



175th Anniversary Moment

“He who promised is faithful” (Heb 10.23)

WITHERING GRASS—FLOWERS OF RESURRECTION

Those who walk through the front doors of First Saint Paul’s and look straight ahead will see a two-panel mural that adorns the north wall of the narthex. These two large paintings—depicting grass and flowers—remind us both of our mortality and also of the resurrection life that “flowers” in the Christian and the Church. These paintings, rendered in acrylic on plywood, also tell the story of a key moment in our history. They memorialize a visionary leader who, in the years before his untimely death, contributed much to the renewal of the congregation.

According to the artist, Arthur Geisert, his painting was inspired by Scripture passages about grass and flowers. The left panel, which refers to the Old Testament, alludes to verses such as “As for man, his days are as grass” (Psalm 103:15) and “The grass withereth, the flowers fade: because the spirit of the Lord bloweth upon it; surely the people is grass” (Isaiah 40:6-7). The right panel, however, represents the New Testament, and the flowers “joyously remind us of Christ’s triumph over death,” says Geisert. The artist also notes that “the flowers are wild flowers, flourishing yet seemingly unattended and uncared for. The Christian may often feel alone but can be strong in faith and sure in the fact that God will sustain him.”

The painting was commissioned as a memorial to Richard J. Hoerger, who was chair of the congregation when he died in a tragic airline crash in 1971. Hoerger, an attorney who was only 34 at the time of his death, had been a leader of the church’s Renewal for Christ program in the late 1960’s. He was instrumental in the congregation’s decision to demolish the old church and build our current sanctuary, which was dedicated in 1970, just a year before his death. Geisert’s painting, dedicated in 1974, reminds us that life springs again from what seems to be dead, due to the regenerating power of Christ’s resurrection.

