

With all the heart: The story

WITH ALL THE HEART

The story of this painting starts in Lebanon many , many years ago...it also ends in the Lebanon!

A married couple lived in Miami....Mr. and Mrs. Anthony Abraham. Mr. Abraham was an emigrant from Lebanon and his wife, a Lebanese young lady whose parents had immigrated to Miami before she was born.

When they realized that they would not be blessed by children they decided to adopt ...for this they came to Lebanon and adopted a Lebanese orphan from an orphanage and took the child back to Miami...after that they would come and spend their summers in Lebanon and every year they would go back to the orphanage and adopt another child....with five adopted children they decided that they had a beautiful family and would stop at that.

However they continued to come to Lebanon in the summer, visit the orphanage and make donations to help the nuns who ran the orphanage.

On one of these visits a three year old little boy took the hand of the lady and kept holding on to her...when the visit was over Mrs. Abraham turned to her husband and said....we cannot leave this child behind ...please ...just one more....and Thomas was adopted and went back to the States with them.

I



Anthony
Abraham



Many years later this boy, now a young man with a college degree was put in charge of the **Anthony Abraham Foundation**. He would come to Lebanon to donate funds from the Foundation to help different Lebanese NGOs.

I met Tom at a dinner party in Beirut and as we chatted...he told me that he was interested in art and I told him that I was an artist and as at the time I had an exhibition at Aida Cherfan's gallery in downtown Beirut and I invited him to pass by and see it....which he did. Tom asked me if I would do a painting that he could offer to the Pope...and what would the price My answer was that I did not want to be paid but as I greatly admired Pope Francis, but I would like to be present when he offered the painting to the Pope.



Thomas A. Abraham on the bus going to the Vatican

WHAT TO PAINT FOR SOMEONE WHO LIVES AMIDST TREASURES OF THE RENAISSANCE??!!

The first thought that came to my mind was that even a Pope may sometimes feel overwhelmed by all these long corridors, true filled with fabulous art works, but somewhat over powering!

I decided to do something cheerful

The crosses in the painting are the different versions of a cross in different Christian denominations...the hearts represent love...for without LOVE nothing can be achieved.

As I was doing this painting **“with all my heart”** I decided that this would be the title... and asked Father Khalil Rahme if he could give me the translation of this text into Aramaic (the language of Christ) to put on the work.

Although when I called him he was about to get into a plane for a trip to the USA, he managed to send me an SMS with the right translation...” **Min Khoul Leb**”.

The painting came together.....it was magic...almost as if someone was helping my brush to the right things....as I painted I felt so much joy!

Mr. Abraham came to Lebanon...loved the work and organized to have it shipped to Rome. Unfortunately the shipping company made a mistake and the painting ended up in Naples ...but no one knew where.....it was finally found and this time was sent to Rome where my husband had arranged that it should be in safekeeping at the offices of the Order of Malta till the time the audience with Pope Francis would be granted.

Symbols in the painting:

The crosses in the painting are the various versions of a cross in different Christian denominations.

The hearts represent love...for without LOVE nothing can be achieved.

The olive branches...Peace of course!

The crescent moon and star represent another great monotheistic religion: Islam. With whom we share the same God and with whom, in Lebanon we live in mutual respect and harmony.



Detail of crosses on the painting



Title of painting: **WITH ALL THE HEART: Birds for St. Francis**
 Date : 2015
 Size : 100x73cm
 Media : Oil on Canvas
 Artist : Mouna Bassili Sehnoui

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The writing above is in Aramaic. It says "With all the heart",
 pronounced "MEN KOUL LEB" or "MIN KHOUL LEB".

This heart represents LIFE, and its every beat makes us thankful to the LORD
 who gave us this gift.

The heart also represents LOVE: for it is an act of love to have given us life.
 It is therefore for us, in grateful thanks, to love one another and to work
 together for

PEACE

WITH ALL THE HEART

Out of the blue I get a note from Tom saying that the audience was to be on August 27th.... I left for Rome on August 24th 2017 as I thought it would be better to check on the state of the painting so I took some oils and paint brushes in case any retouching was needed. Thankfully the painting was in excellent condition and bright and cheerful as I had remembered it to be so I could just enjoy my stay...with my sketch book ...of course!



In my sketch book I found this drawing I had done of Pope Francis from a scene that had passed in a newsreel: The Mufti of Cairo and His Holiness Pope Francis exchanging a fraternal hug!

Finally going to be able to meet His Holiness Pope Francis...
I arriving early in Rome...to get settled and make sure that if I
have to retouch the painting it has the time to dry!

Also to enjoy a short vacation in a city I love to walk
in and that is so inspiring...and to just enjoy sitting in the
sunlight and sketching.



Breakfast in Rome August 25th 2017



The Parthenon



Tom had come to Rome with a group of American Catholics from Miami and asked me if I would sign a series of beautifully reproduced copies of the painting that (with my permission) he had printed and wanted to sell when back in Miami to raise money for the Abraham Foundation. He suggested I go in their bus with the painting to the Papal audience.





In the bus with Tim
(the Papal representative to the United Nations in New York)
And with the painting standing between our knees and the driver's seat.
I did not dare put it in the luggage trunk.

As the bus pulled into the Vatican... MY HEART WAS BEATING....

Up one flight of stairs we were led into a room that was adjacent to the balcony giving onto the Saint Peter's place where we heard the crowd chant :

"Viva el Papa " ...

"Viva el Papa"

We were seated and I had the privilege of being on the front row with Tom....then suddenly with a brisk step Pope Francis walked into the room. We all stood up and applauded him too. He sat down in the row right in front of me.



I was told that I could go up and offer the painting...which I did, accompanied by Tom. Pope Francis held my hand as I explained the symbolism of the painting and he thanked me and asked me to pray for Him.....I replied that I would but could he pray for my country Lebanon, my family and my friends...as I was sure his prayers would be heard before mine...he smiled, and accepted.



**Goodbye Rome...
I shall never forget this
memorable experience !**

**Back in Lebanon I feel blessed
to have had the chance to
meet this extraordinary man**

*Residenza
della Ripetta
Rome
August 28th
2017*



MBS
21st August 2017
B E I R U T