

# GUIDE TO CATHOLIC STAINED GLASS WINDOWS

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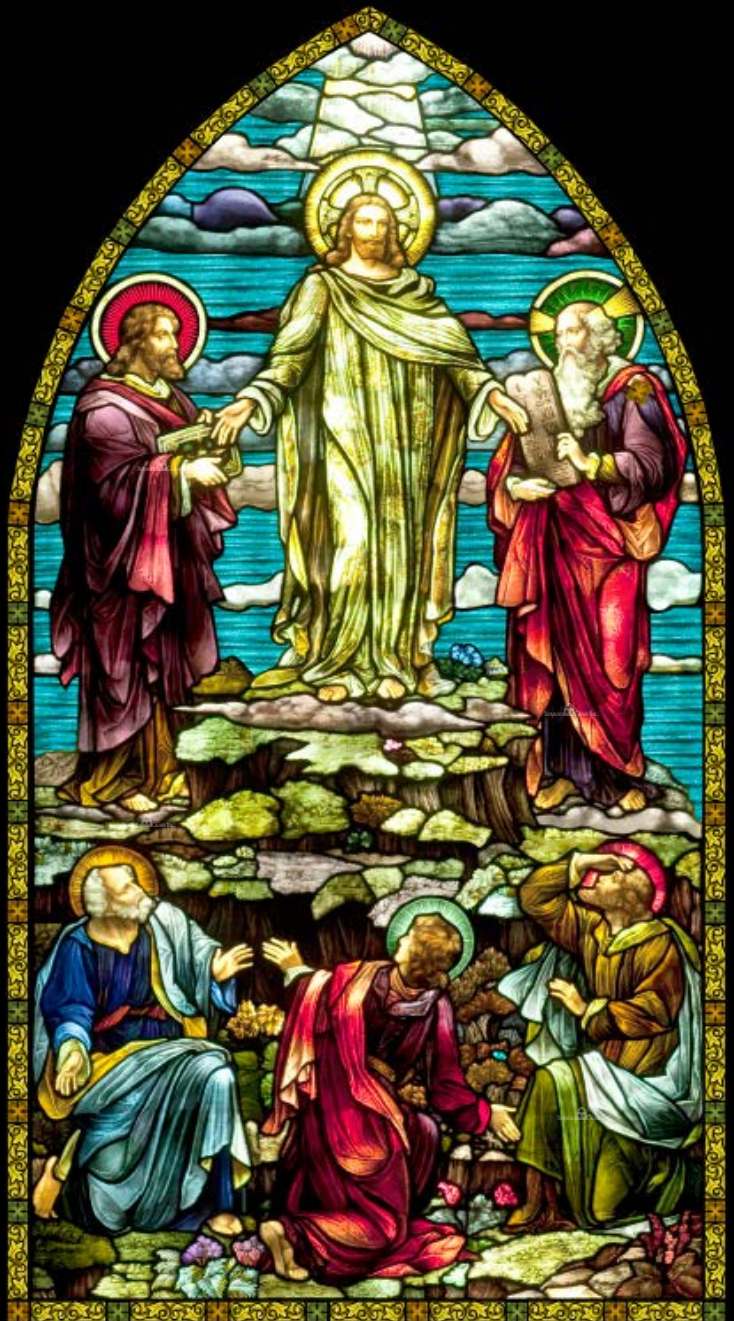
STAINED GLASS CAN REMIND US THAT THERE IS SOMETHING—SOMETHING BEAUTIFUL—BEYOND THE WORLD WHERE WE LIVE.

It can help us refocus on the things of God and on our faith. While **stained glass** is used by almost all Christian denominations and most share sacred images, this brief guide focuses on the unique subject matter and attributes of *Catholic stained glass windows*.

“Christ himself made extensive use of images in his preaching, fully in keeping with his willingness to become, in the Incarnation, the icon of the unseen God.” Pope John Paul II

## CATHOLIC STAINED GLASS

Over the years we have produced many works of art for **Roman Catholic Churches**, Basilicas, Cathedrals and Monasteries. In the Catholic Church, **stained glass artwork** is intended to illustrate, supplement and portray in tangible form the teachings of the **Catholic Church**. As in all church stained glass, the principal subject matter in **Catholic stained glass** is the life of Jesus, the parables, the disciples and the **Old Testament**. While the subjects and stories of most stained glass art are similar throughout all Christian denominations; some stained glass artwork for the Catholic Church is unique to the Catholic faith. These **Catholic stained glass artworks** often reflect the greater emphasis placed on the Blessed Mother, The Stations of the Cross, the sacraments and the saints.



Stained Glass Window 3545: The Transfiguration of Christ



Stained Glass Window 2571:  
Leaves and Grapes



Stained Glass Window 2572:  
Pretty Rose Window



Stained Glass Window 2570:  
Leaves and Flowers



## A BACKGROUND ON CATHOLIC STAINED GLASS

**Stained glass** has been used by the **Catholic Church** since ancient times to aid in devotion and to instruct. In 1563, the Council of Trent addressed the role of Sacred Art. *“by means of the stories of the mysteries of our redemption portrayed in paintings and other representations, the people are instructed and confirmed in the articles of the faith. These images ought to be borne in mind and constantly reflected upon.”* The decree made it clear that the purpose of sacred art, including **Catholic stained glass windows**, was to educate the viewer in Catholic doctrine and to allow the viewer a physical illustration of the truths of the Catholic faith. In more modern times, the Church has recommitted to the long partnership between art (**including Catholic stained glass**), and the Church. Pope John Paul II stated: *“The Church needs art. In order to communicate the message entrusted to her by Christ, the Church needs art. Art must make perceptible, and as far as possible attractive, the world of the spirit, of the invisible, of God. It must therefore translate into meaningful terms that which is in itself ineffable. Art has a unique capacity to take one or other facet of the message and translate it into colors, shapes and sounds which nourish the intuition of those who look or listen. It does so without emptying the message itself of its transcendent value and its aura of mystery.”*

POPE JOHN PAUL POINTED OUT THAT THROUGH STAINED GLASS AND OTHER TYPES OF CATHOLIC ART “THE KNOWLEDGE OF GOD CAN BE BETTER REVEALED AND THE PREACHING OF THE GOSPEL CAN BECOME CLEARER TO THE HUMAN MIND”.



Stained Glass Window 2091: Water to Wedding Wine

“ From the Nativity to Golgotha, from the Transfiguration to the Resurrection, from the miracles to the teachings of Christ, and on to the events recounted in the Acts of the Apostles or foreseen by the Apocalypse in an eschatological key, on countless occasions the biblical word has become image, music and poetry, evoking the mystery of “the Word made flesh” in the language of art.”

POPE JOHN PAUL II

## SUBJECTS IN CATHOLIC STAINED GLASS

While **stained glass windows** depicting Christ, the Parables, The Apostles and Disciples, Bible Stories and the Old Testament are featured in almost all **church denominations**, the following subjects have a greater emphasis placed on them in **Catholic stained glass windows**. As you view the images, keep in mind that they are available in custom shapes and sizes and can be modified to meet the needs of your particular church.

## JESUS

▸ **Catholic stained glass and artwork** provides some images of Jesus that are unique to the Catholic faith. These include:

## THE SACRED HEART

▸ **Stained glass windows** that depict the Sacred Heart of Jesus depict the physical heart of Jesus to represent His divine love for humanity. This **stained glass design** is used primarily in the Roman Catholic, Anglo Catholic, and Lutheran Churches. **The Sacred Heart** is often depicted in stained glass as a flaming heart shining with divine light, as a heart pierced by the lance-wound, surrounded by a crown of thorns, or bearing a cross and bleeding. Sometimes the **stained glass image** is of Jesus with his wounded hands pointing at the heart. The Sacred Heart stresses the central **Christian concept** of loving Jesus, the wounds and crown of thorns allude to the manner of Jesus' death, and the fire represents the transformative power of love.



Stained Glass Window 1675- St. Margaret Mary Alacoque



## MARY

- Stained glass windows depicting the Blessed Virgin Mary have been a major subject of **Catholic stained glass** for centuries. The stained glass images of Mary include the following types, derived from the Biblical Scriptures, the Church Fathers and the traditions of the **Catholic Church**.



Stained Glass Window 3569: Mary and Scriptures

## ANNUNCIATION

- In Catholic stained glass, **the annunciation** depicts the announcement by the archangel Gabriel to the **Virgin Mary** that she would become the mother of Jesus.



Stained Glass Window 4460: Mother of Christ

## LIFE OF THE VIRGIN MARY

- The life of the Virgin Mary includes depictions of events in Mary's life. These **stained glass windows** are sometimes done as a series depicting events from the life of Mary.

## THE NATIVITY, THE ADORATION OF THE SHEPHERDS AND THE ADORATION OF THE MAGI

- Catholic stained glass window depicting the birth of Christ, the visit of the wise men and the Adoration of the Shepherds.



Stained Glass Window 3570: The Nativity of Jesus





Stained Glass Window 1225:  
Mourning at the Cross

## STABAT MATER

- In **Catholic stained glass Stabat Mater** (the mother stood) refers to the depiction of the Virgin Mary under the cross during **the Crucifixion of Christ**. In these depictions, the Virgin Mary is generally standing to the right hand side of Jesus on the Cross, with Saint John the Evangelist standing to the left. "At the Cross her station keeping, stood the mournful Mother weeping, close to Jesus to the last".



Stained Glass Window 1374: Queen of Heaven

## THE ASSUMPTION OF MARY

- In **Roman Catholic stained glass**, the assumption of Mary depicts the bodily assumption of Mary at the end of her life

## CORONATION OF THE VIRGIN

- Stained glass windows** featuring Christ, sometimes accompanied by God the Father and the Holy Spirit in the form of a dove, placing a crown on the head of Mary as **Queen of Heaven**.



Stained Glass Window 1415: Mary in the Clouds

## THE HOLY FAMILY

- Catholic stained glass windows** depicting the Holy Family: the Child Jesus, the Virgin Mary, and Saint Joseph.

## PIETÀ

- ▶ The **Pietà** (Italian for *pity*) is a subject in **Catholic stained glass art** depicting the Virgin Mary cradling the dead body of Jesus.



Stained Glass Wndow 1287: Holy Mother Cradling Child

## MADONNA

- ▶ **Catholic stained glass images** where Mary, with or without the infant Jesus, is the central focus are referred to as "**the Madonna**".



Stained Glass Wndow 5534:  
Holy Mother Cradling Child

## LIVES OF THE SAINTS

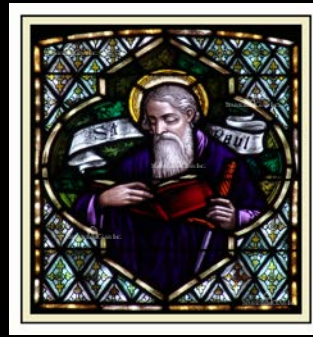
- ▶ **Saints** are depicted in stained glass to encourage worshippers to emulate the piety, good works, or steadfast faith of the saint. Many **Catholic churches** and cathedrals are dedicated to a particular saint and these associations are often celebrated in the **stained glass of the church**.



Stained Glass Wndow 1459:  
Square St. Peter Window



Stained Glass Wndow 1464:  
Saint John with Chalice



Stained Glass Wndow 1466:  
St. Paul with Book and Sword



Stained Glass Wndow 1467: St. James

We are always happy to work with your **church or organization** to produce custom **stained glass artwork** commemorating a particular saint or event.