



Mary Clopas, dressed in garments of an earthen color suggest her humility while her mantle of green speaks of Christian hope. Her admiration of Jesus is indicated by the gesture of her hand.

The Centurion of Capernaum holds a piece of wood in his left hand, indicating his relation to the synagogue (Luke 7:1-10.) The boy beyond his shoulder is the servant healed by

Jesus. The three heads behind the boy reveal that “he and his whole household believed” (John 4:45-54.) He extends his thumb and two fingers, a teaching device of the Holy Trinity, while his closed fingers symbolize the mystery of the two natures of Christ. “Truly he is the Son of God” (Mark 15:39.)

The Lesser Figures

Longinus is the Roman soldier who pierced Jesus’ side with a lance. Stephen, the name given by tradition to the soldier who offered Jesus a sponge soaked in vinegar wine after Jesus cried out, “I thirst.” (John 19:28-30)

There are 33 figures depicted on the Icon — Two Christ figures, One Hand of God the Par-

ent, 5 major figures, 2 smaller figures, 14 angels, 2 unknown at Christ’s hands, 1 small boy, 6 unknown saints at the bottom of the Cross and one rooster. There are 33 nail heads along the frame just inside the shells and seven around the halo.



The Unknown Saints

At the foot of the Cross we find six unknown saints. It is postulated that they are Saints Damian, Rufinus, Michael, John the Baptist, Peter and Paul. All of these are patrons of the building that housed the Crucifix and Saint Rufinus was the patron of Assisi. There is too much damage in this area to make a proper identification. However, through the use of our imagination, we can place ourselves into the Icon, at the foot of the Cross.



The Astonished Angels

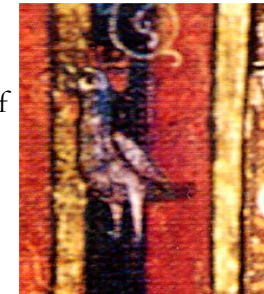
On either side of the arms of the Cross we find a group of two angels animatedly discussing the scene unfolding before them. “For God so loved the world that the only begotten Son was given, that whosoever believes in him shall not die but have life everlasting.” (John 3:16) This enduring truth still amazes and astonishes those who come to faith.



As mentioned earlier, behind Christ is the open and empty tomb. This central symbol on the Icon depicts Christ alive and standing over the tomb. The red of love overcomes the shadows of death. The gestures of the unknown saints at Jesus’ left and right hands indicate faith. Could these be Peter and John at the empty tomb? (John 20:3-9)

The Rooster

The rooster recalls not only the denial of Peter but also proclaims the new dawn of the Risen, living Christ (I John 2:8) “But for you who revere my Name, the Sun of Righteousness will rise with healing in its wings.” (Malachi 4:2 or 3:20 depending upon your translation.)



Metropolitan Community Church of the Coachella Valley

Worships Every Sunday, 10 a.m. & 6 p.m.
32150 Candlewood Drive, Suite 6
Cathedral City, California 92234
760-328-3591 • fax: 760-328-3596
Outside the calling area: 1-800-565-0805
or email us at: info@mcccv.org
www.mcccv.org



The San Damiano Crucifix

The History of the San Damiano Crucifix
Painted by an unknown Umbrian artist in the 12th Century, the San Damiano Crucifix is a popular object of devotion among many Christians rich in symbolism. The Crucifix appears to be of Syrian influence, and history indicates that there were Syrian monastic communities in the area where the Crucifix was discovered.

Painted on cloth which has been glued onto wood (walnut), the original Icon is about 190 cms high, 120 cms wide and 12 cms thick. The Icon most likely was originally painted as the central devotional object for the chapel in San Damiano. In 1257 the Poor Clare nuns left San Damiano for San Giorgio and took the Crucifix with them. The Icon was to remain at San Giorgio for 700 years, carefully preserved. In Holy Week of 1957, the Icon was again used for public worship over the new altar in San Giorgio's Chapel in the Basilica of Saint Clare of Assisi where it can be seen today.

The Icon of the Transfigured Christ
Icons or “windows of heaven” are used extensively in the Eastern Church. As a representation of the living God, we are invited to a personal encounter with the sacred, through the grace of the Holy Spirit. The Crucifix is an invitation to meet the transfigured Christ — God made into human flesh. Through pictures, the Icon tells the story of the death, resurrection and ascension of the Lord Jesus. It beckons each of us into relationship with the living Christ through a vital and vibrant faith, just as Saint Francis and Saint Clare shared. The entire passion story from the Gospel of Saint John, in all of its splendor and mystery is portrayed in picture form. It is not surprising that people of faith continue to be attracted to this Icon that pro-

vided one of the most beloved Saints of the church the inspiration for his life. As the story goes, Saint Francis heard Christ speak to him from this crucifix, inviting him, “Go repair my Church.” For those of us in MCCCXV we continue to follow Christ's invitation and work to “repair” the Church to become the inclusive house of prayer for all people that it was always intended to be.

The Centrality of Christ

The figure of Christ on the Icon is not only due to its size the central figure, but also serves as the light source for the painting. *“I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.”* (John 8:12) Notice that Christ stands upright and is not nailed to the cross, in fact the figure seems to float on the cross. The eyes of Jesus are wide open looking out to the world which he has saved and redeemed. The shadow over the face of Jesus is increased by the fact that the halo and face are tilted forward. The humanity of Christ veils the true glory of the Word who lives beyond our world in mysterious union with the Divine. Notice that behind the outstretched arms of Christ is an empty tomb represented by a black rectangle.

The Medallion and Inscription

In a circle of red, the Ascension of Jesus is portrayed. Breaking out of the circle, Christ holds a golden cross which serves as his royal scepter. Garments of gold — a symbol of royalty and victory, the kingship of Christ and a sign of His Dominion, exercised in love, is welcomed and celebrated by the heavenly hosts. The flowing red scarf Jesus wears may help us remember the ongoing work of redemption in each of our lives.



IHS are the first three letters of the Name of Jesus. The little bracket above indicates it is shorthand. NAZARE, is the Nazarene; REX is ‘king’ and IUDEORVM is ‘of the Jews,’ as mentioned in St. John's Gospel, “Jesus the Nazarene, King of the Jews.” Celebrated in the heavens, these words root our faith in an actual place and time in history.

The Hand of God the Parent

From within the semi-circle at the very top of the Icon, we find the One whom no eye has seen being revealed in classic pose of benediction. The right hand of God brings the blessing of the Holy Spirit in the extended finger. The gift of the Holy Spirit is given solely on the merits of the Passion of the Christ.



The Mystical Vine

Surrounding the Cross, we find various calligraphic elements. Could these be symbolic of the mystical vine? “I am the vine and you are the branches...” (John 15) There also is a section that looks like a rock a common symbol of the Church. Seashells are a symbol

of eternity — a mystery hidden in the vast and timeless sea of eternity revealed.

Mary and John

Mary and John are found side by side in the Gospel of John. Mary's mantle is white meaning victory (Rev. 3:5), purification (Rev. 7:14); and good works (Rev. 19:8). The gems on the mantle illustrate the graces of the Holy Spirit. The burgundy in her robes symbolize intense love and the purple, the Ark of the Covenant (Exodus 26:1-4). Mary's left hand is raised to her cheek — her acceptance and love of John while her right hand points to John, “Woman, behold your son...” (John 19:26) John's mantle is rose a sign of eternal wisdom and the tunic is white for purity. John is positioned between Mary and Jesus as the disciple who is loved by both. John looks to Mary and yet points to Jesus, “Son, behold your Mother.”



Mary Magdalene, Mary Clopas and the Centurion of Capernaum

Directly next to Christ, Mary Magdalene, the first witness to the resurrection is placed. Her hand is on her chin which indicates her confided secret, “He is risen!” Her robes of scarlet and blue symbolize her great love for the Lord.