



The Making of a Cross

It has been a great privilege for my family to have lived in such close proximity to St John of the Cross Parish Church, at a distance of only a few paces away. Construction works to build our family home were in progress during the same years as those of the Church. In fact the Church structure came to completion around the time that our house was ready to move into, during October 1958.

With great interest we followed all stages of advance looking forward to the day when the most important requirements would be in place in order for Mass to be said within rather than attending service inside the chapel within the Convent.

This was a decade when the inhabitants of the village numbered very few, occupying maisonettes scattered in the main streets. Funds were contributed mainly by the small community living around it. In fact that the area developed at a very slow pace kept Ta' Xbiex unique as a tranquil and serene village that enjoyed large open fields giving the atmosphere of country side but situated at the waters edge with wide open views of the historic and picturesque backdrop of Manuel Island as well as the imposing basilicas of Valletta.

It was through the generosity of the local residents that the priests were able to order and purchase over a number of years what was needed. Initially the Church opened its doors very humbly with many requirements that were made available from older Churches of the Order. Gradually with the invaluable support of benefactors the clergy were in a position to give the Church its very own identity with furnishings and finishes selected to make it a beautiful dwelling place for God in simplicity to the eye but full of strength spiritually.



Marionne, my wife, was invited to participate in designing sketches of the present door tabernacle which indicate representations formed in pink brass, a colour that had been chosen to complement the pink marble that was to be used. Marionne also helped with sketches for the modern altar which was a permanent replacement for Mass to be said with the celebrant facing the people. This was successfully one of the first Churches to adopt the new practice much welcomed by the residents and others alike.

Much thought and preparation went into drawings and designs of the magnificent Cross that embellishes the sanctuary portrayed as seen by St John of the Cross himself in his visions. Many discussions to study details of the project were held between the clergy and Marionne my wife.

The most appropriate visual media that was selected to express the unusual angle of the large Crucifixion was graphite ferrobattuto. Mariomne and myself knew the perfect hands into which the project could be entrusted.

Sunny Muscat was an official in the military had a workshop close to his residence in Creche Street Sliema where he practiced his hand at manufacturing ferrobattuto. With great honour and devotion he put forward his talent to create a wonderful sculpture with a beautiful representation of the divine Crucifixion.

Many hours of intense effort were contributed to create an image that would receive endless hours of deep devotion and heartfelt prayer. It was a breath-taking experience to have participated in the formation of a very sensitive subject that from a small ink drawing was turned to reality. I clearly recall that on her return from the workshop sessions, Marionne would be clearly distraught and moved by the sorrow and pain that affected her as though having been actually present at the scene of the true Crucifixion.

Cecil Pace

Children's Exhibition 2015

