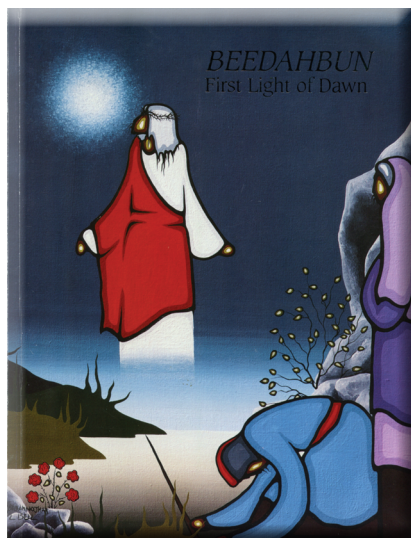


NATIVE WAY OF THE CROSS

Leland Bell, is an increasingly more acclaimed Native Artist who lives on the Manitoulin Island with his wife and children. He presents us a new look at the Stations of the Cross. He presents us with a unique concrete example of the challenge of enculturation: the ongoing fruitful dialogue between Native culture and the Christian faith. Visit his website: <http://www.woodlandprinters.ca/bell.html>

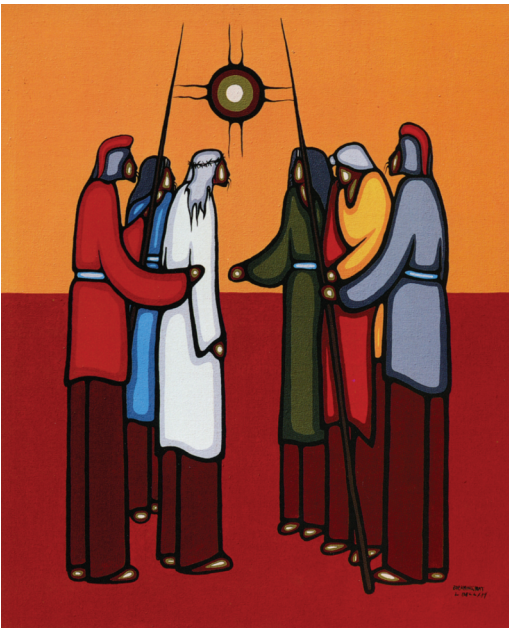
“Thus, not only is Christianity relevant to the Indian Peoples, but Christ, in the members of His Body, is Himself Indian” - Blessed Pope John-Paul II

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JESUS IS CONDEMNED TO DEATH.

No one has the right to pass judgement. There is only one being who can pass judgement – that is the Creator. We attempt to have justice in the world by using laws, but even justice is often an imitation, second guessing of the Creator.



JESUS IS PICKING UP HIS CROSS.

Jesus accepts the cross and the responsibility of the cross – the suffering. He takes that on for the people. In our tradition the sun is the grandfather, the Creator. The blue circle is broken and the color is coming out to show that Jesus is not alone, even though he takes the burden alone.



JESUS FALLS ON THE ROAD OF THE CROSS.

Sometimes we may feel what you are doing has meaning, but everybody else around you just ignores you. This painting shows that there is often very little understanding of why the suffering is taking place.



JESUS MEETS ONE WHO IS VERY SORROWFUL.

I have something definitely in mind when I did the mother and the flowers. I did it to show life. Motherhood is like the earth; it supports life. And this mother, like all mothers, understands when she sees her child suffering. Not pity, understanding. The moustaches are there to symbolize communication, that there is more to the words than the uttering of certain sounds.



05

SIMON OF CYRENE GOES TO HELP JESUS.

The three circles are the Trinity. I use a path. Jesus has taken this path. He accepts his situation and walks the path, the way of the cross. Simon is dressed in a yellow frock, because in my tradition, yellow is the color of the East and symbolizes knowledge. He must possess knowledge and wisdom if he helps another man who is suffering.



06

HOLY VERONICA WIPES THE FACE OF JESUS.

I see something other than comfort at work here, a kind of compassion. It's the woman giving the compassion, or Jesus consoling the woman. The soldier holds the sword, for in all of life the potential of danger always lurks under the surface and tries to take hold.



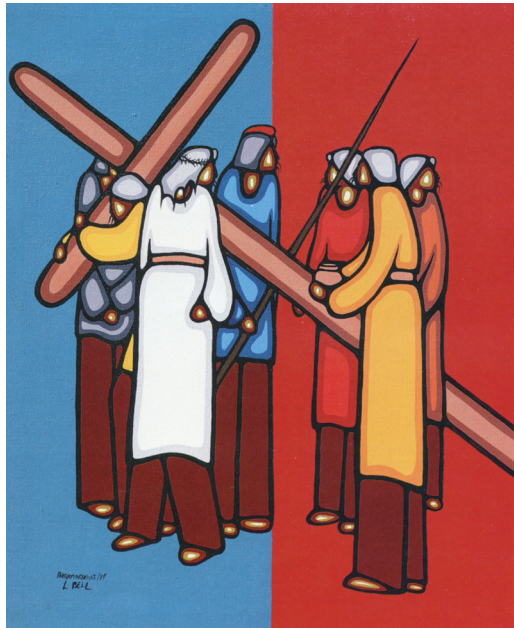
JESUS AGAIN FALLS ON THE ROAD OF THE CROSS.

Here I try to show the fall, not so much that Jesus collapses under a great burden, but more in the sense that he tries to gather strength in the form of prayer. The Trinity watches over him. He is going to a high place to receive a vision; he is going to the mountain to pray. Simon remains besides Jesus; he is the support.



THE WOMEN OF JERUSALEM ARE CRYING FOR JESUS.

There is a separation here. The red background symbolizes people, while the blue background symbolizes spirituality. Because women carry life in them, in our tradition they pray for water because water sustains life. So the woman is holding the bowl. The cup of life must be maintained.



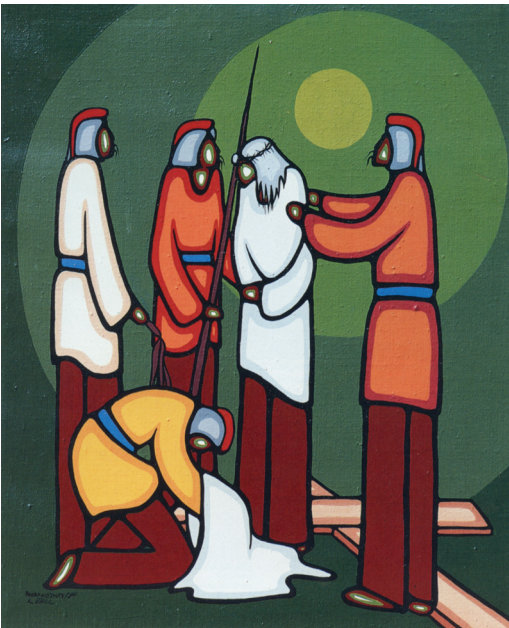
JESUS AGAIN FALLS ON HIS KNEES.

Jesus is exhausted. At this point I want to show more of the inside of Jesus. He is cradled by the earth because there is nothing really there but the earth that holds him or cradles him. The anguish here is caused more by people and so the soldier carries a whip. But again, he is not alone because Simon is there; Simon reaches out to him.



JESUS HAS ARRIVED AT THE PLACE, AND IS BEING PREPARED FOR CRUCIFIXION.

One soldier bows in reverence, with great respect. He recognizes that there is something great about this man.



JESUS IS NAILED TO THE WOOD OF THE CROSS.

The red circle here means that he is doing this for the people; he is dying for the people. He is in great pain. There is no way to comfort someone who is in such great pain.



JESUS IS HANGING ON THE WOOD OF THE CROSS AND DIES.

Something significant has happened. The figures look up like when we look up to the stars. When we look into the darkened sky at night there is immensity to it and we are so insignificant. Yes, something great has happened to us whether we understand it or not.



JESUS' BODY IS TAKEN DOWN FROM THE WOOD OF THE CROSS.

By using the four colors of yellow, red, blue and white I want to show that there is light even after someone has gone. There's something here besides an ending. We can't hold back a person who has died by our tears. We have to learn to let go.



JESUS' BODY IS PLACED IN THE DESIGNATED SPOT FOR THE DEAD.

The tomb is not a dark place because this painting is supposed to give comfort. It is a sacred place to be in and so there's a kind of warmth to it. There is no idealistic or perverse kind of attitude towards death. No, the people in this painting care for Jesus right to the end, to the end of life. They still love Jesus. It didn't end on the cross and it didn't end after he was taken down from the cross. It went beyond. There is the light.





15

JESUS RISEN FROM THE DEAD

Early in the morning at dawn you pray to greet the day. You announce your name, who you are and who you are praying for. Then supposedly at dusk when creation stops you announce your prayer again and your prayer is heard. You praise again and you stand still again... All of creation is being purified. It wasn't just the cleansing of sin, but it was also the cleansing of all of life. It wasn't necessary for the people at that moment to understand or to know the meaning. His resurrection shows it was for all people and all centuries. The important thing is what was provided. Life. We always celebrate life. We cannot celebrate death. What we celebrate is life!