

## THE LITURGICAL ART OF RICHARD ENDA KING (1943-1995) IN IRELAND

### THE SUBJECT:

This research examines the relationship between art and spirituality in the late twentieth century in Ireland. In particular, the focus is on the challenges faced by the artist Richard Enda King in his attempt to interpret the mysteries of the Christian faith in an authentic manner which engages the viewer and is relevant to the modern church setting. King's theological interests were centred on the Old Testament, the Cross and Resurrection, the Eucharist, the Holy Spirit, the Trinity and the Book of Revelation.

### THE APPROACH:

An effort has been made to understand how the enamelling and metalwork techniques used by the artist brought a strength of expression and an economic style to his depiction of religious themes. Also pertinent to this enquiry are the artistic influences which formed him. These were his father Richard Joseph King (1907-74), Georges Rouault, Henry Moore, Early Irish and European metalwork and sculpture and modern German art. Such sources contributed to the ranges of styles used and the religious integrity of the work. His interest in the writings of Pierre Teilhard de Chardin and St John of the Cross enhanced the profound theological dimension of his liturgical art.

### KEY WORKS:

- 1: Stations of the Cross, 15<sup>th</sup> Station, *The Resurrection*, 1968, repoussé copper and enamels, Manresa, Jesuit Centre of Spirituality, Dollymount, Dublin.
- 2: Tabernacle, 1971, repoussé copper with enamels, Chapel of Peace in Christ Centre, Kilkenny.
- 3: Crucifix, 1975, repoussé copper with enamels, Chapel, Convent of Mercy, Templemore, Co. Tipperary.
- 4: Stations of the Cross, 4<sup>th</sup> Station, Jesus meets his mother, 1994-95, copper panels, inlaid with polychromed resin enamel, St Colmcille's Church, Holywood, Co. Down.
- 5: Monstrance, 1995, polished silver and dark blue vitreous enamel, St Macartan's Cathedral, Monaghan.

### THE FINDINGS:

The liturgical art of Richard Enda King is imbued with a deep spirituality which draws the viewer into the religious experience. It is also intellectually stimulating and visually challenging so that traditional religious subjects can be presented in a new, striking and unconventional manner. The range of media used proves the extraordinary versatility and talents of this artist who was given to much experimentation in both style and technique. Richard Enda King is principally known for his innovative secular public sculptures such as *The Fifth Province* (1989), Navan Approach Road, Dublin Road, Navan, *Spirit of the Air* (1989-1991), Airport Roundabout, Dublin and *Evocation* (1991), Dublin Road Roundabout, Athlone. Hence, the richness and variety of his liturgical art has been not been sufficiently recognised.

