



## Gregory A. Page – “Artist for Hire”



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### Collaboratively Conceived Commissions

Twenty years ago I accepted my first commission to collaboratively conceive and create a painted sculpture. The commission required that I include images or symbols that related to the subject of the Eucharist and the Communion of Saints. Steve and Ellen Cristoff commissioned this first piece in the summer of 2000. It became the first of a handful of commissions that would be completed in the following years. Each of the subsequent commissions was also collaboratively conceived and reflected some aspect of the Catholic faith.



**Steve and Ellen Cristoff  
Minneapolis, Minnesota.**

Commissioned: August 2000  
Completed: August 2001  
Title: "Last Supper"



**Mike and Sally McGraw  
Minneapolis, Minnesota.**

Commissioned: January 2003  
Completed: July 2003  
Title: "Mike and Sally in Love"



**Trina and Paul Wentzel  
St. Paul, Minnesota.**

Commissioned: April 2004  
Completed: July 2004  
Title: "The Promise"



**Avis Page**

**Prior Lake, Minnesota.**

Commissioned: December 2004  
Completed: August 2005  
Title: "The Journey"



**Donated to the Nativity School  
Silent Auction**

Purchased by Anonymous  
Commissioned: May 2006  
Completed: August 2006  
Title: "In the Garden"



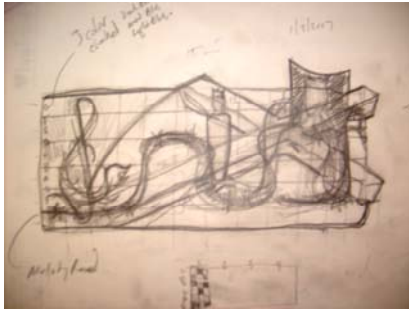
**Mike and Mary Kosir  
St. Paul, Minnesota.**

Commissioned: January 2007  
Completed: July 2007  
Title: "The Blues and our Mother of Hope"

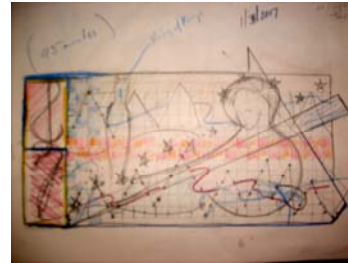
### “The Blues and our Mother of Hope”

The “The Blues and our Mother of Hope” painting was commissioned in January of 2007 and collaboratively conceived during a series of discussions with Michael and Mary

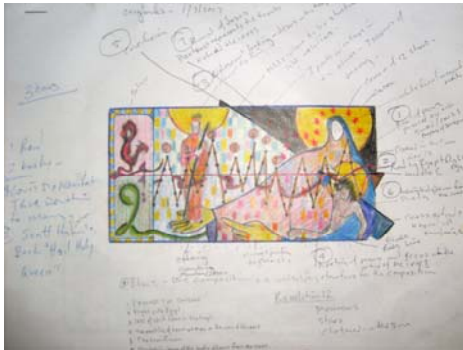
Kosir. The Kosir's were interested in commissioning a painting that would live in their dining room and express thoughts and feelings related to two broad themes, the seven sorrows of Mary and the musical tradition of the blues. After a series of discussions that were guided by the review of a few initial drawings a final general design was achieved and the painting process began.



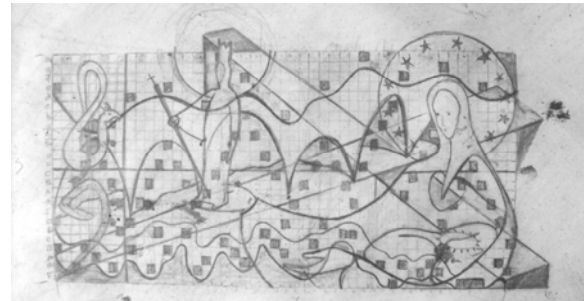
1<sup>st</sup> rough sketch



2<sup>nd</sup> rough sketch



3<sup>rd</sup> rough sketch



Final draft of the design.

To work the agreed upon themes into a single composition I proposed a layered compositional approach. I first graphed out a simple 12 bar blues progression over the three and a half by five-foot surface of the painting and then began to use the structure suggested by this simple musical composition to generate a visual composition that would include symbols that metaphorically represented the seven sorrows of Mary.



The flow of the upper harmony that supported walking blues bass line suggested a series of hills, which became a metaphor for the journey of the Holy family to Egypt.



The interior of these hills came to be filled with blocks or maze like building structures, which represented the Temple in Jerusalem and the loss of Jesus at the Temple.



The linear flow of the walking bass line produced a point that drove through the center of the figure of Mary and pierced her heart representing the prophecy of Simeon.



The division between the two staves suggested a cross that I flipped and placed at an angle to support the visual composition. This cross connected the figure of Mary to the figure of Christ and represented the meeting of Mary and Jesus on the way of the cross and the crucifixion.



Nestled in the crook of Mary's arm is her son the "Lamb of God" this is a pieta image and represents the taking down of Jesus from the cross.



And the black empty space located in the lower right corner of the composition under Mary's arm and at the left edge of the cross was intended to represent the burial of Jesus.

Painting, or art, is a collaborative process. It's a "participation in", a "receipt of" or "a cooperation with" that leads to the development of the painted surface that is eventually called a painting, or piece of art. Ultimately the painting process and the process of "participating in", "cooperating with" or "receiving" the life of Grace, that God extends to us, are the same thing.

Since painting is "a participation in", "a receipt of" or "cooperation with" I employ painting techniques such as the application of fire, sand paper or scrapers that alter the image in unpredictable ways. These interventions are a metaphor for the power of God's Grace gently nudging us in the direction of his will. These interventions produce colors, textures, forms, lines and symbolic content that would never have been considered or produced via more traditional marking methods.

At an early stage in the process of laying out this composition I sprayed and spread a thin layer of turpentine and pigment onto the surface of the painting and then lit that slurry of pigment on fire. The fire caused the pigment to blend and move about the surface of the painting in an unpredictable manner. These movements then began to suggest new compositional opportunities that I could have never imagined on my own.



For example, the clenched fist that joins the dragonsque treble clef and serpent like bass clef located on the left side of the painting was discovered after the surface of the painting had been transformed by the intervention of the fire. The clenched fist shoved in the face of our merciful Lord represents our own inclination to sin and self-definition.



The hand, which gently guides the gesturing left hand of Mary, also presented itself for inclusion via the firing process. This hand represents the gentle guiding hand of God and the humble fiat of Mary in contrast to the defiant hand of sin and self-definition. The unique colors and textures of this image also came to be in large part due to the gifts left behind by the intervention of fire.

Just as our lives become richer than we could have ever imagined when we cooperate with God's Grace so paintings that I produce via these unconventional methods, which mimic Grace, at least metaphorically, become much more than I could have ever imagined on my own.

In conclusion: This painting became over time not just a reflection of the themes initially discussed but ultimately of the theme of happiness itself and our place in God's merciful plan of salvation and redemption.

As I worked on the image and reflected on the theme of sorrow, or the blues, I started to reflect more on the subject of happiness, or joy. I was also reading and reflecting on the

writings of St. Thomas Aquinas who wrote quite extensively on this subject. What is happiness, or joy, and how do we experience it? As I see it this question is the fundamental question that we all play with in one way or another throughout the course of our life. My own answer to the question is that true happiness is something we receive from God when we participate and cooperate with the gift of his Grace.

Our participation in the gift of God's Grace enables us to become "gifted". As we receive these gifts of Grace they transform us and we become the children that God had always envisioned we would be. As Grace filled children of God, like Mary, we become creatures who possess the capacity to share in the fullness of God's own happiness and joy.