

Stations of the Cross

Virginia “Ginger” Scribner Mallard

February 21, 1927 – December 17, 2016




Sheil Catholic Center
at Northwestern University

Symbolism & Color Significance in the Mallard *Stations of the Cross*

In each station a gossamer veil crosses the painting representing the action, activity, and hope of the Holy Spirit in Christ's Passion.

The Cross is always purple, jagged and dark and always portrayed in a downward thrust to emphasize the mass and weight of Christ's burden.

The crown of thorns and nails are black, visible and viciously spiked.

Each station has a three sided border forming a parenthesis, 2 left brackets and 1 right, signifying the beginning, middle and end of that cycle. 3 is the mystical number of supreme power and completion; it signifies the Trinity, also the 3 days Jesus lay in the tomb.

Red is used each time Christ meets with women. It is the color of passion, blood, fire and the love of Mary – 4th, 6th, 8th stations.

White is used for all three times Jesus falls symbolizing innocence, light, purity, faith, glory and holiness – 3rd, 7th, 9th stations.

Purple is the symbol of royalty, power, passion, suffering and love of truth – 2nd, 5th, 10th stations.

Black was chosen for the lightless times – 11th, 12th, 13th stations.

Pearl used for the 1st & 14th stations emphasizes the beginning and the end of Christ's ordeal – the Alpha & Omega. It is the symbol of sorrow, but also of a rare jewel; it also represents the Word of God.

The First Station – Jesus is Condemned to Die



Christ stands alone, condemned and bereft. All human presence is left out deliberately to emphasize the path he must walk alone. Only the Holy Spirit is present. The crown-like shape in the upper section above him reminds us of his royalty, while the grotto-like cavernous space around him foreshadows the 14th station (*Jesus is Laid in the Tomb*).

The Second Station – Jesus Takes Up His Cross



A tiny patch of dawn can be found in the upper right representing dawn's promise. "Cause me to see thy loving kindness and mercy in the morning and the dawn...".
(*Psalm 143:8*)

The Third Station – Jesus Falls the First Time



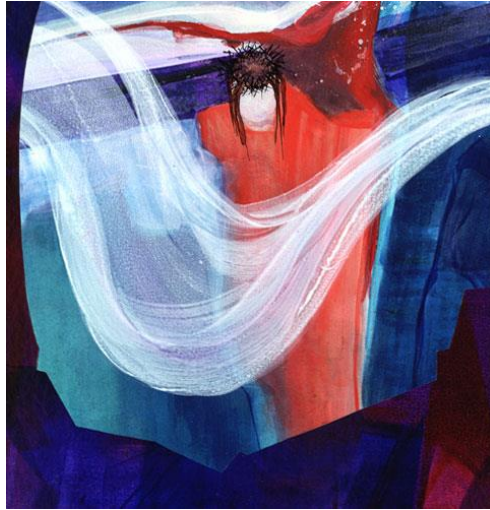
Dawn's light is present above the head of Jesus and is exaggerated by the downward thrust of the cross.

The Fourth Station – Jesus Meets His Mother



The first painting the artist created; inspirational source and the determining, unifying factor for all other stations.

The Fifth Station – Simon Helps Jesus Carry the Cross



Simon, hooded and hovering in the background, wears a red robe signifying his acceptance of Christ's passion.

The Sixth Station – Veronica Wipes the Face of Jesus



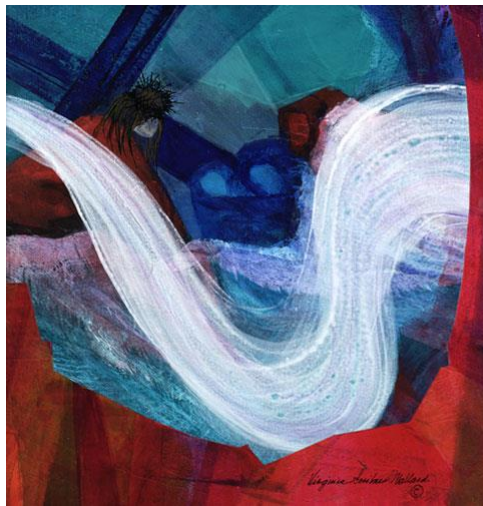
The figure of Veronica was made secondary to the face of Jesus and to the image on the veil.

The Seventh Station – Jesus Falls the Second Time



Jesus looks to the Father as He accepts his suffering.

The Eighth Station – Jesus Meets the Women of Jerusalem



Jesus does not let his head droop as he greets the women. “Women of Jerusalem! Do not cry for me but for yourselves and your children...”.
(*Luke 23:28*)

The Ninth Station – Jesus Falls the Third Time



This final fall shows Christ completely exhausted and flattened by his heavy burden, the sins of the world.

The Tenth Station – Jesus is Stripped of His Garments



Christ stands stripped and totally alone in his innocence.

The Eleventh Station – Jesus is Nailed to the Cross



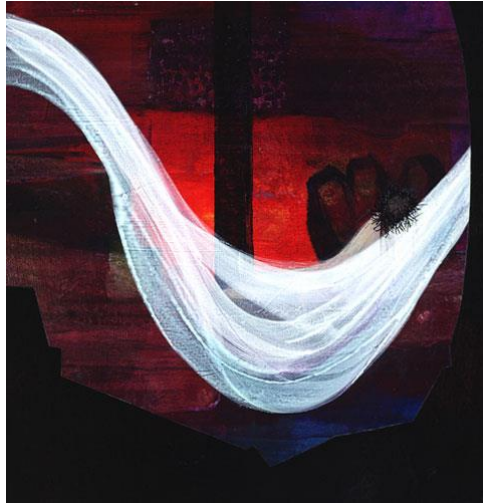
Christ's head and the cross are purposely thrust diagonally downward to emphasize the intensity of his suffering. The viciousness of the spiked nails will remain until the 15th station.

The Twelfth Station – Jesus Dies on the Cross



The strange volcanic skies and other-worldliness are most pervasive in this and Station 13. “Standing by the cross of Jesus were his mother and his mother’s sister, Mary wife of Clopas, and Mary of Magdala.”
(*John 19:25*)

The Thirteenth Station – Jesus is Taken Down from the Cross



Christ's body is vaguely suggested with the same pervasive atmosphere found in the previous station.

The Fourteenth Station – Jesus is Laid in the Tomb



Again Christ's body is only suggested. The background coloration and mood echoes the 1st Station and completes the Passion. "Joseph of Arimathea, secretly a disciple of Jesus for fear of the Jews, asked Pilate if he could remove the body of Jesus. And Pilate permitted it. So he came and took his body. Nicodemus, the one who had first come to him at night, also came bringing a mixture of myrrh and aloes..."

(John 19:38-39)

The 15th Station – The Resurrection



No borders to begin or end the cycle: it is the epitome of consummation. The spiked nails begin their transformation to gold.

The Ascension



The Risen Christ, displaying his wounds, is encased in a golden Mandorla, which is an almond or oval shape presence of golden light, signifying the radiance of Christ's divinity.

Considered the 16th Station by the artist - hangs in the office of the Chaplain and is displayed within the sanctuary on the Ascension of the Lord

In Search of the Father: A Spiritual Journey

Introduction

I gave up on God when I was about 15 years old. My parents were getting a divorce and how could He let this awful thing happen to us. I was angry! The events which followed the divorce made life even more difficult. (That's a story in itself – but not here!) Soon after, I began to read everything I could find that cast doubts on religion, God, or a “superior intelligence”, Ouspensky, Sartre, Camus, Nietzsche, Wylie, etc. – if it ridiculed and rejected, I read it and spouted it. Existentialism /Universalism – that was my “church”. This period in my life lasted almost 20 long, dry years. Although I had given up on God, He had not given up on me. And I thank Him every day of my life for sending someone to show me the way out of the desert my life had become; a more barren place would be impossible to imagine.

Perhaps this brief introduction will help you understand why this “spiritual journey” made such a powerful impact on me. Why so often in the middle of an especially moving awareness, I'd stop and wonder “Why me?” (No, I never heard Him say “Why not”.) So this journey became the high point of my spiritual life and even of my artistic life. Never have I had so many people (even several who confessed that it was the first spiritual experience they had ever had) respond so emotionally to my work. No painting I have ever done has been so deeply understood. It's not surprising then that it has left me with a stunning realization. No matter how far from God you think you are, He is still there talking to you if you but listen. He speaks very softly.

Ginger Mallard, May 2008

The Journey of Artist and Spiritual Art

Ginger's journey to bringing the *Stations of the Cross* to the Sheil Catholic Center was long and Spirit driven. Begun in February of 1997, they were originally intended for St. Eugene Catholic Church in Asheville, North Carolina. Completed in April of 1998, they would remain in storage for years after a major miscommunication between the pastor and the artist. They found their permanent home at the Sheil Catholic Center at Northwestern University in the spring of 2005.

In the spring of 2003, Ginger's husband, Captain John Boyd Mallard Jr., to whom the Stations are dedicated, died suddenly before their move to Evanston to be near family. They had discovered Sheil on an earlier trip and knew that it would be their spiritual home. When Ginger arrived in Evanston after his death she struggled to find the Catholic Church that they had attended. After many months of searching she found us on Palm Sunday of 2004. She would remark often through the years that as soon as she saw the stained glass windows she knew immediately that this was the Church that she and John had discovered, and that this would be the home for her *Stations of the Cross*. With a generous heart she approached staff soon after and offered to donate her work. At the time we had been through a 2 year process searching for stations that fit the character of the architecture, and the stained glass windows; Ginger saw the compatibility immediately as did the staff when presented with her work. Of this partnering of community, space and artistry Ginger would say often: "the Spirit was guiding everything, and they (the Stations) were always meant for Sheil."

Ginger was a valued and active member of this community of faith until the time of her death in December of 2016. She annually donated further art works to our Mardi Gras celebration, raising funds to support the mission of campus ministry. Ginger also proudly served as an Extraordinary Minister of Communion with love and dedication. She will be remembered through the beauty of her artistry and her devotion to the Sheil Catholic Center community through the *Stations of the Cross* that grace the walls of the Christ the Teacher Chapel. We will forever hold her memory dear.