

MATER DEI CHAPEL

Stained Glass Windows | Symbols and Explanations

With the crucifix at the front, begin in the sanctuary, facing the right side, moving left to right:

Window #1

- Rex Gloria
King of Glory
- Latin Cross Inside an Oval Archway
The oval shaped archway, or vesica, represents Mary's womb, from which Christ came, the cross signifies Christ. Together they represent the birth of Christ.

Window #2

- Gladiolus
This flower represents the incarnation, the word made flesh. The green leaves symbolize survival and renewal; they are emblematic of the Savior.
- Anchor Cross
This symbol was carried over from the days of persecution, before Constantine. Early Christians had to conceal their religious practices; the anchor was their disguised sign of the cross. It was symbolic of Hope in Jesus Christ, "this hope we have, as a sure and firm anchor of the soul ... "
(Hebrews 6:19)

Window #3

- Circle
The circle is eternal without ending; this is symbolic of eternal existence.
- Agnus Dei
Lamb of God
- Lamb
This is the symbol of Jesus, taken from the gospel passage that proclaims Jesus as the Lamb of God.

Window #4

- **Circled Joined to the Latin Cross**
The Latin cross has a longer upright than a crossbar; it resembles a person with arms outstretched. It was chosen because it represented atonement in Jesus' life and his resurrection. Joined with the circle, this symbolizes Jesus' eternal existence.

Window #5

- **Lux Mundi**
Light of the World
- **Crown of Thorns**
This is known as the mocking crown, symbolic of humiliation and defeat which ultimately gave way to Christ's glory in his resurrection.

Facing the left side of the sanctuary, moving left to right:

Window #6

- **Chalice and Host**
The host is a flat round piece of unleavened bread which is symbolic of the manna given to the Jews in the desert. Its name comes from the Latin word "hostia" meaning victim. The chalice is the cup of salvation, the source of never ending sustenance. When the host is shown above the chalice, it symbolizes the sacrifice of Christ upon the cross.
- **Grapes**
This fruit is used to make the Eucharistic wine and is symbolic of the blood of Christ and his sacrifice; Christ called himself the "true wine" (John 15:1-8).
- **Wheat**
This symbolizes bread, the staff of life from which abundant blessings flow.

Window #7

- **IC XC**
These are the first and last letters of the Greek word for Jesus.
NI KA
This is the Greek word for conquers. Together the above means Jesus Christ Conquers.
- **Staff and Serpent**
The brazen serpent collided around the cross refers to John 3:14, "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of man be lifted up."

The next three windows depict a rainbow, which symbolizes Christ's throne.

Window #8

- Triangle
This is the most popular symbol of the Holy Trinity; it is usually an equilateral triangle. It represents the three equal parts of the Holy Trinity.
- Basket and Bread
The number three denotes the Holy Trinity. The bread, which contains cross marks, symbolizes Christ's sacrifice.
- Fish
Fish were used as a symbol of Christianity as a time when Christians were persecuted for their beliefs. Since fishing was a way of life, the fish was a common sight. Christians could identify each other by drawing a fish in the sand; fish were also used to point the way to Christian services in the catacombs. A single fish represents Christ, several fish represent faithful Christians.

Window #9

- Chi Rho Cross
This is the monogram of the first two letters of the Greek word for Christ: CHI (X) and RHO (P). The letters are the abbreviation for the name of Christ.
- IXOYC
This is the Greek word for "fish;" the fish was used to point the way to underground worship services at a time in history when the Christians were persecuted for their religious beliefs. The letters stand for "Jesus Christ, Son of God, Savior."

Window #10

- Water
This is a symbol of the sacrament of Baptism which was instituted by Christ. The old life is washed away and the new life is sanctified in Baptism.
- Pebbles
Early Christians and monks would gather up pebbles in the desert to use as a rosary. There are seven of these pebbles; seven is a significant number – seven tribes, seven loaves and fish, etc.

The windows within the Chapel area are dedicated to Mary, the Mother of God, and taken from the Litany.

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Window #11

- Carpenter's Angle and Hammer
This is to symbolize St. Joseph, the carpenter.
- Chi Rho Cross with the Letter "M"
Symbolizes that Mary is the "Mother of Christ."
- Scales of Justice
Mary was called the "Mirror of Justice" and Joseph was referred to as a "just" man. Scales are an emblem of the archangel Michael, regarded as guardian of the church and its members. He weighs the souls of men and women on the Last Day.
- Lilies
These flowers denote the "Mother Most Pure;" this comes from the Litany. The white, three petaled lilies symbolize purity and innocence; they are a symbol of Mary's virginity and innocence.

Window #12

- Three Intertwined Circles
Circles have no apparent beginning or end. The three circles symbolize the Holy Trinity, the eternal nature of each person in the Godhead. They are intertwined to show unity between the three Godheads.
- Three Candles
They represent Jesus, the light of the world. Three candles refer to the Holy Trinity.

Window #13

- Sunflower
This flower denotes the soul turning to Christ, just as a sunflower turns toward the sun.

Window #14

- Some symbols are used several times; this window repeats the use of the Chi Rho cross and the equilateral triangle.

Window #15

- Olive Leaves
These leaves signify the peace of God made with human beings. In the story of Noah, the dove brought back an olive branch as a sign.
- Laurel
This is a symbol for triumph; in ancient times victors were adorned with a crown of laurel leaves.

Window #16

- Chi Rho Cross Within in a Lily
This window utilizes a symbol of Mary and a symbol of Christ, one within each other, to represent that Mary is the Mother of God.
- Lamb
Used again to symbolize that Christ is the Lamb of God.

Window #17

- Heart with Inserted Dagger
“Sacred Heart of Mary” the heart is the symbol of love, the center of being, unifying life principles.

Window #18

- This is the window dedicated to St. Thomas Aquinas; there is a portrait image of St. Thomas wearing the scholarly vestments. St. Thomas was one of the great teachers of the Medieval Catholic Church. His greatest contribution to the Catholic Church was his writings. St. Thomas believed that reason was a divine gift which would be highly cherished.

Window #19

- Open Book
This symbolizes the Holy Bible, the Word of God, the open book symbolizes that the Bible is accessible throughout the most of the world. It is published in more than 1,000 languages.
- Seven Red Flames
They are used to denote the tongues of fire representative of the Holy Spirit.

With the crucifix at the front, face the left side of the Chapel, moving right to left:

Window #20

- Jesse Tree
This represents Jesus' royal genealogy. "Come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse (David's father) and a branch shall grow out of his roots." Jesse is the roots, Mary is the rod, and Jesus is the fruit.
- Single Candle
This represents Jesus, the light of the world.
- Crown
A crown is used to signify Mary, the queen of many things.

Window #21

- Tower of David
This is from the Litany of Mary. Mary is sometimes referred to as the "Tower of David."
- Mystical Rose
The "Mystical Rose" is also from the Litany to Mary. The Christmas rose survived the cold and snow of winter and bloomed at Christmas. "... despite wars which shake the whole earth, there still exists a mighty power which can shape a rose or lead shepherds to a king." The Christmas rose is a symbol for the nativity and Messianic prophesy.

Window #22

- Gates of Heaven
This is another title given to Mary in the Litany. She is the "Gate of Heaven."

Window #23

- Moon
Symbolic of Mary
- Chalice with Open Book
This represents the Blood of Christ and the Word of God, which is available to all people.

Window #24

- Morning Star
This is taken from the Litany to Mary. The five pointed star directs us to our Lord's Epiphany. It is more commonly known as the Star of Bethlehem, which symbolizes divinity, supremacy, and the eternal. The star is suggestive of a man, arms outstretched and standing, who is both true God and true man in one person.

Window #25

- **Descending Bird**
Symbolizes the Holy Spirit descending upon God's people.
- **Ark of the Covenant**
This is taken from the Litany to Mary; she was referred to as the "Ark of the Covenant" because she was the vessel which carried Jesus forth into this world for all to behold. The color purple used on the Ark signifies mourning, penitence, humility, suffering, sympathy, and fasting.

Window #26

- **Chalice with Host**
These two objects symbolize the body and blood of Christ, his sacrifice for us. The bread meets our physical needs and the Holy Eucharist meets our spiritual needs.
- **Candles**
The candles refer to the Light of the Word, Jesus and his faithful followers.

Window #27

- **Equilateral Triangle within a Circle**
The circle has no beginning or end; it stands for eternity and signifies eternal existence. The circle surrounds the triangle, which symbolizes the Holy Trinity, the three equal parts joined as one.

Window #28

- **Volumes of Closed Books**
These books were possibly used to symbolize Elizabeth Seton who founded the first native American religious community for women, the Sisters of Charity. She also opened the first American parish school, and established the first American catholic orphanage.
- **Sun**
This is a symbol of Jesus Christ; "Sun of righteousness" shall "rise with healing in its wings." Both the Son and the Sun bring light and life to the world. There is a triangle attached to one of the sun's ray representing the Holy Trinity. Through the Holy Trinity, you will find the light.

The symbolism of the windows was researched by students Vanessa Torbeck, Robert Wichman, Danette Clark, and Jeannette Jackson during the 1989-1990 academic year. They were guided by Professor William Schutzius, long-time faculty member and colleague to Sr. Augusta Zimmer.