




UNDERSTANDING SYMBOLS IN CATHOLIC CHURCH ARCHITECTURE + ART

especially those found in All Saints, Holy Spirit, St. Aloysius, St. Bonaventure Churches of St. Matthew Parish

HOW WELL CAN YOU "READ A CHURCH"?

1	2	3	4	5
What Sacrament do these symbols represent?	What Liturgical Season is Fr. Gretz celebrating?	What does the Dove represent?	What does "INRI" mean (<i>in English</i>)? Where do you see "INRI" written?	What's the main difference between a Cross and a Crucifix?
				

Answers:

1. Eucharist (slide 9)
2. Ordinary (slide 15)
3. The Holy Spirit
4. Jesus the Nazorean, King of the Jews (it's an acronym for "Iesus Nazarenus, Rex Iudaeorum" (*Latin*))
5. A Crucifix has Jesus on it; a Cross doesn't

—

A symbol I was confused about but didn't realize I was confused is the Chi Rho — I went to St. Pius X as a kid so I thought it was a symbol for St. Pius X since it is a 'P' and 'X'. Only much later in life did I realize it wasn't what I thought it was ("*Why does this church have St. Pius' symbol, too?*"). So there is always something to learn ...and even learn after you think you have learned something!



Holy Spirit

THE GOAL

"WHAT IS THAT?"

+

"WHY?"



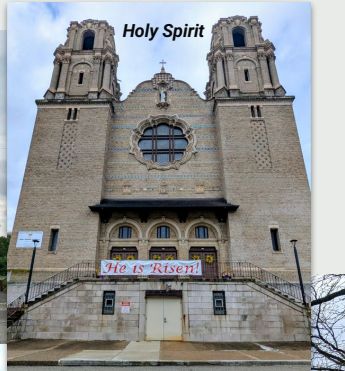
Holy Spirit

The Goal

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My goal is to help you be able to answer the question "What is that?" when your kids ask ...as well as their inevitable follow-up: "Why?"

Or perhaps you yourself are wondering "What is that?". I hope to give you some answers, some insights, and some answers to why things are what they are.



**THE CHURCH IS
THE HOUSE OF GOD**

and

**A GATHERING PLACE
FOR THE
PEOPLE OF GOD
TO WORSHIP GOD**



Church Buildings

**"The visible church is a *symbol* of the Father's house
toward which the People of God is journeying" (CCC 1186)**

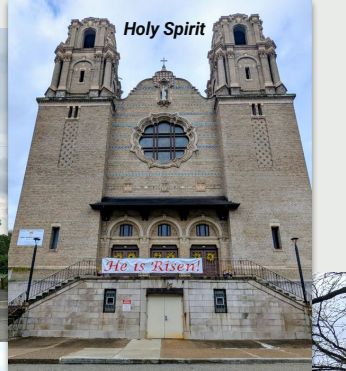
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As we can see within our own parish, there are many styles of church buildings – but there is only one Truth: The Church is the House of God and A Gathering Place for the People of God to worship God

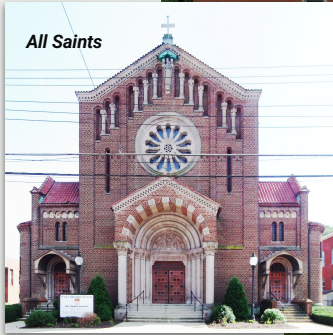
"The visible church is a symbol of the Father's house toward which the People of God is journeying" (CCC 1186)



St. Aloysius



Holy Spirit



All Saints



St. Bonaventure

CATHOLIC CHURCH BUILDINGS ARE DESIGNED TO...

- Communicate **Salvation History**
- Raise our minds and eyes towards God

SACRED ART...

- **Glorifies God** (CCC 2502)
- **Draws man to God** (CCC 2502)

Church Buildings

*"The visible church is a **symbol** of the Father's house toward which the People of God is journeying" (CCC 1186)*

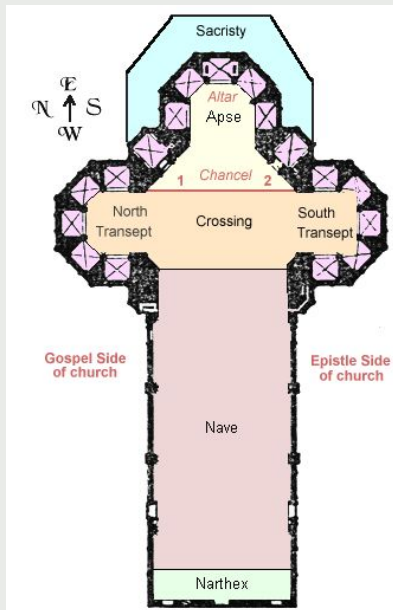
Catholic Church buildings are designed to...

- Raise our hearts, minds, and eyes towards God
- Communicate Salvation History -even to the illiterate :: This is not as important as in past generations, but while most of us have learned to read (or someday will learn) we have lost quite a bit of our ability to "read a church".

Sacred Art is used to...

- Evoke and glorify, in faith and adoration, the transcendent mystery of God (CCC 2502)
- Draw man to adoration, prayer, and to the love of God, Creator and Savior, the Holy One and Sanctifier (CCC 2502)

As I have learned more and more about how to read a church I've discovered there are entire chapters I didn't even know existed in the book!



Almost everywhere you look you will encounter something with deeper, hidden meaning. The Architecture & Art/Iconography of Catholic Churches contain a lot of Symbolism. If you ever look at something and think: "I don't know what that means, but it's probably important." *You're right!*

Everything is used to reveal deeper truths of the Divine.

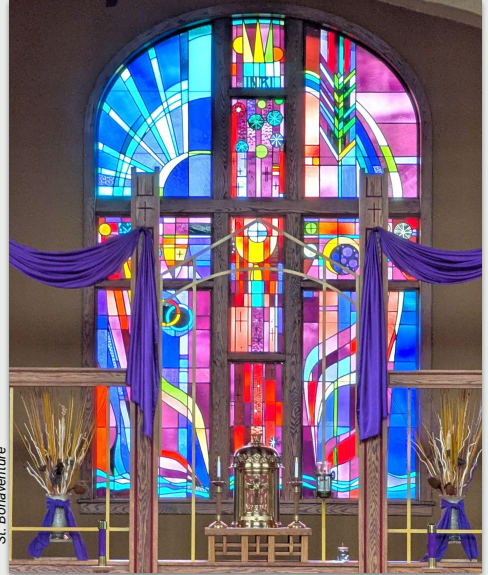
- design motifs
- statuary
- murals
- mosaics
- stained glass
- ornamentation
- geometric shapes
- colors
- how many of something there are
- where things are placed

Traditional Layout of Catholic Churches...

- A church's orientation holds meaning: Historically built with altars in the East. "*Alert Watchfulness*": Pre-Vatican II both the priest and the congregation used to face the Altar because Christ will come from the East His Second coming.
- The altar is in "Liturgical East" even if the church cannot be/isn't built with the altar in the actual East.
- The Traditional Cruciform shape is meant to evoke the Cross.
- The main section of a church is called the "Nave" (*from Latin 'navis' meaning 'ship'*)
- Baptismal font in Narthex of church as entry point into Christian life and you proceed to the altar – it's a symbol of a Christians journey through life
- From the perspective of Jesus on the altar Mary shrines are placed on the right; Joseph on the left. Mary is "higher" up than Joseph – so she is at Jesus' right hand. If Jesus is to be displayed in a statue (like in the Sacred Heart) it will be placed to Jesus' right and Mary will either be shifted over so it goes altar-Jesus-Mary or moved to the opposite side of the church). –There are many such rules or guidelines as that when designing a church and placing "items" within it. Basically, just know that there usually is a "rhyme and reason" for why things are where they are.
- Church ceilings are often designed to resemble boats –to represent a vessel of salvation - The Barque of St. Peter. All Saints' ceiling is our parish's best example of this with wooden beams and the angles - if you look up it looks like it's an upside down boat and you are in it.

YOU
SEE
THE SIGN.

YOU
CONTEMPLATE
THE SYMBOL.



Most things are simultaneously both Sign and Symbol.

Sign (what you see; what's on the surface?). Signs signify, point to, or indicate a specific reality or action.

Symbol (what you think about; what is its meaning?). Symbols represent an abstract idea and point to a deeper, hidden meaning.

A few examples:

The Crucifix

- Sign: A representation of Jesus crucified + dead on the Cross
- Symbol: Our Salvation by Jesus - We are saved by His death and Resurrection; **the unfathomable love and mercy of God**

The Sign of the Cross

- Sign: Hand/arm movements
- Symbol: A profession of faith / a prayer; Our belief in the Holy Trinity (*God as One but 3 Divine Persons*); A reminder that "God is a communion of love" (*Pope Francis*); That we claimed by God through our Baptism

Holy Water

- Sign: Water (*well, technically it's Blessed Water but it looks like regular water*)
- Symbol: When we bless ourselves with the blessed water we remember our Baptism and recommit ourselves to living holy lives in fidelity to Christ

Wheat and Grapes

- Sign: Wheat and Grapes
- Symbol: Body and Blood of Jesus in The Eucharist; **the unfathomable love and mercy of God**

Sacramentals are sacred signs instituted by the Church to prepare us to receive the fruit of the sacraments and to sanctify different circumstances of our lives (CCC 1677). – Holy Water is a Sacramental.

Among sacramentals blessings (of persons, meals, objects, and places) come first. Every blessing praises God and prays for his gifts. In Christ, Christians are blessed by God the Father "with every spiritual blessing." This is why the Church imparts blessings by invoking the name of Jesus, usually while making the holy sign of the cross of Christ. (CCC 1671)



St. Bonaventure

THE SEVEN SACRAMENTS

SUPER SPECIAL SIGNS

"An outward sign instituted by Christ to give grace."

The Sacraments are not symbols.

Signs: Sacraments

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The Seven Sacraments are "Super Special Signs"

"An outward sign instituted by Christ to give grace."

The Sacraments are not symbols. The Sacraments are efficacious signs. [efficacious = they produce their intended effect]

They point beyond themselves to the invisible activity of God. What they point to, God actually does, through them.

- Water in Baptism actually washes away sin
- The Eucharist is actually the Body and Blood of Jesus

"An outward sign instituted by Christ to give grace." (*The Baltimore Catechism*) - When I was in my early 20s I attended a talk where every older person in the room was immediately able to recite this definition by heart – and I was astounded. When asked the definition of a sacrament I had gotten as far as thinking "umm" when they all in unison recited it. I was amazed at their knowledge and then by my lack of knowledge. ∴ Sometimes seeing other people's faith and understanding can be a good motivator for you to go and learn more!



	ANOINTING OF THE SICK (EXTREME UNCTION)	BAPTISM	EUCHARIST (COMMUNION)	CONFIRMATION	HOLY ORDERS	HOLY MATRIMONY (MARRIAGE)	RECONCILIATION (CONFESSION)
THE OUTWARD SIGN	Oil of the Infirmid	Water, oil, candle & white garment	Bread + Wine / Body + Blood	Chrism Oil	Chrism and Laying on of hands	Vows and Rings	Laying on of hands + Words of Absolution
SYMBOL	-jar of oil	-water -scallop shell (sometimes with 3 drops of water for the Holy Trinity)	-grapes -wheat -host -chalice	-Holy Spirit as dove -rays of light -container of oil	-stole (green or white, not purple) -keys of the kingdom/St Peter -Bible	-rings/bands -heart shape	-hands -purple stole -epiclesis (the laying on of hands)

Symbols: Sacraments

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The Sacraments are not Symbols, **but** Symbols are used to represent the Sacraments. Sacraments are outward signs – and they have common symbols associated with those outward signs.

Anointing of the Sick (Extreme Unction)

Sign: Oil of the Infirmid

Symbol: -jar of oil

Baptism

Sign: Water, oil, candle & white garment

Symbol: -water -scallop shell (sometimes with 3 drops of water for the Holy Trinity)

Eucharist (Communion)

Sign: Bread + Wine / Body + Blood

Symbol: -grapes -wheat -host -chalice

Confirmation

Sign: Chrism Oil

Symbol: -Holy Spirit as dove -rays of light -container of oil

Holy Orders

Sign: Chrism and Laying on of hands

Symbol: -stole (green or white, not purple) -keys of the kingdom/St Peter -Bible

Holy Matrimony (Marriage)

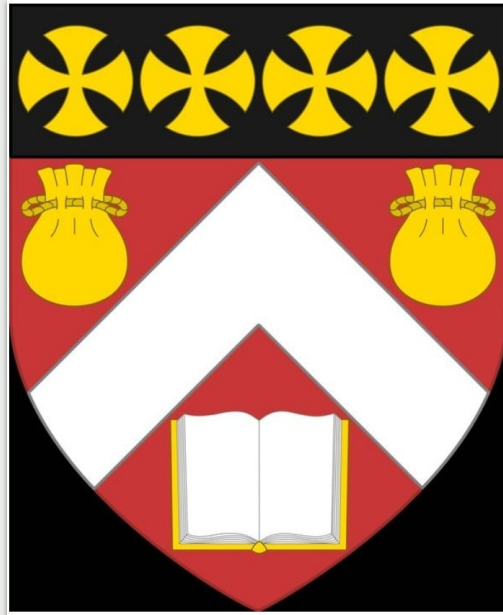
Sign: Vows and Rings

Symbol: -rings/bands -heart shape

Reconciliation (Confession)

Sign: Laying on of hands + Words of Absolution

Symbol: -hands -purple stole -epiclesis (the laying on of hands)



Symbols: *St. Matthew Parish Coat of Arms*

The symbols within the symbol...

- The four crosses are the same style as those for the Diocese of Pittsburgh and represent the four parish communities: Etna, Glenshaw, Millvale, and Reserve
- The black and gold colors pay tribute to Pittsburgh's "black and gold".
- The two money bags because St. Matthew was a tax collector.
- The chevrons represent the hilly geography of the four communities.
- The book represents the Gospel of Matthew.
- The red background represents the blood Matthew shed for the sake of the Gospel

Did you know? This was designed by Fr. Alek Schrenk, a Diocese of Pittsburgh priest



Symbols: *St. Matthew Parish Image*

Sign:

- St. Matthew instructing a child in the Gospel.
- The child is pointing to the words from Matthew 9:9 - The Calling of St. Matthew:
- *"As Jesus passed on from there, he saw a man named Matthew sitting at the customs post. He said to him, "Follow me." And he got up and followed him."*

Symbol:

- We are all called to be followers of Christ.
- The importance the Word of God.
- The importance of teaching others about Jesus -especially children. *"Jesus said, "Let the children come to me, and do not prevent them; for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these." - Matthew 19:14*
- The new identity of the new parish. The painting of St. Matthew was created when the four separate parishes merged to form the new parish (2021).

Did you know?

- Artist: Bernadette Calvino (former All Saints Parish Faith Formation program manager)
- Parishioner Doug Hamilton and his daughter Thea were used as the models.
- On the left page are the Greek letters for "Father Doctor Gretz".

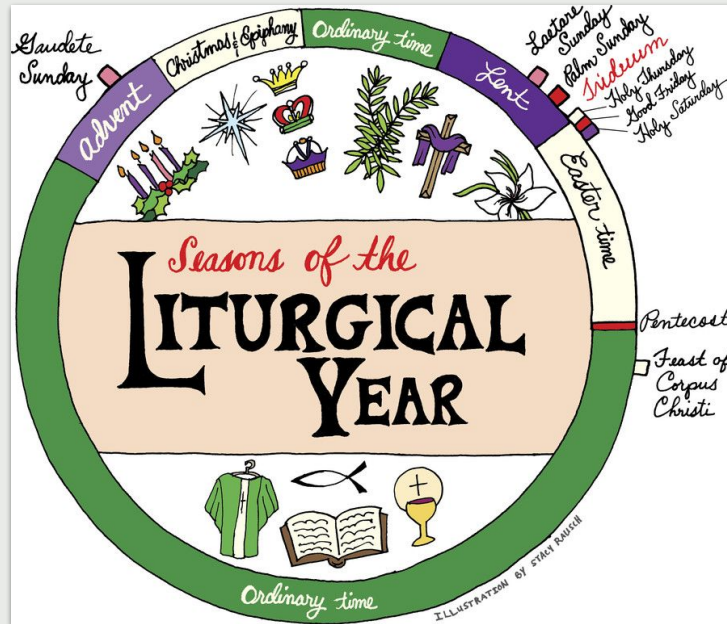
There are many, many Signs and Symbols within the Church used in and for the **LITURGY**.

<p>SANCTUARY</p> <p>The area just around the altar; usually placed at a higher level, to bring to mind mountains in Scripture which are places of privileged encounters with God.</p>	<p>SANCTUARY LAMP</p> <p>This is the candle that burns near the tabernacle, to indicate that Christ in the Eucharist is present within it.</p>	<p>STATIONS OF THE CROSS</p> <p>The 14 Stations of the Cross in every Catholic church allow us accompany Christ on His path to His Crucifixion, through which He saved the world.</p>
<p>STATUES</p> <p>Statues remind us that the Saints are praying and interceding for us in Heaven, just as our</p>	<p>TABERNACLE</p> <p>The vessel in which the Blessed Sacrament is reserved outside of Mass. From the</p>	<p>RELICS</p> <p>An object, usually part of the body or clothes, remaining as a memorial of a</p>
<p>...UNFORTUNATELY THERE ARE WAY TOO MANY FOR THIS PRESENTATION... <i>But fortunately lots of other people have written about these things!</i></p>		
<p>The structure upon which the Mass is celebrated; it recalls the table upon which Jesus celebrated the Last Supper, as well as the Cross upon which He was crucified.</p>	<p>Bells are used to draw our attention to the coming of Christ at the Mass, and of His real presence in the Holy Eucharist.</p>	<p>Candles are always used for the celebration of Mass, to remind us that Jesus is the light of the world.</p>
<p>CHALICE</p> <p>The cup that holds the wine which will soon become the Precious Blood of Christ. It should be noble and beautiful, as it is the vessel which holds the price of the world's salvation, the Precious Blood of Christ</p>	<p>CIBORIUM</p> <p>The vessel in which the hosts are kept, which will be consecrated at Mass and will become the Body of Christ. Following Mass, the Holy Eucharist, the Body of Christ, is kept in a ciborium, and reserved in the tabernacle.</p>	<p>CORPORAL</p> <p>The square piece of linen which is unfolded and placed on the altar. The Chalice and the Paten which contain the bread and wine for the celebration of the Eucharist are placed upon it.</p>



St. Bonaventure

The symbolism of the Liturgy is pretty much the most important symbolism to understand about Church. Unfortunately I am not going to discuss them, but fortunately many other more knowledgeable people have written about all these things – so I encourage you to read some books!



Symbols: Colors

I do want to talk about the Colors of the Liturgical Year. Because this is the “easy” one to get your kids interested in noticing things around them (that and the ringing of the bells during the Consecration).

Great questions to ask your kids:

- “What color is the priest wearing?”
- “Do you know what that means?”

Yes, the color is for the Liturgical season we are in ...but also there is more!! (see the next slide)

When a season changes ask:

- “Notice anything different?”
- “What color did the priest wear last week?”



COLOR	USED DURING...	DEEPER MEANING
PURPLE/ VIOLET	Advent and Lent	Penance, Waiting, Preparation, Humility
RED	Passion Sunday, Good Friday, Pentecost, Feasts of the Apostles and martyrs + Confirmation	Sacrifice, Blood shed for Christ, Fire of Charity
ROSE (Not Pink!)	3rd Sunday of Advent, 4th Sunday of Lent	Anticipation, Joy, Love
GREEN	Ordinary Time	Hope, Growth, Life
WHITE/ GOLD	Easter, Christmas, Feasts of the Blessed Mother, angels, and saints who weren't martyred + Weddings, Baptisms	Purity, Joy, Innocence, Glory
BLACK	Funerals (alternative colors: Purple, White)	Death/Mourning



Holy Spirit

Symbols: Colors

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You see the Liturgical Colors in...

- Vestments worn by the Priest
- Altar Cloth
- Banners and Coverings in the Church

Purple/Violet

Used During: Advent and Lent

Deeper Meaning: Penance, Waiting, Preparation, Humility

Red

Used During: Passion Sunday, Good Friday, Pentecost, Feasts of the Apostles and martyrs + Confirmation

Deeper Meaning: Sacrifice, Blood shed for Christ, Fire of Charity

Rose (Not Pink!)

Used During: 3rd Sunday of Advent, 4th Sunday of Lent

Deeper Meaning: Anticipation, Joy, Love

Green

Used During: Ordinary Time

Deeper Meaning: Hope, Growth, Life

White/Gold

Used During: Easter, Christmas, Feasts of the Blessed Mother, angels, and saints who weren't martyred + Weddings, Baptisms

Deeper Meaning: Purity, Joy, Innocence, Glory

Black

Used During: Funerals (alternative colors: Purple, White)

Deeper Meaning: Death/Mourning

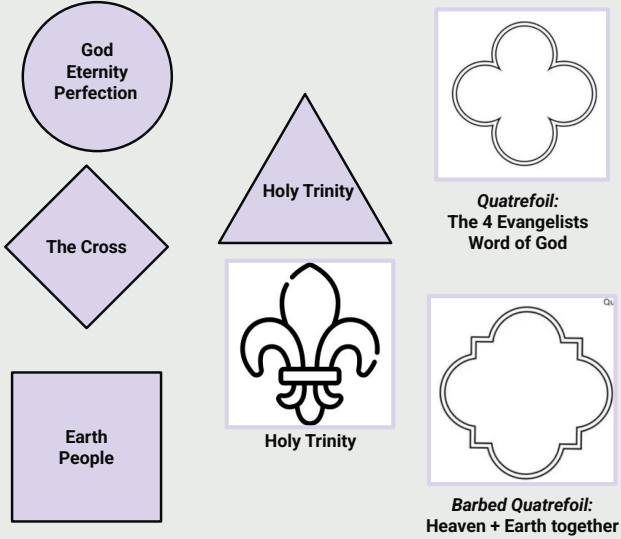
(Black isn't really used any more, but historically it was the color for Funerals)

Purple meaning penance and waiting is likely familiar to you. Ordinary time is most of the year – and it is green which is a perfect color for growth - and we are to spend the time growing in our faith.

Who knows Fr. Gretz's joke? Answer: Fr. Gretz wears rose, not pink – because Jesus rose from the dead! He didn't pink from the dead.

SHAPES ARE OFTEN MORE THAN JUST "SHAPES"

THE NUMBER OF THINGS MATTERS, TOO!



NUMBER	MEANING
2	The 2 natures of Jesus - both God and Man / both human and divine
3	Holy Trinity (Father, Son, Holy Spirit)
4	The Cross
5	The 5 wounds of the crucified Christ
7	Perfection
12	The 12 Apostles
14	This is just 7 + 7

Symbols: Shapes, Numbers

Shapes

Shapes are often more than just "shapes"

- **Circle** - God / Heaven / eternity / perfection (because it has no beginning and no end)
- **Triangle** - Holy Trinity (because 3 equal sides)
- **Square** - The Earth / The People of God (because people thought the earth was flat / it's in contrast to a circle / four angels holding the 4 corners of the Earth (Revelation 7:1))
- **Diamonds** / things with 4 points - The Cross
- **Fleur de Lis** / things with 3 points - Holy Trinity
- **Plant-like shapes or leaves** - Tree of Life, Jesus as vine, Beauty of God's creation
- **Quatrefoil** = The 4 Evangelists (Matthew, Mark, Luke, John) aka The Word of God (they interconnect / are part of a larger whole) or it can represent The Four Cardinal Virtues: Prudence, Justice, Fortitude, and Temperance
- **Barbed Quatrefoil** = Quatrefoil + Square = Heaven + Earth coming together

Numbers

Not just within shapes, but also in how many of something there are.

- 2 = The 2 natures of Jesus - both God and Man / both human and divine
- 3 = The Holy Trinity (Father, Son, Holy Spirit)
- 4 = The Cross
- 5 = The 5 wounds of the crucified Christ
- 7 = **Perfection**
- 8 = Jesus (because an octagon is halfway between a circle (God) and a square (earth) - that is, where heaven and earth meet)
- 12 = The 12 Apostles
- 14 = This is just 7 + 7

Note: This is not an exhaustive list. But it will help you see more + understand more as we look at the St. Matthew Parish Churches

Pay special attention to 7! That comes up a lot. And that is not surprising since God is perfect and loves perfectly and we are called to love Him perfectly.



If it looks something like A CROSS.. then it's probably meant to represent THE CROSS.

Symbols: Shapes, Numbers

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Shapes are often more than just "shapes"

If it looks something like **A Cross...** then it's probably meant to represent **The Cross.**

I am the weirdo that can stare at door of seemingly nothing interesting for minutes. But that is because I am seeing the Fleur de Lis - with 4 of them in the form of a Cross - that form a square - inside a circle - with 4 triangles that also seem to form a cross with the in between space forming a cross - all within a square. That square is also part of a group of 3. ...Perhaps the architect didn't intend all of the layers of symbolism and meaning or perhaps they did - but it does go to show that once you learn more about what is around you you can't help but start seeing all that is there "hiding in plain sight"!

SYMBOLS CAN HAVE MORE THAN ONE MEANING

(and can even mean multiple things all at the same time)



All Saints



All Saints



All Saints

Symbols: Multiple Meanings

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Symbols can have more than one meaning – and can mean multiple things at the same time. “The relationship of the sign to the signified can be complex. It can arise from historical association, social convention, or mere physical resemblance. Sometimes several of these factors enter the equation. The meaning of symbols is rarely simple. Sometimes a lone symbol stands for a multitude of realities: either the fish or the lamb can represent Jesus, or the individual believer, or the Eucharist that binds the Christian to Christ – or, most likely, it can represent all three at once. Often multiple symbols can stand for the same reality: as the fish, the lamb, and the shepherd all refer to Christ.” -*Aquilina, Signs and Mysteries: Revealing Ancient Christian Symbols, p21-22*

Peacock

1. Resurrection | Eternal life | The beauty and immortality of heaven
2. Christ's triumph over death
3. Can sometimes be depicted alongside the Tree of Life
4. Can sometimes be drinking from a vase or fountain = a Christian drinking the waters of eternal life.
5. The "multitude of eyes" on the peacock's fan-tail = the all-seeing eye of God / the omniscience of the Church.

Fleur de Lis - "Flower of the Lily" / Lilies

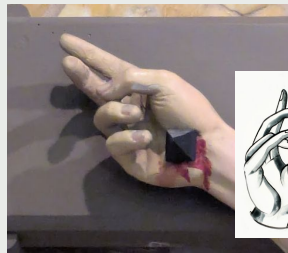
1. The Holy Spirit (3 petals, 3 sepals)
2. The Virgin Mary or Joseph or Jesus' Resurrection
3. Purity | Virginity or Innocence | Obedience
4. The virtues of faith, wisdom, and chivalry or The virtues of faith, hope, and charity/love
5. Love and beauty (*Song of Solomon*)
6. Resurrection | New Life | Eternal Life (*they bloom in the Spring, symbolizing the promise of eternal life in Christianity*)
7. It is an attribute of the Archangel Gabriel as well as several Saints (*like St. Aloysius*)

"Wait, I thought the lily was for St. Joseph." - *You're right.* / "Wait, I thought the lily was for Mary." - *You're right.* / "Wait, I thought the lily was for Jesus." - *You're right.* / "Wait, I thought the lily was for purity." - *You're right.* / "Wait, I thought the lily was for the Resurrection." - *You're right.*

The Peacock is from ancient mythology that it was an immortal bird that would die and resurrect – so early Christians would have understood this very clearly as a relevant symbol for Jesus. I don't think we have this association, so if we see a peacock in a church we might be a bit confused. So this a great example of "opening your eyes" to what's around you and why it is there – it isn't just "fancy art" or a "neat carving". It is symbolism deep truths and revealing (or trying to reveal!) those truths to the viewer.

The 2 Peacocks drinking from the chalice aka the waters of eternal life is fittingly on the Confessional. Peacock with the "all seeing Eye of God" on the Church's exterior.

Alpha & Omega / ΑΩ	The Beginning and the End
IHS	Jesus' name in Greek: IHSUS. The first 3 letters: iota (I), eta (H), sigma (S).
INRI	Acronym for "Iesus Nazarenus, Rex Iudaeorum" (in Latin) meaning: "Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews".
IC XC and NIKA	In Greek, first letters of 'Jesus' (IC) and last letters of 'Christ' (XC). "NIKA" = "Jesus Christ Conquers"
Chi Rho	X (chi) and P (rho) are the first two letters in the Greek word for Christ.
Ω ΩΝ	"He who is"; usually found in Jesus' halo (and Jesus is the only one whose halo can have it)
Ichthus / ΙΧΘΥΣ	"The Jesus Fish" - Greek for "fish". An acronym for "Iesous Christus, Theou. Uios, Soter" meaning: "Jesus Christ, God's Son, Savior"



All Saints

Symbols: *Jesus*

To simplify it: They all mean "JESUS"

In the Church's earliest days, Christians used letters as symbols to stand for Jesus. (Christograms). This was especially important during times of persecution when they had to hide the fact that they were followers of Christ.

Alpha & Omega / ΑΩ - The Beginning and the End

IHS - Jesus' name in Greek: IHSUS. The first 3 letters: iota (I), eta (H), sigma (S).

INRI - Acronym for "Iesus Nazarenus, Rex Iudaeorum" (in Latin) meaning: "Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews".

IC XC and NIKA - In Greek, first letters of 'Jesus' (IC) and last letters of 'Christ' (XC). "NIKA" = "Jesus Christ Conquers"

Chi Rho - X (chi) and P (rho) are the first two letters in the Greek word for Christ.

Ω ΩΝ - "He who is"; usually found in Jesus' halo (and Jesus is the only one whose halo can have it)

Ichthus / ΙΧΘΥΣ - "The Jesus Fish" - Greek for "fish". An acronym for "Iesous Christus, Theou. Uios, Soter" meaning: "Jesus Christ, God's Son, Savior"

The Cross Anchor - Safety and hope - Since many early followers of Jesus were fishermen it was easy to "hide" the fact that they were Christians in the anchor since it naturally has a cross at its top.

Hand of God / Hand of Benediction/Blessing

(1) 3 Persons of the Holy Trinity

(2) Jesus' 2 Natures: Man + Divine

Greek: The fingers are arranged to form the letters I, C, X, and C

You will see the hands with 3 fingers, 2 fingers in various forms but it means the same thing - 3 = Holy Trinity, 2 = Jesus as both God and Man.

I struggle to remember what each of these mean - Is it Latin? Is it Greek? Was it letters for "Jesus"? Is it an acronym? What are the words they are representing? ...But at least I do know at the most basic level they all mean "Jesus". Maybe someday I will be able to keep them all straight and readily remember and be able to say what they are - but the first step is know they stand for "Jesus".



*Notice the "IHS" in the host

Holy Spirit



All Saints



Holy Spirit



Holy Spirit



Holy Spirit

Symbols: Jesus

Bread/Wheat, Grapes, Chalice, Host - The main ingredients of bread and wine and thus The Eucharist – the Body and Blood of Christ.

Sacred Heart of Jesus Represents Christ’s love for each of us. He offers his life for us in the crown of thorns, the Cross, his Blood. The fire stands for His burning love for us.

The Good Shepherd Our loving, caring, personal God who protects, guards, takes care of and saves His Sheep

Pelican in her Piety - Ancient mythology: Pelican mothers would pierce themselves and feed their young ones their own blood in order to keep them alive. Adopted by early Christians to represent Christ’s sacrifice for us. Associated with the Eucharist.

Agnus Dei - (Latin for “Lamb of God”)

(1) Lamb + Banner for Jesus’s sacrifice and triumph. **not pictured here*

(2) Lamb laying on the Book of the Seven Seals - the Lord alone was able to open the book (*from the Book of Revelation*)

....yes, there are even more that I haven’t listed here...

A lot of symbols were “co-opted”/adopted from ancient mythology by the earliest Christians and given Christian meaning. The “Pelican in her piety” was a very surprising symbol to see and I just had to learn more. The picture I use here isn’t very easy to see what it is – but it is a pelican mother piercing herself to feed her young – just like Jesus did for us on the Cross. Once you understand what this is its symbolism is rather clear. Even if I don’t know the ancient myth I can understand enough to know now why it is displayed in church symbols and what it is meant to represent.

The Lamb of God on the book was another that I was curious about – and I at first thought if it as it being presented as a sacrifice but in the Holy Spirit clerestory it is very clearly a book – so I searched for that meaning and discovered there is more to the sign than just “Jesus as sacrificial lamb”.

St. Aloysius



The Apostles and Saints are depicted with items that represent...

HOW THEY LIVED

HOW THEY DIED

WHAT THEY ARE KNOWN FOR

St. Bonaventure



Symbols: *Apostles and Saints*

The Apostles and Saints are depicted in stained glass windows, statues, and murals - typically with items that represent...

- how they lived,
- how they died, and/or
- what they are known for

The best way to learn what the Symbols mean is to read about the particular Saint :: Because symbols can have multiple meanings it is helpful to know what the symbols mean in reference to that particular saint. There are many resources you can use to learn about the saints and their symbols.

St. Aloysius

Feast Day - June 21

- Black cassock and white surplice (*his priestly vestments*)
- Gazing at a Crucifix (*his love of Christ*)
- Lily (*his purity, obedience*)

St. Bonaventure

Feast Day - July 15

- Cardinal's Hat (*for his role as Cardinal*)
- Books/Scroll (*for his writings*)
- Communion / Ciborium (*the vessel that holds the consecrated host*) **not included in this stained glass*

Did you know? Saints' feast days are often on the day of their death (*aka the date of their "heavenly birthday"*)

I feel bad for the saints that don't typically get depicted in church art, statues, or stained glass. There are some intriguing saints – like St. Bartholomew who holds his own skin because he was skinned alive. St. Lucy had her eyes plucked out and so holds them on a platter (though I have seen a statue of this)

A book I own that I like:

https://www.google.com/books/edition/Saints_and_Their_Symbols/D_aF50Lo8lQC?hl=en&qbpv=0

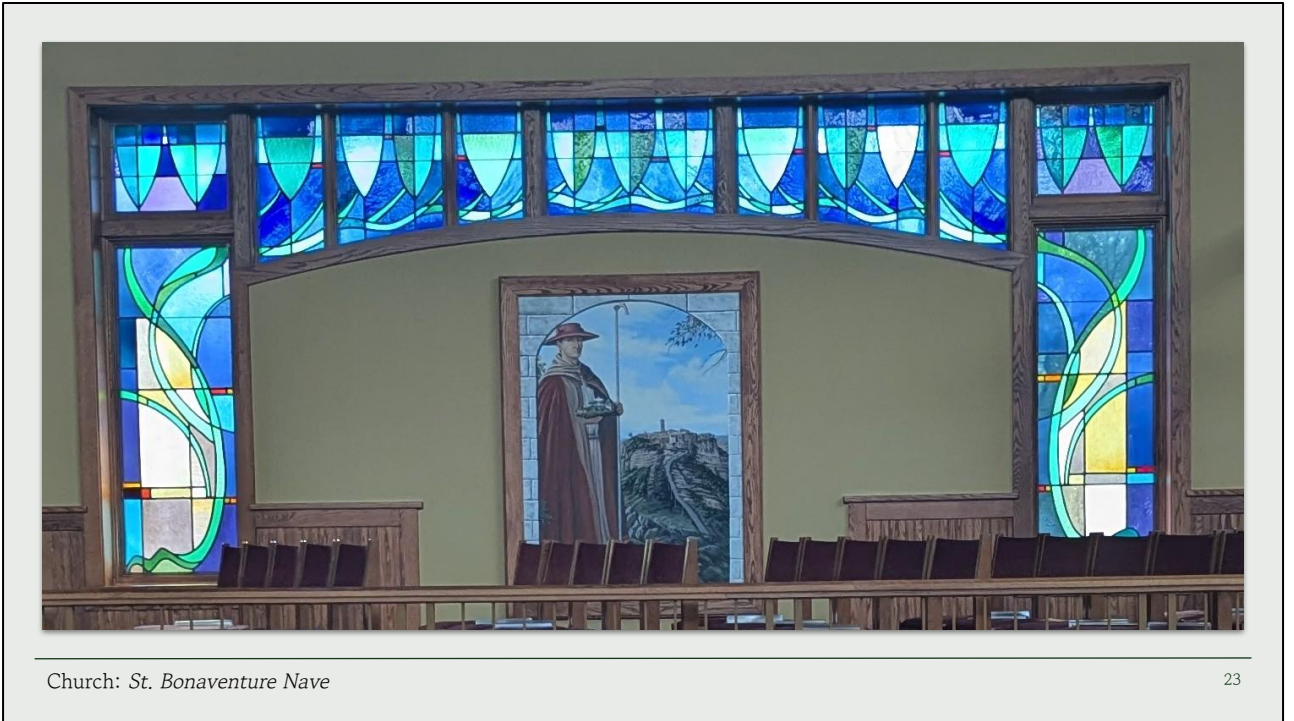
A DEEPER LOOK AT EACH OF THE
St. Matthew Parish Churches



Church: *St. Bonaventure (Glenshaw)*

- The bell tower recalls the city gate of Bagnoregio, the Italian hill town that was home to St. Bonaventure.
- Why does the Cross have multiple arms? Because you can see a Cross from every direction – so no matter which direction you are coming from you know that you are being called to worship.
- Inside the church all the wooden beams point upwards - raising your eyes towards the Crucifix and onwards up to Heaven / God.

St. Bonaventure parish was founded in 1957. They originally built a "school-church" with the hope of making a separate church someday - so they factored that into the design. St. Bonnie's original church became the school gym once the new church was built in 1999.



Church: *St. Bonaventure Nave*

The Stained Glass motifs in the nave are inspired by the writings of St. Bonaventure regarding "The Tree of Life," "The Mystical Vine" and "Love Attained"

This is the Mystical Vine window + St. Bonaventure Painting

—

Once you know that the stained glass are telling a larger story of St. Bonaventure (the saint) and that they relate to the themes of his writing you can maybe see and understand them a bit better. Because they are more "artsy" and symbolic than clear sign, even just know this small detail helps you understand them. Even if you don't know what St. Bonaventure wrote about you at least could say they relate to his best known works.



Church: *St. Bonaventure Painting*

- St. Bonaventure is depicted holding a model of St. Bonaventure Church with the Holy Spirit (dove) descending upon it. He is holding the new church building – this shows St Bonaventure's blessing; that the church is under his care.
- In the background is the city of Bagnoregio. Bagnoregio is actually known as "the dying city" because it is built on a mountain that is slowly collapsing with rockslides. The only way in and out is via the one footbridge – and you have to walk it; no cars are allowed.
- Two figures are walking along the path –Fr. James Gretz and Fr. George Newmeyer. The two figures were intended to be Fr. Gretz and Fr. Newmeyer, but these can represent any two people traveling along. Perhaps one of those figures is you!

Did you know?

- This was painted by James Guentner, a local artist and member of St. Bonaventure Parish.
- It is customary for artists to paint their benefactors into paintings.

"LOVE ATTAINED"

St. Bonaventure wrote:

"These are the seven steps by which the sweetness of love is attained through the reception of the Holy Spirit:

alert watchfulness,
comforting trust,
inflaming desire,
uplifting rapture,
joyful peace,
transporting happiness,
and perfecting intimacy.

You must proceed in this order if you wish to attain perfect charity and the love of the Holy Spirit."

Crown + INRI = Jesus, King and Prince of Peace

(1) Alert watchfulness = Sunrise

Shields = "leaves are for medicine"

(7) Perfecting intimacy = Marriage Rings

Waters = Baptism; the Gospels irrigate the whole garden of the church

The wooden beams of the stained glass form a Cross

(5) Joyful Peace = Rainbow

(4) Uplifting rapture = Host, Chalice, Wheat

(6) Transporting happiness = Blossoms, Fruit

(2) Comforting trust = Stars, Moon, Dark night

(3) Inflaming desire = Flames

Church: St. Bonaventure

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Sanctuary Window - "Love Attained"

They have packed a lot of symbols into this – though a lot of its meaning is hard to see without someone else explaining it.

It helps to know that this window is called "Love Attained" which is one of St. Bonaventure's writings and each of the 7 things listed in his writing has been reflected somewhere in it – along with a few additional things like the crown+INRI, wooden beams form a cross, and waters of Baptism. The 'shields "leaves are for medicine" is from St. Bonaventure's writings.

As I was trying to decipher this stained glass my best thought was that it represented the 7 sacraments – I could see Baptism, Eucharist, Marriage. But then I couldn't figure out the rest. Fortunately there was a dedication publication put together for the church and it explained its symbolism.

Pre-Vatican II resources specifically state that church images should not be too symbolic -especially those around the altar. The sign should be clear and then people can see and interpret its symbolism. But St. Bonaventure was built post-Vatican II (in 1999) - the sign of the stained glass is more symbol than clear sign.



Church: *Guess the Object*

Proving that anything and everything in a Church can contain symbols/symbolism...

- Crosses
- Quatrefoils
- 4 pointed shapes
- ...a dizzying overlap of shapes and shapes and shapes...

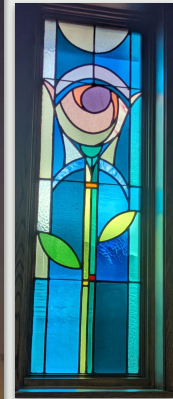
This is the upholstery on the Chapel chairs. Likely very familiar to those with young kids since this is the cry room / the best room to attend mass in if you have rambunctious little ones.



Queen (*crown of life*)



Mother (*lily amid thorns*)
[behind Our Lady of Guadalupe]



Virgin (*rose of passion*)

Church: *St. Bonaventure*

27

- The Marian Shrine is on the left side of the church (*so to Jesus' right as viewed from the altar; the traditional location*).
- 3 of Mary's symbols are displayed in the stained glass windows - crown, lily, rose.
- Our Lady of Guadalupe hangs in front of the center ("Mother") window.



Church: *St. Bonaventure*

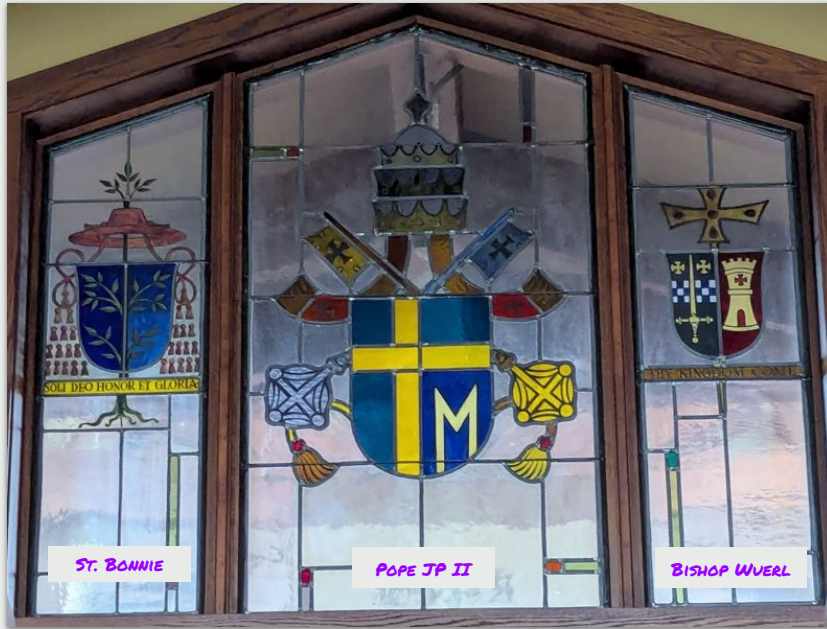
“The Three Marys” - These three women were at the foot of the Cross during the Crucifixion.

- Mary Cleophas
- Mary Mother of Jesus
- Mary Magdalene

You may easily be able to tell that the 3 Marys are Marys since the stained glass is clearly labeled with their names – but you may not realize that these 3 women were the ones who stood at the foot of the Cross.

—

I am uncertain what Mary Cleophas and Mary Magdalene are holding; I have yet to learn this myself. But Mary Magdalene typically is shown with myrrh but it appears she is holding a shell. Mary Cleophas is holding yellow flowers - but I’m not sure if that is correct or what it means; Mary is holding the infant Jesus (*which at least is clear*).



Church: *St. Bonaventure*

Church Dedication Window

Left - A Coat of Arms imagined for St. Bonaventure, the man. He lived before heraldry so doesn't have an official COA, but...

- **The Hat:** The Galero hat and tassels represent his priesthood/he became a Cardinal. (Typically: the more tassels = the higher in the church hierarchy you are)
- **The Motto:** The Latin phrase "Soli Deo Honor Et Gloria" meaning "To God Alone be Honor and Glory" is taken from one of his works.
- **The Shield:** "Tree of Life" is one of St. Bonaventure's writings.

Center - Pope John Paul II Coat of Arms - He was pope at the time the parish was founded (in 1957).

- **The Shield:** The blue field and gold color are traditional, with the cross representing the Redemption.
- **The Letter "M":** Placed in the lower right to signify Mary's involvement in the mystery of Christ's death.
- **The Cross:** Off-centered to make space for the "M".
- **Papal Insignia:** Unlike his successors who used a miter, John Paul II retained the three-tiered papal tiara and crossed keys.
- **Motto:** "Totus Tuus", meaning "Totally Yours", expresses his deep personal devotion to Mary.

Right - Bishop Donald Wuerl's Coat of Arms - He was bishop at the time of the new St. Bonnie building (in 1999).

- **The Tower:** Represents the "City of God" and titles of the Blessed Virgin Mary (*Tower of David, Tower of Ivory*).
- **The Sword:** Derived from the official coat of arms of the Diocese of Pittsburgh.
- **The Cross:** With the 5 Holy Wounds of Christ
- **Motto:** "Thy Kingdom Come" (Matthew 6:10) represents his commitment to the building of the kingdom of God

The current St. Matthew Parish also has dedication information - but these are framed prints hanging in the church rather than stained glass. You will see the Coat of Arms for St. Matthew Parish and the Bishop and Pope information. We already have a new bishop and a new pope since the parish was formed ...so you can look at the prints and see which bishop and pope have their coat of arms depicted. You can investigate: Do they display the initial ones or current ones?



Church: *All Saints*

The carved stone façade shows Jesus on his kingly throne holding a book over the altar while angels worship Him.

The inscription: "Venite Adoramus " (*Latin*) = "Come let us adore Him"

"Come let us adore him" is a fitting message on the outside – welcoming those in to the church to worship

The top of the church is adorned with a cross and a statue of the Virgin Mary holding an infant Jesus.

The Church was built in 1915 by architect John T. Comes (*a Catholic Pittsburgher*). Comes was the architect of many Pittsburgh Catholic churches (as well as in other places). He unfortunately died at the age of 49 but has left behind a legacy that, in many cases, still stands. Two of our parish churches are Comes designs –All Saints and Holy Spirit.

Mary is holding the infant Jesus + lilies (*or at least she's holding some sort of flowers and I think they are lilies*).



"Repent and believe in the gospel"

Church: *All Saints*

As we have seen (*slide 30*), even before you get into the church, there is a lot to take in from the All Saints Exterior.

Top:

- Fleur de Lis Cross
- Chi Rho
- Fleur de Lis

Bottom:

- 2 birds with interlocking necks = divine + human; body + soul
- Peacock

Gargoyles

- The fundamental message of Gargoyles is: "Repent and believe in the gospel" (Mk 1:15).
- Gargoyles, Grotesques, and Chimeras represent the concept of evil and remind the faithful of the perils of sin. They adorn only the outside of churches.
- Gargoyles actually have 3 forms (as noted) – but they all represent the sin of the world; inside the church is how we are saved from our sins and avoid the sin of the world.
- I think these are technically grotesques rather than gargoyles, but it is simplest to call them "gargoyles". They all represent demons/evil.

The two interlocking birds and peacock were a few symbols I took notice of because they seemed more unusual – and I wasn't sure about them – so I had to read up on these things and found that rich symbolism of the peacock (*slide 17*) and the meaning of "2" things (*slide 15*). [There may be more to the two birds but that is the best I have figured out.]



Symbols: *Rose Windows*

<https://chasinggods.com/symbolism-of-rose-windows/>

[History of Rose Windows](#)

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Rose Windows (also called Wheel Windows) are “Visual Bibles” that represent the “Light of God” flooding the world.

Sign

- Biblical Narratives
 - ...The main image is usually centered on Christ or Mary
 - ...The smaller panels depict other Biblical scenes or people
 - ...or they depict virtues (*which is done via symbols*)

Symbol

- Divine Light
- The Perfection and Eternal-Nature of God (*circle*)
- The Virgin Mary (*the “Mystical Rose” and her role as Queen of Heaven*)
- Often broken into 12 divisions – a number that represents the Apostles (*All Saints’ has 14 (which is 7 x 2)*)

Where they are located in a Church building also matters (*traditionally*):

- *West*: Usually faces the setting sun, often representing the Last Judgment and the end of time.
- *North*: Associated with the Virgin Mary.
- *South*: Often focuses on the Church triumphant or Christ in glory.
- *East*: Usually doesn’t have one since this is where the altar is located.

Did you know? Artists use light to show holiness and God’s gift of grace.

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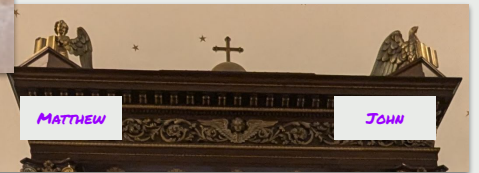
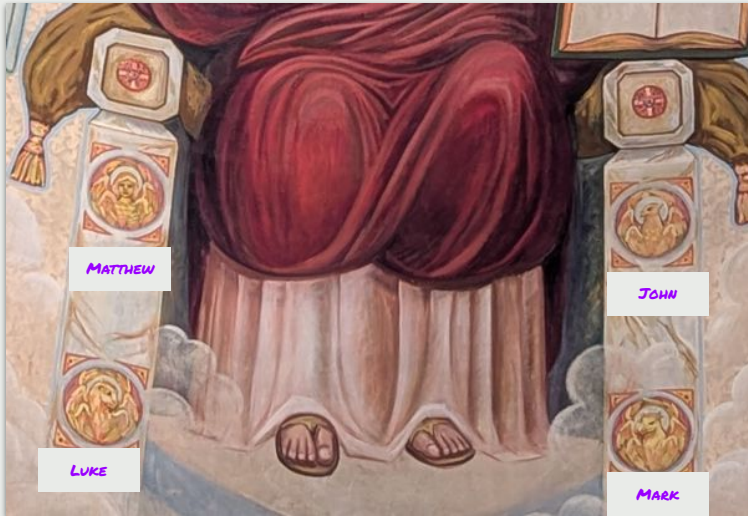
This is a view outside the church - it’s more beautiful inside the church aka “the correct side” to view stained glass windows. Which is itself symbolic – you get the full beauty when you are within the church - that is, when you are a part of The Church.



Church: *All Saints*

All Saints Dome: Jesus is in the center. And if you weren't sure you get 4 very clear signs that it is Jesus (hand, alpha omega, halo, IC XC) – as well as the fact his face is depicted as Jesus tends to be depicted in art. He is also robed in red likely for his sacrifice.

- **Jesus** seated on the Throne, being crowned with the Crown of Victory by **Angels** ministering to Him
- **Halo with "WON"** - "O" = "The Existing One" and the first and last letters of "Jesus Christ"
- **Hand of God Hand Gesture** - Holy Trinity; Jesus's Dual Natures
- **The IC XC Monogram**
- **Alpha and Omega** on the Bible/Word of God
- **Gold** in the background confirms that we are looking up into Heaven.
- **16 Apostles + Saints** Ring the bottom, below Christ on His throne (*4 are grouped in 2s making 14 separate 'groups'*)
- **4 Evangelist Symbols** are on the Throne
- **The Holy Spirit as Dove** with **7 tongues of fire** (*Pentecost; 7 gifts of the Holy Spirit; 7 Sacraments*) Note: The dove is above a triangle, inside a circle with a wound on its breast = The Holy Trinity.



Holy Spirit

Symbols: *The Four Evangelists*

The Four Evangelists

The Gospel writers are known as The Four Evangelists because they spread the "Good News" of Jesus - They spread the Word of God.

Matthew

Symbol: Winged Man

Why?: His Gospel begins by tracing our Lord's human origin.

Mark

Symbol: Lion

Why?: He tells of Jesus' kingship (power and glory). His Gospel begins by describing St. John the Baptist (Mk 1:3).

Luke

Symbol: Ox

Why?: His Gospel gives a very full account of the sacrificial death of our Lord. Oxen were an important part of the Old Testament laws of sacrifice - just like the calf, Jesus' sacrifice saves us from our enemy (Satan).

John

Symbol: Eagle

Why?: His Gospel tells of Christ's divine origin. John begins at the very beginning, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God and the Word was God..."

All Saints Sanctuary Dome - Jesus' Throne : The images on the throne aren't super clear (both in this image and in real life) but if you are familiar with the symbols for the 4 Gospel writers then you can make it out. Holy Spirit has a better depiction in actual statue form on the Altar.



Left: Parables and Biblical Stories

- Simon being renamed Peter
- The Parable of the 10 Virgins
- The Prodigal Son Returns
- Jesus Welcomes the Children
- The Good Samaritan
- Jesus, The Good Shepherd
- The Resurrection

Right: The 7 Sorrows of Mary

- The Prophecy of Simeon
- The Flight into Egypt
- The Loss of Jesus for Three Days
- The Carrying of the Cross
- Jesus dies on the Cross
- Jesus Taken Down from the Cross
- Jesus Laid in the Tomb

Church: *All Saints*

There are 14 Murals - 7 depict Parables and Biblical Stories + 7 depict the 7 Sorrows of Mary

Left: Parables and Biblical Stories

- Simon being renamed Peter
- The Parable of the 10 Virgins
- The Prodigal Son Returns
- Jesus Welcomes the Children
- The Good Samaritan
- Jesus, The Good Shepherd
- The Resurrection

Right: The 7 Sorrows of Mary

- The Prophecy of Simeon
- The Flight into Egypt
- The Loss of Jesus for Three Days
- The Carrying of the Cross
- Jesus dies on the Cross
- Jesus Taken Down from the Cross
- Jesus Laid in the Tomb

Once you understand the “theme” it is easier to understand what you are looking at. At first I didn’t know the right side was depicting the 7 Sorrows of Mary so the “Loss of Jesus for 3 days” mural was very confusing. I could see several stations of the cross. I could figure out all the other ones (or so I thought), but I was unsure what that Loss of Jesus mural was – but once I learned it was for the 7 Sorrows I understood it because I knew the other 6 and could figure out “Which one am I missing?”

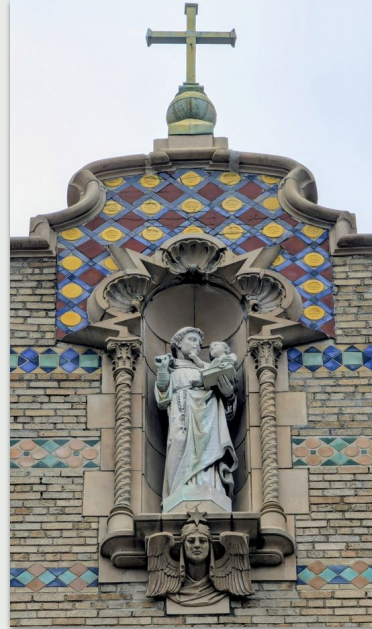


Church: *All Saints*

- The Stations of the Cross are in a Medieval style with German titles
- All Saints was founded by German immigrants.

Saint Windows

- 14 line the Nave = 7 left + 7 right
- The stained glass was made by Munich Studios in Chicago (so a German connection).
- You can see the info on St. Juliana (*she was beheaded because she wouldn't marry someone so she holds a sword (the means of her physical death), but she holds a demon in chains (the means of how she gained eternal life)*)



Church: *Holy Spirit*

Holy Spirit Church (Millvale)

Built 1914 by architect John T. Comes

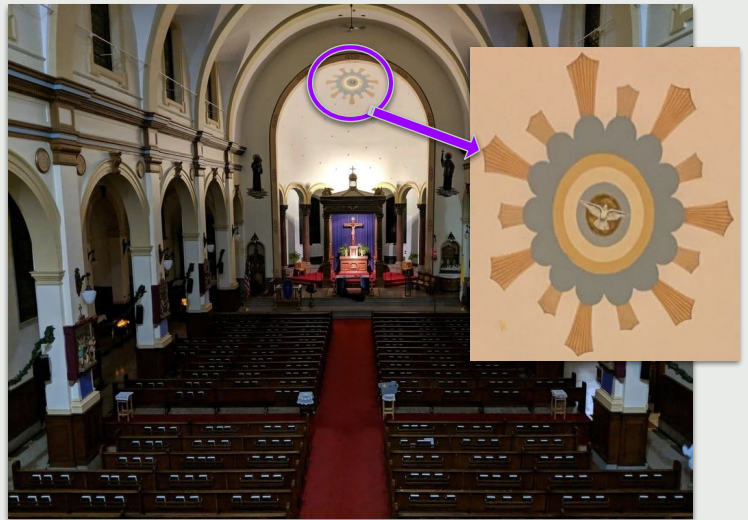
Why does St. Anthony show up so much at Holy Spirit? Because the church/parish was originally founded as St. Anthony Parish. It became Holy Spirit Parish in 1994 when St. Anthony and St. Ann merged.

There is a marble statue of St. Anthony in the center above the main rose window.

The top of the church is adorned with two bell towers —with 3 bells named George, Maria, Anton. Because they were donated by Knights of St. George.

All Church bells are named after saints and are blessed – there is a special “Blessing of the Church bells” ceremony that takes place where they are blessed before they are ever rung. Then after they are blessed, as part of the Church blessing ceremony, they ring out for the first time.

It is worth zooming in on your phone or getting binoculars and checking out the ornate work and colors at the top of the church. It is hard to see the details from the ground with your eyes: there is a lot hidden in plain sight!

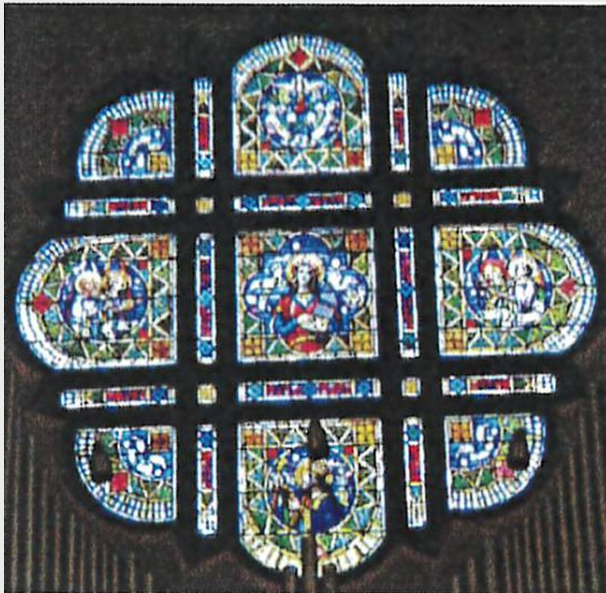


Church: *Holy Spirit*

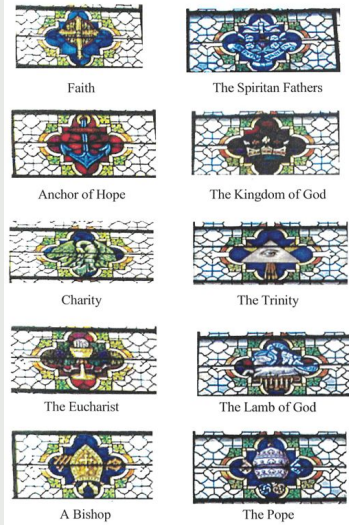
Before you go into the Nave, just in case you need a reminder of what Church is, you get an actual sign: "Be Silent. Be Prayerful. This is the House of the Lord."

The sign has Holy Spirit and hands praying.

Similar to All Saints, the Holy Spirit Altar Dome has a Dove inside circles amidst the cosmos (*stars*) with rays emanating from the center. There are 7 large tri-pointed rays representing the 7 gifts of the Holy Spirit (*wisdom, understanding, counsel, fortitude, knowledge, piety, and fear of the Lord*) being bestowed upon the believers.



Stained Glass Windows of the Upper Part of the Church (the Clerestory)
 Symbols signifying the following:



Church: *Holy Spirit*

Stained Glass

- 14 windows in the Nave depict Saints (7 on Left + 7 on Right)
- 3 windows over the Main Church Doors: Faith + Hope + Charity
- 2 windows on the altar: Sacred Heart of Jesus, Immaculate Heart of Mary
- 1 window over the Vestibule Center Door: Holy Spirit

The Clerestory

- 10 windows in the Clerestory - Faith, Anchor of Hope (Cross Anchor), Charity (Pelican in her piety), The Eucharist, A Bishop, The Spiritan Fathers, The Kingdom of God, The Holy Trinity, The Lamb of God, The Pope
- Of note: The Spiritan Fathers Coat of Arms, the Pelican in her piety, the eye of God.
- The symbols are within barbed quatrefoils (heaven + earth)
-

Rose Window

- The rose window is fittingly focused on music imagery since it is placed over the organ.
- 4 Main Images:
 - Top: Coat of Arms for the Holy Ghost Fathers (Spiritans) – They are the ones who founded the original church/parish
 - Center: St. Cecilia: Patron Saint of Musicians
 - Left: King David: Musician
 - Right: (I'm unsure and still need to learn what it is)
 - There are also additional angels and decorations

The Holy Ghost Fathers (Spiritans) founded the original parish – and so when St. Ann and St. Anthony merged the name “Holy Spirit” was chosen in honor of the original founders.

—

These images were from a brochure that Holy Spirit used to hand out on special occasion – but this is the type of thing I think we need so people can better understand the beauty and depth of meaning to everything around them when they are at church! The brochure briefly explained what symbols were and some specific history (like the Crucifix is the original from St. Anthony (from 1896) and the Mary and Joseph shrines were brought over from St. Ann Church.)



Church: *St. Aloysius*

40

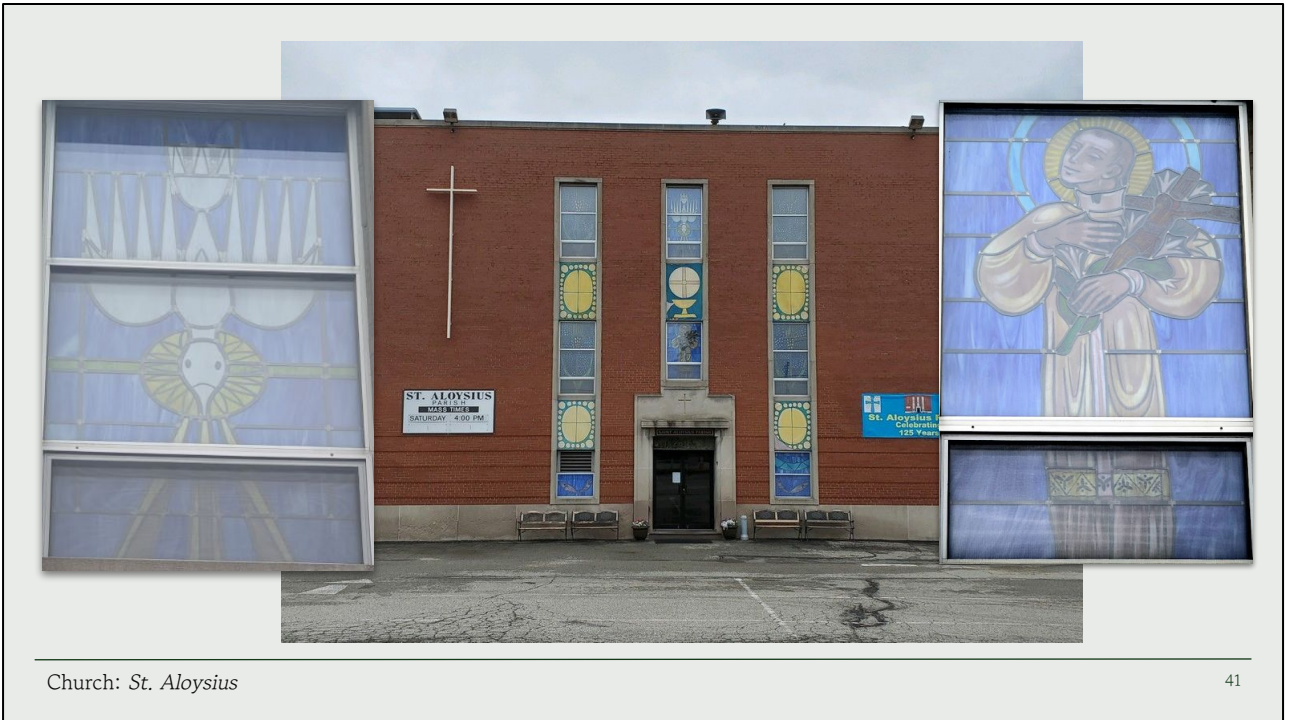
St. Aloysius Church (Reserve) - Wait, *ST. ALOYSIUS* used to look like this???? 😊 Yes!

The original building was built in 1892. I found these images on eBay. And I was skeptical that this was true but then I found an image in the "Around Troy Hill, Spring Hill, and Reserve Township" book –confirming it is true. Pg 71.

St. Aloysius started as a mission church for Most Holy Name of Jesus on Troy Hill. Then got big enough to become its own parish. There is a copy of the church's centennial at the History Center that I have yet to go see to learn more about the original church –it would be great to know things like what the stained glass was like.

Also, someone on eBay is selling a card of what St. Aloysius used to look like on the inside. You see St. Aloysius with his black and white robes, gazing at a crucifix. There is a Mary shrine (left from our vantage point) and Joseph shrine (right of the image). Angels in mural. It was very ornate.

The altar als has a few additional statues – but I will need to see if that info exists in the centennial book to know for sure who they are.



Church: *St. Aloysius*

This is St. Aloysius Church (Reserve) as it is today. In 1957 the new Church + School was built. ...*The outside is blended into the school building with little ornamentation...*

The 1950s/60s were not a great time for architecture in general – so the new St. Aloysius is reflective of that. But perhaps this is a great example of remembering that Church is the place to worship God – **it doesn't really matter what the church looks like; the point is to worship.**

3 panels on the front of the church. The center panel has the Holy Spirit as a descending Dove (with 3 rays) + [Eucharist] + St. Aloysius. Left and right each have 3 panels: 2 wheat + 1 fish

Fun Facts: St. Aloysius is home to the SMP Holiday Train Display and the Rummage House.

Please visit the holiday train display and for St. Nicholas day there is a fun day of crafts, food, cookie decorating, a picture with Santa, face painting. Fr. Gretz dresses up as St. Nick. It is a really great event! My kids love it.



Church: *St. Aloysius*

When you enter the building you go down stairs to get into the Church (*which is rather unique*).

The inside is simple with limited decorations. [I still have to get there to take photos, but I pulled these from the parish website.]



Church: *St. Aloysius*

The Nave Windows are heavily symbolic ...and also heavy (*with concrete*)

A few examples:

- Keys of St Peter [with chains] (The Church)
 - *Matthew 16:19: "I will give you the keys to the kingdom of heaven. Whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven; and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven."*
- The Eucharist, The Church
- The Chi Rho + ? (*I'm unsure*)
- The Holy Spirit (dove, flames)

A FEW MORE
Symbols

We covered a lot of symbols but there is a lot (and will be a lot) we don't cover. The remaining part briefly covers a few additional symbols which are helpful to know.



Holy Spirit



Holy Spirit

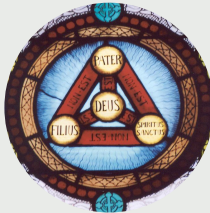
Symbols: *God the Father, Holy Spirit*

Symbols of God the Father

- **Eye of God** - Often seen in the sanctuary; representing God who is everywhere and sees everything.
- **Circle** - Symbol of God's eternity; with no beginning and no end; the unbroken covenant between God and His people.
- **Hand of God** - Often in a blessing gesture; indicates the intervention in or approval of affairs on Earth by God. / The thumb and first two fingers are usually extended and the third and fourth fingers closed.
 - The thumb and two extended fingers represent the **Holy Trinity**; the two that are closed represent the **two-fold nature of Christ**.
 - The Hand can extend out from shining clouds, which are a sign of sanctity.

Symbols of the Holy Spirit

- **Dove** - All four Gospels describe the Holy Spirit coming upon Jesus in the form of a dove. (Often depicted as descending)
- **Fire / Tongue of Fire** - The Holy Spirit came to the apostles at Pentecost in tongues of fire. Symbolizes zeal - being on fire for Christ.
- **Olive Branch** - A symbol for peace and the peace the Holy Spirit brings. A dove brought back an olive branch to Noah on the Ark.



Holy Spirit



St. Aloysius



Symbols: Holy Trinity, The Church

Symbols of The Holy Trinity

- **Shamrock** - Three separate and distinct petals, but is also just one single leaf.
- **Triangle** - Three equal sides but it is one shape.
- **Triquetra** - Interlocking symbol of the Trinity - Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.
- **Shield of the Trinity** - Ancient symbol with 3 parts as 1 whole

Symbols of The Church

- **Keys of Peter** - The keys to the kingdom of heaven entrusted to St. Peter, the first Pope
- **Jerusalem Cross / Five-Fold Cross / Crusader's Cross** - On the Papal banner given by Pope Urban II to the knights of the First Crusade in 1095.
- **Vine and Grapes** - Christ as the true vine and believers as His branches. Grapes represent the fruit of the Spirit, communion, and the blessings of faith. This imagery calls to mind the Eucharist, sacrifice, and spiritual nourishment.



All Saints



Symbols: *Mary*

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Symbols of Mary

The church has always venerated Mary -

- Jesus' Mother
- Our Mother
- The Mother of the Church
- The Queen of Heaven

...among many other titles we have for Our Lady

- **Rose** - The "Mystical Rose," symbolizing beauty, purity, and divine love
- **Lily / Lilies** - Mary's purity
- **Garden / Enclosed Garden / Closed Gate** - Mary's perpetual virginity
- **Olive Branch** - Peace and reconciliation
- **Crown / Scepter / Throne** - Mary as Queen of Heaven; her spiritual authority; her exalted place beside Christ
- **Seven Swords** - The Seven Sorrows of Mary
- **Ark of the Covenant** - Mary as the bearer of God (*Jesus*) *Theotokos*
- **Tower of David / Ivory Tower** - Strength and purity (*from Marian litanies*)
- **Immaculate Heart** - Mary's pure love and sorrowful compassion
- **Rosary Beads** - Devotion to Mary through prayer
- **"Ave Maria" / "AM"**
- **"Blessed Mother" / "BM"**
- **Star (Stella Maris / Star of the Sea)** - Mary as a guide leading people to Christ
- **Crown of Twelve Stars** - Her queenship and connection to the twelve tribes / apostles
- **Sun / Radiance** - Clothed with the sun, symbolizing glory and divine
- **Crescent Moon** - Her role in salvation history (*Book of Revelation*)
- **Blue Mantle** - Purity, heaven, and royalty
- **White Garment** - Innocence and holiness

The All Saints Mary statue has rose/flower motif.

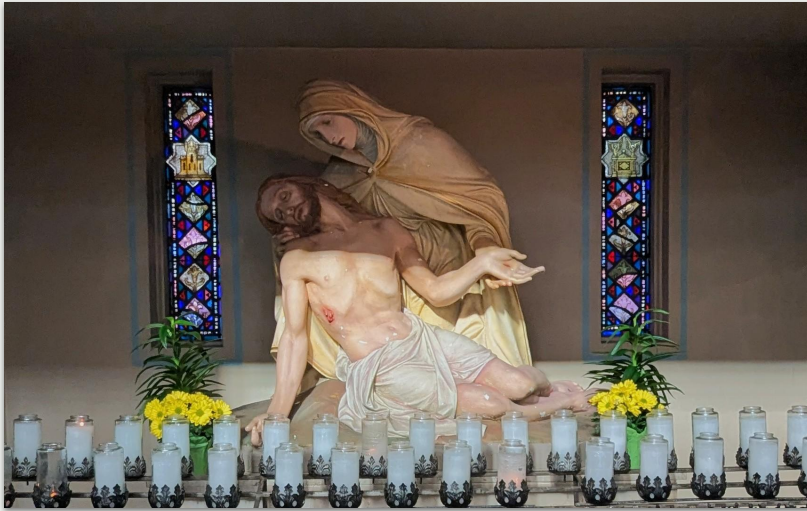
Our Lady of Guadalupe contains many of her symbols - heavens, moon, stars, nimbus/radiance/sun, blue and white, ark

IN CONCLUSION
Summary

Your main takeaway should be:

Churches are full of a lot of signs and symbols with a lot of meaning! And there are many symbols with many meanings!

I encourage you: If you ever are curious about what something is take time to look it up. I only know all the things presented here because I have been curious about them.



All Saints

EVERYTHING IN A CHURCH POINTS US TO GOD



All Saints

Summary

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Everything in a Church points us to God ...and reveals His unfathomable love and mercy.

If you are ever in doubt about what something means a good guess is that it represents **Jesus**. But no matter what it is – its ultimate point is to **point us to God**. It is all meant to guide us to Him so we can be with Him for all eternity.

- Everything shows us the importance of The Church - as both the House of God + the People of God
- Everything is meant to call to mind God and Salvation History
- Everything reveals to us... the unfathomable love and mercy of God –in Father, Son, and Holy Spirit

No matter what you look at or encounter at Church just understand that it likely has deeper meaning (symbol) than what you see on the surface (sign). Almost everything is both sign and symbol.

Not only does everything reveal God's love for us – but we also should understand that we are all called to be a part of His eternal love story. Being a part of the "People of God" doesn't end at death - as Christians we are called to be with God for all eternity. We start as members of the Church Militant (those living) – then after our physical death we join the Church Triumphant (those in heaven) [...after perhaps some time as part of the Church Suffering (those in purgatory)]. :: Catholic Church buildings and art contain numerous reminders of our identity and our ultimate goal.