

Nano Icon

Slightly adapted description and original illustration by Desmond M. Kyne



LEFT side panels. The top left panel combine the forces, which together formed the realities of life for Nano Nagle. The Cross of the Passion, the cross with the pointed ends, begins the story. This cross, with sword like quality, releases the winged shapes all about it into flight and movement. The sword/cross has pierced the heart of Christ. Suffering opens wide the heart. Nano contemplates the heart of Christ; from this open heart, a symbol of Divine love, she is to receive all things necessary. She would spend long hours in prayer before the Blessed Sacrament each day. Through daily prayer she received the inspiration and strength to do what she did for the needs of her people.



Nano lived dangerously. The next panel refers to hardships the majority of the people of Ireland were subject to in Penal Days: grim reminder of the gallows; deportation to the slave colonies; need for secrecy of religious practice and education, too. Artist Desmond Kyne tried not to dwell too much on these brutal facts of life. As Nano would probably, say, "No blame, no condemnation, no resentment – just love."



We move to a small window - the cramped conditions of early cabin schools in which Nano taught each day. The window lets light in, permitting the person inside to look out beyond the walls into a wider world. Nano is the children's window to the world of the spirit; through her they receive a light that will not fade.



In the next panel, Nano takes counsel with her uncle Joseph, a tough and skillful lawyer, "one of the greatest single influences of her life," and reputable Catholic lay leader in Ireland. This picture perhaps shows the moment of decision between them – Nano seeking the approval of her uncle for her schools. Grim-faced Joseph clearly knows the risks involved. They both realize the momentous issue involved. The Catholic struggle for survival was frequently a matter of life and death, prison and deportation. Uncle and niece were of the same mettle, and spiritually, very close to one another.



In the next panel – Nano's care for the sick, the lonely, and the aged. It is said of Nano, that there was not a single garret in the city of Cork that she did not visit, and did not know. Right beside her little cottage at Cove Lane (in Cork), she built an alms house for destitute old ladies. The following panel shows Nano making her way by the light of the lantern, through the lanes and alleyways. Light from this lantern has since spread across the world.



Center panel ... this is very close to how Nano might have appeared in the early days of her apostolate ... Nano as "eternally young" within the reality of the "eternal present." The past, the present, and the future are all here united within the eternally young. This spiritual life, not death ... Filled with life, energy, and movement, we are invited to cross over into the invisible world of the spirit.



Above Nano's head is a spiral wheel of many lights and colors, symbolic of the Trinity ... the multi-splendored glory of God. Sweeping downward, in an all-embracing gesture behind Nano, the arm of Christ. The hand carries the nail mark of the crucifixion. Note the pattern on Christ's sleeve, a sort of lightning flash, signifying spiritual power. This flash is picked up again on Nano's gown, suggesting that the forces of spiritual power come to us through Christ.



In the area around Nano, a tumult of wings (proceeding from the God and Son), enter into and through Nano. These winged shapes find their expression in the bird-like shape of the Holy Spirit, bearing downwards the seven flames – the gifts of the Holy Spirit. (center of the gown)



Nano had a great devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus; her spirituality expressed in a new vision of the heart of Christ – drawing its sense of energy from the divinity spirals. This burning, glowing, jewel-like symbol is embroidered on the wide shoulder collar of her gown.



The sun never sets in the "Eternal Present;" those who live there are eternally young. They can be very close to us, in our earth-bound detention. Nano, eternally young, like Mary before her, permits the spiritual

energies of God to flow through her. This receptivity is suggested by her openness, obedience and readiness, signifying awareness, consciousness of the profound relationship she has entered into.



Her right hand, normally the busy hand, is stilled to indicate patient endurance. Her left hand makes a restrained gesture, expressing controlled energy, and a particular quality of action that springs from prayerful thought and contemplation. God knows she needed all of these virtues in those penal times in Ireland.



Both of Nano's hands touch the quiet water. Nano's hands were always busy in the living waters of the river of life itself. Her own life has an interesting relationship to rivers. From her earliest tomboy days in the valley of the River Blackwater to her heroic struggle for the poor on the banks of the River Lee in Cork, Nano sought to understand, grasp, and practice what is symbolized here. Her left hand is over the roadway that leads down to her home at Ballygriffin – or away from it, meant to acknowledge and pay tribute to her family and childhood influences. The great natural symbols – the sun, earth, water, and the mountains – Nano's soul was first kindled to beauty. Here she grew up, and received the love, affection, companionship and security of her family. She was able to go out from here and in turn **give so much to so many**.



On the left-hand side, the alley of the River Blackwater is in a very different mood. Dark threatening sky strikes the land of Ireland. It speaks of the spiritual forces of evil and oppression, pain and suffering which afflicted all of Ireland under the Penal Laws. Nano lived through this dark period, and had direct experience of all its dangers and difficulties. In the ruined castle in the background, a hedge school was kept. Here she received her earliest education, before being sent off at the age of about 13 to the convent school in France.



Below the children are wrapt unaware in the Paschal Mystery. Nano brings the fire down into the heart of her world and with it comes light and warmth, encouragement and consolation. Great was the suffering and deprivation that she found there; she knew that answers were urgently needed to avert despair. This overall, downward thrust in the icon signifies the incarnational truth of God forever reaching down to people. Among children God is to be found. Nano grasped this truth profoundly, and expressed it in action.



The children suffer abuse, misunderstanding and deep anxieties. They are open to exploitation, like the pregnant young girl on the right. Nano understood and involved herself with all these problems, and worked to help them. Flames of the Holy Spirit come over them; Paschal Mystery flaming, burning like a wheel of fire among them. Light that shone across that city was destined to extend its rays outward. Nano's gown spreads out to touch the city on both sides, so frequently done in the 30 years of her ministry there. As Jerome Kiely said in his poem, "Lanes her hem touched were cured of hopelessness, her cloak was a mother skirt that cuddled crowds ..."



This gift Nano brought to the children of Cork – with a sense of urgency on one hand and with great, slow patience and painstaking care on the other. Thoroughness in all her undertakings was a characteristic feature of Nano Nagle. Her example and courage – inspired Presentation Sisters, Presentation Brothers and Christian Brothers around the world.



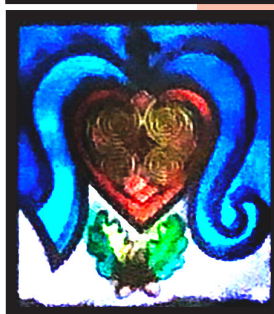
RIGHT side panels, the presentation of Mary. November 21st a great feast of the Christian Church, where they understood Mary as being the temple of God, seeing her as replacing the old temple and becoming the new temple. From first dawning of her consciousness, we imagine her life as **one long continuous act of presentation** of herself to God. We contemplate Mary as one whose consent to God would later seek on behalf of the whole human race – to become the mother of the savior. We see Mary rising up from the Mystical Rose. We contemplate her coming forth, rising from out of the flames of the Menorah – the seven branched candlestick of the Mosaic Law.



Next panel records the founding of the Presentation Sisters – the middle panel on the right-hand side. On Christmas Eve 1775, Nano Nagle made her foundation in Cove Lane in Cork, Ireland. A moment filled with brightness, the symbolic sun floods the founding sisters with light and warmth, suggesting how the influence of Nano is felt amongst her spiritual family, day by day, moment by moment. Through Christ and with him, Nano is eternally young, eternally active in the eternal present.



Nano gave her first community the title of "Sisters of the Sacred Heart of Jesus." In the long course of getting approval from the Vatican in Rome, and the approval of our constitutions, this original title was changed to the **Sisters of the Presentation** – a feast sisters knew had a special meaning to Nano. Since the founding day, devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus (love of Jesus for his people) has been central to the lives of the Presentation Sisters, who celebrate the joy of the heart of Christ and the Presentation of Mary to enrich our lives.



At the feet of the sisters is a well, its surface waters are rippled and disturbed by that spiral – *divine power*. "God's breath on the waters" (Gen.,) the sowing of the seed, and the falling of the acorn symbolize the growth of the Presentation community and how sisters encountered and successfully dealt with dangers and difficulties as they followed the inspiration of their foundress. Below the heart of Christ with the letter "M" for Mary signifies the enduring devotion of the Presentation Sisters everywhere to Christ and to Mary, strong and unending efforts for the growth of the Kindom of God.