

Stained Glass Windows in St. Joseph Church

By Frank White

In our continuing series about the windows in the Church, I have had many discussions with the late Msgr. Charles Meter, who was an expert on the significance of each window. I am grateful to him for sharing his expertise so that we would have this record.

The window around the Blessed Virgin Chapel has four scenes:

(Top-across chronological order)

1. Annunciation
2. Visitation

(Bottom-across)

1. Marriage of Mary and Joseph
2. Nativity

The window above the St. Joseph Chapel also has four scenes:

(Top-across)

1. Presentation of Child in Temple
2. Joseph with child, Jesus

(Bottom-across)

1. Finding of the child, Jesus, in the temple
2. Joseph and Jesus working with an adz in the carpenter shop.

Above the choir loft is the large rose window, and below it, the four evangelists are featured for the second time, as their statues are above the main altar. Each is depicted with his symbol. The gospel writers Matthew (Man), Mark (Lion), Luke (Ox) and John (Eagle) are depicted with their quills, paper, scrolls and books. John is shown to be left handed. Note the outstanding faces of the evangelists. These are the only figures on all the windows which are identified by a written name.

I met with Msgr. Meter several times to obtain information about the windows and he would always challenge me with questions, "Did you see the Pope broadcasting on the radio?" and "Have you seen the devils coming out of their graces?"

He would talk about the windows and then embellish the description with his own thoughts. He also provided written information and gave me copies of the tapes he had made.

Msgr. told the story of a visiting priest who came into the sacristy after mass and said that the church should be called the angel church there are so many. This priest was quite observant. By Msgr. Meter's count, there are 114 images of angels or cherubs in the church: 10 in the sanctuary, 1 in the Blessed Virgin and St. Joseph Chapels, 84 (7 in the 12 windows) in the Church, each in scenes in windows on north and south sides, plus 6 stone angels. Can you find them all?

The large windows along the sides of the church alternate the background colors of red and blue. In addition, the top and bottom panels alternate in color. Those on the red windows are orange and brown; on the blue windows, they are green.

The panels in the large side windows depict the life of Christ; those on the south side depict the Church at the time of the Apostles (with the exception of the Pope on the radio). A true logical

chronological order is difficult to find. They are identified by their location' between the Stations of the Cross (SC).

SC1-SC2

The bottom panel is the coat of arms of Pope Pius XI, who was Pope at the time the Church was built. The first scene, naturally, is Adam and Eve, with apples on the tree. God's creation of our universe with the sun coming upon the first day and the bird and flowers indicate new life. Above that is the creator, God the omnipotent, holding a scepter in his hand, with crown on his head. The top panel is thought to be a scene of Mary as a child with her parents, Joachim and Anne.

SC2-SC3

The bottom scene is the flight into Egypt from Nazareth with Mary holding the baby Jesus and Joseph leading the donkey. Above that is the presentation in the temple with the baby in arms of the high priest, with Mary and Joseph present. The top is a scene of the Holy Family - not praying, but at work. Joseph, the carpenter is working on wood. Baby Jesus is carrying wood, symbolic of the future wooden cross he would carry. Mary is spinning yarn.

SC3 - SC4

The top panel is the Annunciation, showing the Angel Gabriel appearing to Mary to declare she will become the mother of Jesus. The light coming down from the left indicates the Holy Spirit in the form of a dove. The lily symbolizes Mary's purity. The middle scene is the Nativity - the birth of Jesus. The Shepherds are there (note the crook in the lower edge). They had been instructed by an angel to follow the star which took them to Bethlehem. The bottom scene shows the wisemen, the kings, bringing their gifts in their coffers. A king's crown, removed to adorn the "real king", is on the ground.

SC4-SC5

The top panel shows Christ before Pontius Pilate, who is pondering his decision. The center is the Crucifixion - the death of Jesus. Mary is there with folded hands. On the other side is the apostle, John. Above are the letters I.N.R.I. - Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews. The bottom scene is the Pieta. John is with Mary as Christ is gently placed into the tomb.

SC5-SC6

The bottom scene shows the empty tomb from which Christ has risen. The angel telling the women "He is Risen". The middle panel shows Mary Magdalen kneeling before Peter and John attempting to convince them that the tomb is empty. The top panel appears to be that of the Transfiguration, which took place before the Passion. Peter, James and John went to the mountain with Jesus. While there, Jesus' face was changed and his clothes became as bright as lightning. God the Father said "This is my Son in whom I am well pleased" .

SC6-SC7

The lower panel shows Thomas, the apostle, the doubter. He was not present when Jesus rose and said he would not believe when Christ appeared to all the apostles. Thomas put his fingers in Christ's wounds. The middle panel shows Mary Magdalen in the garden. She meets a man whom she thinks is a gardener and asks, "Where have you put him..." With that, Christ says "Mary." She replies "Rabboni" (an emphatic form of rabbi). The top Resurrection panel shows Christ appearing to the apostles in his risen glory.

SC8-SC9 (south side)

The lowest panel shows Pope Pius XI, broadcasting to all the world. Marconi, inventor of the radio, gave one of his early short wave-sets to the Vatican. Vatican Radio continues to broadcast to the world in many languages. The next scene is the Blessed Trinity Father, Son and Holy Spirit above as a dove. The angel below is the, messenger from God to man. God the Father is on the right with his scepter, as shown in the Creation scene. Next is Jesus who became Christ the King, shown with a crown and seated at the right hand of the Father. The top scene is the Ascension, the transfer of Christ's human body to heaven. The dove the Holy Spirit is below.

SC9-SC10

The lower scene is that of the Second Coming, when Christ will come again at the end of the world with trumpets blowing. The middle scene is of Christ instructing his apostles, the poor fishermen, who would later preach to the world. The top shows Christ making his first public appearance as he studies in the synagogue.

SC10-SC11

At the bottom is a scene of Paul preaching in Athens at the Parthenon. The middle panel is of Paul preaching in Damascus, shortly after his conversion. The top is a scene of Pentecost, the coming of the Holy Spirit. The rays indicate the Holy Spirit coming down on Mary and the apostles. Note the little red flames over their heads, indicating the tongues of fire.

SC11-SC12

At the bottom is the Conversion of Saul, the Jewish name for Paul, being knocked off his horse and blinded. In the middle, Christ speaks to Peter, possibly the time when Christ addressed Simon as Peter. Peter means rock in Latin, "on this Rock I build my Church". The bottom is a scene of Jesus instructing his apostles, possibly the Sermon on the Mount.

SC12-SC13

The bottom is that of Christ the King, holding a scepter indicating a king's authority, with two angels and the Star of David below. In the middle is a scene of an angel taking the souls from the flames of purgatory to heaven. The top panel is the monstrance of the Blessed Sacrament, with people praying in adoration.

SC13-SC14

At the top is Mary Magdalen washing the feet of Jesus and drying them with her hair with men looking on in wonderment. Next is a panel with people coming out of their graves with glorified bodies for the final judgement. Next is another scene out of order thought to be St. John writing the last book of the Bible, the, Apocalypse, on the Greek island of Pappos. The lowest panel is the coat of arms of George Cardinal Mundelein whose approval made the building of St. Joseph Church possible. Cardinal Mundelein dedicated the Church on September 24, 1939. The last public appearance picture of the Cardinal was taken on the walk in front of the Church. He died soon after.