

BCE Media Release – BCE celebrates the Year of Prayer with a commissioned painting of Jesus and the Holy Trinity

World renowned artist John Maitland, famous for his iconic painting of Mary Mackillop, has unveiled a rare painting of Jesus, commissioned by Brisbane Catholic Education.

The artwork, which depicts Jesus surrounded by the Holy Trinity, was commissioned by BCE to celebrate the Year of Prayer.

John Maitland said he was invited to paint the image of Jesus at a time when he was about to travel to the UK and Ireland.

“We planned to visit some of the ancient pilgrimage and historical sites, as these have always been important for us as I’ve grown up in northern England and my wife is Irish,” he said.

“These visits ended up becoming research and reflection opportunities.

“(The many places I visited) are all associated with the early story of Christianity in Northwest Europe.

“These are places imbued with the faith of our ancestors, the very stones were laid in faith and prayer and the story continues in the present.

“It was while standing at the top of Grianan Fort looking down into the circle I saw the elongated shadows of two figures converge into one central figure on the ancient stones, and this was the moment of inspiration for my composition of the Trinity.”

Mr Maitland said he drew inspiration for his colour pallet from stained-glass windows of St Paul’s Church at Jarrow, dedicated in April 685.

“The stained-glass windows are the oldest in the world. I have used all their colours in the basket of the loaves and fishes,” he said.

“The colour gold has been used because of its magnificence and symbolism.

“My image of Jesus ‘in the now’ is a pared back image, it is of Jesus the Son in the moment he blesses the loaves and fishes and his compassion for the hungry crowd as described in Mathew 14:19.

“It allows the viewer the opportunity to glance at the power of the moment as it is stripped of any emotion.

“The representation of The Father and the Holy Spirit through the presence of shadows indicates the indivisible and eternal presence of the Trinity.”

BCE’s Head of Catholic Identity Sharon O’Keeffe said when John unveiled the artwork she was left in “awe and wonder”.

“Of all the images of Jesus I’ve sighted across the world, I’ve never seen Jesus portrayed with the Trinity in this way – its contemporary nature is uniquely appealing,” she said.

“This is a symbolic way to commemorate the Year of Prayer for BCE and across the Archdiocese of Brisbane. It supports our focus on Jesus through our relaunched Catholic Identity framework.”

Ms O’Keeffe said she was pleased to see that Jesus has been deliberately painted in his geographical context.

The artwork will be hung at BCE’s Burke Street office in Woolloongabba.

About John Maitland:

John Maitland was born in Newcastle Upon Tyne, England, and at age 15 was awarded a scholarship to study art at Kings College.

John has held many successful exhibitions in Queensland and New South Wales and was a finalist in the “Tribute to Mary McKillop” exhibition. His entry was nominated as one of the finest in the show and was part of a national tour in 1996. Since 1997 his work has been reproduced by a leading British publishing company, one of which reached number two in an international competition in Amsterdam in 1998. It also appeared in an American Scholastic production alongside Picasso and Matisse and a Canadian print publication.

ACU used John’s image of St Mary MacKillop on large banners in St Peters Square at the Vatican during the canonisation celebrations in October 2010, was the inspiration for a concert/drama and featured on large banners marking Mary Mackillop 100 anniversary by ACU, which was performed at Brisbane City Hall and King George Square, and as the cover on World Youth Day booklets and prayer cards. It has been used continually on magazine covers, prayer cards and in schools across Australia since 1995. John’s work has been commissioned by a number of Brisbane schools and Catholic Education South Australia.