

That you would pardon us, we beseech you, hear us.  
 That you would bring us to true penance, we beseech you, hear us.  
 That you would pour into our hearts the grace of the Holy Spirit, we beseech you,  
     hear us.  
 That you would defend and propagate your Church, we beseech you, hear us.  
 That you would preserve and increase all societies assembled in your holy Name,  
     we beseech you, hear us.  
 That you would bestow upon us true peace, humility, and charity,  
     we beseech you, hear us.  
 That you would give us perseverance in grace and in your holy service,  
     we beseech you, hear us.  
 That you would deliver us from unclean thoughts, the temptations of the devil, and  
     everlasting damnation, we beseech you, hear us.  
 That you would unite us to the company of your Saints, we beseech you, hear us.  
 That you would graciously hear us, we beseech you, hear us.  
 Lamb of God, you take away the sins of the world; spare us, O Lord.  
 Lamb of God, you take away the sins of the world; graciously hear us, O Lord.  
 Lamb of God, you take away the sins of the world; have mercy on us.  
 Christ hear us.  
 Christ, graciously hear us.  
 Lord, have mercy.  
 Christ, have mercy.  
 Lord have mercy.  
 We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you,  
 because by your holy Cross you have redeemed the world.

## The Theophany of the Passion

Painted by Lisa Autry  
 In Collaboration with  
 Father Herbert T. Burke

Completed February, 2014  
 Dedicated by Bishop Peter Jugis on May 7, 2014

Immaculate Conception Roman Catholic Church  
 1024 West Main Street  
 Forest City, NC 28043  
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## The Theophany of the Passion

**The Mural at  
 Immaculate Conception Church  
 Forest City, North Carolina**

by Father Herbert T. Burke

Jesus, fastened with nails to the Cross, Have mercy on us.  
Jesus, wounded for our iniquities, Have mercy on us.  
Jesus, praying for your murderers, Have mercy on us.  
Jesus, reputed with the wicked, Have mercy on us.  
Jesus, blasphemed on the Cross, Have mercy on us.  
Jesus, reviled by the malefactor, Have mercy on us.  
Jesus, giving Paradise to the thief, Have mercy on us.  
Jesus, commanding Saint John to your Mother as her son, Have mercy on us.  
Jesus, forsaken by your Father, Have mercy on us.  
Jesus, given gall and vinegar to drink, Have mercy on us.  
Jesus, testifying that all things written concerning you were accomplished,  
    Have mercy on us.  
Jesus, commanding your spirit into the hands of your Father, Have mercy on us.  
Jesus, obedient even unto death, Have mercy on us.  
Jesus, pierced with a lance, Have mercy on us.  
Jesus, made a propitiation for us, Have mercy on us.  
Jesus, taken down from the Cross, Have mercy on us.  
Jesus, laid in a sepulcher, Have mercy on us.  
Jesus, rising gloriously from the dead, Have mercy on us.  
Jesus, ascending into heaven, Have mercy on us.  
Jesus, our Advocate with the Father, Have mercy on us.  
Jesus, sending down the Holy Spirit, Have mercy on us.  
Jesus, exalting your Mother, Have mercy on us.  
Jesus, who shall come to judge the living and the dead, Have mercy on us.  
Be merciful, spare us, O Lord.  
Be merciful, graciously hear us, O Lord.  
From all evil, deliver us, O Jesus.  
From all sin, deliver us, O Jesus.  
From anger, hatred, and every evil will, deliver us, O Jesus.  
From war, famine, and pestilence, deliver us, O Jesus.  
From all dangers of mind and body, deliver us, O Jesus.  
From everlasting death, deliver us, O Jesus.  
Through your most pure conception, deliver us, O Jesus.  
Through your miraculous nativity, deliver us, O Jesus.  
Through your humble circumcision, deliver us, O Jesus.  
Through your baptism and fasting, deliver us, O Jesus.  
Through your labors and watchings, deliver us, O Jesus.  
Through your cruel scourging and crowning, deliver us, O Jesus.  
Through your thirst, and tears, and nakedness, deliver us, O Jesus.  
Through your precious death and Cross, deliver us, O Jesus.  
Through your glorious resurrection and ascension, deliver us, O Jesus.  
Through your sending forth the Holy Spirit, the Paraclete, deliver us, O Jesus.  
On the day of judgment, we sinners, we beseech you, hear us.  
That you would spare us, we beseech you, hear us.

# Litany of the Passion

Lord have mercy on us  
Christ, have mercy  
Lord, have mercy  
Christ, hear us.  
Christ, graciously hear us.  
God the Father of heaven, have mercy on us.  
God the Son, Redeemer of the world, Have mercy on us.  
God the Holy Spirit, Have mercy on us.  
Holy Trinity, one God, Have mercy on us.  
Jesus, the eternal Wisdom, Have mercy on us.  
Jesus, conversing with men, Have mercy on us.  
Jesus, hated by the world, Have mercy on us.  
Jesus, sold for thirty pieces of silver, Have mercy on us.  
Jesus, prostrate in prayer, Have mercy on us.  
Jesus, strengthened by an angel, Have mercy on us.  
Jesus, agonizing in a bloody sweat, Have mercy on us.  
Jesus, betrayed by Judas with a kiss, Have mercy on us.  
Jesus, bound by the soldiers, Have mercy on us.  
Jesus, forsaken by your disciples, Have mercy on us.  
Jesus, before Annas and Caiaphas, Have mercy on us.  
Jesus, struck by a servant on the face, Have mercy on us.  
Jesus, accused by false witnesses, Have mercy on us.  
Jesus, declared worthy of death, Have mercy on us.  
Jesus, spit upon in the face, Have mercy on us.  
Jesus, blindfolded, Have mercy on us.  
Jesus, smitten on the cheek, Have mercy on us.  
Jesus, thrice denied by Peter, Have mercy on us.  
Jesus, delivered up to Pilate, Have mercy on us.  
Jesus, despised and mocked by Herod, Have mercy on us.  
Jesus, clothed in a white garment, Have mercy on us.  
Jesus, rejected for Barabbas, Have mercy on us.  
Jesus, torn by sources, Have mercy on us.  
Jesus, bruised for our sins, Have mercy on us.  
Jesus, regarded as a leper, Have mercy on us.  
Jesus, covered with a purple robe, Have mercy on us.  
Jesus, crowned with thorns, Have mercy on us.  
Jesus, struck with a reed, Have mercy on us.  
Jesus, demanded for crucifixion, Have mercy on us.  
Jesus, condemned to death, Have mercy on us.  
Jesus, given up to your enemies, Have mercy on us.  
Jesus, led as a lamb to the slaughter, Have mercy on us.  
Jesus, stripped of your garments, Have mercy on us.

## INTRODUCTION



**Mount Calvary**  
Franciscan Monastery in D.C.

The concept of the mural was born in my mind when as a seminarian in the 1980's I saw for the first time the beautiful version of Mount Calvary at the Franciscan Monastery of the Holy Land in Washington D.C. As I looked at the life-size crucifix I saw the city of Jerusalem painted in the background behind our Lord on the cross. I saw the ground, the two thieves, the Pharisees, the soldiers, the weeping women, and the frightening sky which looked so foreboding but appropriate

for a sky above the God who created it and was dying on the cross. I thought that if I ever built a church I would make a similar rendition of what I saw because it was so moving, just as Mel Gibson's movie, the Passion of the Christ moved so many by its realism. I felt the extra details in this image would move so many towards a greater understanding and love of the sacrifice of Christ on the cross. That thought was a long time ago.

Amazingly enough I was sent to Immaculate Conception Parish in Forest City in 2001, a parish that needed a new church! As I thought about how it should be built, various thoughts came to mind. I remembered how back in my old neighborhood in Maryland, a new modern, unattractive church that seated many was built down the road from an old traditional stone church with a bell tower. No one wanted to go to the new church, but everyone crowded into the old small church because it looked beautiful, it looked like a church, it looked like a reverent type of building for the house of God. I was determined that I would not build an unattractive modern church. I thought about how the beautiful traditional churches were built, cruciform, stone, gothic, or Romanesque, with bell towers. I hoped and prayed that we could have something like that here.



**The Holy Trinity**  
Albrecht Durer



The Holy Trinity  
Guido Reni

As time progressed we worked together as a parish, with the architects, artists, builders and the diocese; our new church was born. Early in the design process I reserved a large indentation above the tabernacle which I hoped would be the future home of a mural similar in design to the one in the Franciscan Monastery in D.C. I planned to have both statues and a painted background as the Franciscans did, giving the image a three dimensional life like quality.

There still remained many issues to be resolved. The image of the Franciscans was too bleak. Our mural needed to have a mixture of joy amidst the sadness, or it would be too heavy to look at year round. I decided on a hybrid version which introduced the split view with God the Father and the open heavens as seen by Albrecht Durer's "The Holy Trinity" and Guido Reni's "The Holy Trinity" as the solution.

As time went on, I visited St. Ann's Parish in Charlotte, and viewed the work of artist Lisa Autry. I asked Lisa to come to our new church. After her visit, Lisa was interested in doing the art for our parish and so our artistic collaboration began.

Father Gabriel, our beloved former Pastor, donated the first \$20,000 towards the mural, saying he hoped it would inspire others to give. It did, and after struggling for additional donations for the Mural, we are now at the final moment of completion. It has taken Lisa almost a year to paint our unique, and in my opinion priceless, mural; to bring the depth of the crucifixion, and the presence and love of God the Father and the Holy Spirit to rest forever above the Tabernacle of Our Lord.

## ABOUT OUR MURAL

We find the paintings of the Trinity by Albrecht Durer and Guido Reni almost prophetic in their view of God the Father above the crucifix with the Holy Spirit in the often forgotten last vision of Sister Lucia of Fatima. It occurred in 1929 in the Spanish town of Tuy as Sister Lucia was praying alone in her convent chapel. Sister Lucia describes this great vision of the Holy Trinity:

So the mural is a powerful witness of biblical symbols, heavenly realities, and Gospel truths. It is designed to inspire a love and understanding of God's message and mystery. It gives warning to hardened sinners, but hope for repentant sinners. The fig tree is blooming with fruit on the right side of Christ, Matthew 24:32-33 "*From the fig tree learn its lesson: as soon as its branch becomes tender and puts forth its leaves, you know that summer is near.*"<sup>33</sup> *So also, when you see all these things, you know that he is near, at the very gates.*"

## CONCLUSION

One might ask "Is there anywhere else in the world where one can see this?" The answer is that our mural is a unique representation, a hybrid work of art merging Guido Reni's Trinity at the top, and the Franciscan Monastery of the Holy Land in Washington D.C. altar of Calvary at the bottom. So, something like it exists in two different places, but only ours brings both pieces together like this. Praying the Our Father while looking at the Mural it is a unique experience, being able to see into the heavens, and see the Father. In the Mural we are looking at Christ surrounded by the drama and tragedy of the earthly events, while the heavens are opened up to see their viewing of the earthly moment where Christ redeems the world. The Fathers arms are outstretched in a manner of offering, as His only beloved son is on the cross of Calvary. This is the day that changed the world, that changed our world, that gave us hope for heaven, and a bridge to paradise. Jesus says in John 14:1 "*Let not your hearts be troubled; believe in God, believe also in me. 2 In my Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? 3 And when I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also*" He prepares a place in heaven for us from the cross.

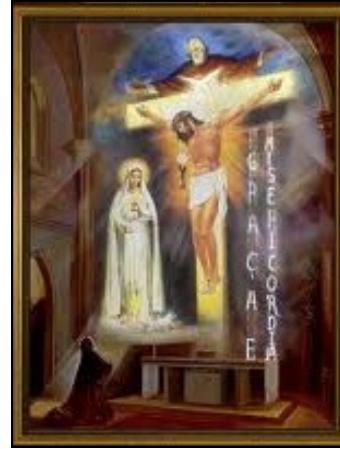
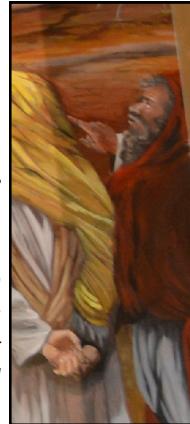
The mural is designed to teach and to inspire. It teaches us about the Holy Trinity, it teaches us about Christ and his work on the cross, it teaches us about the benefits of redemption with the good thief, and the frightful prospect of damnation with the bad thief. It is my hope that the centerpiece of art for our church will help us contemplate many different truths about God. I hope that it will help us ponder the mysteries of the Gospel.

May God bless our mural, *The Theophany of the Passion* with inspirations that lead to salvation.

Since the scripture describes heaven as the throne of God, we see the Father seated in the heavens with a rainbow behind him as it is also depicted by Dürer's version of the Trinity. The rainbow in scripture is a sign in the heavens of God's covenant with man as it says in Genesis 9: "And God said, *"This is the sign of the covenant which I make between me and you and every living creature that is with you, for all future generations:* <sup>13</sup> *I set my bow in the cloud, and it shall be a sign of the covenant between me and the earth.* <sup>14</sup> *When I bring clouds over the earth and the bow is seen in the clouds,* <sup>15</sup> *I will remember my covenant which is between me and you and every living creature of all flesh; and the waters shall never again become a flood to destroy all flesh.* <sup>16</sup> *When the bow is in the clouds, I will look upon it and remember the everlasting covenant between God and every living creature of all flesh that is upon the earth."*

The figures on the right side, as we face the cross, are as follows: Statue of St. John the disciple, Caiaphas, Annas , and Nicodemus. Caiaphas was the high priest who condemned Jesus to death, and whose sinister face we see below the bad thief looking on in mockery and judgment at Jesus. Matthew 26:57 "Then those who had seized Jesus led him to Caiaphas the high priest" Annas is next to Caiaphas in the mural but his back is to us and we cannot see his face. John 18:12-14: "So the band of soldiers and their captain and the officers of the Jews seized Jesus and bound him. <sup>13</sup> First they led him to Annas; for he was the father-in-law of Caiaphas, who was high priest that year. <sup>14</sup> It was Caiaphas who had given counsel to the Jews that it was expedient that one man should die for the people."

Lastly, in the far right corner, we have Nicodemus, pointing toward Jesus, attempting to defend him against Caiaphas and Annas as he did in John 7:50 "Nicodemus, who had gone to him before, and who was one of them, said to them, <sup>51</sup> "Does our law judge a man without first giving him a hearing and learning what he does?" <sup>52</sup> They replied, "Are you from Galilee too? Search and you will see that no prophet is to rise from Galilee." John 19:39 "Nicodemus also, who had at first come to him by night, came bringing a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about a hundred pounds' weight"



Vision of the Holy Trinity

"Being alone one night, I knelt near the rails in the middle of the chapel and, prostrate, I prayed the prayers of the Angel. Feeling tried, I then stood up and continued to say the prayers with my arms in the form of a cross. The only light was that of the sanctuary lamp. Suddenly the whole chapel was illuminated by supernatural light, and above the alter appeared a cross of light, reaching to the ceiling. In a brighter light at the upper part of the cross, could be seen the face of a Man and his body as far as the waist; upon his breast was dove of light; (*This is God the Father with the Holy Spirit symbolized by a dove, above Christ on the cross. Nailed to the cross was the body of another man, obviously Jesus.*) A little below the waist, I could see a chalice and a large host suspended in the air, on to which drops of blood were falling from the face of Jesus Crucified and from the wound in His side. These drops ran down on to the host and fell into the chalice. Beneath the right arm of the cross was Our Lady, and in her hand was her Immaculate heart. (*It was Our Lady of Fatima, with her Immaculate Heart in her left hand, without sword or roses, but with a crown of thorns and flames.*) Under the left arm of the cross, large letters, as if of crystal clear water which ran down upon the alter, formed these words: «Grace and Mercy.» I understood that it was the Mystery of the Most Holy Trinity which was shown to me, and I received lights about this mystery which I am not permitted to reveal."

In this vision of Sister Lucia (soon to be Saint Lucia) of Fatima, we see the image of God the Father above the cross as a man. The artist whose paintings are based on her vision has the Father as older man with a beard. Traditionally in classic art God the Father is pictured as an Elder with a beard. In Scripture he is described as "Father" and as "Ancient". Jesus (Son of Man) is presented to him in Daniel 7: "I saw in the night visions, and behold, with the clouds of heaven there came one like a son of man, and he came to the Ancient of Days and was presented before him. <sup>14</sup> And to him was given dominion and glory and kingdom, that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve him." Also, in Acts 7:55-56: "But he, full of the Holy Spirit, gazed into heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God; <sup>56</sup> and he said, "Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing at the right hand of God."

## LOOKING AT THE MURAL

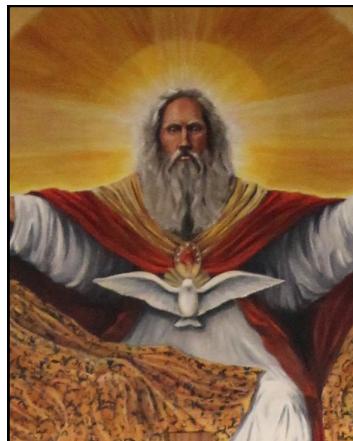


As we look at the mural, our eyes will first be drawn to the face of God the Father. In his bosom is the Holy Spirit as a white dove. Directly below is Jesus Christ the Son, on the crucifix. The robe of God the Father is gold with a black pattern. He is surrounded by a Trinitarian, three way halo beaming out from his head into the clouds of heaven which are filled with the faces of cherub angels. As we come further down from the mystical gold and white shadowy glow of the upper levels of heaven, we encounter the two large dominant angels. The one on the left of the mural, as we look at it, is St. Gabriel, the one on the right is St. Michael.

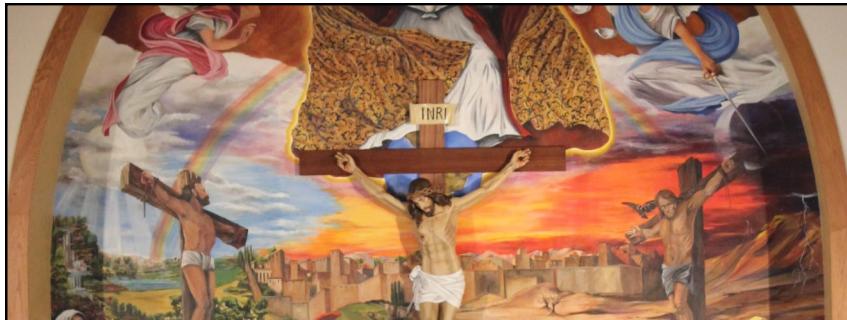


## THE TRINITY

Jesus laments over Jerusalem in Matthew 23:37-38 "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, killing the prophets and stoning those who are sent to you! How often would I have gathered your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you would not! <sup>38</sup> Behold, your house is forsaken and desolate."



Eventually there is a new one, Revelation 21:2 "And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband" Matthew 5:35 "Do not swear ...by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the great King." Behind the head of Jesus where the two beams of the cross meet, is pictured the world, for which he dies on the cross, John 3:16 "For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son". This world is also under the feet of God the Father, as scripture says in Matthew 5:35 "Do not swear at all, either by heaven, for it is the throne of God, <sup>35</sup>\*or by the earth, for it is his footstool, or by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the great King."



yielding angel bearing the scales of God's wrath and justice for those who reject his mercy and love. We find St. Michael described as leading a battle in heaven against the evil angels, Revelation 12:7-9: "Now war arose in heaven, Michael and his angels fighting against the dragon; and the dragon and his angels fought, <sup>8</sup> but they were defeated and there was no longer any place for them in heaven. <sup>9</sup> And the great dragon was thrown down, that ancient serpent, who is called the Devil and Satan, the deceiver of the whole world--he was thrown down to the earth, and his angels were thrown down with him."

In the center, behind the cross, is the city of Jerusalem, the most biblically significant city in the history of the world. We find the city divided; on the left it is bathed in sunshine, in the center a tumultuous sky of controversy, a fiery sky of judgment, and on the right the darkening sky of evil, sin, and damnation. We find a reference to some things that we see in the mural sky in Venerable Anne Catherine Emmerich's writings:

"A little hail had fallen at about ten o'clock,—when Pilate was passing sentence,—and after that the weather cleared up, until towards twelve, when the thick red-looking fog began to obscure the sun. Towards the sixth hour, according to the manner of counting of the Jews, the sun was suddenly darkened. I was shown the exact cause of this wonderful phenomenon; but I have unfortunately partly forgotten it, and what I have not forgotten I cannot find words to express; but I was lifted up from the earth, and beheld the stars and the planets moving about out of their proper spheres. I saw the moon like an immense ball of fire rolling along as if flying from the earth. I was then suddenly taken back to Jerusalem, and I beheld the moon reappear behind the Mountain of Olives, looking pale and full, and advancing rapidly towards the sun, which was dim and over shrouded by a fog. I saw to the east of the sun a large dark body which had the appearance of a mountain, and which soon entirely hid the sun. The centre of this body was dark yellow, and a red circle like a ring of fire was round it. The sky grew darker and the stars appeared to cast a red and lurid light."

## LEFT SIDE OF THE MURAL



St. Gabriel is the Archangel who announced the birth of Christ, and here he is announcing with a trumpet, the conversion of St. Dismas, the good thief. The scriptures speak of the angels rejoicing over repentance: Matthew 24:31: "... he will send out his angels with a loud trumpet call, and they will gather his elect..." Luke 15:10: "Just so, I tell you, there is joy before the angels of God over one sinner who repents...." The account of the good thief is Luke 23:42-43: "And he said, "Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom. 'And he said to him, "Truly, I say to you, today you will be with me in Paradise."

Visual hints of paradise are found in the area behind the good thief. The entire scene to the right of Christ (on the left side of the mural as we look at it) is filled with symbols of this joyful repentance. The reason the "good guys" are on the right side is found in Matthew 25:31-33 "When the Son of man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit on his glorious throne. <sup>32</sup> Before him will be gathered all the nations, and he will separate them one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats, <sup>33</sup> and he will place the sheep at his right hand, but the goats at the left." Here in the mural, the good thief represents the saved sheep, and the bad thief represents the unsaved goats. So we have as symbols the sheep peacefully grazing in green pastures in the background round behind the good thief. John 10:7-9 "I am the door of the sheep. <sup>8</sup> All who came before me are thieves and robbers; but the sheep did not heed them. <sup>9</sup> I am the door; if any one enters by me, he will be saved, and will go in and out and find pasture."

To counter the peaceful sheep on the one side, we have the snake at the base of the bad thief's cross on the other side, symbolizing sin.





Flowing from the left side of the mural is a river which symbolizes the water of baptism, grace, and the Holy Spirit. Revelation 22:1,2: "Then he showed me the river of the water of life, bright as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb through the middle of the street of the city; also, on either side of the river, the tree of life with its twelve kinds of fruit, yielding its fruit each month; and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations." We find lush green trees symbolizing the tree of life, and flowers symbolizing the virtue of purity all around the good thief and the statue of the Blessed Virgin Mary. Song of Songs 2:1 "I am a rose of Sharon, a lily of the valleys. 2 As a lily among brambles, so is my love among maidens..."

As the water flows behind the cross, it drops into a dark ravine symbolizing the graces which our Lord worked so hard on the cross to gain that are lost on sinners. The land becomes barren, with the cursed fig tree, a symbol for Israel's rejection of her messiah Mark 11:12-21 "... The fig tree which you cursed has withered."



The word *Calvary* (Latin *Calvaria*) means "a skull". Calvaria and the Gr. *Kranion* are equivalents for the original *Golgotha*. There was a tradition current among the Jews at the time of the Crucifixion that the skull of Adam, after having been confided by Noah to his son Shem, and by the latter to Melchisedech, was finally deposited at the place called, for that reason, Golgotha. The Talmudists and the Fathers of the Church were aware of this tradition, and it survives in the skulls and bones placed at the foot of the crucifix. The skull of Adam is often depicted in art at the base of the cross of Christ. The most common symbolic use of the skull is as a representation of death and mortality. "*If death began its reign through one man ... much more shall those who receive the overflowing grace and gift of justice live and reign through the one man, Jesus Christ*" (Rom. 5:10-17). Vatican II, in "The Church in the Modern World" said:

"He (Christ) who is the 'image of the invisible God' is himself the perfect man who has restored in the children of Adam that likeness to God which had been disfigured ever since the first sin. Human nature, by the very fact that it was assumed, not absorbed, in him, has been raised in us also to a dignity beyond compare" (Chap. 1, 22).



So, as we look at the mural and see the skull of Adam, we are reminded that Christ is the "New Adam", the new head of the human race, who never sinned, and regained for us the paradise that Adam lost.

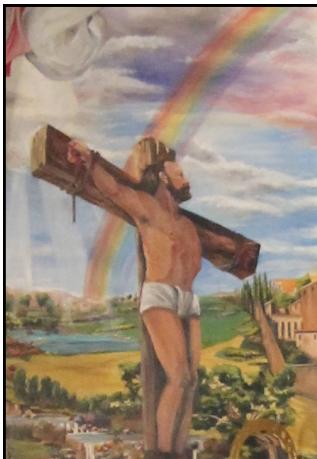
## GOOD AND EVIL

To contrast with the beautiful blue sky around the good thief, who was converted and was forgiven by God and therefore saved, we have the darkest side surrounding the bad thief.

The dark sky symbolizes the greatest tragedy in human life, the loss of the soul. This is yet another example of where the mural powerfully teaches using symbols which contrast light and darkness, good and evil, right and wrong. The sun is contrasted with the moon, the sun's rays contrasted with the lightning, the green meadows contrasted with the dark canyons and ravines, the fig tree bearing fruit contrasted with the cursed fig tree which bore no fruit, the weeping women contrasted with the mocking Pharisees, the sheep contrasted with the snake, the trumpet blowing angel contrasted with the sword

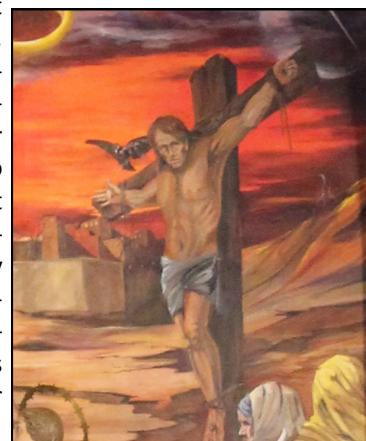
## THE TWO THIEVES AND CALVARY

As we look at the two thieves we see that the good thief is looking at Jesus, while the bad thief is looking away. Here is the continuation of the excerpts of Venerable Anne Catherine Emmerich's writings:



"The prayers of Jesus obtained for the good thief a most powerful grace; he suddenly remembered that it was Jesus and Mary who had cured him of leprosy in his childhood, and he exclaimed in a loud and clear voice, 'How can you insult him when he prays for you? He has been silent, and suffered all your outrages with patience; he is truly a Prophet—he is our King—he is the Son of God.' This unexpected reproof from the lips of a miserable malefactor who was dying on a cross caused a tremendous commotion among the spectators; they gathered up stones, and wished to throw them at him; but the centurion Abenadar would not allow it."

The Blessed Virgin was much comforted and strengthened by the prayer of Jesus, and Dismas said to Gestas, who was still blaspheming Jesus, '*Neither dost thou fear God, seeing thou art under the same condemnation. And we indeed justly, for we receive the due reward of our deeds; but this man hath done no evil.*' Remember thou art now at the point of death, and repent.' He was enlightened and touched: he confessed his sins to Jesus, and said: 'Lord, if thou condemnest me it will be with justice.' And Jesus replied, 'Thou shalt experience my mercy.' Dismas, filled with the most perfect contrition, began instantly to thank God for the great graces he had received, and to reflect over the manifold sins of his past life. All these events took place between twelve and the half-hour shortly after the crucifixion; but such a surprising change had taken place in the appearance of nature during that time as to astonish the beholders and fill their minds with awe and terror."



## THE WOMEN AT THE FOOT OF THE CROSS

The first woman, a very beautiful woman, on the left, nearest the springing water from the fountain, is the Samaritan woman, to whom Jesus said in John 4: *Jesus answered her, "If you knew the gift of God, and who it is that is saying to you, 'Give me a drink,' you would have asked him, and he would have given you living water."*<sup>11</sup> The woman said to him, "Sir, you have nothing to draw with, and the well is deep; where do you get that living water?"<sup>12</sup> Are you greater than our father Jacob, who gave us the well, and drank from it himself, and his sons, and his cattle?"<sup>13</sup> Jesus said to her, "Every one who drinks of this water will thirst again,<sup>14</sup> but whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him will never thirst; the water that I shall give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life." She is in front of the earthly symbol, a powerful spring gushing forth from the mountain, symbolizing the living spiritual water of eternal life that Jesus spoke of.

From left to right the characters are as follows : the Samaritan Woman from John 4, Mary of Cleophas, and the Mother of Jesus depicted by the Statue of Our Lady of Sorrows. Kneeling at the foot of the cross is Mary Magdalene who is holding the jar of ointment that many commentators have placed in her hand as the unnamed sinful woman in Luke 7:37-38: "*And behold, a woman of the city, who was a sinner, when she learned that he was at table in the Pharisee's house, brought an alabaster flask of ointment,*<sup>38</sup> and standing behind him at his feet, weeping, she began to wet his feet with her tears, and wiped them with the hair of her head, and kissed his feet, and anointed them with the ointment." With the exception of the Samaritan woman, whose image was chosen for placement on the left for teaching purposes, the Gospel lists the women who stood at the cross. John 19:25 "*But standing by the cross of Jesus were his mother, and his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Cleophas, and Mary Magdalene.*"

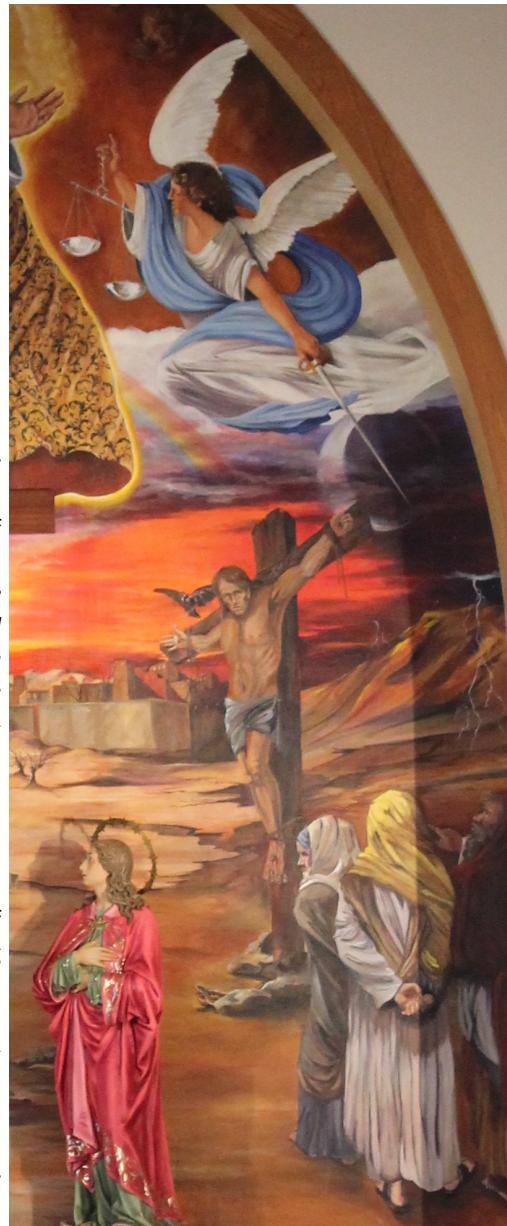
A Roman soldier, or centurion, traditionally called Longinus, is also shown on the left side of the mural. His name is derived from the word "Lance" since he is traditionally understood to be soldier who thrust the lance into the side of Jesus and came to faith in Christ, Mark 15:39 "*And when the centurion, who stood facing him, saw that he thus breathed his last, he said, "Truly this man was the Son of God!"*" Matthew 27:54 "*When the centurion and those who were with him, keeping watch over Jesus, saw the earthquake and what took place, they were filled with awe, and said, "Truly this was the Son of God!"*" John 19:34 "*But one of the soldiers pierced his side with a spear, and at once there came out blood and water.*" Because of his demonstration of faith, he has been recognized as Saint Longinus.

## RIGHT SIDE OF THE MURAL

In stark contrast to Angel Gabriel on the left side of the mural, is the angel on the right, St. Michael, positioned over the bad thief, and whose realm is the darkest most foreboding area of the mural. Scripture describes the bad thief as ridiculing Jesus as he dies. Luke 23:39-41:

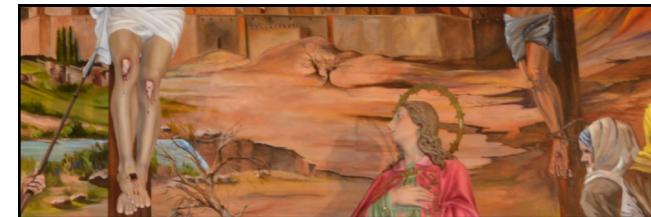
*"One of the criminals who were hanged railed at him, saying, "Are you not the Christ? Save yourself and us!"<sup>40</sup> But the other rebuked him, saying, "Do you not fear God, since you are under the same sentence of condemnation?<sup>41</sup> And we indeed justly; for we are receiving the due reward of our deeds; but this man has done nothing wrong."*

The combination of the raven and the bad thief, is a rather frightening aspect of the mural; not a story for the weak of heart. First we find in scripture a passage Proverbs 30:17 *"The eye that mocks a father and scorns to obey a mother will be picked out by the ravens of the valley and eaten by the vultures."* This passage is fulfilled in the attack of the crow on the eyes of the bad thief. We find this story in Venerable Anne Catherine Emmerich's works, the crow attacking the eyes of the wicked thief after mocking our Lord in front of Mary his mother. Mel Gibson's movie "The Passion of the Christ" places this event into his movie. We have the raven landing on the wooden beam near the head of the bad thief in our mural.



Here are excerpts from Venerable Anne Catherine Emmerich's writings where she gives the name of Dismas to the good thief, and the bad or wicked thief as Gesmas:

*"The countenance and whole body of Jesus became even more colourless: he appeared to be on the point of fainting, and Gesmas (the wicked thief) exclaimed, 'The demon by whom he is possessed is about to leave him.' A soldier then took a sponge, filled it with vinegar, put it on a reed, and presented it to Jesus, who appeared to drink. 'If thou art the King of the Jews,' said the soldier, 'save thyself, coming down from the Cross.' These things took place during the time that the first band of soldiers was being relieved by that of Abenadar. Jesus raised his head a little, and said, 'Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.' And Gesmas cried out, 'If thou art the Christ, save thyself and us.' Dismas (the good thief) was silent, but he was deeply moved at the prayer of Jesus for his enemies. When Mary heard the voice of her Son, unable to restrain herself, she rushed forward, followed by John, Salome, and Mary of Cleophas, and approached the Cross, which the kind-hearted centurion did not prevent. ..When our Lord pronounced his last words, before expiring, in a loud tone, the earth trembled, and the rock of Calvary burst asunder, forming a deep chasm between the Cross of our Lord and that of Gesmas "*



In the mural we have this chasm in between them, pictured in the open ground between them.