

ST. JOSEPH'S CHAPEL, LOWER WINDOWS



The windows of the lower part of the chapel were installed in 1940, reflecting a common sequence of building for churches of the time. Patrons first commissioned the major thematic windows, followed by other decorative programs, often by a second generation of parishioners. The Church Crafts Center, New York, directed by Joseph Tierney, designed and installed the windows. They address the two sacraments most often administered in the chapel, the Eucharist and Reconciliation, the latter known at the time as the Sacrament of Penance.



Focusing on text and symbol, the imagery reflects the importance of receiving frequent communion. The practice was advocated by Ignatius as part of Jesuit spirituality. In the early years of the 20th century Pius X (1903-1914) had encouraged the practice of frequent communion in the universal church, especially by lowering the accepted age of the first communicant. Consequently, the generation of Jesuits who planned the lower cycle of windows had from childhood been a part of reforms that had brought them early into the spiritual life of the Church. The inscriptions pertaining to the Eucharist begin to the left of the altar with the acclamation of John the Baptist: *Ecce Agnus Dei* (John: 1:29: Behold the Lamb of God). John, who was baptizing in the Jordan, spoke these words when he saw Jesus coming toward him. The reference is included in the Mass after the communion of the priest and just before the communion of the faithful. The priest holds up the consecrated host, saying, "Behold the Lamb of God." The congregation answers, "Lord I am not worthy that you should come under my roof." The image presents the Lamb above the scroll (here represented as a book) with its seven seals as described in the fifth chapter of Revelations.



The inscriptions found in the following windows on this side are drawn primarily from two sources, Christ's discourse on the Eucharist in the Gospel of John and Paul's recalling of the institution of the Eucharist in the First Letter to the Corinthians. In the sixth chapter of John's Gospel, Christ preaches to the crowd of five thousand and feeds them through a miraculous multiplication of the loaves and fishes. The next day Christ crosses the Sea of Galilee, walking across the water while the Apostles struggle to row their boat against the wind. The crowd follows him to the other side and questions these miracles but he responds by speaking of his mission, of the manna sent by God to sustain the Israelites in the desert, and of himself as the true bread from heaven. *Ego sum panis vitae* (John 6:35: I am the bread of life) appears below an image of stalks of wheat.

The third window shows the communion cup with Eucharistic wafer but does not carry an inscription. The next shows the Eucharist in a monstrance (a vessel used to display the sacrament for veneration, for example in processions and the ritual of Benediction) with the phrase *Adoramus in aeternum* (Let us adore into eternity). Appropriately, this image is set beneath the Aquinas window; his hymns honoring the Blessed Sacrament were known to all users of the chapel.



Familiar from its function as part of the Consecration, the verse in the fifth window, *accipite et manducate* (Take and eat), is derived from Paul's letter to the Corinthians (I Corinthians 11:26). The image presents a fish and a basket of bread, a reference to the miracle of the loaves and fishes. Closest to the entrance, the two last windows return to the text of John's Gospel. *Caro mea vere est cibus* (John 6:56: My flesh is food indeed) appears below an image known traditionally as the Pelican in its Piety. Classical lore, continued through the middle ages, describes the pelican as a bird that when faced with danger to its young would pierce its breast and feed its offspring with its own blood. From Early Christian times this image was associated with Christ, feeding humanity with his saving blood. Finally, in the last window, the verses *sanguis meus vere est potus*

(John 6:56: my blood is drink indeed) appear with a cluster of grapes, an allusion to the sacramental wine.

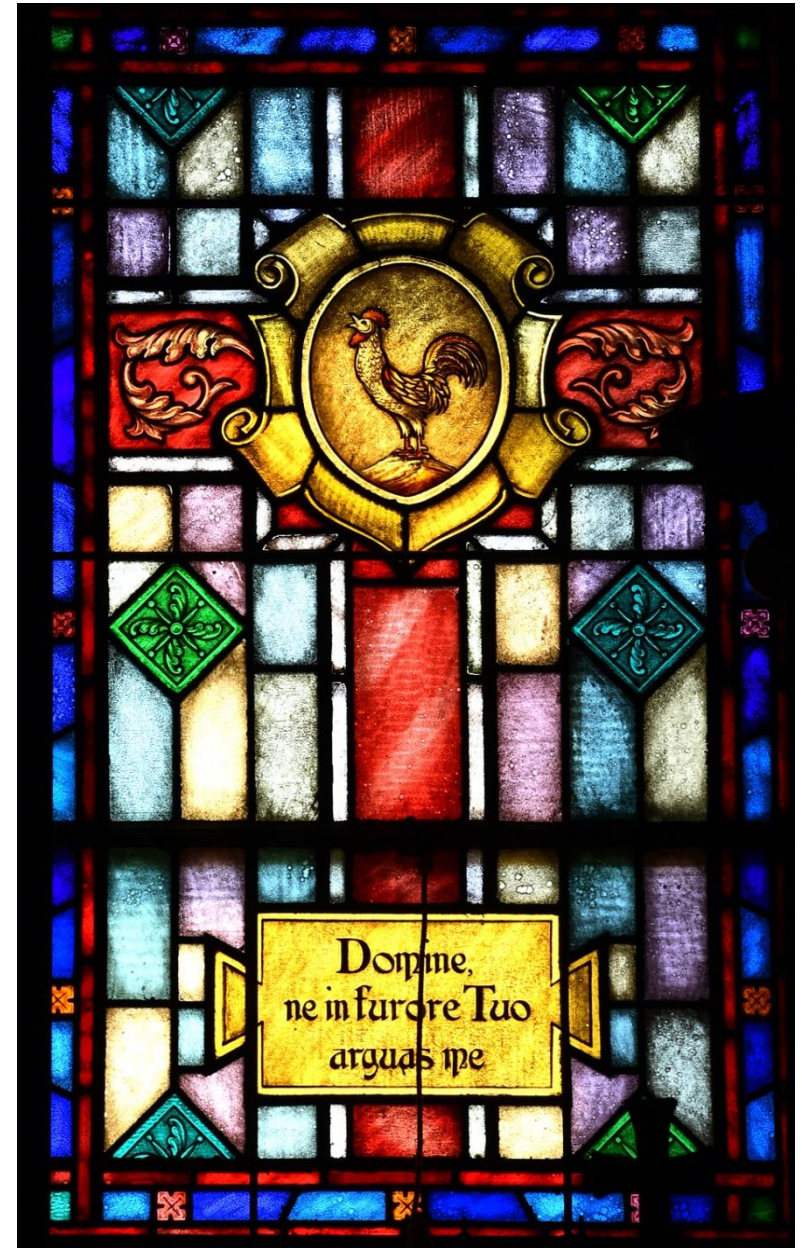


On the right, or south side of the chapel the theme of penance is exemplified through verses from the Psalms and Tobias. Tradition ascribes the composition of most of the psalms to King David. Often, psalters (separate books containing only the psalms) would show illustrations from the life of David, and a decorative “B” initial of the opening lines of the first psalm *Beatus vir* (“happy the man”), with a depiction of David playing the harp within the letter’s shape.



The psalms formed the essential core of monastic prayer and a large portion of the readings in the priest’s breviary. Two of the psalms, six and thirty-seven, are particularly familiar as part of a group recommended for personal prayer when meditating on confession and repentance. This group has been called the *Seven Penitential Psalms* and was frequently included in spiritual guides and prayer books.

The sequences of verses are moving in their eloquence and rich interior imagery: *Oculi omnium in te sperant, domine* (Psalm 144:15: The eyes of all look hopefully to you, Lord); *Propitius esto domine, peccatis nostris* (Psalm 78:9: Pardon our sins, Lord, our offenses); *Quoniam iniquitatem meam annuntiabo* (Psalm 37:19: Indeed I acknowledge my guilt); *Miserere mei domine, quoniam infirmus sum* (Psalm 6:3: Have pity on me, Lord, since I am languishing). The verse *Domine ne in furore tuo arguas me* (Psalm 6:2; 37:1: Lord, reprove me not in your anger) is written below the cock of St. Peter. This is reference to Peter as penitent, weeping bitterly after he had denied knowing Christ (Luke 22: 62). Christ had foretold that before the cock crowed Peter would betray the Lord.





The images that accompany the verses are general penitential signs, not as tightly linked to specific verses as those concerning the Eucharist. The first contains a hair shirt and scourge, ancient signs of penance. The cock, symbol of Peter, follows. The next image of the pilgrim's staff and the scallop shell are symbols of Saint James and of pilgrimage itself, often undertaken by the faithful as a form of penance. The jug of water and the loaf of bread in the next window are symbolic of fasting, invariably mentioned in saints' lives and a commonly remembered part of parishioners' lives during the penitential seasons of Lent and Advent. The cross, skull and book are images associated with the term *memento mori* (remember death). The text of the book reads. *Memento, homo . . . quia pulvis es, [et in pulverem reverteris]* (Genesis 3:19: Remember man . . . dust thou art, [and into dust thou shalt return]), words that are part of the liturgy for Ash Wednesday. These emblems are commonly represented with the great penitential saints, such as Jerome, Mary Magdalene or Francis of Assisi. The Scriptures, the knowledge of human mortality, and the saving act of Christ's death are key issues of Christian piety. The image of a lamp, concluding a series of symbols of penance, here suggests a light for a penitential vigil, that is, the kind of extended prayer often described in the lives of the saints. A circle of rosary beads surrounds the lamp, suggesting the frequent use of the rosary in penance. The rosary (Joyful, Sorrowful, and Glorious Mysteries) will constitute the subject of the windows in the Marian Chapel.

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