

closely analagous to the Franciscans, as are the Penitentes.

In the early part of the 13th century the Carmelites became a part of the 3rd Order of St. Francis,(17) and were known as The Sisters of Penance, Mt. Carmel in Palestine no longer being a safe abode for them.

In Avila in Old Castile Santa Teresa along with San Juan de la Cruz de Los Caballeros during the 16th Century instituted numerous reforms of the Carmelites. They were brought to Spanish America by the Conquistadores.

In the absence of written records, one has to resort only to legends, but the fragments that have been pieced together seem to substantiate these legends with some validity.

During the middle of July the Carmelites hold daily services, including a procession, to celebrate the Feast of Our Lady of Carmel. These services last for nine days.

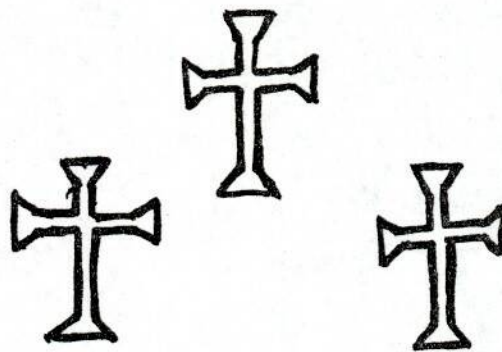
During Lent they sing the Stations of the Cross every Friday afternoon in the Old Church of Truchas, and also every day from Palm Sunday through Good Friday.

On the morning of Good Friday, the Carmelites carry the Mater Dolorosa during the Encuentro, a profound and sorrowful occasion, perhaps the most meaningful and beautiful service held by the Penitentes in their rituals during Holy Week. This is when the Holy Mother bids Her Son farewell, before His departure to Calvary.

The Carmelites also sing in processions and during the rituals at velorios, the services held for a person when he dies. These last for 72 hours, giving untold consolation to the survivors.

They are responsible for the upkeep of the Old Church in Truchas, and help the men with different duties in the Morada, and other tasks of the Order.

Although their rituals are not as dramatic as are the men's, their role is every bit as important and satisfying.



IV

THE ATTITUDE OF THE CHURCH

Since the arrival of Archbishop Lamy in 1851, and the subsequent establishment of an Archbishopric in Santa Fe, the Roman Catholic Church has continually sustained a campaign designed to suppress the Penitentes, even though it was they who had nurtured and kept alive the Faith through the long secular years. ✓

It wasn't until the reign of the late Archbishop Edwin Byrne that a compromise was finally achieved in 1947. The Penitentes were permitted to participate in the affairs of the Morada, provided they follow certain guidelines as set down by the Church.

Even though the attitude of the Church has softened with the years, apparently the attitudes of the parish priests have not necessarily changed. This is understandable be-

cause the priests have to deal with the Penitentes more directly. It must be difficult to administer a parish where in a portion of the parishioners have outside religious commitments.

Apparently the zeal and esoteric nature of the Penitentes' rituals confounds or embarrasses some of the priests and their congregations in the villages where the Penitentes predominate; as one priest so aptly put it, "It gives scandal to the Church!"

The present Archbishop has made no public pronouncements regarding the Penitentes; so apparently a live and let live attitude prevails up to this writing.

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BETRAYED AND SCOURGED

Archbishop Grants Church Blessing To Penitente Order in New Mexico

Archbishop Edwin V. Byrne today, in a declaration on the status of the Penitentes, granted this order the Catholic church's blessing and protection, "if the Brethren proceed with moderation and privately under our supervision."

Miguel Archibeque and leaders of the Hermanos have acted to rid them of "excesses and abuses" which have occurred in their practices in past years, the metropolitan says. However, "there are still instances of individual bad lives, as in other societies, and this or that group still makes itself a political football, thus giving a bad name to the Brethren."

Declaring the order's aim is corporal and spiritual penance, he declares such acts "after abolishing whatever excess or abuse there might have been, are not acts of sadism or masochism . . . not so severe or cruel as to injure one's health."

Frowning upon what has been

called "Penitente hunting," the archbishop says no polite or cultured person should try to spy upon their meetings.

His statement follows in full:

It has become necessary for us to make a definite declaration regarding the Brothers of Jesus of Nazareth (commonly called the Penitentes), in order to clarify their status both to Catholics as well as to non-Catholics.

These Brothers or Brethren constitute a pious association of men joined in charity to commemorate the passion and death of the Redeemer. This society, like many others in the Catholic church, is part of that church and therefore deserves her protection and guidance so long as it keeps and practices the teachings of the Church.

Its origin is obscure in history. It seems that it began somewhere in the beginnings of the last century when the Franciscan padres left New Mexico by order of the new

government of Mexico. No other priests were sent to take their place. Groups among the faithful tried to keep up Catholic practices without priestly guidance, and though certain excesses crept in, it is to these groups of penitential brethren that we owe, in a manner, the preservation of the faith in those hard and trying times.

But why do we make this declaration now? Precisely because many, even Catholics, harbor an erroneous idea concerning this association. It cannot be denied that the association itself is at fault because of certain excesses and abuses in the past. There are still scattered instances of individual bad lives, as in other societies, and this or that group still makes of itself a political football, thus giving a bad name to the Brethren.

However, moved by the admirable zeal of Mr. Miguel Archibeque, who at cost of great personal sacrifice

(Continued on Page Seven)

3. That these acts of penance, after abolishing whatever excess or abuse there might have been, are not acts of sadism or masochism, as modern wise men wish to say in these days, softened by luxury and comfort; and that they are not so severe or cruel as to injure one's health, for then they would be sins and not acts of virtue; and that these penances must be done in private to avoid scandal, because Christian penance is of itself private and not like that of the Pharisees; hence it follows, that no individual, be he Catholic or not, should interfere with their meetings, just as no one who deems himself polite or cultured would try to break in or spy on the meetings of societies to which he does not belong;

4. That we have the authority and power to suppress this association, just as we can and must suppress any other pious association in the church which goes counter to, or exceeds, the laws of

God and His church, or the dictates of reason. But if the Brethren proceed with moderation and privately and under our supervision, meanwhile giving a good example to all as Catholics and citizens, they have our blessing and protection.

has conferred with important members (Hermanos), in order to abolish there might be and association definitely to ensure and protection of church which they love as archbishop of Santa Fe under my supervision according to directions accepted by them, as they from ill-instructed persons who consider them with curiosity or ridicule.

Therefore, I declare 1. That the Asociacion de Hermanos de Nuestro Nazareno is not a football apart from the church, but a group of Catholic men united in love for the passion of our Blessed Lord.

2. That the end of it is to do corporal and spiritual penance, for the sake of the Lord concerning the penance for salvation true now as it was and therefore there is no shameful connotation in the word penitent; like the humble saint Francis of Assisi, love birds and beasts, an whole world still loves him, practiced the Third Order, which for lay people is called "Penitence." And this is the opinion that they are descended from societies founded here centuries ago. Certainly there is no reason why some writers claim, Hermanos and those sects of Flagellants (times);

Newspaper account of decree of Archbishop Edwin V. Byrne, abolishing the Penitentes into the Church. It requires certain concessions from the Penitentes; condemns "Penitente Hunters".

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V

THE FUTURE OF THE PENITENTES

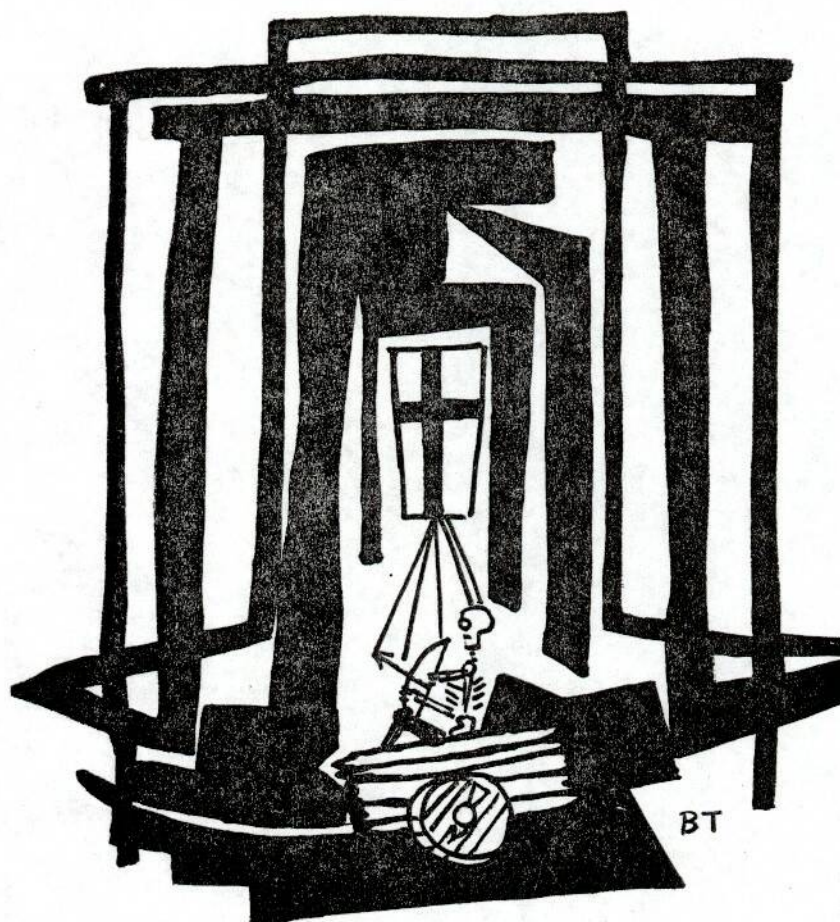
The future of the Penitentes is tenuous and in doubt; however, each year during Holy Week in the Morada, and in the procession, one sees new faces. How long this can continue under the pressures of modern society one can only surmise. ✓

Today the youth of the Spanish villages of the Sangre de Cristos are moving away to the metropolitan areas to complete their educations and to seek work. ✕✕

The Great Society with the Job Corps and other economic and educational inducements will undoubtedly make even deeper inroads into the Penitentes' membership.

It is very unlikely that these young people when they become involved with the social structure of the metropolitan areas and suburbia will ever return to the old ways of their fathers.

Although the Penitentes are still vital and active at the present time, and they are continuing to take in new members, their numbers are decreasing. It is inevitable that they will gradually fade away into the misty realm of legend and history.



*Esta vida es un engaño,
y nos tiene como deudo..*

LA CARRETA DE LA MUERTE



VI

THE ART OF THE PENITENTES

No other art form of any other people since the Middle Ages or the Byzantine better portrays the profundity of emotion or the depth of human religious expression than does the sacred art of the Penitentes of Northern New Mexico.(18)

It embodies not only the mood of medievalism, but the asceticism of El Greco, the grief imbued in the Gothic, and the Miserere of Rouault, as well as the stark simplicity of the frescoes in the catacombs beneath Rome, that were tantamount to prayers and offerings for the salvation of the deceased.

The sacred folk art of these people, in all its deceiving simplicity, best portrays the awful impact of Christ's pilgrim-

age and His agonising ascent to Calvary in a fashion captured perhaps only by Gruenewald.

Penitente art represents the honest uninhibited religious expression of a simple people steeped in a deep religious tradition, a people who have suffered the terrible isolation and the hostile environment of the high plateaus the Sangre de Cristos, with their tenuous existence dependent upon a short and fitful growing season, a people whose life and death were fused in a fatal alliance, making it easy to identify themselves with the suffering dying Christ.

Plastic forms of religious representation known as santos divided into three general categories. These include tin frames in which religious pictures are placed.

They are usually made from tin cans, many of which retain the imprint of the manufacturer of the product. The intricate designs were fashioned by using leather, as well as those used in the manufacture of Indian jewelry. They can be quite ornate, and to the untrained eye resemble silver.

The pictures that were placed in them were taken from prayer books, and many of them were gravure pictures brought to New Mexico by the traders over the Santa Fe Trail. Many of these were printed in France and many, and many by Currier and Ives, who printed them especially for trade with the inhabitants of Spanish America. The most famous subjects represented were Christ on the Cross, The Virgin of Guadalupe, and the Santo Niño.

Other santos were painted on wood coated with gesso, and mostly vegetable dyes for color. These are called retas.

Figures in the round are known as bultos, the highest expression of which are the Cristos, almost life sized figures of Christ used in the processions and other ceremonies. They are dramatic and imposing. In the making of

p- Cristo, the Penitente santero poured forth the total of his emotions and artistic genius.

x- The Penitentes created an art form designed to provoke feel-
us ing, to achieve identity, and to assure transcendence, to
a- live with, to share in their sufferings and their joys; an
of art form in its most noble manifestation.

le- "The Russian icon is one of the highest forms of artistic
ple expression in the world . . . It is a unique phenomena
lk- in the history of painting. They bequeathed to us price-
nd less gifts whose beauty is filled with a profound mean-
ing.

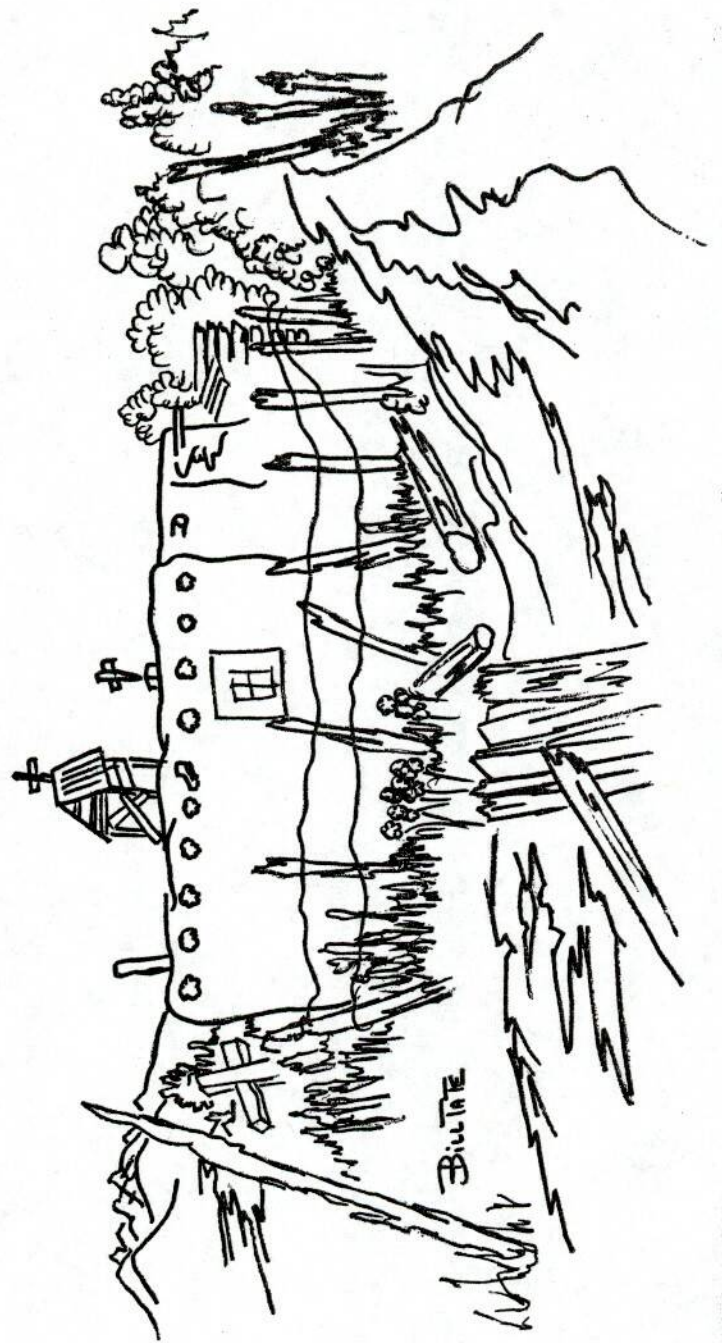
are These icons of early Russia have revealed man's own inner
the world, his purity, and nobility of soul, his readiness
for sacrifice, and the depth of his thought and feeling.

ain My generation has been lucky enough to be the first to
neir discover the real Russian icon, beneath the coats of
ies. varnish and later inscriptions which obscured it, and
vel- reveal to the world a brilliant art that enthralls us by
re- the exquisite harmony of its coloring, the easy flow of
its lines, and the deeply spiritual significance of its
imagery."

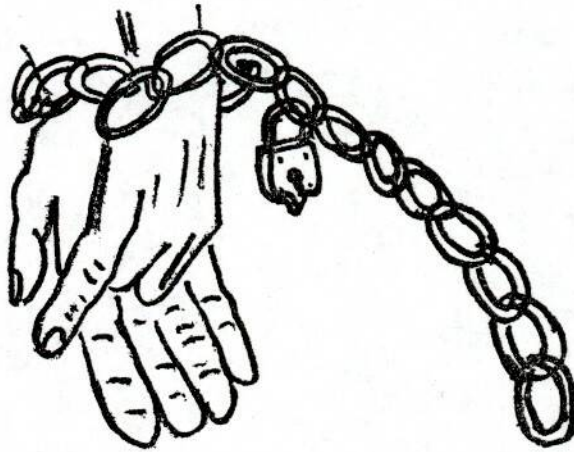
By Igor Grabar
People's Painter, USSR

old These are truths that are equally applicable to New Mexico's
ints iconography, perhaps even more so because Russia's craft,
Fe though resembling that of ours, was produced by profes-
Ger- sional painters more or less under the direction of the
hem Church, whereas ours was the free expression of the
Am- individual santero uninhibited by authority, and are the
nist honest expressions of his own inner consciousness, and
anto naive interpretations of the legends as handed down by
his own forebearers.

ising Today these beautiful and anthropomorphic pieces are find-
blos. ing their way into private homes as the prizes of collec-
t ex- tors or hidden in the dark recesses in the basements of
gures museums, while being rapidly replaced in the Moradas and
onies. the churches by plaster, plastic and chrome effigies so
f the outrageously vulgar in taste that only the priests and
members could be their apologists.



MORADA IN TRUCHAS



VII

ARCHITECTURE — THE MORADA

The architecture of the Penitentes is best expressed in the design and layout of the Morada. If it is true that architecture is the mother of the arts, best relating the nature, environment, and the purpose of a people, then the Morada is the one structure in a Spanish village that fulfills these aesthetic prerequisites.

The Penitente Morada is usually situated in a prominent location, alone, like a monument and oftentimes within the community cemetery.⁽²⁰⁾

It is easy to identify, because it is usually long and low, close to the earth. Its length usually several times its width, shaped not unlike a coffin. Its massive walls are of hand textured adobe, giving the structure a unique organic sculptured quality. It is the essence of simplicity in design.

There are seldom any windows, but if there are, they are invariably quite small, much like gun ports. Obviously they were recessed deeply into the walls to give only a minimum of light. The door, though heavily timbered, is proportionately small.

Opposite the entrance is usually a massive cross, known as a "calvario",⁽²¹⁾ a sun and snow silvered cenotaph of ancient hand adzed logs, before which outdoor rituals are performed and processions are assembled.

Unlike great cathedrals with their vaulted domes and triumphant towers designed to celebrate the victory of the risen Christ, the ascended Lord and King, presiding on the Throne of God with the earth as his footstool, with their worshipping congregations singing out Te Deums and Hallelujahs, echoing to the very heavens, the simple and silent Penitente Morada stands like a stark sarcophagus to house the Cristo, Ecce Homo, the suffering Christ of the Passion, a cimmerian chamber wherein to pray, and to contemplate the irony of His tragic life . . . and death; to identify with His suffering and sacrifice, hoping to achieve atonement for all of mankind by imitation of His tragedy. His indignities and scourging in the court of Caiaphus, His humiliation because of the vacillations of Pilate, His inexorable struggle to Calvary, the enormity and cruelty of His crucifixion, and consequent liberation by death, and His subsequent descent into Purgatorio, the rending earthquake, and the awful silence when the centurions stood vigil with their swaying lanterns during that interminable night; where there are no Easters.

The Morada was built to do with the events and artifacts that give character and meaning to that for which liturgical architecture was intended; for without tragedy there could be no triumph. It is here in the dark recesses of the Morada that a basic people have fathomed the mystery of basic faith, the genesis of Christian philosophy.

With this in mind, the Morada is architecturally the quintessence of liturgical exactitude. It is here that the mood has been established.

*The agony of
the cross*



BILL TITE

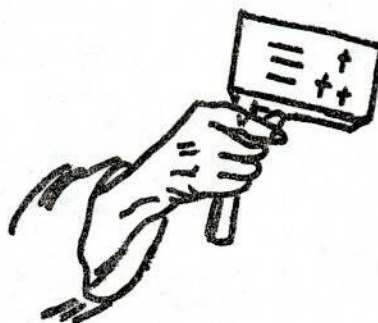
ON A HILL FAR AWAY

Madre de Dolores
 Madre de tormentos
 May diles mas
 que sentimiento
 = 1 =
 Nuestro hijo hermoso
 Nuestro hijo
 suando sangre
 hasta en el sudor
 = 2 =
 Matalla conica
 de un remedio
 lo pien que suela
 decir con rallo
 = 3 =
 Que escogida
 en tanto apuro
 lo dicen solo
 cuando a suela
 = 4 =
 Ya viene juda
 Prador pavoroso
 Con las ballenas
 para fundirlo

Cadenas duras
 Cordas mas
 Contra Dios, Santa
 del sacrilegio
 = 6 =
 Le con las manos
 Con sentimiento
 que fabricaron
 la tierra y Cielo
 = 7 =
 Hombres rufes
 hombre soberbio
 la cosa se hizo
 dando al suelo
 = 8 =
 Nueva las manos
 Con cruel intento
 a los espaldas
 Con mudos rison
 = 9 =
 al fuerte impulso
 O que tormento
 de con sus rufes
 sobre aquel suelo

O Cuellos clavos
 O fusas mas
 que tanto Cuellos
 por Dios con fusos
 = 11 =
 Tener de una
 por el otro fusos
 entre en la vida
 de Dios soberbio
 = 12 =
 Hay una mas
 con el fusos
 en el otro fusos
 cuando a Tello
 = 13 =
 Solos y golpes
 en el sacrilegio
 cuando en sangre
 de sus tormentos
 = 14 =
 Tuellos de Cello
 y entre al Consejo
 donde lo expone
 Cuellos, Cuellos

Actual Penitente Alabados, photographed from a Penitente songbook. Rezadors copy these from books of elders; thus are handed down from one to the other. Writing and verbiage remain archaic, even though modifications are made in each copying. How much present day Alabados resemble "original" Alabados is not known.



VIII

PENITENTE MUSIC

Very little of the Penitente ritual is performed without music. The Penitente's melancholy songs are heard on the wind, wafting from the Morada during the hours of the day and night, during different times of the year, and when anyone dies.

Like the Penitentes themselves, very little is known about the origins of the songs. Some say that they remind them of the old Jewish canticles, but others say that they sound much like the music heard in the mosques of Tangiers and Morocco.

The Gregorian chants are much too sophisticated and too European to be considered for attribution. Santa Teresa and San Juan de la Cruz wrote many exalted poems and hymns for the Carmelites in the 16th Century. Many of

✓ the Alabados could be the descended versions of these. The Moors of Old Castile could have influenced to a considerable degree their haunting tones. The Cantors in the worship in the Synagogues must have contributed to because they were very much a part of the religious life of Old Castile.

Every Penitente sings from a small book, much like the "time books". The novitiate upon joining the Penitents copies the songs from the book of the village rezador, and thus the songs go on and on, with the modifications made in the copying.

The principal Penitente instruments consist of flutes, clackers, matracas,⁽²⁴⁾ and occasionally a drum. The flute has been used since the earliest times to imitate the emotions of higher personages in tragedies. They are mentioned as having been used in that way in Aristotle's Poetics, and were used to accompany Pindar in the singing of odes, and for the dithyrambs of the Dionysians. The songs of the flute seem to be ammytrical to the singer. The sadder the occasion the more pronounced the dissonance. If one has ever heard the wailing of the flute of the Penitentes, it will haunt his psyche always, and call him to yearn, wherever he may be to hear it over and over again.



THE CRUCIFIXION



*¡Dí: que pases pronto,
Que camine tan ligero!
Me voy para la otra vida
Y deténme mi Dios.*