spiritual journey, a real pilgrimage.

The 14 Stations of the Cross in the Roseau Cathedral are valuable original works of art and beautiful colourful depictions of above-mentioned events. The artist is unknown. The paintings are set in beautiful Oak frames and all, except one, are as old as the stained glass, as they were also installed in 1883.

It is interesting to know that the art work is painted on copper sheets and not on canvas! This copper sheeting provides, from underneath the paint, an unusual luminescent shine or glow, still evident today after 129 years of exposure to the harsh Dominican climate.

Research shows that contrary to popular belief, master painters as Rembrandt, Brueghel and El Greco, among others, also painted their masterpieces on copper sheets. Copper has the advantage not to swell or shrink very much and so provides a reliable stable support for painting work.

In a subsequent article on the “large murals” in the Cathedral we will look in detail at the damage done by age and inclement weather to paintings on canvas glued to wooden boards.

It must also be noted that painting oil on copper sheets is expert work as the oil paint tend to run on the smooth copper surface. It is not for every artist.

During the forty days of Lent, on every Friday, the prayers of the Stations of the Cross, remembering Jesus’ sufferings and death, will be said by the faithful in each Catholic Church building in the world.

This Lent will be the last time for some time that these prayers will be said in the Roseau Cathedral. To protect these pieces of original art and deep devotion for future generations, the Stations of the Cross will be moved to St. Gerard’s Hall, after Easter, for the duration of the Cathedral roof renovation project. The time frame of the renovation project will depend on the fund raising efforts for this project.