



Resurrected Irene II

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Artist: Rose Reilly

In 1987 after teaching 30 years in Australian schools, the Sisters of St Joseph of the Sacred Heart missioned Sister Irene to serve in Lima, Peru.

Irene saw a great need for after-school programs for the children. She supervised their homework and socialised with them by playing many games, including Australian Football. She was like the Pied Piper when she walked along the street with many children running with her.

Sr Irene was then appointed to Huasahuasi. She was well aware of the dangers from the Sendero Luminoso or “Shining Path” group of terrorists in Huasahuasi. All other religious leaders had abandoned the people in the area. Irene and her Josephite companion decided, in spite of the danger, to stay with the people.

On the fatal night of 21st May 1991 Sr Irene was alone in the village of Huasahuasi. She faced the call from the “Shining Path” to come out of her house. They pushed and shoved her along to the Village Square where she and four companions were tormented and mocked for hours. Finally all five were ordered to lie face down on the ground. Sr Irene was the first shot, by a 13 year old girl.

While germinating and implementing her ideals, Irene’s life and that of four other men of the village were tragically taken on the 21st May, 1991. This did not mean her life was taken in vain.

Irene’s family and the Sisters of St Joseph believe it is a wonderful testament to Irene’s life and work to have Irene McCormack Catholic College, Butler, named in her honour and an art work created to represent her faith and her vocation in life to serve the poor. The art work process actually began in 2004 when the Sisters of St Joseph commissioned Rose Reilly to create a memorial art work in memory of Irene. Glass mosaic medium was chosen. The work drew on symbolism and metaphor to represent the many facets of Irene’s life and her work as a teacher and missionary. The original *Resurrected Irene* was completed on 21st May 2007 and is exhibited at the Mary McKillop Centre, York Street, South Perth.



Resurrected Irene I



Resurrected Irene II was commissioned by Irene McCormack Catholic College in January 2016. It was considered important that a visual, tactile representation of Irene be available to students and the wider school community.

Resurrected Irene II was constructed as a large architectural kiln formed glass panel. The fusing of the glass components creates a contemporary image, reflecting the modern design of the Paul Rafter Centre.

Resurrected Irene II, was blessed on 30th June 2016, by the Auxiliary Bishop of Perth, Most Reverend Donald G Sproxton DD VG,. During the blessing Bernadette McCormack, Irene's sister, placed the emblem of the Sisters of St Joseph on the red dress symbolising the Habit.



The *Resurrected Irene II* is rich in symbolism and represents the eternal journey of Irene.

Irene was born in Trayning in the wheat belt area of Western Australia. The green glass expresses her early life, with her family portrayed as leaves on a sheath of wheat, in the bottom left corner. Each member of her family is represented, with Irene's presence missing. You will see her 'leaf' placed with her spirit above her head.

The blue pathway is Irene's life leading to and ending in the Andes Mountains of Peru. The tree of life on the right of the icon represents Irene's apostolic works of mercy and the purple glass within the tree is her spiritual and religious journey.

On the right are the women and children of Huasahuasi, who were so dear to Irene.

The chalice depicted above the rocks is the fountain in the centre of the Huasahuasi plaza, where Irene and the four men were murdered. From the fountain flows Irene's blood and the blood of Christ, with water representing a continuation of life. The men, Augustin, Noe, Pedro and Alfredo, killed alongside Irene, are depicted as four grey rocks at the foot of the icon. Irene is the central figure, resurrected and dancing... forever Irene.

The red dress represents her religious habit, the blood of martyrs, the colour of her favourite football team, South Fremantle and her love of the Peruvian people. The national colours of Peru are red and white. The emblem attached to the dress is the emblem worn by the Sisters of St Joseph. The gold flecks emanating from the dress reflect Irene's spirit as she began her eternal journey. Irene's resurrection culminates with bursts of colour in the sky as her spirit enters heaven.



This art work is a tribute to Irene's life, her work as a teacher and missionary and friend to the poor. It is an acknowledgement of her generosity and compassion, her indomitable spirit. A spirit that could not be subdued or overcome.

Irene chose to face life without fear and to live wholeheartedly in each present moment. In her morning offering, Irene says "I am God's work of art, I am precious in his sight". Irene, herself, is a work of art.

This artwork attempts not just remember Irene and represent her symbolically, but to help us to never forget her and the many people in the world who suffer injustice. Irene is truly a worthy patron of the College named in her honour.

Resurrected Irene II is a gift to the College through the generosity of the McCormack family, the Sisters of St Joseph of the Sacred Heart, Irene McCormack Catholic College Parent Group, Ian Dixon from Perth Art Glass and the passion and creativity of Rose Reilly.



Irene McCormack RSJ

Born: Kununoppin 1938

Died: Huasahuasi Peru 1991

Irene dedicated her life to seeing a need and doing something about it.

**IRENE McCORMACK
CATHOLIC COLLEGE**

Prayer Service Justice

