

San Damiano Crucifix

I. The Church of San Damiano (St. Damian)

- Francis went to pray here after he was a prisoner of war
- During Middle Ages the Crucifix would be Christ's presence in a church. They did not have the practice of Blessed Sacrament being perpetually present.

II. The Crucifix itself

- About 100 years old when Francis saw it.
- Perhaps painted around 1100's
- Artist is unknown, perhaps an Umbrian monk
- It is an ICON painted in the Byzantine Style
- During Middle ages, people learned about their faith through symbols, art and stories.
- Colors on the Cross and Seashells.
 - Red is a symbol of love and blood
 - Black of the cross is a symbol of death.
 - Red covering black means LOVE overcomes death.
 - Seashells represent heaven = durable and uncountable.
- 33 characters on the cross
 - represent the 33 years of Christ's life.
 - Angels on the crossbeam; speaking lively about Christ's love.
 - Enlarged Christ =
 - He is the "new Adam,"
 - "new Tree of Life"
 - Palms and feet of Christ
 - Blood is like a fountain: freely given
 - Under the "New Tree of Life" are 5 biblical characters.
 - 1. Virgin Mary: on the east, place of honor
 - White head garment = purity
 - Crimson overtunic = intense love
 - Violet undertunic = color of curtain in Tabernacle = Mary is the New Ark of the Covenant.
 - Head on hand = meditation
 - 2. John the Beloved

- next to Mary, closest to Christ
 - White = purity
 - Pink = Wisdom
 - Blood from Christ's side is on him. He is becoming the blood of Christ.
 - Both Mary and John point to Christ = unity
 - 3. Mary Magdalene
 - In Francis' day, she was thought to be a prostitute
 - Plain red = Love for sale / closeness to Christ redeems her.
 - 4. Mary the wife of Clopas:
 - Brown = humility
 - Green = hope
 - Hand gestures signify conversation/talking
 - 5. Royal Official (centurion):
 - His boy was sick. He came to Jesus for help. Jesus healed him!
 - Brick = symbol of the synagogue he built
 - Face of small boy = healed
 - Evidence of conversion to Christianity. = curves
 - Fingers of Centurion
 - 3 = Trinity
 - 2 = The 2 Natures of Christ (human divine)
 - Why would this NOT be the centurion who exclaims, "Truly this is the Son of God?"
- Small Centurion with spear and Jewish guard
 - Protectors of the testaments.
- Rooster: Symbol for light
- Face of Christ
 - Large eyes = He is the ultimate intercessor. Helps us get to heaven.
- Inscription above Christ's head
- Small figure of Christ surrounded by Angels

- **5 angels represent senses**
- **10 angles represent infinite number of angels**
- **Hand of God the Father blessing the situation**
- **Bottom of the Cross**
 - **Only two figures visible. Identity unknown**
 - **Other figures may have been "kissed off"**
- **Crucifix stands on a painted rock = Peter**

III. Francis used the story of the Characters to shape his life.

- **After his conversion, Francis does NOT mention the cross in any of his writings.**

IV. Today:

- **1950's Cross was exposed on a regular basis.**
- **1980's Cross was exposed openly and rather permanently.**
- **Serves as inspiration for Franciscans and everyone.**
- **The original is housed in St. Clare's Basilica, not in San Damiano.**

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