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THE FOURTEEN STATIONS OF THE CROSS



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The Italian Chapel, Orkney Islands



"On the 13th of October 1939 the German U-boat *U47*, under the command of Lt. Gunther Prien, slipped undetected into Scapa Flow. Prien launched a torpedo attack on the battleship *HMS Royal Oak* which was lying at anchor in Scapa Bay and within minutes the huge ship sank to the bottom of Scapa Flow with the loss of 833 crew.

U47 slipped away undetected through Kirk Sound but the terrible loss of life and obvious failings of the defenses to Scapa Flow prompted the call for a more substantial eastern defense of the naval port. In March 1940 Winston Churchill approved the building of causeways to link the south isles to Mainland Orkney and so closing off the eastern approaches.

Work soon started and continued a-pace but a shortage of local labor was causing delays so in early 1942 Italian POWs were shipped in to work on the huge building project. Many camps were established to house these POWs. The Italians POW status changed however in September 1943 when Italy capitulated to the allies and the workers were given more freedom and were actually paid properly for their labors.

The Italians requested a proper place of worship and with the help of padre Father Giacobazzi and Domenico Chiocchetti persuaded the then camp commandant, Major T. P. Buckland, to allow them to build a chapel on Lamb Holm. They were given two Nissen huts joined end to end to convert on the condition all work was carried out outside working hours on the barriers. So the foundations were laid for what has become Orkney's most visited attraction.



One end of the hut was lined with plasterboard to form a sanctuary and an altar, altar-rail and holy water stoop were expertly fashioned from concrete.

Domenico Chiocchetti started work on what has become widely recognized as an amazing body of work given the restrictions on time and materials. With the success of the adornment in the sanctuary it was felt the whole chapel should be lined and the entire interior of the chapel was painted to depict

brick walls, carved stone, vaulted ceilings and buttresses. Frescos of angelic figures, stained glass windows and an altarpiece depicting the Madonna and Child surrounded by cherubic figures with the scroll inscribed *Queen of Peace pray for us* complete the interior paintwork.

All the materials for the decoration were scavenged from wherever possible. Wood was sourced from a wrecked ship for the tabernacle. A rod-screen and gates enclosing the sanctuary were expertly fashioned by Palambi from scrap metal. He also made two candelabra which stand on the alter alongside four brass candelabra made by Primavera.



Chiocchetti's work and enthusiasm for the project is indisputable but many others contributed extensively to the project. Buttapasta, a cement worker; Palumbi, a smith; Primavera and Micheloni, electricians; Barcoglioni, Battiato, Devitto, Fornasier, Pennisi, Sforza and others also added their assistance.

As work progressed inside it was decided to construct a more attractive façade for the front of the huts and Buttapasta set to work building an ornate frontage with pillars, Gothic pinnacles, archway and bell-tower. Directly above the door on the front of the archway Pennisi sculpted a head of Christ from red clay complete with thorn crown. Finally a thick layer of cement was applied to the entire outside of the Nissen huts to protect it from the Orkney weather.



With the work on the Churchill Barriers complete the prisoners were shipped out in September 1944. Chiocchetti remained behind for two weeks to complete the font which he was working on. The chapel had only been used for a very short time but it remains today as an amazing testament to man's endeavor to overcome adversity and a dedication to their faith.

In 1960 Domenico Chiocchetti (then residing in Moena, Italy) returned to Orkney to assist with a restoration project. He remained for three weeks carrying out a variety of repairs and on his departure he wrote a letter to the people of Orkney in which he said:

'The chapel is yours - for you to love and preserve. I take with me to Italy the remembrance of your kindness and wonderful hospitality. I thank the authorities of Kirkwall, the courteous preservation committee, and all those who directly or indirectly have collaborated for the success of this work and for having given me the joy of seeing again the little chapel of Lambholm where I, in leaving, leave a part of my heart'. – Domenico Chiocchetti – 11th April 1960. (<http://www.visitorkney.com/italianchapel/>)

On the walls inside the Italian chapel are wood carvings depicting the fourteen stations of the cross. With the permission of the Italian Chapel tour guide, the author took photos of the stations of the cross. They are duplicated below with short descriptions of each station as devised by St. Francis of Assisi in the 12th century.



Station One: Jesus is condemned to death.



Station Two: Jesus takes hold of his cross.



Station Three: Jesus falls under the weight of the cross for the first time.



Station Four: Jesus meets his mother.



Station Five: Simon of Cyrene helps Jesus carry his cross.



Station Six: Veronica gives Jesus a cloth to wipe his face.



Station Seven: Jesus falls under the weight of the cross for the second time.



Station Eight: Jesus meets the women of Jerusalem.



Station Nine: Jesus falls under the weight of the cross for the third time.



Station Ten: Jesus' clothes are taken from him.



Station Eleven: Jesus is nailed to the cross.



Station Twelve: Jesus dies on the cross.



Station Thirteen: The body of Jesus is taken down from the cross.



Station Fourteen: Jesus is laid in the tomb.



Today is the beginning of the Holy Week. The first day is Palm Sunday, which commemorates Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem. The Jerusalem crowds welcomed Jesus who was riding a donkey in fulfillment of the prophecy in Zechariah 9:9. They waved palm branches in the air and shouted "Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest!" Jesus and his disciples spent the night in Bethany, located approximately two miles east of Jerusalem.

During the morning of Holy Monday Jesus and his disciples returned to Jerusalem. Before entering Jerusalem Jesus cursed a fig tree because it had failed to bear fruit. Arriving at the Temple, Jesus encountered the courts full of corrupt money changers. He overturned their tables and cleared the Temple. He said, "The Scriptures declare, 'My Temple will be a house of prayer,' but you have turned it into a den of thieves." (Luke 19:46). Jesus stayed overnight in Bethany.

Once at the Temple on Tuesday, Jesus was challenged by the religious leaders. He avoided their traps and passed judgment on them: "Blind guides! ... For you are like whitewashed tombs – beautiful on the outside but filled on the inside with dead people's bones and all sorts of impurity. Outwardly you look like righteous people, but inwardly your hearts are filled with hypocrisy and lawlessness ...Snakes! Sons of vipers! How will you escape the judgment of hell?" (Matthew 23:24-33)

In the afternoon Jesus left the city and went with his disciples to the Mount of Olives, which overlooks Jerusalem due east of the Temple. Here Jesus prophesied the destruction of Jerusalem and the ending of the age (Olivet Discourse). He also taught and prophesied His Second Coming. On Tuesday Judas Iscariot negotiated the betrayal of Jesus with the Sanhedrin (Matthew 26:14-16).

Scholars speculate that on Holy Wednesday Jesus rested in Bethany with Lazarus, and his two sisters, Mary and Martha.

On Maundy Thursday after sunset, Jesus washed the feet of his disciples as they prepared to share in the Passover, thus demonstrating how they were to love one another. After the ceremony Jesus and his disciples took part in the Passover Feast. Jesus said, "I have been very eager to eat this Passover meal with you before my suffering begins. For I tell you now that I won't eat this meal again until its meaning is fulfilled in the Kingdom of God." (Luke 22:15-16) During this Last Supper, Jesus established the Lord's Supper, known as Communion. He told his followers to always remember his sacrifice by sharing in the elements of bread and wine: "And he took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to them, saying, 'This is my body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me.' And likewise the cup after they had eaten, saying, 'This cup that is poured out for you is the new covenant in my blood.' " (Luke 22:19-20)

Jesus then left the room and went into the Garden of Gethsemane. The Gospel of Saint Luke tells us that Jesus prayed in agony to God the Father: "his sweat became like great drops of blood falling down to the ground." (Luke 22:44)

In Gethsemane, Judas Iscariot betrayed Jesus with a kiss whereupon the Sanhedrin arrested Jesus. He was taken to the home of the High Priest Caiaphas to be tried. Before the trial Peter denied knowing Jesus three times. Judas Iscariot, overcome with remorse, hanged himself early on Friday morning. Before the third hour (9 AM) Jesus was sentenced to death by crucifixion. Roman soldiers tormented and mocked him, spit on him, and pierced him with a crown of thorns. Then Jesus carried his own cross to Calvary where, once again, he was mocked and insulted while Roman soldiers nailed him to the wooden cross. On the cross Jesus spoke the following words: "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing." (Luke 23:34). His last words were: "Father, into your hands I commit my spirit." (Luke 23:46) At about the ninth hour (3 PM), Jesus stopped breathing and died.

At about 6 PM Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea took Jesus' body down from the cross and placed it in a tomb, where it lay throughout the day on Saturday, the Sabbath. At the end of the day Nicodemus treated Christ's body with spices. "He brought about seventy-five pounds of perfumed ointment made from myrrh and aloes. Following Jewish burial custom, they wrapped Jesus' body with the spices in long sheets of linen cloth." (John 19: 39-40)

Jesus Christ paid the penalty for sin with his perfect, spotless sacrifice. He secured our salvation by conquering death. "For you know that God paid a ransom to save you from the empty life you inherited from your ancestors. And the ransom He paid was not mere gold or silver. He paid for you with the precious lifeblood of Christ, the sinless, spotless Lamb of God." (1 Peter 1:18-19)

The zenith and culmination of the Holy Week is Resurrection Sunday. It is the cornerstone of the Christian doctrine.

On early Sunday morning Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, Joanna, and Salome went to the tomb. They found that the large stone covering the tomb's entrance had been rolled away. An angel told them, "Don't be afraid! I know you are looking for Jesus, who was crucified. He isn't here! He is risen from the dead, just as he said would happen." (Matthew 28:5-6)

Jesus Christ made the following appearances on the Day of Resurrection: the first person to see him was Mary Magdalene, then Peter, then two disciples on the road to Emmaus, and finally to all of the disciples except Thomas.

These are eyewitness accounts. They are proof that the resurrection of Jesus Christ happened

Frederick William Dame
Patriotic, Steadfast, and True
March 24, 2013.