

The Stained Glass and Statuary of Saint Margaret Mary Church

Algonquin, Illinois

History of Stained Glass

The use of stained glass as part of the inspiring dimension of the Church architecture dates back in our Christian traditions as early as the third or fourth century after Christ. These early windows were similar to those of Arabian windows done with small pieces of translucent glass to admit light yet display some form of design. With the movement from the heavier Romanesque architecture to the more slender, graceful designs of the Gothic church, came the larger, more brilliant pieces of stained glazing. The 12th and 13th centuries have been designated as the "Golden Age of Stained Glass".

Our Window Designers

Our windows at St. Margaret Mary are the design of the Crosby Willet Studios of Philadelphia. This internationally renowned firm was founded in 1898. It came into worldwide prominence in 1910 when the Willet Studios won a special international competition for the design and installation of windows at the West Point Military Academy Chapel. Twenty-six studios entered the competition, including the studio of Louis B. Tiffany of New York. Willet was the winner and over the next 66 years installed two window sections a year. Some of Willet's more well known installations include the College Chapels of Princeton, Ohio State, and Northwestern University. Moreover, they include the window in the National Cathedral, the Smithsonian Institute, Washington D.C.; St. John the Divine Cathedral, and the former chapel of the United Nations Building, New York City; Grace Episcopal Cathedral, and St. Mary's Catholic Cathedral, San Francisco.

The Corporal Works of Mercy

As one approaches the entrance to Saint Margaret Mary Church, one is met by the largest panel of stained glass in the building. It measures some 8' by 24'. The third panel depicts Christ calling us, his disciples, to Himself. The Lord welcomes us who have been struggling to fulfill His mission. That mission includes the corporal works of mercy. The inviting Christ is surrounded by six vignettes of these charitable deeds of mercy as proclaimed in the gospel according to Matthew 25: 31-40 (Feed the hungry, give drink to the thirsty, clothe the naked, welcome the stranger, visit the imprisoned, and comfort the sick).

Later, as we leave the church, Christ stands there challenging us to live out these six injunctions that we might be assured our place in the His Flock as Good Shepherd on the final day.

The Clerestory

Upon entrance to the church nave itself, one immediately is aware of the beautiful ribbon of stained glass surround the entire building. This section of glass is known as the clerestory. These 64 panels each

measure some 2'x4'. They depict the 5 Glorious, 5 Sorrowful and 5 Joyful mysteries of the Most Holy Rosary.

The Joyful Mysteries

The Joyful Mysteries on the west and north walls, like the Glorious Mysteries to the south and west, are fashioned in warmer, earth tones.

The Annunciation

The Joyful Mysteries begin on the northwest portion of the church. The first panel depicts the ANNUNCIATION (the Virgin Mary is on the left being asked to be the Mother of God by the Angel Gabriel to her right.)

The Visitation

The second panel portrays the event of the VISITATION (the Blessed Mother is pictured with staff in her hand on the right having journeyed to the home of her cousin Elizabeth on the left in the doorway of her cottage.)

The Birth of the Lord

The third panel shows the Nativity scene, THE BIRTH OF THE LORD (Mary is on the left and Joseph on the right looking down upon the Baby Jesus in the manger.)

The Presentation in the Temple

The fourth panel is the PRESENTATION IN THE TEMPLE (Mary on the left and Joseph on the right have brought the 40 day old Child Jesus to the Temple in accord with the law for purification. The holy man Simeon has long awaited the coming of the Messiah. He holds the child Jesus and blesses God in his famous canticle "*Nunc Dimittis*" i.e. "Now Lord, you may dismiss your servant in peace." Simeon foretells Mary that her heart will be pierced with the sword of sorrow.)

The Finding in the Temple

The fifth panel portrays the FINDING IN THE TEMPLE (Jesus, now 12 amazes teachers on the left with His intelligence and questions. Mary and Joseph rejoice in finding Him on the third day.)

The Sorrowful Mysteries

The panel of windows on the east wall is done in much more somber colors portraying a sense of sorrow and pain. These are the Sorrowful Mysteries of the Rosary.

The Agony in the Garden

The first panel in the northeast corner shows the AGONY IN THE GARDEN (five of the Disciples are shown in two panels on the left sound asleep. Jesus kneeling in prayer, asks that the Father

take away the cup of suffering presented before Him in the hands of the angel but Jesus adds “not my will but your will be done.”)

The Scourging at the Pillar

The next storied panel portrays the SCOURGING AT THE PILLAR (one can see the long, cruel whip in the hand of the soldier on the left.)

The Crowning with Thorns

The third mystery portrays the CROWING WITH THORNS (the soldier on the left is about to place the terrible crown of thorns on the head of Jesus. The soldier on the right is mocking Him with a fake scepter. Through the three regal colors of royal red, purple, and gold, the artist portrays our countering that mockery by our acclaiming Jesus as the Kind of Kings.

The Carrying of the Cross and the Crucifixion

The fourth station, THE CARRYING OF THE CROSS and the fifth station, the CRUCIFIXION display Jesus in the darkest hour. Nevertheless, noted the strain of unquenchable hope present, depicted by the streaks of gold near the base.

Glorious Mysteries

As one looks at the south wall of the clerestory lass one can see again the warmer earth tones as we come upon the Glorious Mysteries.

The Resurrection of Jesus

The RESURRECTION OF JESUS (Jesus is stepping from the graver, His left foot not yet ascended from the tomb.)

The Ascension

The second mystery is the ASCENSION forty days later (Jesus, His arms outstretched, is about to be taken to His heavenly Father’s home, saying good-bye to His disciples surrounding Him.)

The Decent of the Holy Spirit

The third storied window depicts the great feast of PENTECOST (50 days after Easter- the birthday of the Church begins with the coming of the Holy Spirit in the form of tongues of fire shown over the head of each of those present. The Blessed Mother stands in the middle of the scene.)

The Assumption of Mary

The fourth mystery proclaims the feast of the ASSUMPTION (Mary, the Mother of Jesus, at the end of her life is taken up body and soul, to heaven.)

The Coronation of Mary as Queen of Heaven and Earth

The Fifth Glorious Mystery depicts the CORONATION OF MARY AS QUEEN OF HEAVEN. Parishioners are heartily invited to pray their rosary, using the windows as a source of reflection of these sacred, saving events.

Trapezoidal Windows

The two large trapezoidal windows to the left and right of the Sanctuary area put us in touch with the events at the beginning and end of Jesus' public life.

Baptism of Jesus

The window on the left, forming a backdrop for the Baptismal Font, portrays the scene of Jesus, on the right, being baptized by His cousin, John the Baptist in the river Jordan.

Road to Emmaus

The trapezoidal window to the right tells the story of the Disciples of Emmaus on Easter Sunday evening. They had not recognized Jesus as He walked along with them on the road to Emmaus but when they invited Him to have supper with them, they "recognized Him in the breaking of the bread." Jesus is portrayed at the table with them; note the loaf of bread and cup of wine on the table projecting this beautiful Eucharistic setting.

St. Margaret Mary encountering Jesus

A truly gorgeous piece of art is the depiction of Saint Margaret Mary encountering Jesus Christ, found in the exit door in the northeast corner of the Church. Jesus reveals to this saintly French nun in the 17th century His Sacred Heart, on fire with love for His people.

Windows in the meditation Garden portraying sacred actions of the Chapel

When one enters the Meditation Garden surrounding the Sacred Heart Chapel one finds the final stained glass panels. This window is done in symbols to portray the Sacred Actions of the Chapel setting. The two panels at the top show the Wheat and Grapes used to make the Bread and Wine for the Mass celebrated in the Chapel. The lower panel on the right shows the Keys of the Kingdom of Heaven given to Saint Peter and his fellow apostles on Easter Sunday night. These stand for the power to forgive sin which occurs in the Reconciliation Room of the Chapel. The window to the left contains the symbol of the incense Container with the perfumed smoke rising in praise to God. Above it is the *Chi Rho* sign, depicting the first two letters of the Greek word for "Christ." This tells the story of our devotion for the Blessed Sacrament reserved in the Eucharistic Chapel. We come to adore the Lord and send forth our prayers of praise and thanksgiving heavenward like cloud of sweet smelling incense.

Our Hope for you

It is our hope that these lovely windows, depicting some of the most important events in the life of Jesus, his mother, and friends will serve as a source of inspiration, comfort and peace for all who view them.

Statuary of St. Margaret Mary Church

The Statuary Designers

The statuary, designed specifically for our church and chapel. Is the work of artist, I. George Botti, of the Botti Studio of Architectural Arts, Evanston, Illinois. Mr. Botti taught art for many years at Community College of New York before founding his present studio. George, his wife and two sons, all degreed artists, and some ten other artisans made up the staff of the studio which is open to the public. Besides his work as a sculptor, Mr. Botti also does commissions for stained glass, murals, and mosaics. Moreover, Mr. Botti has attained an international reputation as a painter, exhibiting his works in galleries throughout the U.S.A. as well as London and Rome.

The Stations of the Cross

All the statuary has been carved from bass or lindenwood, with Swedish oil applied to bring out the natural finish. In viewing the Stations of the Cross on the north wall, one cannot but marvel at the intricacy of the workmanship yet appreciate the naturalness of the wood grain.

The Holy Family

The life -size Holy Family statue, amid the greener against the west wall, reminds us that this special family is our model, inspiration, and source of strength. We bring flowers at various seasons and during certain times such as weddings, special feasts, and funerals to express our admiration, devotion and appreciation to Jesus, Mary, and Joseph.

Saint Margaret Mary's apparition of Jesus

In the meditation garden, enshrined against the south wall is a lovely bas-relief, some 5' x 4'. It portrays the apparition of Jesus revealing His Sacred Heart to Saint Margaret Mary in the garden of her convent. This splendid expression of faith invites us to honor the Sacred Heart of Jesus in this chapel dedicated to Him and to appreciate and emulate the holiness of the patrons of our parish, Margaret Mary Alcoque.

Parting Thoughts

May the Lord God grace us to know, love and serve Him better through the inspiration these beautiful works of art afford us.

