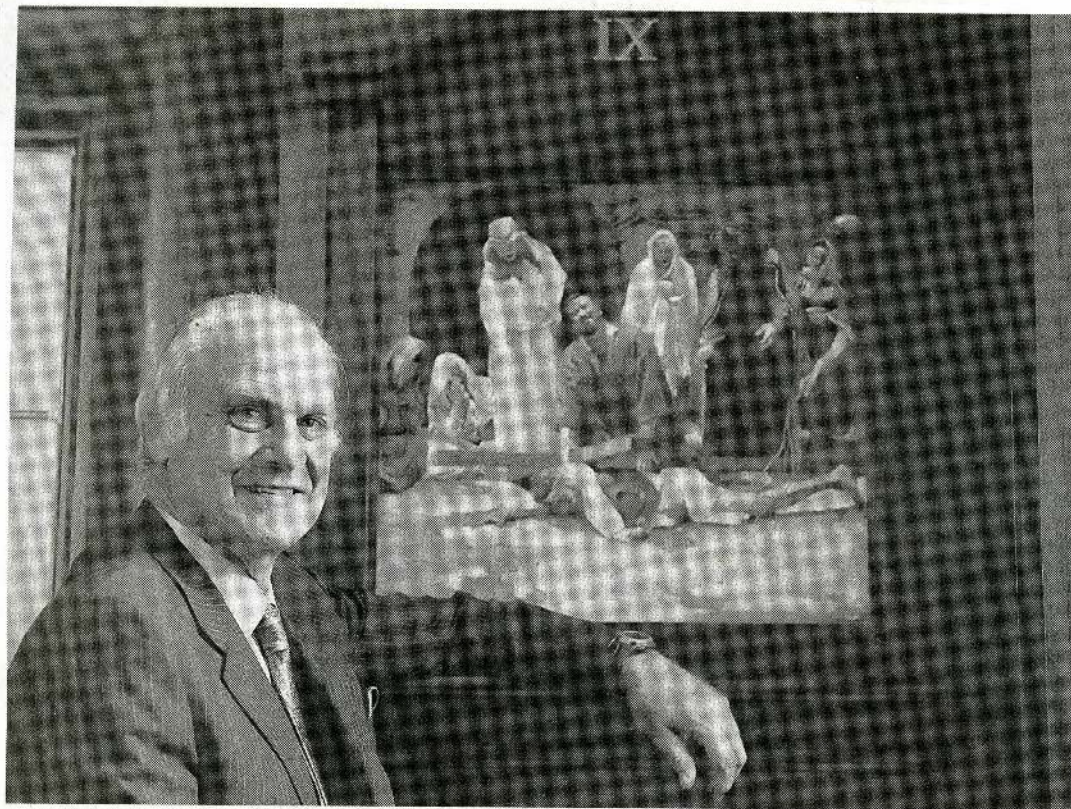


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"Christ Falls a Third Time" is the ninth Station of the Cross. Peter Adams of Pasadena painted the depictions of Christ's journey from trial to execution for Our Savior Church at USC, which was dedicated Sunday. He even traveled to Jerusalem for inspiration while working on the paintings.

John McCoy
Staff Photographer

Artist finds passion in crucifixion

RELIGION: Artist sought to create an 'uplifting' Stations of the Cross at USC.

By Janette Williams
Staff Writer

With the 14 paintings that he spent two years creating for the new Our Savior Church at USC newly installed, Pasadena artist Peter Adams is happy with the effect.

"In a way, it sounds conceited, but I think it looks better than I thought it would," Adams said.

A feature of the church, which was consecrated Sunday, is his series of 24-by-21-inch wooden panels showing the 14 Stations of the Cross, every stop on Jesus' torturous progress along the Via Dolorosa from trial to crucifixion.

"It harmonizes so well with the stained-glass windows, which are just beautiful, made by the Judson Studios in High-

church is special, classical and Romanesque ... so welcoming and warm."

Adams was the unanimous choice of the church's 11-member art committee for the commission in early 2011.

He prepared in 2010 by making a monthlong stay in Jerusalem — doing one painting while locked for the night in Jerusalem's ancient Church of the Holy Sepulchre — and finding inspiration in visiting and painting some of Christendom's most sacred sites.

Ruth Weisberg, the dean of fine arts at USC, said at the time that Adams' knowledge and his extra effort in going to Jerusalem to "walk the streets and actually follow in the footsteps" of Jesus gave him an edge.

The panels are hung about 15 feet apart and six feet off the ground, set between the stained-glass windows, Adams said.

"They are very different from most other 14 Stations,"

feeling of outdoor light to them ... and although they are not large, they can be seen from all different corners of the church."

Adams said he tried to convey the "sacred meaning" of each of the 14 stages, "rather than focus on the brutality."

He used family and friends as models, not trying to make it a likeness, he said, but using them to "stand for a lot of other people."

And he wasn't a stickler for every detail of historical accuracy.

"I was trying to make everyone see themselves in the crowd scenes — Hispanic or Asian or African-American," he said. "I think I even had one woman with blond hair."

Adams said he tried to bring a fresh eye to the traditional depiction and make the paintings of Christ's suffering "uplifting, not gory or horrific."

And, he said every Roman Catholic priest he consulted told him 'Don't make it like

showing Jesus' agonizing last hours in graphic detail.

"It's a dichotomy — to have something so ugly and try to make it beautiful," he said.

Adams said he felt relieved and excited to see his work in a setting that includes local sculptor Christopher Slatoff's "pretty amazing" bronze figure of Christ on a 13-foot crucifix, hanging from the ceiling.

"It was very moving for me to do this and I enjoyed the process very much, and got a lot out of it," Adams said. "When I was painting, it seemed to go very easily — I like to think it was the hand of God inspiring me."

For more information on the Church of Our Savior, at 844 W. 32nd St., Los Angeles, visit www.catholictrojan.org.

"Jerusalem Journey: Walking the Sacred Path," a special exhibition of the paintings Adams did in preparation for the commission, is on view at the Cathedral of Our Lady of the Angels, 555 W. Temple St., through Feb. 17.