

Episcopal Church of the Ascension 214 North Third Street

Adapted from a sermon on May 29, 1988, by the Rev. Thomas G. Phillips, Rector.

Begin by considering the layout of the building itself: first, the entryway known as the narthex. In very early Churches it was an area set aside for “catechumens” – those learning about Christianity but not yet baptized, and for penitents who were not allowed to join with the worshipping congregation.

We enter the back doors into the “nave” -- from the Latin “navis” for ship. The nave symbolizes the voyage of life, often called the “ark of salvation” by the early church fathers. Looking up at the beamed ceilings of many a traditional church, the nave certainly does take on the aspect of a ship’s hull turned upside down. You’ll see the ship image again when we visit First Presbyterian. The baptismal font is properly placed in the rear, signifying that baptism is the entry to the church fellowship.

The three aisles remind us of the Trinity: father, son, and holy Spirit. The center aisle encompasses the major milestones of church life: down it the children come for first communion and confirmation. Down it walks a happy bride. Down it remains are carried for the last rites of the church.

The chancel is approached by three steps, denoting the threefold virtues of faith, hope, and charity - called the “theological virtues” in traditional moral theology because they bring us into a right relationship with God, and are inspired by God’s grace in the first place.

The word “chancel” comes from the Latin “cancellus”, or lattice work, because that area was often separated from the nave by a screen--called a “rood screen” after the “Holy Rood” or crucifix placed above the entrance of the screen.

Going through the chancel we arrive at the “sanctuary”, the “holy of holies”. It is here the altar stands, and the most sacred rites of the Church are enacted. The red “sanctuary lamp” burns constantly to indicate that the sacrament is reserved in an “ambry” or safe on the south wall from whence it may be taken to communicate the sick or shut-in.

The Bishop’s throne graces the north wall of the Sanctuary, reminding us that we are an “Episcopal Church”, with the Bishop as our chief pastor. Carved into the back of the throne is the seal of the Diocese of Minnesota which includes a mitre (indicating the bishop’s authority) with a broken tomahawk and peace pipe crossed and the words “pax per sanguinem crucis” (peace through the blood of the cross), reflecting the heritage of the Minnesota diocese and the ministry of the first bishop, Henry Benjamin Whipple, among the Native American population of Minnesota.

The Ascension window over the altar is the focal point of this entire building, depicting the ascending and triumphant Lord.

The Ascension window is flanked by scenes from the life of Mary, Jesus’ mother. On the right is the “Annunciation” and on the left is the “Education of the Virgin.” Made by the Tiffany Studios of New York, the three windows together cost less than \$2,000 when they were installed in 1910.

As we move back into the nave we pass in front of the eagle lectern, which holds the Bible. The soaring flight of an eagle suggests inspiration--the experience of transcending ourselves--and so an eagle lectern points to the inspiration of the Holy Scriptures.

Looking now at the south wall’s windows:

The first window pictures the Bible on a cushion--suggesting the preciousness of Holy Writ. In the second window an anchor and a cross are added to the Bible. The anchor is symbolic of the hope and stability which faith brings to life.

The third window combines a cross and a crown. The crown is emblematic of victory, and with the cross we are reminded of the price paid by Christ for his victory.

The symbol on the top of the fourth window is of the Holy Eucharist: note the grapes for the wine, and the grain for the bread. And lest there be any mistake — a chalice and host are also pictured.

Lower in the fourth window is an hour glass, indicative of time and especially the brevity of life. The acacia leaves are symbolic of everlasting life.

The last window on the south side depicts Noah’s ark--which like the nave itself points to the church as “the

ark of salvation”.

The semi-rose window in the rear, given by the children of Ascension in 1888, appropriately pictures Jesus with children. Note how the disciples are trying to restrain the children, which provoked Jesus’ response, “Let the little children come to me”.

The lamb on the right hand corner refers both to the “Passover Lamb” of the Old Testament, and to Jesus Christ, who for Christians is “our passover, sacrificed for us!” The banner which the lamb bears symbolizes Jesus’ joyful victory over death. The tablets of the Ten Commandments are pictured in the left hand corner.

On the north wall, starting at the rear:

The first window suggests the authority given by Jesus to his disciples to “forgive and retain sins”-- the keys of the Kingdom, one opening the door of Heaven, one closing it through excommunication.

The next window features a pelican with her young. She is plucking open her breast and feeding her young with her own flesh and blood. In times of famine it was thought that a female pelican sacrificed herself to keep her young alive. And so the pelican is suggestive of Jesus’ death on the cross so that we might live, and of the Eucharist by which we feed on his body and blood.

The next window was given by a local chapter of the Knights Templar in 1888 in memory of their dead. It carries numerous Masonic symbols which also have some Christian significance. Notable are the words on the arms of the maltese cross: *In hoc signo vinces* – “In this sign conquer” – referring to the dream which the Roman Emperor Constantine had assuring him of victory over his enemies if the cross of Christ went before him. Constantine had crosses put on the shields of his warriors and won the battle. In gratitude, Christians were granted toleration in 313 A.D. by the edict of Milan.

The next window is decorated with the very common Christian monogram “Alpha and Omega”--the first and last letters of the Greek alphabet. It comes from references in the Book of Revelation to Jesus Christ being the “Alpha and Omega”, the beginning and the ending of all things.

On the last window is an equilateral triangle--symbol of the Trinity. The three equal, but distinct sides tell of the equality, but distinct character of the three persons of the Trinity, while the unity of the whole suggests the one divine nature.

Church of St. Michael (Catholic) 611 South Third Street

Built 1875

Adapted from a tour created by parishioner Marilyn Keating:

Our Stained Glass Windows

The stained glass windows in the Church of St. Michael were probably imported from England. We have little information of where or by whom these windows were made. Nor do we know how much they cost or when they were installed in the Church. A photo of St. Michael’s from 1874 suggests that the windows were in place at that time. Individuals knowledgeable on stained glass detected a hint of the English in the grisaille mesh pattern that gives the windows a somewhat three-dimensional feeling. The lines and squares of the pattern are uneven, indicating they were done by hand. At that time, United States glass makers tended to use machine made stencils for their background patterns. This produced patterns that were more uniform and consistent, but also less lively. There is also clear English influence on the grisaille geometric patterns and foliage depicted in the windows. Add the fact that there were no stained glass manufacturers in Minnesota during this period, and it is likely that the windows did indeed originate in England.

Start your tour at the St. Michael statue in the back of the Church. Note that there are four recessed stained glass windows on both the north and south walls. All eight windows have two “lancets.” Lancets are the tall thin column-like windows separated only by a wooden molding. Centered on top of the two lancets is a circular window called a “rondel.” It is these top rondels that we will be talking about first. They contain symbols specific to the Catholic faith. They are intended draw the viewers’ minds and memories away from everyday life and remind them of Christ’s life, teaching, and example. They may also refer to scenes from the Bible, or important turning points in the

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history of Christianity.

North Wall

Walk up the center aisle or left side aisle. On your left the first rondel contains three instruments used in Christ's crucifixion: 1) the spear with which Christ was pierced causing blood and water to pour from his side; 2) the sponge with which he was offered vinegar to drink; and 3) the three nails by which he was affixed to the cross. Two of the nails were driven through his hands, and one was used on his feet. Christ's feet were, and are, often shown with one foot positioned on top of the other. In those portrayals a single nail was driven through both feet.

The second rondel contains a gold crown with white jeweled peaks. Gold is a reference to God and divinity. White is a symbol of innocence, glory, and virginity. This type of crown, gold with white jewels, was called a Crown of Victory which Christ merited by his passion, death and resurrection.

Our third rondel shows the Lamb sitting upon the "Book of Life" wherein are the names of all those who are saved. He is also sitting on a scroll from which dangles seven seals. The Lamb, Christ, holds under his right front leg the Banner of Victory gained through His death and resurrection. According to the Book of Revelations, 5:12-6:1, only the Lamb who was slain is worthy to open the scroll and its seals, revealing prophesies about the future of mankind and the church. Note that the colors of the banner are gold and white, the colors worn by the Pope, Christ's Vicar.

The fourth rondel contains the letters IHS: This is a symbol that can have several meanings. It is the first three letters in Greek for the name Jesus, and is basically a monogram meaning Jesus. But as noted at Ascension, is also the beginning letters of "In Hoc Signo," part of Emperor Constantine's dream.

St. Dominic Window

Among the interior decoration here at St. Michael's there are three large painted windows all in the Gothic Revival style that attract the most interest and questions. Looking at the foreshortened left, or north, transept wall, there is a window given by the Society of the Holy Rosary, a parish organization. In it Mary, with Jesus on her lap, is placing the Rosary into the hand of

St. Dominic. Why do we believe this is Dominic when the Dominican colors are black and white? It is the dog holding the torch. This particular symbol is specific to Dominic. It refers to an account given by St. Dominic's mother of a dream she experienced while pregnant with the future saint. She dreamt she gave birth to a dog with a torch in its mouth, which went out into the world and set it on fire.

The red and green colors of Dominic's clothing are symbolically representative of his life's achievements. Red depicts the fire of love; green, the fecundity shown in the growth and greatness of the Dominican Order. With the rosary as a powerful aid from heaven the Dominicans spread the faith throughout the world.

This picture has other color symbols. Note the gold sky behind Mary; representative of heaven and the divine. Earth, on the other hand, is depicted as dark, dirty and unappealing; a place where there is sin and death. With his right hand Dominic accepts the rosary from heaven. With his left hand he points to earth where he will proclaim its power.

Sanctuary

Now that you are at the front of the Church we will examine the many symbols found in the sanctuary. Look up at the rounded marble arches that frame the altar. Just above the columns on each side are winged creatures representing the four evangelists. These are the men who wrote the Gospels: Matthew, Mark, Luke and John.

Starting at the top of the left hand column and moving horizontally across the framed area there is:

Matthew symbolized as a man. It was he who emphasized Christ's humanity. He begins his gospel with a detailed account of Christ's human lineage.

Mark is represented as a Lion. He traveled with Peter to Rome where he wrote his gospel for the Roman gentiles. Mark highlighted Christ's power and dignity by emphasizing His miracles. His gospel has been called 'The Gospel of Miracles'.

Moving directly across to the right side of the altar we find:

Luke depicted as an Ox. The ox was a sacrificial animal, and Luke's gospel begins with the sacrifice of

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Zechariah. Later, Christ will become the sacrificial Lamb.

John is the Eagle that soars upward. John dwells on Christ's divinity.

Matthew and John, the two evangelists who were also apostles, may be seen with their apostolic symbols in other settings. Matthew would carry a purse; John, a chalice with a serpent around it base.

The Seven Sacraments

You may have already noted the seven symbols for the seven sacraments gracing the inner marble arch. Starting above the lion of St. Mark they are:

- **Baptismal Font:** The font represents rebirth in water and the Holy Spirit.
- **Penance:** We see here the same key image as at Ascension. "I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven." Matt: 16: 9.
- **Confirmation:** The Holy Spirit here is symbolized as a dove.
- **The Eucharist:** This greatest of Catholic sacraments is portrayed as a host and chalice and is given the position of highest dignity in the center and above all the other sacraments.
- **Marriage:** Two hands joined symbolizing the union of husband and wife.
- **Priestly Ordination:** The stole symbolizes the priest's dignity and spiritual powers to consecrate and forgive sins. It also symbolizes the yoke of Christ.
- **Extreme Unction or The Sacrament of the Sick**
This symbol shows a repository for blessed oils with the initials O I on its exterior. The latter stands for 'Oleum Infirmorum' and refers to the olive oil blessed by the bishop of a diocese for use in the Sacrament of Anointing. The sacrament provides forgiveness of sins and a spiritual strengthening to face the illness or impending death.

Michael and Gabriel

Look now at the Angels on either side of the altar. It is hard not to recognize St. Michael and St. Gabriel.

Turn left or north to the statue of Michael. He holds a sword to the head of Satan in a battle described in the Book of Revelations 12: 9. In this citation Satan is referred to as "the dragon, the old serpent which is the devil and Satan." Look carefully toward the bottom of the statue, and you will see the sculptors' representation of dragon wings. Just under the statue is the symbol most often connected with St. Michael, the scales of justice. He is often portrayed as weighing in judgment the souls of the dead.

Under the column nearest to St. Michael and next to the marble altar are four letters, I C and X C. The top two letters, I C are the first and last letters of the name 'Jesus' in Greek. The lower set of two letters, X C, are the first and last letters of 'Christ' in Greek.

Now look to your right at the statue of Gabriel, the Archangel of the Annunciation. Here there are many symbols of Mary to whom Gabriel carried his message. In his hand he holds lilies, flowers honoring Mary's purity. The fact there are three lilies also suggests the Trinity. Just below the statue is a fleur-de-lis, a type of lily that denotes royalty. It is meant to honor Mary as Queen of Heaven. Below the column between St. Gabriel and the marble altar is the familiar PX denoting Christ.

While you're at it look high into the wooden supports under the nave. A single star is a symbol of Mary's virginity. We will see further evidence of Mary's presence later.

Marble Altar

The marble altar where the tabernacle now rests is the second main altar used at St. Michael's. It arrived in 1936-1937, and continued in use until 1964. Our last symbols here in the sanctuary are the mosaics on its front wall. They all refer to the Old Testament.

To the left you will recognize the Ten Commandments. The three commandments on the left are those which pertain to our relationship with God. The seven commandments on the right are the commandments ordering our relationship with each other.

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The large circular piece in the center represents Melchizedek, a precursor of Christ. He is both king and priest and offers the thanksgiving sacrifice for Abram's victory in battle using the unusual elements of bread and wine. Melchizedek thus foreshadows Christ both in what he was, and in his unique offering. This is an apt symbol to grace an altar. In the mosaic Melchizedek is garbed in Old Testament clothes. Those who would be Abram's followers are outfitted like knights from the Middle Ages. We are not sure why.

This burning lamb mosaic represents the story of Abraham's willingness to sacrifice his son Isaac in obedience to God's command. The Old Testament story tells that the substitute for Isaac was a ram, a male sheep, who was caught in the bushes by its horns. The depiction in this mosaic is a lamb, a young sheep; perhaps in an attempt to more directly foreshadow the Christ, "Lamb of God" whose sacrifice is repeated in every Mass.

Reigning over the sanctuary, at the very top of the arches framing the altar you can see the Alpha and Omega symbol referring to God the Son. It is based on Revelations 1:8, where it is written, "I am the Alpha and the Omega says the Lord God, who is, who was, and who is to come."

South Wall

Look at the foreshortened south transept wall. The St. Vincent de Paul Conference donated a window of St. Vincent holding an infant. The child is not Christ as is indicated by the lack of a halo. Note the child's dirty clothing and its weary facial expression. This is one of the many poor and needy for whom St. Vincent dedicated his life. Look at the arch surrounding the picture then let your eyes move up the arch wall to the second tier of glass above St. Vincent. Note how St. Vincent has been subtly put in a context suggestive of a church. The church spires end in Fleur-de-lis: again Mary. Adding to Mary's unseen presence is the profusion of lilies in the vase of flowers above St. Vincent's head and in the side light decorations. Do these Mary symbols look familiar? You saw the exact same background when you studied the painting of St. Dominic.

South Wall

Turning to the remaining windows on the South wall

one can see that the geometric patterns and foliage are seemingly mirror images of the window designs directly across the Church in the north wall. And a mirror image is what they are supposed to be. This is not totally accurate, however. The hand-made stencils tend to show small differences in the flowers and leaves which make the windows an even more interesting study for the sharp-eyed.

Look for a moment at the rondels in the south wall windows. Many of the Christian symbols used in church rondels in the late 19th Century were sufficiently universal that most all Christian denominations could find them suitable to their needs. The crown of thorns, the dove signifying the Holy Spirit, and the cross on the south wall are representative of this category. There were exceptions, however. The monstrance at the top of the St. Dominic window would be more specifically Catholic and would rarely be found in Protestant churches.

The fourth rondel next to the choir loft represents a gold incenser sending up to God the prayers of the saints. This symbol comes from the "Book of Revelations" 8: 3-4: "Another angel came and stood at the altar with a golden censer; and he was given much incense to mingle with the prayers of all the saints.... and the smoke of the incense rose with the prayers of the saints from the hand of the angel before God. Then the angel took the censer and filled it with fire from the altar and threw it on the earth; and there were peals of thunder, voices, flashes of lighting and an earthquake."

In the back of the church hidden in the choir loft at the top of a lancet (not easily noted because it is obscured by the stairway to the loft) is a golden shield emblazoned with a stylized silver cross. Of particular interest are the handles and partial shaft of two swords shown at the upper corners of the shield.

St. Michael Front Window

Above the front entrances to St. Michael's is the third large Gothic Revival Window containing three paintings. Concealed behind the pipe organ installed in 1983, these paintings are now best seen from the outside when lit up at night. On the left or north lancet, there is a guardian angel guiding a child. This child may represent us. The child is barefoot and his right foot has stepped into the center of a large partially coiled snake. The snake is looking at 'us' as it

flicks its forked tongue. With his right hand the angel guides the child forward. Note the child's index finger is pointing trustingly at the angel and his left hand is over his heart. Similarly, the angel's hand points to heaven. This latter symbol is reinforced by the golden opening in the sky, symbolic of heaven and the divine which is behind and highlighting the angel's hand. This original window was a gift of The Crusaders, a parish organization in the 19th century.

On the right or south lancet St. Michael is again pictured as thrusting the devil down to earth as described in the Book of Revelations noted earlier. In this biblical passage the devil is referred to as a dragon and is here again shown with dragon wings. But in this picture we also see his claw like toes and fingers. Also note the fire suggesting hell coming up from below and the generally unappealing terrain. In contrast to the devil's distorted features Michael is depicted, as he often is, with a very peaceful expression suggesting that he is a heavenly creature.

At the highest point of this Gothic window, above the two angel lancets, is a rondel which encloses a close-up painting of Christ's head and shoulders as He carried His cross. The wood of the cross is coarse and grainy. His burden is heavy and in His eyes lifted to heaven we come to recognize the agony of heart, soul, and body He endured for us.

First Presbyterian Church 6201 Osgood Avenue North

Built 1969

Adapted from the building dedication program:

As you enter the sanctuary your attention is drawn to the art glass in the north and south gables. These windows were drawn and completely executed by August Molder, who was artist in residence at Augsburg College in Minneapolis. Molder was a refugee from Estonia with degrees from the University of Tartu in Estonia. The theme, "Come Follow Me," dominates the north window, and "Go, Serve" the south. You may note, however, an interwoven portrayal of the entire thought in each of the gables. The artist encourages you to interpret this artwork as it has most meaning to you. If your initial response is purely reaction to the beautiful colors, this too is symbolic, for the joyous, vibrant colors are intended to be an invitation to non-Christian as well as those already a part of the church, to the young, and also other ages.

The north window (on your right as you stand facing the pulpit) reads from right to left as we see the fishermen being called from their nets by Christ to become "fishers for people". Matthew, the tax collector, sits before Christ and is called as one of the 12 disciples. The living water flows before this group who follow.

Note the ship in the center extending across several panels. This long-time symbol is the people of God (the Church) as they sail the seas of life. Christ taught from a boat in the Sea of Galilee, was with his disciples whom you also see in this boat.

The bold royal colors in front of the ship contain the first two Greek letters in "Christ."

The lighthouse at the left symbolizes Christ showing the way, guiding with His Light. The hands above and below the lighthouse are beckoning, receiving, leading all who would come.

Across the lower portion of the window are many fish. Early Christians, particularly those during the time of persecution, used this as a sign of their faith in Christ. The Greek word for fish, "Ichthus," was used as an acrostic for Jesus Christ, Son of God, Saviour.

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The doves hover overhead. We are reminded of Christ's baptism and the Holy Spirit going out with power and peace.

At the apex of the window curved lines with joyful colors remind us of the high reward of eternal life given those who would "Come, Follow Me."

Turning to the south window we have the theme of "Go, Serve." Christ is the servant Lord. All of life is seen as being under the Lordship of Christ.

To the left of center is a large cross. Repeatedly, Jesus said, "Let those who would come after me deny themselves, take up their cross and follow me." To the right of this cross is the "River of Life" with many people reaching up to receive from it. The "Tree of Life" is seen in the upper right portion of the window. The fruit is accessible to everyone. Its rich variety is offered us in life and it bears on and on in constant productivity.

In the second row and the panel to the right of center is an example of the servant Lord. When the disciples argued about who was the greatest, Jesus took a pitcher of water, a basin and a towel and washed their feet. Jesus said, "It shall not be so among you; but whoever would be great among you must be your servant, and whoever would be first among you must be your slave; even as the Son of man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many." (Matt. 20:26-28) "If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example, that you also should do as I have done to you." (John 12:14-15)

As we think of Christ being the Lord of all of life we think of him as Lord of each one's occupation. In the lower right the healing arts and occupations of social concerns are depicted even as Christ when asked about his being the Messiah responded, "...the blind receive their sight, the lame walk, lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, the poor have good news preached to." (Luke 7:22) Jesus also said, "...the one who believes in me will also do the works that I do; and greater works than these will one do, because I go to the Father." (John 14:12)

Just above the healing scene we see the St. Croix River with many logs afloat. As Stillwater has long been

known for its lumbering industry so today a great many still work with wood in diverse ways as the Lord creatively leads them. Added hours of leisure find the river beckoning. The Lord provides and rules over these hours as well.

Above this is a painter's palette and a harp representing the visual and performing arts.

Opposite this is the symbol of the atom, reflecting America's intense interest in science and space when the windows were created in 1969, again depicted as under the lordship of Christ.