

Death of St. Joseph

Finish 1949, 7'6" x 7'2"

St. Joseph is patron of a happy death. The painting gives a perspective on death and the after life. It is not a sorrowful picture; the colours are vivid and joyful.

Mary is supporting Joseph's head as he looks at Jesus who extends his hand in blessing. The rainbow foreshadows the resurrection, while above, the Chi-Rho, a Greek monogram for the name of Christ, is conjoined to the anchor of hope, forming a jewelled cross. In earlier times the jewelled cross veiled the stigma attached to crucifixion.

Father Dunstan, then a student in the seminary high-school at Dear Lake, worked for over three years, snatching every spare moment between classes. He was also painting during much of his Christmas and summer vacation. His studio was a class room and the students didn't seem to mind the smell of oil paints and linseed oil.

It is painted on stretched tent canvas. To get a piece big enough "I had to glue two pieces together." Instead of gold leaf gilding, bronze powder mixed with a medium was used. "It looked quite brilliant to start with but eventually tarnished as I never managed to varnish it."

At this time "all the monks favoured the Beuronese style so I went along with them." Except for the treatment of faces there is very little realism in this painting; it is very abstract. The posture of the figures may be Beuronese but the handling of the details is influenced by the school of Maria Locke. "I still clung to my old style of rich coloring. My later paintings in the Beuronese style were more subdued."

The painting presently hangs in the south stairwell of the monastic dormitory.