

Exhibition
of
**The Stations of the Cross
in Stained Glass**
by
Harry Clarke R.H.A.

from
St. Patrick's Purgatory
Lough Derg, Co. Donegal



sponsored by
The Abbey Stained Glass Studios
in association with
The Royal Hospital, Kilmainham
25th January 1990—25th March 1990
Open Tuesday-Saturday 2-5 pm. Sunday 12-5 pm.

Introduction by Dr. Nicola Gordon Bowe

In February 1927 Harry Clarke was inundated with work. This included stained glass commissions for all over Ireland, including a set of decorative windows for Bewley's Café, a window commissioned as Ireland's official gift to the League of Nations in Geneva, and others in Scotland and England. He also had schemes of interior decoration and graphic design and book illustrations to complete, exhibition deadlines to meet. All this on top of running the large and thriving Studios he had built up at numbers 6 and 7 North Frederick Street in Dublin since his father's death six years earlier. Furthermore, his own health was deteriorating; in four years he would be dead.

Canon Keown had worked with Clarke since 1925, on the extensive series of windows for St. Joseph's, Carrickmacross, Co. Monaghan, where he had been Dean. So when Professor William Scott's new basilica was completed in the same county, on the penitential island of St. Patrick's Purgatory in Lough Derg, he commissioned Clarke to design stained glass for the fourteen windows which would denote the Stations of the Cross. It was decided that each should portray one of the Apostles, St. Paul and Our Lady, who would hold small oval mandorla panels depicting each Station. Clarke's small scale, exquisitely detailed and annotated pencil drawings and splodgy colour notations were accompanied by full-scale coloured designs of these inset panels. The Studios would copy them directly on to glass, while the small preparatory studies would be photographically enlarged to serve as cartoons and guides for selecting and cutting the glass. These small-scale studies are contemporary with those he made for the Newport Last Judgment in Co. Mayo.

The Clarke Studio artists began the windows in Harry Clarke's absence, although following his careful instructions. The Dublin architect Mr. Cullen had taken over as architect of the church on Professor Scott's death. Clarke had escaped to a studio in London to try and work in peace on the Geneva window and his illustrations to a selection of Swinburne's poetry. On January 7th 1928, the Irish Times published a profile on him, reporting on the progress of the Lough Derg windows, among others. His choice of glass, detail, colour, design and leading are all fully evident in the dramatically effective concept of these windows, even though any study of the original designs for the inset panels and their realization in glass will reveal his absence. The windows were completed under extraordinary pressure of work and after his enforced departure for a sanatorium in Switzerland. The Studios did all the glazing for the huge reinforced concrete basilica. The windows were consecrated in June 1929 to great acclaim.

The windows are smaller than one would expect from their design and the presence of the figures portrayed. Their saintly images are presented theatrically hovering in spiritual ecstasy, dressed in heavenly raiment of symbolic colours, against a fulminating backdrop of richly whirling decorative patterns and colours. Alice Curtayne has written of the emotional impact of this device as they stand "in the glow of the Pentecostal fires" with their respective attributes. For Peter, bearing his golden keys, red denotes joy, charity and martyrdom; for Paul, with his sword, Andrew with his wheel and transverse cross and James Major with his pilgrim's staff and ball and chain, green is for hope and promise. For John the Evangelist with his Chalice and winged serpent, wine red is for love, while Philip the Wayfarer wears green and blue for purity. Bartholomew is dressed as an Orthodox bishop, holding his martyr's flaying knife, Thomas as a hieratic builder, Matthew, with his purse, in deep violet for penance, James with a Fuller's pole, as a bishop ornate with gold for innocence and Thaddeus with halberd, in purple for penance and crimson for charity. Simon, with his saw, also wears crimson beside Matthias with his battle axe, in gold, red and blue. The Virgin is clad in symbolic blues, gold, purple and green.

On Clarke's last visit home to Dublin, he was delighted by Beatrice Toal Coogan's rhapsody in the Irish Independent (May 26th 1930) on the windows, written after a sunset when "the Western glow suffuses the white marble with prismatic tints and the whole church is filled with coloured rays streaming from off the sun like seraph's wings".

This exhibition gives the unpenitent or comfort-preferring public a unique opportunity to see these windows without having to endure the trials of Purgatory, and another chance to study the powerful Judas panel (1913), one of the artist's earliest award-winning student masterpieces.

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December 1989

Stations of the Cross

St. Patrick's Purgatory, Lough Derg.

1st	Apostle Peter	Jesus is condemned to death.
2nd	St. Paul	Jesus takes up his Cross.
3rd	Apostle Andrew	Jesus falls the first time.
4th	Apostle James	Jesus meets his mother.
5th	Apostle John The Evangelist	Simon helps Jesus to carry his Cross.
6th	Apostle Philip	Veronica wipes the face of Jesus.
7th	Apostle Bartholmew	Jesus falls the second time.
8th	Apostle Thomas	The women of Jerusalem weep for Jesus.
9th	Apostle Matthew	Jesus falls the third time.
10th	Apostle James the Less	Jesus is stripped of his clothes.
11th	Apostle Thaddeus	Jesus is nailed to the Cross.
12th	Apostle Simon	Jesus dies on the Cross.
13th	St. Matthias	The body of Jesus is taken down from the Cross.
14th	Our Blessed Lady	The body of Jesus is laid in the tomb.

*By kind permission of
Most Reverend Joseph Duffy D.D. Bishop of Clogher and
Rt. Reverend Mgr. Gerard McSorley Prior of Lough Derg.*

ALSO

***The Unhappy Judas
by Harry Clarke R.H.A.***

*Exhibited South Kensington Schools of Design 1913
Gold Medallion Winning Entry for the National Competition 1913 by kind permission of
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Stations Of the Cross
Bronze Ventilators

January 1990

In August 1987 I visited St. Patrick's Purgatory, Lough Derg to inspect and report on the condition of the Stained Glass Stations of the Cross by Harry Clarke R.H.A.

The Stained Glass windows are beautiful and the medallion sections showing the Stations of the Cross are exquisite. They were originally ordered by Canon Keown in 1926 for the sum of £721.

On close inspection of the windows I found that they had become quite buckled over the years. The distortions were exerting great strain on the sections of glass and some of the glasses had cracked. Problems arise as the lead perishes and the greatest cause of this is the heat from the sun. The dark colours of the Stained Glass attract the heat and when the lead gets warm it becomes pliable. The weight of the lead makes the window sag and buckle and when the lead cools it does not revert to its original shape. Every day heat is generated the window sags further and eventually it becomes quite distorted.

Then it becomes necessary to take out the stained glass window completely, dismantle the old lead, clean each glass and fit new lead throughout. Fortunately these beautiful windows have been attended to just in time and their deterioration has been arrested. When they are refitted in Lough Derg this year they will sparkle as they did when they were first installed in 1929.

We should like to take this opportunity to thank Most Rev. Joseph Duffy D.D., Bishop of Clogher and Rt. Rev. Mgr. Gerard McSorley who loaned these windows for the Exhibition. We should also like to thank Dr. Nicola Gordon Bowe for opening the Exhibition and for all her help and advice. We thank the Directors and Staff of the Royal Hospital, Kilmainham for providing the venue and attendant services.

KEN RYAN