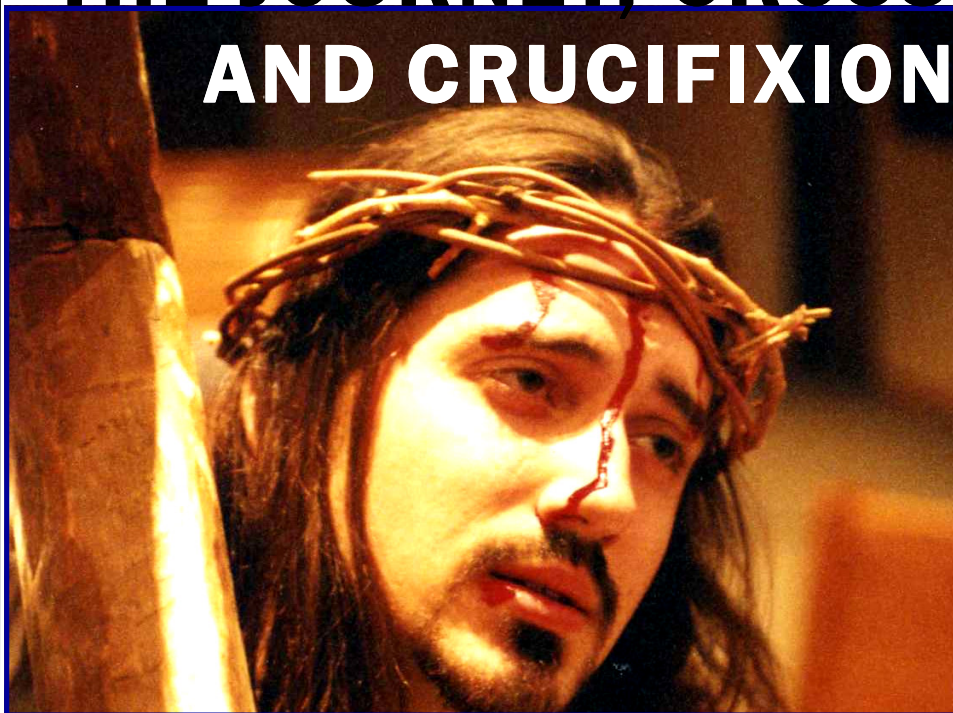


IN THE PARISH SPOTLIGHT

By Bernie Beglane

THE JOURNEY, CROSS AND CRUCIFIXION



The live and dramatic presentation of the Stations of the Cross will be held in St. Rosalie's Church this Wednesday, Ash Wednesday, at 8 P.M. Join us as we experience the trial of Jesus, His journey through Jerusalem and His final moments on the Cross. Ashes will be distributed.

Music, drama and dance are important tools for expression, teaching and community building. Perhaps you have realized this in the many undertakings in your life.

Noel S. Ruiz certainly did in his years as a youth minister. Thus he combined all three in many of his productions.

So well were they received that people would approach Noel once the presentation had been completed and jokingly ask, "Do you think you could bring this program to my facility?"

The wheels began turning, as they say, and Ruiz began to consider the possibility of forming a traveling troupe.

Many friends and co-workers encouraged and supported him. As a result, Creative Ministries was

founded a little over 20 years ago.

To be exact, February 15, 1987.

And Ash Wednesday--this coming Wednesday at 8 P.M., Creative Ministries will be in St. Rosalie's Church for a live, dramatic presentation, "The Journey, Cross and Crucifixion."

The Journey, Cross and Crucifixion is a journey back through time. It is an opportunity to walk with Christ and become one with Him and the people who walked with Him. For many who have shared the Journey it is almost as if it were happening now for the first time.

The music, narration, dialogue and poignant silences all add to the power of this prayerful meditation. To be part of The

Journey, Cross, and Crucifixion is to experience the complete and utter frustration devastation of Mary, the frustration of Simon, the loneliness and desolation of John, Pilate's struggle between justice and expediency and the excruciating pain and degradation Jesus suffered on the way to Calvary and His ultimate death on the Cross.

For the past 20 years, the troupes have been presenting this powerful Journey to churches and schools throughout Long Island, leading people of all ages in a powerful prayerful Lenten experience.

The troupes are made up of volunteer actors, singers and musicians who use their gifts to bring the Passion Story to life.

Now to return to a little more about the early beginnings of Noel's Creative Ministries which is based at 931 Montauk Highway, Oakdale.

“In the Spring of 1987 we produced the first traveling program,” stated Ruiz, “the Journey Cross and Crucifixion, a dramatic presentation of the Stations of the Cross.”

“What was once a dream had evolved into a year round ministry touring with a variety of programs to churches, schools and organizations throughout Long Island and the neighboring boroughs. We became a legal not-for-profit and incorporated organization recognized by both the state and federal government in March of 1988. All of the original four board members are still involved in the organization.”

Obviously, since Creative Ministries is beginning its 21st year, there was almost instant success.

“We quickly outgrew our first rehearsal space on Knickerbocker Avenue in Bohemia, and moved to a larger rental space on Dante Court in Holbrook,” Ruiz said. “This new space incorporated offices, rehearsal facilities and some storage areas. For the first few years we only produced Broadway musicals during the summer.

“By 1994 we were producing major musicals throughout the year, some involving as many as 150 people with lights, sound, full size sets and orchestra, and beautiful costumes. We continued to rent space in local schools and churches for the actual performances. It became evident that it was neither cost effective or artistically prudent to rent auditoriums. It was time to take the leap of faith and investigate the possibility of buying or renting our own full theatre space.”

All of which began in 1996.

“In January of that year,” related Noel, “an ambitious multi-focused core group established the first building fund campaign to investigate and locate a new permanent home. After locating the Oakdale Theatre, an old movie theatre vacant for nine years, and negotiating with the landlord terms of lease and renovation, we began the arduous task of turning this eyesore into a facility capable of producing live theatre.

“This involved our raising over \$150,000 and recruiting our members to help with the actual renovations to keep the cost down. Over 100 volunteers spent hours, painting, sanding, recovering



Jesus, as He stumbled carrying the Cross through Jerusalem, was assisted by a Centurion.

seats, hanging electrical wires and laying carpet.

“We had some help from our continuous supporter, Fleet Bank, as they sent a crew of volunteer employees to help with the renovation and donated much of the office furniture and many computers.”

At long last, the official opening of the Creative Ministries Performing Arts Center was held on May 23, 1997.

And how appropriate!

The presentation was “Man of LaMancha.”

Yes, Noel and his people realized ‘The Impossible Dream.’