

Stained Glass Windows

Stained glass windows have been used for many centuries as a means of bringing light into a church building and imaging important teachings of the church. They are expressions of creative imagination, inviting believers into a deeper relationship with God. Stained glass windows are a silent proclamation of God's love for us and divine involvement in human life and human history. The glass captures light and seems to glow. It is made from the ordinary material of sand transformed by fire. Minerals may be mixed within the molten glass to create colored glass for stained glass windows. Cobalt makes shades of blue; silver creates yellow and gold tones; copper makes green and brown; the precious metal, gold, makes red. Or the glass may be painted with oxide of silver, which penetrates the glass when subjected to heat.

St. Margaret Mary Church contains beautiful sacred images and symbols in the stained glass windows. Generally, stained glass windows are either "story windows" or "symbol windows". "Story windows" depict events or persons important to our faith. Our church has only one story window, the large one on the north wall named "St. Margaret Mary and The Ministry of Jesus". The stories include St. Margaret Mary's vision of Jesus as the Sacred Heart and six events in the life and ministry of Jesus. "Symbol windows" have depictions of objects that must be interpreted to know their deeper meaning. The rest of the windows in our church are "symbol windows", or more accurately, "floating symbol windows", as each symbol is separate from the others on that window and appears to be floating on the background of plain, diamond-shaped glass. While each symbol has its own meaning, it takes on deeper meaning when considered in conjunction with the other symbols and their specific location on the window.

The original stained glass windows in St. Margaret Mary Church were designed and made in 1932 by Emil Frei Studios of St. Louis and Germany, as indicated with a small notation on the "Covenant, Judgment and Redemption" window in the choir loft. Our study of the windows began with contacting Emil Frei Studios of ST. Louis, Missouri, for a written explanation of our stained glass windows. Sadly, we learned their records had been destroyed in a fire many years prior. Several people then began the process of exploring the meaning of the symbols, attempting to understand the plan and vision of the artist of each window. Early researchers were Frances Gerber and Sister Ella Kaster. Continued and more extensive research was done by Joan Bartman, Pastoral Associate at St. Margaret Mary Parish. She was often surprised to discover the artist's creative underlying meanings of the symbols and their interrelationship as hinted by their placement. She then gave a title and wrote a descriptive explanation for each of the thirteen original stained glass windows in St. Margaret Mary Church.

In 2002, when church renovation was begun, six windows were removed, crated and stored until the expanded worship space was completed. This included additional seating in the nave, a Gathering Space, small meeting rooms and the Twin Cities Perpetual Eucharistic Adoration Chapel. At that time a new window was created and placed over the new sanctuary. The theme and ideas for the "Creation" window were formulated by the Liturgical Arts Committee of 2003: Patricia J. (Beltram) Mottard, Sue Ruthven, Jane Sawtell and Jean Olson. Artistic interpretation and construction of the stained glass window was done by Paula Roberts and the Studios of Potente in Kenosha, Wisconsin. At that time five of the six crated original windows were reinstalled in the church. Then, in 2015, the sixth original window was reconfigured by Hershey Stained Glass Studio, Milton, Iowa, and installed in the transom on the west side of the Gathering Space.

May your study of the images and messages of our stained glass windows bring you to deeper understanding and love for the Catholic Church, her history, theology, liturgy, moral teachings and faith practices.