

# ***THE WINDOWS OF ST STEPHEN'S CATHEDRAL***

Fr Peter Grice

One of the extraordinary facts about the Cathedral windows is that there is no complete photographic record of them. And were it not for the researches of Fr. Denis Martin, there would be no information available either. I would like to express my indebtedness to Fr. Martin and also to Mr. Mitchell Foley of Stained Glass Restorations of Australia, for allowing me to use some of his colour slides of the windows. Unfortunately the equipment required to produce a complete set of pictures is considerable, and that task was beyond my resources.

Therefore we will have to use our imaginations and try to do a mental tour of the church windows. We will start with the window over the front door and then we shall say what we can about the windows first in the left wall of the nave and then in the right. After this, we will give our thoughts to the windows in the left wall of the transept and then those in the right wall. After this, note will be taken of the two small windows in the back wall of the church, and finally we shall treat of the three great windows in the left transept, right transept and then in the sanctuary (east) wall.

Standing inside the front door and looking up, we notice that the old choir loft is no longer there. While this may be problematic from a conservator's point of view, its absence does add a lot to the appearance of the interior of the church. And a bonus is that the window in the (west) wall is now much easier to see. It is a huge window, 35 feet high. It depicts at the top the Ascension of Christ, with Mary; and underneath a row of saints, viz. the four evangelists, St. Peter and St. Paul, with St. Stephen in the centre. This window, designed by Justice Charles Mein of the Queensland Supreme Court, cost the princely sum of £800. It was erected in honour of W. Edward Murphy who died on 1st. January, 1881. He had been chairman of the committee of

management for completing the Cathedral. This is the largest of the old windows in the church and it is over 100 years old.

The side walls of the nave each have seven openings; six on each side are windows and one a door. The doors are situated between the second and third windows from the front of the church (i.e. the front door). And there are three small windows over each door.

Essentially, each of the twelve main windows has three panels or openings, with small lights in the heads, surrounded and separated by stone tracery. Nearly all the windows in the Cathedral are examples, albeit modified, of geometrical tracery and consist chiefly of rectangles, surmounted by sprandels containing circles or foiled circles. These circles in the sprandels contain stained glass medallions. Only two of the windows are in a different style, and they manifest interesting tracery in the sprandels.

- 1 Left      The first window on the left, dedicated to Robert Hayes (died 25/7/1885), depicts the three wise men, the new born Christ and the three shepherds. This finely tinted window is surmounted by a medallion in the sprandel depicting St. Aloysius Gonzaga.
- 2 Left      The second window, by the firm of Franz Xavier Zettler of Munich, is in memory of William Keating (died 14/9/1879. He had been resident of Creek Street in the City.) Erected in 1886, the window depicts the raising of Lazarus, with the "Noli me tangere!" above: Christ has a spade over his left shoulder and is presented in the guise of a gardener. The detailed work in the window is fine and the artistic ideas are imaginative. This valuable window originally cost £76-10-0.
- D Left      This door had leaded lights above it, but contains no figure work.
- 3 Left      The third window is in memory of Michael Quinlan (died 11/7/1875.) It was erected in 1885, having been made by the firm of Louis Gille & Co. in France, at the cost of £76-10-0. The main part of the window depicts Christ before Caiphas, the Agony in the Garden, and Christ-meeting His afflicted Mother. A glorious chalice occurs in the head.
- 4 Left      This window was also erected in 1885. It is in memory of William Sheehan (died 6/10/1866.) The manufacturer was Gille & Co., France. The window depicts a whole scheme that might be described as 'death swallowed up in victory'. In the lower, large lights, three of the falls of

Christ are depicted, and next to it, the Crucifixion, and then the nailing to the cross. In the head a vibrantly coloured setting of the labaram of Constantine concludes the idea of suffering through to victory.

**5 Left** The fifth window records the memory of Randall MacDonnell (died 22/6/1877.) Many of these 'in memoriam' inscriptions are damaged and so incomplete and we are indebted to Mitchell Foley for reconstructing them. This window illustrates the Crowning with Thorns; the Ecce Homo with Pilate to one side, and the Flagellation. Note the small column to which Christ is tied, so like the famous Roman relic in the chapel of S.Zemo in Sta.Prassede. Gille & Co. did the window, and Archbishop Dunne blessed it on 14th. October, 1885.

**6 Left** The sixth window is signed and dated by the firm of Zettler, Munich. It is a superb piece of work. Christ as the Infant Sacred Heart stands on a globe of the world, between His foster-father and His mother. The details are all interesting. Mary is weaving and Joseph has carpentry gear. And the world on which Jesus stands is menacingly wreathed in clouds. This window is dedicated to the memory of Bishop James Quinn (died 18/8/81.) It cost the usual £76-10-0 and was paid for by Miss F.O'Reilly. The standard of all the Zettler windows erected in the Cathedral over a period of forty years is uniformly high.

Let us now return to the front door of the Cathedral and come up the right hand side.

**1 Right** The first window is one of the best in the nave. It is elegant and mannered, with refined washes and rich, subtle colours. It depicts the Annunciation, the Immaculate Conception, and the Nativity. Two little angels support Mary's crown in the central head, supplementing the Presentation of Mary below.

**2 Right** The second window, showing the Ascension, the Deposition of Christ and the Burial of Christ, was erected to the memory of Joseph Hayes in 1885. Mary is portrayed as being present at Christ's Ascension, and swoons at the Deposition, and the latter in particular is a sentimental 19th. Century image.

**D.Right** The door has three fine stained lights above it, depicting St. John, Mary holding the infant Christ, whose arms are outstretched, and the Agnus Dei. These were executed by Zettler in Munich, Bavaria. 1886. (There was a Herr Ibbler in Brisbane who was an agent of this firm.) It was the

gift of P.White of the Albert Hotel. St.John is shown in the act of blessing a chalice from which a snake is emerging.

- 3 Right This window has representations of the 'Noli meTangere', the Resurrection, and St.Thomas placing his finger in Christ's side.It was erected in 1885 to the memory of Patrick Mayne (died 17/8/1865.) This PatrickMayne was a butcher, and his family were notable in Brisbane. The window was made by Louis Gille & Co. of France and the cost £76-10-0.
- 4 Right The fourth window shows the death, Assumption and Coronation of Mary. It was erected in 1885, was commissioned from Gille & Co., France and cost £76-10-0.It bears the inscription: 'In mem. Thos.Hayes, obit July 25, MDCCCLXXIX.' In the head, the initial 'M' occurs, surrounded by a triumphal wreath of pink roses and lilies.
- 5 Right This window was erected in memory of the contractor, John Smith, who had died the year before in 1884. It depicts the Annunciation, the Immaculate Conception and the Visitation to Elizabeth. It is the work of Louis Gille & Co.on behalf of the Cathedral and cost £76-10-0.
- 6 Right This window is in memory of William Naughton (died3/10/1920.) Its theme is the Sermon on the Mount, with three quotes below the picture. The strong, linear angular style and the lack of shading with washes, as well as the mediocre character of the work, mark the window out as below the level of the rest. However, Archbishop Duhig was delighted with it, because it was done here in Brisbane in 1923, and he saw with the firm of Extons who did it, hope for some local expertise. As he said on the occasion of the formal blessing of the Mayne windows in the church: "Unfortunately, art is not sufficiently appreciated among Australians, who are largely a commercial people, too eagerly taken up with the development of the country and with the material comforts to have yet the appreciation for art that the continental people have. However, efforts are being made in our own city to elevate art to the position it should have."

(Reported in *The Age*, Brisbane, Sat.,June 16,1923.p.10.)

The transepts have windows in the lower and higher levels of the side walls. There are other windows in the transepts, but these contain plain, unfigured leads. Let us consider the lower windows first. There are four on either side. with a door in between the 2nd. and 3rd. window on each side.

- 1,2 Left      The first lower window is dedicated to St Philomena, and the next to St Anthony of Padua. These windows were erected in 1942 by the wife and children of Peter Lynch, (died 26/4/1941.)
- D Left        Over the door is a window depicting St Teresa. This was the gift of Mrs Thomas Anderson of Kangaroo Point. This is an important window. It was executed by the Dublin firm of Clarke in 1925.
- 3,4 Left      The third and fourth windows were erected in memory of Alfred Trevor Smith (died 26/7/1918.) They seem to depict St Margaret Mary and the Sacred Heart of Jesus.
- 1,2 Right     The first window near the nave depicts the Assumption, the second, "Son, behold Thy Mother!"
- D Right       The Coronation of Mary is depicted above the door.
- 3,4 Right     The third window depicts St Anne instructing the Virgin. The fourth window illustrates the Immaculate Conception.

The window R 1, nearest the nave, informs us that the four windows were erected to the memory of Anne Byrne, 1860-1940, by her daughters, Cecilia Douglas, Mary Murphy, Emily Hooper, Eileen Macrossan and Stella Hennessey.

On either side of the High Altar were two small side chapels with altars, above which were single rose windows. These were unsigned, but according to Mr Mitchell Foley, are probably the work of Harry Clarke, Dublin. They have been restored during the present extensions and renovations.

The three great sets of windows that remain to be discussed are the most significant of all. We begin with the one in the left transept above.

The Sorrowful Mysteries are depicted in three, long, glowing panels. This window is described as being in memory of the Pioneer Bishops and priests of Queensland. The Coats-of-Arms of Archbishop Dunne, Bishop Quinn and Archbishop Duhig occur on the bases of the first, second and third panel respectively. Zettler of Munich executed these windows in 1927.

As to the subjects they contain: angels and prophets appear in reserve panels with interspersed dramatic icons. The first window depicts the Flagellation and the Agony in the Garden. The second window depicts the central focus, viz. the Sacred Heart of

Jesus and also the Crucifixion. The third window shows the Crowning with Thorns and the Carrying of the Cross.

A poignant and thoughtful note is struck by a small child depicted in the third window, carrying innocently the superscription and the hammer and nails as he walks by Christ.

The top window in the right transept, again executed in 1927 by Zettler, Munich, is in memory of the pioneering nuns of Queensland. It is remarkable, especially for the blue glass employed. The theme of the window is the Joyful Mysteries, in contrast to the Sorrowful Mysteries depicted in the last mentioned window.

The Visitation, the Annunciation, the Nativity and the Presentation in the Temple are interspersed with reserve medallions of prophets (window 2) and angels (windows 1 & 3). The central picture that balances the window opposite is that of the Immaculate Heart of Mary.

Finally we come to speak of the most significant window in the church, which is situated above the altar in the east wall. It was executed by Harry Clarke of the firm of Clarke, Dublin in 1923. The iconography is simple. The effect is resplendent. In the central panel, the Ascension is depicted with Mary looking up, and on each side is a row of apostles, five on the left, six on the right. Small angels are depicted above the figure of Christ. This window is in memory of Isaac and William Mayne, and was given by Dr. and Mary Mayne in memory of their two brothers.

It is worth quoting at length from *The Age*, June 16, 1923, which reports on Archbishop Duhig's address at the formal blessing of the window:

*Mr Harry Clarke was not only a great master of colour but was also a perfect draughtsman, thus emphatically contradicting the belief held by some that perfect draughtsmanship was incompatible with the production of magnificent colours in the glazier's art. The window before us represents the Ascension of Christ into Heaven. On account of the narrowness of the glass between the mullions, it was necessary to do special grouping, and although Mr Clarke had never seen the Cathedral but had only been provided with a plan of the window, he has given us a window in perfect harmony with the surroundings and the grouping is admirable. The scene depicts Our Lord in the centre standing over the clouds as if on a jewelled sea. On each side are the eleven apostles (Judas of course is missing) and below, still on the ground, is Our Lady, her face revealing all her tenderness, sorrow and loneliness after Christ who is ascending into Heaven. Christ Himself above, is*

*blessing the apostles who are to be seen looking up at Him. The angels in the upper portion of the window are to be seen bearing instruments of the Passion, glorified now by the touch of Christ's sacred humanity.*

Continuing, His Grace said the window was at a disadvantage for unfortunately the light did not enter from the proper point at which the window could be seen at its best, and really the window would not be seen at its best...until the light streamed through at the back which would be about October or November...Mr Clarke, he continued, was a genius.

In speaking of that magnificent window, His Grace did not want to convey the impression that he was deducting from the praise due to our local artists. In our young Australians was to be found as much genius as in the youth of any other country in the world, and Australian art should be encouraged, whether it be architecture, painting, sculpture or stained glass, and our own gifted young Australians should become workers in those arts.

*The Catholic Advocate* for Thursday, August 7, 1924, has a photo of the window and another of Archbishop Duhig, with the remark that the Archbishop "is rightly considered the most energetic and versatile prelate in Christendom." Before we dismiss this remark as a puff of rhetoric, we should weigh the Archbishop's architect over the window. For him to have arranged personally for such a trophy for his temporary church (pro-Cathedral, as he was describing it at the time!) between 1922-24, is remarkable. But he knew what he was doing. He thought big. He secured his backers. And he got hold of a superb piece of stained glass by a master craftsman, that is now recognised as a significant part of Australia's art holdings.

If I might finish by quoting Mitchell Foley's report on the Cathedral glass:

*The stained glass windows in St Stephen's Cathedral are outstanding examples of the art of stained glass. They come from Ireland, Germany, France and Australia, to make up a collection of old stained glass that...is a real treasure of ecclesiastical art in Brisbane and the Australian community at large.*

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