

The Crucifix in St. Charles Church, Oklahoma City, OK

The crucifix was created for St. Charles Church and is a unique work of art. It not only depicts the "historical" realities of the crucifixion of the Lord but also the "spiritual" realities that can be seen with eyes of faith.

The main image is Christ crucified, yet He is not portrayed as dead or dying but ruling from the "throne" of the cross. Above the Lord's head is the title, "The King of Glory," words from Psalm 24: 10. Pontius Pilate had the words, "The King of the Jews" inscribed in Hebrew, Greek and Latin, on the signage of the cross. Our cross depicts the spiritual reality of Christ as King, not as an earthly King but the One Who comes to reign in humility and compassion.

In the Lord's halo are the Greek letters for, "The One Who Is" or "I Am." (Exodus 3: 14) When Moses approached God and asked His name, the Lord responded with I AM the One Who IS." This name teaches a great truth about God. God is the fullness of Being and of every perfection, without beginning and without end. All creatures receive all that they are and have from Him; but He alone is His very being, and He is of Himself everything that He is.

The Lord looks with open eyes on those who crucified Him and also on those of us who seek to follow and become like Him. He Who died now lives. The reality depicted teaches that Christ died once for all and He shall never die again. (Hebrews 9: 28) The Lord lives and reigns forever to make intercession for us with His Father. (Hebrews 7:25)

At each end of the cross beam are the Greek letters IC XC which are initials for "Jesus Christ." Below these letters are the Greek letters NIKA which translate in English as "victor." This tells the truth of our faith, "Jesus Christ is victorious" or "Jesus Christ conquers." The Lord destroyed death by His own death; He puts an end to sin and offers new life and goodness. ("Nika" is also the root word for the name of the athletic shoes, "Nike" chosen because the word means "victory")

At the foot of the cross Mary the Mother of the Lord stands on one side with St. Mary Magdalene. On the other side of the cross stands St. John the Beloved Disciple and St. Charles Borromeo. The Virgin Mary, St. Mary Magdalene and St. John are mentioned as witnesses of the Lord crucifixion. (John 19: 25-26) Mary, the Mother of the Lord is shown holding a chalice to catch the blood and water which flow from the wounded side of her Son. Mary the Mother of God is not only the first disciple of Christ, the first one to bring the Good News to others (Luke 1: 30-56) and the mother of all Christians, the Virgin also represents the

Church. All of us are called to share in the life of Christ through Baptism, thorough the Eucharist and the other Sacraments. The water which flowed from the side of the Lord is a sign of baptism, the blood that flowed is a sign of the Eucharist. The Blessed Virgin represents all Christians who are called to become like Christ through our sharing in the Sacraments of the Church.

St. Charles Borromeo is shown at the foot of the cross to remind us of the need for prayer. As our parish patron he watches over our parish and intercedes for us with God. Though historically St. Charles was not at the crucifixion of the Lord he is shown to represent the spiritual reality that believers in every age are called to stand at the foot of the cross. The image of St. Charles is a reminder that as a community we are a people who stand with others in times of sorrow and joy, to be present to others who suffer and those seeking the way of truth.

The Mother of the Lord, St. Mary Magdalene, St. John are shown with heads bowed in sorrow. St. Charles is depicted with his face raise to Christ, a sign of intercession and prayer.

The Lord is vested in a cloth tied with a ribbon which reads in Greek, "The Almighty; the One Who is and Who was and is to come." (Revelation 1:8)

At the base of the cross is a skull, a sign of this historical reality that the Lord was crucified on Golgotha, "the Place of the Skull." (Mark 15:22, Matthew 27:33, Luke 23:33, John 19:17) This skull also depicts the spiritual reality that Christ is risen from the dead, by death He trampled death and to those in the tomb He granted life. His life giving blood flows down to the skull. The skull reminds us that one of the thieves (St. Dismas) crucified with the Lord repented of His sin. "Jesus, remember me when you enter into your Kingdom." The Lord responded, "Today, you shall be with me in Paradise." The Place of the Skull has become Paradise.

An ancient legend says that the cross was made out of the Tree of Knowledge that was in the center of the first Paradise, Eden (Genesis 2:9) and that the skull represents the skull of Adam. The first Adam is brought back to life by Christ the new Adam (1 Corinthians 15:45)

May this cross be a reminder of God's love for us in sending his Son Jesus Christ to be our Savior, our Model and our Hope.

By Your Cross and Resurrection, Lord, joy has come into the whole world!

