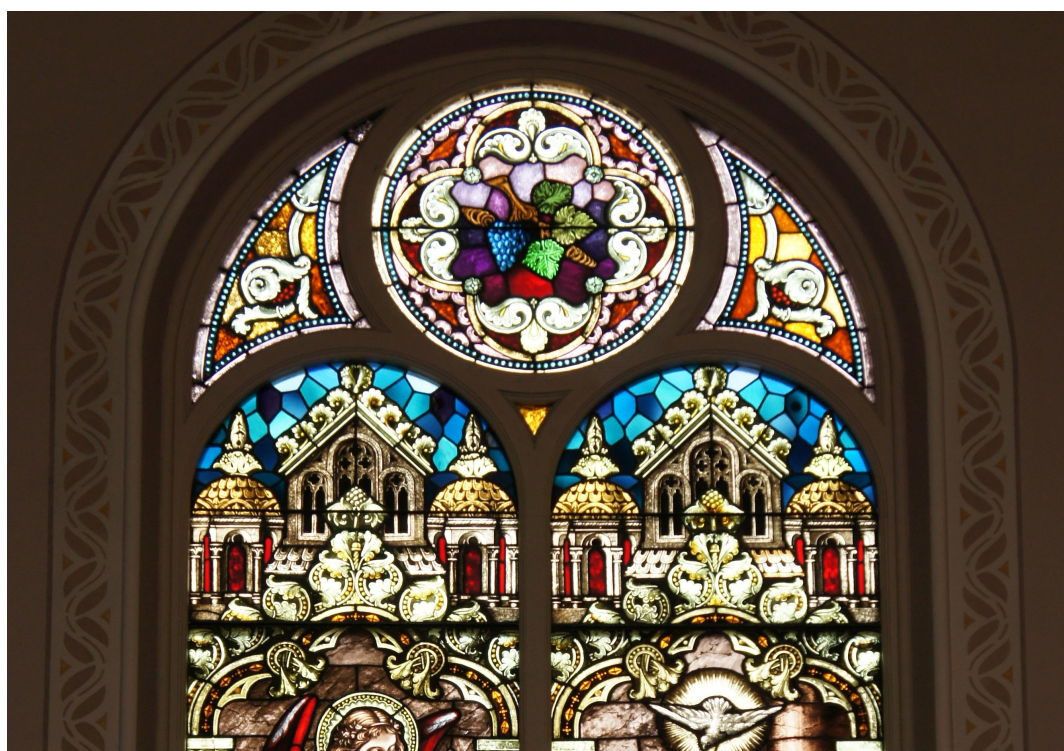


The Stained Glass Windows

St. Michael's is fortunate, at least in the minds of many of the parishioners, to possess some of the finest stained glass windows made in America. These windows were completed when artistic techniques for producing such windows were at a peak. The artists worked for the Munich Studios of Chicago. According to Bishop William Durandus of the 13th Century, the glass windows in a church are "Holy Scripture which expel the wind and rain; that is, all things hurtful, but transmit the light of the True Sun, that is God, into the hearts of the faithful."

St. Michael's windows follow the rounded Romanesque arch form. The windows themselves are recessed within their frames. Bishop Durandus said, "These are wider within than without because the mystical sense is the more ample and precedes the literal meaning."



The form of the window includes two vertical panes (or lights as they were known in medieval times) surmounted by a third light – a wheel window. The two vertical lights together present a scriptural story. The wheel light in the head of each window proper contains a symbol of the faith. The three lights in each window are a sign of the Trinity. The windows are bordered with a stencil representing leaves on a

vine. The Old Testament is full of references to the Israelite people as the Vine of Yahweh. It is a theme Christ presents in Matthew 21:33-41.

Starting at the northwest corner of the nave and proceeding clockwise, the windows and their surmounting wheel lights present the following scriptural mysteries and themes:

- 1) **The Annunciation.** The Archangel Gabriel announces the Incarnation to Mary whose posture is of humility and of obedience to the will of the Lord. The wheel light shows a grape cluster and the Vine of Life.



- 2) **The Visitation.** Mary visits Elizabeth who is expecting the birth of St. John the Baptist. The wheel light shows and hourglass with wings. This symbolizes earthly mortality. “For the hour will come when all those who are in the tombs will hear His Voice. John 5:28.



- 3) **The Nativity.** Our Lord is born in Bethlehem and both earthly shepherds and heavenly angels recognize the divinity of the Christ Child. The wheel light shows a dove, a representation of the Holy Spirit, the wings of which raise the souls of the just to the Trinity. The dove also represents innocence.



- 4) **The Holy Family.** The young Christ, Mary and Joseph live their lives in the village of Nazareth. The lilies are a sign of their lives of purity and chastity. The wheel light shows the Bible, referred to as “Holy Writ.”



- 5) **The Finding of Christ in the Temple.** Christ reveals his divine wisdom to the teachers in the temple while Mary and Joseph are perplexed. The wheel light shows the Dove with olive branch – a sign of anticipation and hope for a new world (Genesis 8:8-12). Christ's revelations in the temple indicates that His ministry is approaching.

