

# Once in a Lifetime Opportunity

— reported by Alexander Mandradjiev

**Editor's Note:** Alexander talks about the creation of the beautiful mosaic art and statuary featured in the June issue of *Catholic Cemetery* magazine. These pieces may be seen during the cemetery tour at CCC's Newark Convention in September.



The Mandradjiev family work on one of the Genesis murals in their California studio.



Print of the Genesis '6th Day' mosaic.

In 2013 Mr. Andrew Schafer, executive director, and Mr. Joe Verzi, assistant director of Catholic Cemeteries for the Archdiocese of Newark, commissioned Alexander Studio, one of the seven studios involved in this project, to create an exquisite work of art for the new and last expansion of the Holy Cross Chapel Mausoleum in North Arlington, NJ.

Among the artwork are six breathtaking mosaic murals depicting the *Book of Genesis*, more commonly known as the six days in which the world was created. The museum quality mosaics were created by husband, wife and son team, Alexander, Daniela and Alexander, Jr. Mandradjiev from Alexander Studio in Los Angeles. The three digitally designed the original concepts from sketches and drawings to professional color renderings.

Alexander, Jr. holds a Bachelor of Fine Arts degree in Illustration from Art Center College of Design in Pasadena, CA, and currently is employed as a concept and character designer in the motion picture industry.

More than 1,800 colors flow throughout more than one million pieces of stone and glass bringing the mosaic murals to life with subtle movement and beauty. Constructed on fiberglass mesh, using imported Venetian Smalti and Gold glass, the natural materials and precious stones from all over the world were chosen for their long-lasting qualities and distinct texture. Hand formed modules in unique shapes and texture gilded with 24K gold leaf and protected with clear epoxy coat to last forever, and specially designed enamel pieces are also used to increase the intensity of the designs.

The painstaking process was a labor of love for the Mandradjiev family, who spent approximately 1,350 hours completing the first two murals



Mother Seton with children statue.

from drawings to installation. Collaborating with Joe Verzi almost daily was essential throughout the entire process. "This is one of the most expressive artistic interpretations in mosaic technique that we have ever had the privilege of working on," said Alexander.

In addition to the mosaic murals, Alexander Studio has also created a Crucifix above the altar, hand carved of Linden wood, with cross-resembling driftwood and a Corpus resembling Botticino marble and four life-size wooden statues of the "Mothers" of the Church, including Mother Teresa, Mother Cabrini, Mother Cope and Mother Seton, hand carved of Linden wood in Italy.

As Mr. Verzi commented, "What makes these four unique, compared to statues in other churches, is how the women stand alongside others, situated in 'action-like' poses.

"This is a once in a lifetime opportunity, and we are thrilled to have been given the chance to create such important pieces of art. It was an unexplainable joy working with Mr. Schafer and Mr. Verzi on this project," said Alexander Mandradjiev

Alexander Studio is very proud to have contributed 13 pieces of art to this Masterpiece Mausoleum.

Alexander and Daniela Mandradjiev may be contacted at their studio in Woodland Hills, CA, at 818.779.7611 or email [mosaicart@yahoo.com](mailto:mosaicart@yahoo.com). Learn more about Alexander Studio at their Website [www.alexanderstudio.org](http://www.alexanderstudio.org).