

## Stained Glass Window Dedication by Rev. Henk S. Vigeveno

“Now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face.” ( 1Cor. 13:12)

If E.T. were to walk in here, these symbols would have to be explained. For many Christian there is a meaning in these symbols. They represent something, but if a Buddhist or a Muslim came, he or she would not quite know what is going on.

The windows which we see about us represent our faith, but to understand them we need to understand our faith. We are in the presence of all symbols, and we are going to try to understand them, so that any time you come into the church and look at one of the windows, you may reflect on the things you have heard today and perhaps with more insight, worship the living lord.

There is a verse in First Corinthians (13:12) in which Paul says, “We see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face.” What he meant was while we are here on earth, we do not really see much of anything. We see dimly the things that are true and real, but when we leave this earth then we will fully understand and see everything as it is. See reality. Understand truth.

These windows help us to come to the truth, but they are not the truth itself. We need to remember that symbols are only ways of coming at the truth! We see through a mirror dimly, we see the symbol which leads us to something else.

That is our text and our beginning. Let us walk through our Sanctuary this morning and see what is shown to us here.

There were two windows presented to this congregation which, are included in this dedication, although they were given in 1977. These windows are currently in storage. One is from the Old Testament. - a Burning Bush and the Ten Commandments, reminding us of the Law of God, given through Moses and through the marvelous experience when Moses met God in the desert. The other is from the New Testament - the symbol of a cup and grapes and wheat which represent our Communion with the Lord. These windows are currently in storage.

When the committee got together they believed that the symbolism of the vine and branches should unite all the windows. Some would contain special added features; others would be “background windows”.

The vine and the branches mean that Jesus is the vine and we are the branches. “I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in me, and I in Him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing. Every branch that does bear fruit he prunes, that it may bear more fruit. (John 15:2-5)

The vine and branches in all the windows remind us that we are connected to Christ, as branches to a tree. And dependent on Him as branches to a tree. If there is to be fruit on any tree, if there are grapes on the vine, then that is only because of the relationship to the tree itself. Perhaps this is the strongest message from all the windows around us!

Now we have several other symbols in many of the windows, as you can see. The first symbol on my left is of **three rings which are intertwined**. That symbolizes the Trinity. Notice that they are not three rings which are separate from each other, but they are related to each other. There is really only one symbol. God is one! That window says to us: “God is one, but God is three persons, Father, Son and Holy Spirit”. Intricately connected, intertwined, three equal circles creating one object. And Jesus said: “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.” (Mt. 28:19). That baptism in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit is represented here.



In the next window we have the **Bible**, the foundation of our faith. “Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God” (Mt 4:4) . The committee in choosing the major symbols that are about us has chosen the Bible. The inspired word bring us the truth of God in our faith in Christ.

We next come to the **boat**. This boat represents to us the first call of Jesus to fishermen: “Follow me and I will make you fishers of men.” (Mt. 4:19) And they left

their boats and their nets and came after him. The boat reminds us of the beginning of our Christian faith and our calling to be God's people even out of our common vocations. Possibly we could also say that the boat represents safety! We are in the boat with Christ. As Noah's ark was safe in the storm during those early days, so there is a safety when we belong to our Lord and the boat remind is of it.

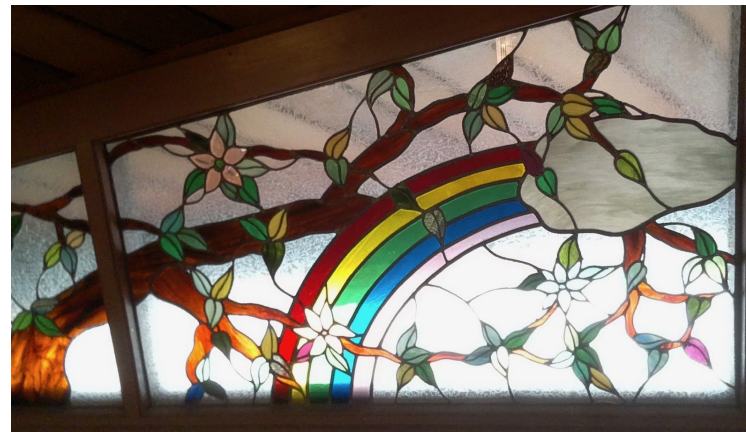


The next window is the **Wheat**. Wheat symbolizes for us, as in the first window, the communion with Christ. In Matthew 13, the wheat also represents the followers of Christ. The Kingdom of Heaven may be compared to a man who sows good seed in the field. The sower is the Son of Man. The field is the world. The wheat is the children of

the Kingdom. It represents us.

The wheat also represents Christ, The bread of life! "Unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit." (Jn12:24) So I must also give my life, and rise again, Jesus says.

In the next window we see a **Rainbow**. I am sure you remember the story from your Sunday School lessons, that a rainbow of promise appeared at the time of Noah's ark. And when that rainbow appeared in the sky, it was a message to Noah that there would never be another flood destruction of the world. God would preserve His people and the rainbow was the symbol of God's promise.



The interesting thing which not too many people know about is that the rainbow is also seen in the last book of the Bible. In the Revelation we read that there is a rainbow about the throne of God. So the rainbow of God's promise is in the beginning and to the very end about God's throne.



The next window contains a **Dove**. The dove also comes from the story of the flood. Noah first sent out a raven and then a dove to see if the waters had receded from the earth. So the dove is a symbol of peace and hope, and also a promise like the rainbow. The dove continues throughout the Bible as a symbol of peace, a symbol of the Holy

Spirit. Jesus was baptized and a dove descended, symbolizing the presence of the Holy Spirit at his baptism.

The **Lamb** in the next window represents the sacrifice God offered on our behalf for our salvation! In the Old Testament, we read many times of the Jewish people offering lambs, that atonement would be made between them and God. When Jesus came into the world, John the Baptist announced, "Behold the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!" (Jn 1:29) For the Jewish mind it was understood, here would be the sacrifice which God would offer on behalf of the world's sin, for all of our sins.



Again in the book of Revelation we read of the Lamb not only slain upon the cross, but present in heaven! "I looked, and I heard around the throne.... the voice of many angels.....saying with a loud voice, "Worthy is the Lamb who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing." (Rev. 5:11-13) The Lamb is an important figure all through the Scriptures of the sacrifice and the glory of Christ.

The final symbol on this side of the Sanctuary is the **Star**. As the star guided the wise men to Bethlehem, so it is a symbol of God's guidance to us, God's direction for our



lives. All of us know the story from Christmas, but the star also represents the fact that God guided Israel through the desert, in the wilderness and into the Holy Land. God guides His church now, as we are open to His leading and direction.

As we turn to the either side of the sanctuary, again I point out the vine and the branches connect all the windows on both sides. Our relationship to Christ is emphasized throughout.

The first symbol on my right is the **Celtic Cross**. We all know this symbol of the death of Jesus upon the cross, where he died for our sins, but what makes this cross unique is that it is a Celtic cross. It was the first Presbyterian cross, you might say, coming from the Celts in Scotland.



The circle around and behind the cross represents eternity. There is no beginning and no end to the circle, and therefore the cross is also eternal! The sacrifice of Christ is eternal, has eternal values, salvation is eternal. God is eternal, symbolized by that circle at the cross.



had was the robe for which they gambled.

Next to the cross we come to **the Robe**. The Robe represents the only piece of clothing Jesus had when they crucified him, and the windows of the robe and the cross belong together. The soldiers gambled for the robe, there at the cross, showing man's inhumanity to God, and also showing in many ways God's poverty. The only possession he

With the robe and the next two symbols we come to the gospels. The **Lily** represents the resurrection of Jesus. Lilies at Easter are a symbol of hope and purity. The color white represents purity, and the lily, resurrection and hope. Even in the Old Testament is a reference to Jesus as “the rose of Sharon” and “the lily of the valley”. In symbolism the Bible speaks of Him in those terms as being pure and full of hope.



In the next window the **Palms** represent the King coming into Jerusalem, coming at that crowning moment to be received as the King of the Jews and the King of the world. He was rejected, and that is why the cross, the robe and after the crucifixion the lilies representing Easter are together on this side of the Sanctuary. Branches were cut down as Jesus came into the city of

Jerusalem. Palm branches are a symbol of peace, not for a conquering hero in terms of war.

From the gospel windows of Robe, Palms and Lilies, we come to two symbols of the Christian life - **The Anchor and the Fish**.

The **anchor** is spoken of in Hebrews 6 as “an anchor of hope”. It is like throwing an anchor in a place we do not see. If it lands on the bottom of the sea and holds us fast to that place, our boat is held steady there. So the anchor reaches into heaven itself, where God is and where Christ is,



and where we are held steady. The anchor of hope is cast out before us. You will also notice that this particular anchor is called a cross anchor, because there is a cross in it as well as the anchor. Our hope is in what Christ has done for us on the cross. Salvation is ours through his death on the cross.



If an alien from outer space came here, he would wonder why a **fish** is shown in one of these windows. The early Romans didn't understand why the Christians in the catacombs put the design of a fish to show their presence. In fact I would dare say, many people driving the San Diego freeways don't know why that little fish design is on some of your cars and what it means.

The letters for the word "**fish**" in the Greek "IXTHUS" are the first letters for Jesus Christ, Son of God, Savior. So the letter "I" is Jesus, "X" is Christ, and so on through the word "fish" represent the fact that these are believers in Jesus Christ, the Messiah, the Son of God, the Savior. And when the Christians put that symbol in the catacombs, they were saying, "I believe in Jesus Christ as my Savior and the Son of God".

The fish became probably the first symbol of the Christians and it's still with us today. Tertullian, one of our church theologians from very early times, went a step further. He said we are like little fish, born of the water, meaning baptism. We are safe as we swim in the water, as we stay true to our baptism, and swim along as little fish following Christ.

From the gospels to the Christian life, to heaven. The last two windows are a **Harp and a Crown**. Helping us reach forward to heaven, the harp represents praise and worship of God. Again from the book of Revelation: "Then I looked, and lo, on Mount Zion stood the Lamb, and with him 144,000 who had his name and his Father's name written on their foreheads. And I heard a



voice from heaven like the sound of many waters and like the sound of loud thunder; the voice I heard was like the sound of harpers playing on their harps, and they sing a new song before the throne” (Rev.1:1-3) We honor God and adore Him, and it reaches to heaven as we hear about harps in heaven.

The final symbol is the **crown**. The crown can be applied to us as well as to Christ. “Hold fast what you have, so that no one may seize your crown,” is addressed to us

(Rev.3:11). Don’t lose the rewards that are to be yours and the honor that is to be yours at the coming of Christ.

But then we heard further in the book of Revelation about 24 elders who fall down before Him who is seated on the throne. These 24 elders represent those who are the Church, the Christians, and “they cast their crowns before the throne, singing, ‘Worthy art thou, our Lord and God, to receive glory and

honor and power, for thou didst create all things, and by thy will they existed and were created.’”(Rev.4:10,11) The crowns which are given to us belong to Christ. He is the one who ought to have the crown, for he was crowned with a crown of thorns on earth. He will receive a crown of glory when that Kingdom comes.

As you look on these rich symbols all about you, each one speaking to you of a different phase of your Christian life, let them lead you beyond the symbolism to the reality and the truth behind them.

Now we are like branches in the vine. Now we see in a mirror dimly, but then there will be fulfillment and joy. We will move beyond symbols to reality and see face to face. Now we know in part, but then we will know even as we are known. Now, when life is difficult, we have a faith to live by, we have a hope to lean on, we have a God to trust.

