

## Jesus – the Resurrection

1. He Is Risen by Chinese theologian and artist He Qi (huh-chee) takes us inside the tomb on Easter Morning listening to an Angel pointing upward, announcing: He is not here. Imagine their stunned incredulity and grief, their believing-disbelief. With Calvary's three crosses behind the women, this painting seems to suggest a sacred paradox of Easter's contradictions: an alternating sense of lights and darks, of God's Absence and Presence - that are the essence, some say, of Contemplative Prayer. This "dazzling dark" and juxtaposition of strong primary colors suggests the intensity of the first startling moment - the realization of a terrible loss of their friend, teacher and Lord who had died only a few days before -- and has now disappeared! To our eyes, this image may not seem revolutionary, but in China for eons, traditional fine arts were limited to black ink calligraphic shapes on white. So He Qi's saturating his art with bright reds, deep blues and gold, his work was deemed aesthetically heretical and shocking. As a new Christian, reading in Genesis "Let there be light!" He Qi fell in love with color and the freedom to create from his new-found convictions, painting / praying his heart out with sheer delight in bold hues and expressively original forms. He Qi was the first Chinese artist and scholar to receive a degree from a western university after the fall of the Revolution. Now as an artist and seminary professor, he offers a fresh insight to the next generation of priests and pastors: To change the images of religion in China through his art, I blend folk customs with traditional painting techniques from Western art.

2. Apostle to the Apostles depicted in a village garden on Easter morning is a wonderfully eager, contagiously enthusiastic, indomitable Mary Magdalene. This passionate, high-spirited, African Mary rushes forward - propelled by and drawn to the Companion she loves. One of the most brief and poignant of all the Easter discourses captures both an unimaginable loss and overwhelming love and awe: Mary! Rabboni! The brilliance of yellows and reds echoes Mary's joy while in contrast, the risen Christ stands in quiet dignity, waiting. Both figures reflect the deep Spirit of African spirituality of active and contemplative compassion, and enrich the universal meaning of Jesus' life among all nations of the world. Unlike more familiar European art, religious art from the parish of Mafa, in Northern Cameroon celebrates their love of the Gospels in the context of daily village life. As mentioned earlier this week, the parish of Mafa reenacted several Gospel events to visualize a Christ reflecting their Black-African spirituality. The artist who photographed, sketched and painted these scenes is kept anonymous as the art is the work of the whole village.

(Second column -- Middle Images)3. Epiphany is the photo of a Canadian sunrise and one person to the left with arms raised in Welcome!

4. In the ritual-language of Native Americans, the Sun Dancer Christ is a Death and Resurrection figure. The dancers prepare by fasting and prayer for a physically grueling ritual. Victorious in the end, their actions bring new life and healing for the whole community. American artist, Father John Giuliani writes: The similarity of the Sun-dancer to the crucified Christ is as prophetic vision is to its realization -- a redemptive sacrifice for the religious life and spiritual health of an entire people.

When asked to explain his decision to portray Native Americans in Sacred icons, artist Father John explains: As a Catholic priest and son of Italian immigrants I bear the religious and ethnic burden of ancestral crimes perpetrated on the first inhabitants of the Americas. My intent, in depicting Christian saints as Native Americans is to honor them, rendering their beauty and dignity as persons.

(Last column - far right)5. A vivid, colorful sunrise and panoramic landscape dwarfs the three figures walking to Emmaus. In Jesuit Brother Jerome Pryor's painting The Walk to Emmaus, there are two clear sources of light, one in the sky, the other from the Stranger walking between two bewildered, grieving disciples Both sources of light emanate and symbolically reveal, the stunning Gift of Resurrection. This painting lets Nature encompassing the travelers, speak to us subtly of the hidden, soon-to-be revealed, burning power of Easter. When the disciples finally recognized Jesus, later, in the breaking of the bread, the two once-confused, disbelieving disciples agreed, No wonder, our hearts were burning within us as he spoke of all the reasons, the necessity for His dying, according to the Scriptures, and His rising. For Brother Pryor, Art is to glorify the world of the spirit with its wonderful light and space and especially in its mystery.

6. In Emmaus, the French artist, Arcabas has painted the all the stages of spiritual maturation\* in this rite of passage with two disciples who have abandoned the others in Jerusalem. From their fluctuating hopes and disbelief, to their warming up to a Stranger opening the Scriptures to them, and finally their shocking recognition of the Jesus really risen! Such a wonderful, astonishing, faith-filled, contagious enthusiasm they have, racing back to Jerusalem to tell the other disciples their unique experience of Resurrection. (\* theologian, Raymond Brown) This painting is set in the middle of an animated conversation, while Jesus waits a quiet moment before breaking bread to share again His body and blood. The image captures the mystery of a wounded beauty still visible in the scars and wounds of Friday, yet His face glows radiantly from within. As with the mystic, Gregory of Nyssa's profound prayer, His visage emanates the dazzling dark of God's glory!

