

Our Beautiful Church

— A SERIES OF ARTICLES DEPICTING THE MAGNIFICENCE OF OUR CHURCH —

PART ONE: INTRODUCTION

It is safe to say that every parishioner admires the beauty of our church, but not everyone is aware of its history and genesis, not to mention the richness and importance of its manifold artistic and architectural details. This series of articles appeared originally in our bulletins of November 10, 2002 through January 12, 2003. They cover most – but not all – of the inner and outer treasures of our church. The first article provides the only known picture of a truly significant event: groundbreaking day, the very beginning of our church. The subsequent articles analyze most of its main architectural and artistic details, especially the main altar, the stained-glass windows, carvings and decorations. We hope to have uncovered for our parishioners many details that are difficult to discern from the pews and also to have succeeded in explaining the meaning and significance of each major aspect of the veritable work of art that is our church.

Among many sources, one we used frequently is a booklet published by our parish in 1988, in celebration of the fiftieth anniversary of groundbreaking day (*which took place on May 18, 1938*). The 1988 booklet contains an article on the treasures of our church, written by a very knowledgeable person who wished to remain anonymous; this is an excellent source of information on a number of important details. The photographs we will be using, however, are entirely new – our very talented volunteer photographer, Pepa Tanousis, spent considerable time producing more than 150 pictures, of which we used as many as possible to illustrate this series.

Parishioners can log on to our website for more information on our church history, well as the latest bulletins:

www.ourladyqueenofmartyrs.org



Our Lady Queen of Martyrs church, photographed in 2002.

Groundbreaking Day – at last!



"Ground has been broken for Our Lady Queen of Martyrs Church. It will be completed at roughly the same time as the World's Fair. Before the huge excavator dug its first shovelful of dirt the pupils of the parish sang several hymns and concluded with 'The Star Spangled Banner.' There was no address except for a few words from Father McLaughlin who told the operator of the steam shovel, 'Now do your stuff.'

—May 18, 1938
(local newspaper coverage)

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PART TWO: THE ORIGINS AND THE CONCEPT

THE BEGINNING

It required a generation of planning and saving — nearly twenty-five years — in order to realize the vision of the first pastor, Msgr. McLaughlin, of a group of buildings here in Forest Hills that exemplified architectural unity, enlivened the then fledgling community and served the faithful of the area. His successors and now Msgr. Funaro, our pastor, have shouldered the responsibility of maintaining and enhancing the church, school, rectory and convent. Even now, work continues to be done in the ongoing effort to provide continuity to the constant improvement of our magnificent facilities — for instance, work in the convent building has started to convert it into a retirement home for priests. But, through the years, the true trustees of Our Lady Queen of Martyrs have been the people who, with their unstinting support, have sustained the pastors' efforts.

Our Lady Queen of Martyrs church reflects several historical impulses. It owes something to the medieval flowering of ecclesiastical architecture and it is also a product of the nineteenth century gothic revival period in America. It borrows from both in some rather interesting ways. But it is a reflection, too, of the determination of a then small Catholic community in Forest Hills to make a substantial statement of faith during the uncertain years of the 1930s.

MEDIEVAL TIES

We know that our church was modeled after the English gothic cathedral at Durham, constructed during the years 1093 to 1130 — which would place it within a period of growing Catholic influence in Europe. It was the time of St. Bernard of Clarivaux (d. 1153), who was one of the Church's greatest preachers. His aim was to "move hearts, not expound scripture." Henry II was king of England; Thomas Becket had not yet met his end.

The role of architect, artist and builder was generally filled by one man, and so modestly that few names have come down to us from that time. Only their work reminds us of the creative and practical problems they had to solve in order to erect churches that would be durable, not too costly and relatively safe from fire.

Our church here at Our Lady Queen of Martyrs is not an exact copy of the Durham cathedral — it is much smaller, and certain architectural elements were simplified or eliminated in order to keep costs at a manageable level. Nevertheless, the artistic integrity remains, as can be seen in the comparative pictures printed on page 5.

Our next article in this series (*A Walk through the Church*) will delve into general points of interest, before we proceed to discuss and depict specific elements.

Our Beautiful Church (continuation)

COMPARING SIMILARITIES

The similarities between Durham cathedral and Our Lady Queen of Martyrs church become very apparent when looking at basic architectural aspects and stylistic elements. For instance (see below), when comparing the main doors, the naves and the floor plans, the fact that they are conceptually identical jumps to the eye.

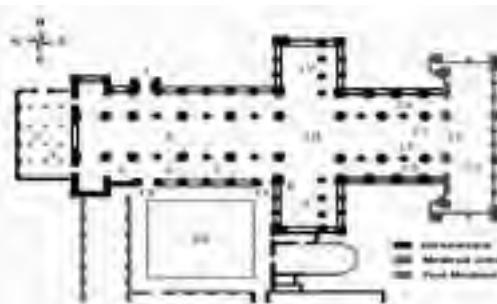
Photo at right: Durham cathedral, seen from the train station.



DURHAM CATHEDRAL



Main doors

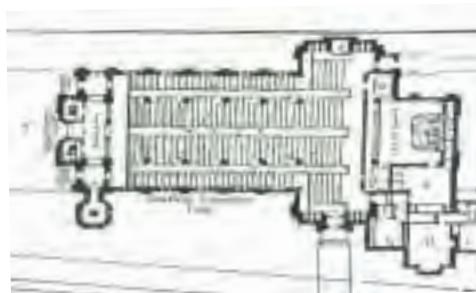


Floor plans



Views of the naves

OUR LADY QUEEN OF MARTYRS CHURCH



Photos (except Durham) by Pepa Tanousis



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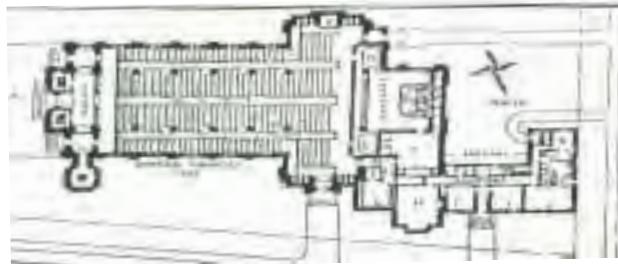
PART THREE: A WALK THROUGH OUR LADY QUEEN OF MARTYRS CHURCH

WHY ROSE WINDOWS?

In part 2, we mentioned the problems faced by the medieval architect in erecting churches that would be durable, not too costly and safe from fire. Safety and structural integrity in these cathedrals might be provided by erecting thick and solid stone walls; but what of light? Gothic architects were opposed to leaving anything in darkness, and so enormous rose windows — like the three we have at Our Lady Queen of Martyrs — became the norm. Medievalists believed that the *fire of stained glass is celestial light*. More about our rose windows in later articles.

HOW LIGHT THE BURDEN

The gothic builder wanted to get rid of weight and mass, to let light in and arrive at the most delicate possible structure. The challenge, thus, was to relieve walls of the weight of ceilings and windows. Builders transferred that weight-bearing job elsewhere; modern architects refer to this as *point loading*. The solid black areas on the floor plan of Our Lady Queen of Martyrs refer to points in the structure that take on the entire weight of the church:



In the eleventh century, the builders of Durham were the first to begin exploring specific medieval innovations to allow this. Notice, for example, that all of the arches in the interior of our church are slightly pointed at their tops. The medieval pointed arch permits the weight of the roof and wall to *flow* or *travel* down the arch's sides and into load-bearing columns. Arches cap all side-aisle windows and appear in the back wall of the church; they also appear atop the enormous openings between the *piers* or columns running down the center aisle. The narrow *ribs* or lines you see in Our Lady Queen of Martyrs' *rib vaults* perform the same function: the weight of the building material travels to the four outer points and down into load-bearing columns.

RIB VAULTS, COLUMNS AND WINDOWS

Rib vaults form the ceilings of both side aisles and that of the narthex or vestibule on Ascan Avenue. The largest vault is located above the end of the center aisle, in front of the Communion rail. This point in the church is called the crossing; the tower we see from outside is located directly over this spot (*see photo*).

The five pairs of columns that run along the center aisle hold up the central roof and the second level — or *clerestory* — of our church. Overall, if walls can be relieved from this burden, they can be virtually eliminated. Sightlines in the church, then, are rarely interrupted. The rose windows, the choir window and the side aisle windows owe their great size to these supporting structures. On all these windows, the *stone tracery* (overlying stone skeleton)

that can be seen both inside and outside the church merely holds the glass and helps prevent damage from wind and weather. This tracery has no supporting structural role in the building. The areas in the building structure that continue, over time, to support its great weight do not do so statically; it is an active, organic process. Our Lady Queen of Martyrs church stands silently doing its work decade after decade.



DEVOTION'S FORM

In medieval architecture, the long perspective — or long vista — of the repetitive rhythm of arches and columns all lead to the distant mystery of the Sacrament. In the early centuries of Christianity, the Eastern or Russian Orthodox faith tended to prefer the *basilica* as its own form of cathedral. The basilica, regardless of its floor plan, would have a great dome arching far above a central location in the building. A long aisle might be incorporated, but ceremonies were held, for the most part, at the center of the church. The supreme moment would occur when the patriarch met the emperor beneath the dome, exchanged the kiss of peace and shared the chalice. The Sacrament was prepared secretly in a distant part of the church.

DEVOTION'S FORM (*continuation*)

Roman Catholic liturgy, however, has as its climax the elevation of the Sacrament, followed by Communion — sharing the precious Body and Blood of Our Lord Jesus Christ with the congregation. This all takes place at the end of the center aisle or *nave*, so called from the latin word for ship (*navis*), implying that the church is a refuge from life's troubled waters. All important ceremonies — Masses, weddings, funerals — begin with a procession from the back of the church to the sanctuary. All of this requires a long central aisle:



Photos by Pepa Tanousis

Our Lady Queen of Martyrs church is cruciform, or cross-shaped, as many early churches were. The *transept*, or arms of the cross, lies between confessionals. The *crossing*, mentioned also in the previous page, is the location where the transept intersects with the center aisle. This cruciform shape allows for smaller areas of devotion, such as our Sacred Heart chapel, to exist within the larger church. Ordinarily, churches were oriented along a west/east axis. Our Lady Queen of Martyrs church has its altar at the west end, which allows the main entrance to be located on Ascan Avenue. Upon reflection, no other entrance would have been as effective or appropriate.

NINETEENTH CENTURY CONTRIBUTION

Although all previous descriptions of the planning stages and building of Our Lady Queen of Martyrs church refer exclusively to its being freely rendered from the cathedral at Durham, our church actually owes much to the nineteenth-century Gothic Revivalist movement in America. In short, this is the same period that inspired Saint Patrick's cathedral, Grand Central station and a host of other buildings that have not been duplicated since for integrity of design and civic presence. There was a surge of ecclesiastical construction during this time and a number of architectural firms — among them Maginnis & Walsh, designers of Our Lady Queen of Martyrs — grew rapidly to meet the demand. Our church, although not begun until 1938, benefits from a number of the period's characteristics. Any revivalist time, in any artistic expression — whether in painting, sculpture, literature or architecture — looks with renewed interest and appreciation on the past. In the nineteenth century, architects took careful note of the building methods, decoration and arrangement of gothic ecclesiastical building and added touches of their own. They particularly admired the efficient and flexible ground plans around which the Church or monastic orders built cathedrals, abbeys and parish churches. Our Lady Queen of Martyrs "campus" resembles in the arrangement of church, school, rectory and convent buildings nothing so much as a cathedral close or compound. All buildings are compatible; small lanes around and between the buildings take a viewer through a constantly shifting series of pleasant perspectives. The buildings are within easy distance of one another and the entire arrangement effectively removes most awareness of the bustle on surrounding major streets. All this, and in the middle of Queens!

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PART FOUR: THE MAIN ALTAR

The bulletin editors had the opportunity to read the text of one of the then monthly bulletins written – we think – in 1941 (the bulletin is not dated), at a time when work in our church was nearing completion. It is of great interest and fits perfectly in this series of articles. Here it is, in its entirety, enhanced by photos taken by Pepa Tanousis:

THE ARTIST

Just before Christmas the five painted panels were installed in the reredos of the main altar. These are the work of Mr. Frederick de Henwood, a man of great artistic ability who has an established reputation in the art world for many excellent works of painting and sculpture. Mr. de Henwood did the Stations of the Cross for our church, as well as the main altar panels. The beauty of design and color and the spiritual quality of Mr. de Henwood's work has received the highest praise from those who visit our church.

THE GENERAL THEME

For the information of our people, we wish to explain the general theme of the main altar reredos. The central panel is, of course, Christ, showing His compassionate Heart in pictorial interpretation of His words: *Come to Me all you who labor and are heavily burdened, and I will refresh you.* The four major panels represent St. Patrick and St. Boniface, to the left and to the right of the central panel, respectively. In the upper panels are represented St. Dominic and St. Francis of Assisi.



Photos by Pepa Tanousis

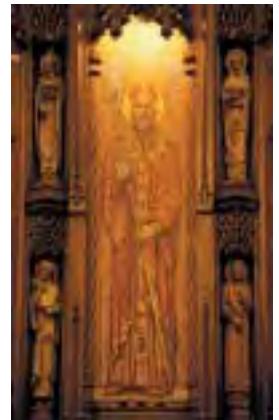
THE GENERAL THEME (cont.)

The general theme expressed is that of the relation of religion to the social order, with special reference to the United States of America. St. Patrick and St. Boniface represent the patron saints of the Irish and the German immigrants, who formed the great masses of Catholics throughout the country and especially in New York. St. Dominic and St. Francis of Assisi represent the protest of religion against the evils of the social order and the solution of the problems of the present day offered by the Catholic philosophy of life.

Associated with St. Patrick are the saints of parish priests. Four have been chosen with this special point in mind: St. John Vianney, the humble Curé d'Ars, who, by his simple priestly ministrations transformed his parish from one of the worst in France to a veritable heaven on earth; St. John Nepomucene, the martyr of the seal of the confessional, who gave his life rather than reveal what he heard in confession; St. Charles Borromeo and St. Philip Neri, both of whom are beloved for their pastoral ministrations.

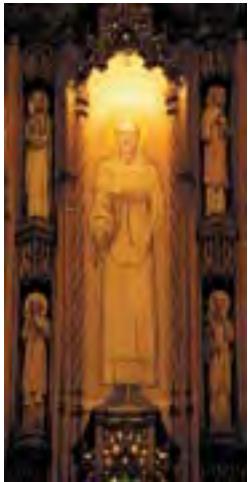


Around St. Boniface are grouped four in recognition of their apostolic work in New York State – St. Isaac Jogues, one of the Jesuit martyrs, who gave his life for the conversion of Indians; Kateri Tekakwitha, the saintly Indian girl; and two pioneers in Catholic education and charity: St. Frances Xavier Cabrini and Saint Elizabeth Seton, both of whom began their work in New York City and whose influence extended throughout the entire country.



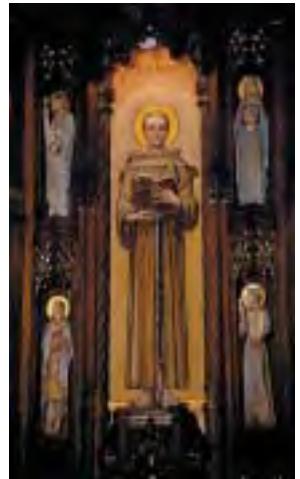
EDITOR'S NOTE: St. Isaac Jogues and Kateri Tekakwitha have shrines in Auriesville and Fonda, N.Y. respectively. They were the subject of the third article in our series "Summer Getaways with a Spiritual Focus" (July 21, 2002 bulletin).

THE GENERAL THEME (cont.)



Associated with St. Dominic, whose Order of Preachers numbers among its illustrious sons the great master of philosophy, St. Thomas Aquinas, are those who testified to the point of martyrdom on behalf of the Catholic philosophy of life in opposition to the philosophy of entrenched power and force. They are represented by the Pope Gregory VII, and the English martyrs: St. Thomas à Becket, St. Thomas More and St. John Fisher, who gave their lives in defense of the spiritual supremacy of the Pope over the usurpation of political tyranny.

In keeping with the spirit of Christian poverty and its protest against entrenched wealth, symbolized by the Poor Man of Assisi, are associated the apostles of Christian charity: St. Vincent de Paul, St. Camillus of Lellis – the patron of Catholic hospitals – the beggar saint, St. Benedict Joseph Labré and the modern apostle of the poor and underprivileged youth, St. John Bosco.



HEROES OF CATHOLICISM

The evils against which these heroes of religion fought and in protest against which they gave their lives are still the evils of our present social order. The disastrous effects of entrenched wealth and entrenched power can be rooted out only by a return to the Catholic philosophy of political, social and economic life. As the Holy Father expressed it, peace, harmony and order can be reestablished only by man's acceptance of God – God known, respected and obeyed.

Here in our church, the representation of the heroes of religion and the way of life in which they believed is not only for devotional inspiration but for instruction as well. Everything in the church is intended to teach in some way or another and to express in a fitting manner the great truths of our Holy Faith. In the years to come, each succeeding generation will find in our church an undying fount of inspiration and instruction for the enrichment of their spiritual lives.

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PART FIVE: THE AISLE WINDOWS ON THE NORTH SIDE

The use of stained glass in church decoration is not only for the purpose of ornament, to carry out a scheme of pleasant lighting with form or color or to give religious atmosphere to the church. First and foremost, pictorial windows are there to teach spiritual lessons. They constitute, in effect, homilies in glass, expressing religious ideals and preaching Catholic doctrines. Beginning with this part 5 of our series, we will systematically analyze each of our main windows, explaining the respective themes and describing what they represent. We will first cover the windows on the north side, to be followed by the windows on the south side.

THE PRINCIPAL THEME

The principal theme of the stained glass windows in our church is that of the title of the church, *Our Lady Queen of Martyrs*. For instance, in the center rose window is the figure of Our Lady enthroned as Queen of Martyrs. The central figure in the north transept rose window is that of St. Stephen, the first martyr; in the south transept rose window, it is that of St. Agnes, virgin-martyr of the early church. On the choir window, the two large figures flanking that of the Blessed Mother are those of St. Agnes and St. Catherine, holding the wheel indicative of the manner of her martyrdom (*more about the rose windows and the choir window later in this series*).

THE THEMES OF THE AISLE WINDOWS

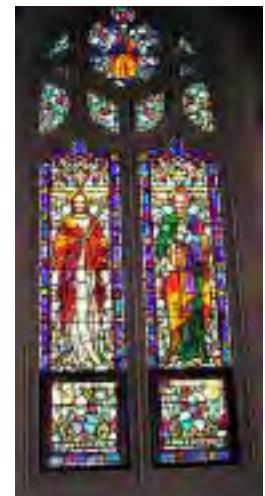
In the aisle windows on the north side of the church, the theme is that of Christ represented under five traditional aspects. On the south side, the theme is that of Our Blessed Lady, also under five traditional aspects. With the figure of Christ and of Our Lady under each aspect is the figure of a saint whose life or chief virtue is properly associated with the particular aspect portrayed.



**HAIL MARY
Full of Grace**

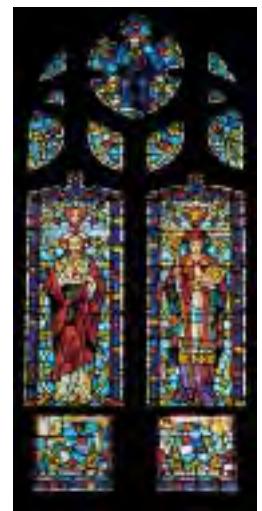
THE FIRST NORTH WINDOW

On the north side of the church, the first window from the transept towards the rear pictures Christ, the Redeemer – the Risen Saviour, described in the words of the angel at the Tomb: *He is risen!* Associated with the Risen Christ is St. Peter holding the keys symbolic of the power given him by Christ: *To thee, I will give the keys of the Kingdom of Heaven, and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound also in Heaven, whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed also in Heaven.* The inscription, *GO TELL PETER*, recalls the words of the angel at the Tomb of the Risen Christ to the two Marys.



THE SECOND NORTH WINDOW

The second window represents Christ – the Sacred Heart, symbolic of the infinite Love of God for men, reminding us of the words of the Sacred Heart to St. Margaret Mary, *Behold this Heart which has loved men so much and is so little loved in return.* The inscription recalls the prayer, *Sacred Heart of Jesus, burning with love for us, inflame our hearts with love for Thee.* Associated with the Sacred Heart is the great Doctor of the Church, St. Augustine, whose life was characterized by his great love of God and who is traditionally represented with a heart pierced with an arrow. The inscription is the virtue of *LOVE OF GOD.*



THE THIRD NORTH WINDOW



Photos by Pepa Tanousis

The third window represents Christ as Prophet Teacher, holding the scroll of Sacred Scripture expressive of Christ's mission as the Teacher of mankind and fulfillment of the prophecies of the Old Testament. It is a reminder of the first sermon of Christ in the synagogue of Capharnaum, when He told the congregation: *This day the Scripture is fulfilled in your ears*. Associated with Christ is the great apostle of Ireland, St. Patrick, in the robes of primate-archbishop, who taught the Faith so well that it became the outstanding Irish virtue. The inscription **FAITH** recalls the result of the apostolic teaching, as St. Paul put it: *Faith comes by hearing*; and the words of the eunuch of Queen Candace: *How can I understand unless some man show me?*

THE FIFTH NORTH WINDOW

The fifth window represents Christ the King, with the motto from the Divine Office of the Feast: *The Lord is our King*. Fittingly associated with Christ is St. Thomas More, chancellor of England under Henry VIII, who was beheaded for "treason" because he refused to take the oath of allegiance to Henry as the spiritual head of the Church of England, which Henry had separated from communion with Rome and the Pope. St. Thomas is represented with the writer's quill, the reminder of the fact that he was a poet and scholar, the author of the classic on good government, *Utopia*. His martyrdom resulted from his higher loyalty to Christ the King rather than to his earthly king; the inscription is therefore the virtue of **LOYALTY**.



THE FOURTH NORTH WINDOW

The fourth window represents Christ as the Eternal Priest, garbed in priestly vestments and holding the chalice of the Holy Sacrifice. The motto recalls the words of Scripture: *Thou art a priest forever, according to the order of Melchisedec*. Melchisedec, it will be recalled, was the patriarchal symbol of the sacrifice of the New Testament, who offered bread and wine as his priestly sacrifice to Almighty God. With Christ, the Eternal Priest, is associated St. Jude, apostle, one of the first priests ordained by Christ at the Last Supper, when He said: *Do this in memory of Me*. St. Jude, popularly called the *Saint of impossible cases*, is pictured with the club indicative of the manner of his martyrdom. The inscription is the virtue of **ZEAL**.



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PART SIX: THE AISLE WINDOWS ON THE SOUTH SIDE

In part 5, we began our coverage of the stained glass treasures we have in our church. It is useful to repeat that the use of stained glass in church decoration is not only for the purpose of ornament; first and foremost, pictorial windows are there to teach spiritual lessons and constitute, in effect, homilies in glass. Part five described the windows on the north side; this part 6 covers the windows on the south side.

THE PRINCIPAL THEME

We know that the principal theme of the stained glass windows in our church is that of the title of the church, *Our Lady Queen of Martyrs*. As we have seen, in the aisle windows on the north side of the church, the theme is that of Christ represented under five traditional aspects. On the south side, the theme is that of Our Blessed Lady, also under five traditional aspects. With the figure of Christ and of Our Lady under each aspect is the figure of a saint whose life or chief virtue is properly associated with the particular aspect portrayed.

THE FIRST SOUTH WINDOW



On the south side, the first window from the transept towards the rear is the Holy Family group. Our Lady is portrayed as **Mother of God**, holding the Infant Jesus in her arms, with the inscription of angelic salutation: **HAIL MARY**. The natural companion piece is that of St. Joseph, spouse of Our Lady and foster-father of Jesus. The inscription, **GO TO JOSEPH**, recalls the Joseph of the Old Testament, who – sold into captivity by his brothers – became in the days of famine the good provider for his people. From St. Joseph, the good provider of the the Holy Family at Nazareth, Christian fathers are counselled to seek advice and help.

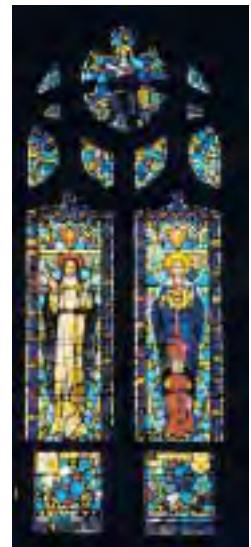
THE SECOND SOUTH WINDOW

In the second window group, Our Lady is represented under the title of the **Immaculate Conception**, bearing the inscription **HAIL, FULL OF GRACE**, which is the Scriptural basis for the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception. The companion picture is that of St. Bernard of Clairveaux, noted – as the inscription reads – for **LOVE OF MARY**. He is the author of the beautiful prayer to Our Lady, *The Memorare*.



THE THIRD SOUTH WINDOW

The third south window pictures **Our Lady Queen of Martyrs** with St. Monica. This is a fitting association of Our Sorrowful Mother – who grieved at the foot of the Cross for Her Divine Son – with St. Monica, the mother who sorrowed for her wayward son, St. Augustine, until, through her tears and prayers and sacrifices, he learned to love God and became a great saint. The petition of the Litany of Our Lady, **QUEEN OF MARTYRS, PRAY FOR US**, is inscribed under the figure of Our Lady, and the virtue **PENANCE** under that of St. Monica.



Please note that there are many more items of interest in connection with the aisle windows in our church which could be mentioned, but space limitations constrict us to this broad sketch. It will, however, give a general idea of the significance of these Homilies in Glass to our parishioners and those who come to visit the church.

THE FOURTH SOUTH WINDOW



Photos by Pepa Tanousis

The fourth window is that of **Our Lady of the Rosary**, representing the favorite form of asking the intercession of the Blessed Mother according to her own wish, expressed in giving the Rosary to St. Dominic. The inscription **INTERCEDE FOR US** is the reminder of the power of intercession exercised by Our Lady of the Rosary. The companion picture is that of St. Rose of Lima, the first canonized saint of the western hemisphere, a member of the Dominican Order. Her name, St. Rose, recalls the fact that the Rosary takes its name from the *Crown of Roses for Our Lady*. The devotion of St. Rose for the Crown of Thorns is also associated with the title of Our Lady as a *Rose among thorns*. The inscription is the virtue of **PRAYER**.

THE FIFTH SOUTH WINDOW

The fifth window is the timely petition for peace in a war-mad world. Representing **Our Lady Help of Christians**, it is the prayer of our parish that peace may be maintained in this country and in the world, and that all forms of war with its horrors may soon cease, and that peace and freedom may once again come to our persecuted Christian brethren throughout the world. The petition inscribed is **BRING US PEACE**. The picture of St. Thérèse, *The Little Flower of Jesus*, who was a favorite of the soldiers in the last World War, and who had promised to spend her Heaven doing good on earth, is fittingly inscribed with the virtue of **CHARITY**.



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PART SEVEN: THE ROSE, CHOIR AND SECONDARY WINDOWS

When we began our coverage of the stained glass treasures of our church (see part 5), we briefly discussed the principal themes of the main and rose windows. It is worth revisiting this in more detail.

THE CENTER ROSE WINDOW

As discussed, the principal theme of the stained glass windows in our church is that of the title of the church, *Our Lady Queen of Martyrs*. In the center rose window is the figure of Our Lady enthroned as Queen of Martyrs (see photos 1 and 2, right.)

THE TRANSEPT ROSE WINDOWS

The central figure in the North Transept Window is that of St. Stephen, the first martyr; in the South Transept Window, that of St. Agnes, virgin-martyr of the early Church. St. Stephen is depicted seeing the vision of heaven (see photo 3, below;) and St. Agnes with the lamb traditionally associated with her.



PHOTO 1: The main Rose Window



PHOTO 2: The center of the main Rose Window, showing Our Lady enthroned as Queen of Martyrs

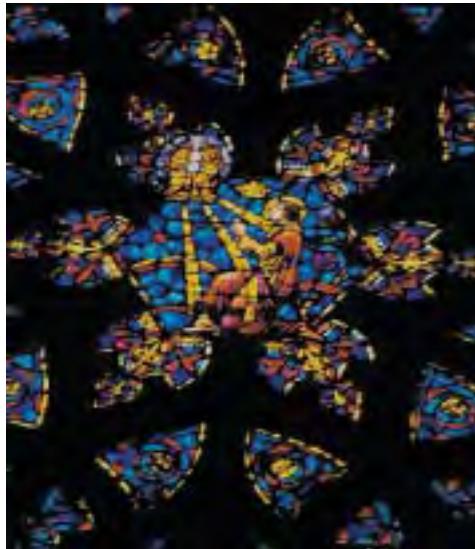


PHOTO 3 (left): The north Rose Window, depicting St. Stephen

THE CHOIR WINDOW

The central figure of the Choir window is also that of Our Lady Queen of Martyrs (see photo 4, below, and photo 7, far right.) The two large figures flanking that of the Blessed Mother are those of St. Agnes (see photo 6, lower right) and St. Catherine, martyrs. St. Catherine is depicted next to the wheel, indicative of the manner of her martyrdom (see photo 5, right). The smaller groups represent different episodes in the life of the Blessed Mother.

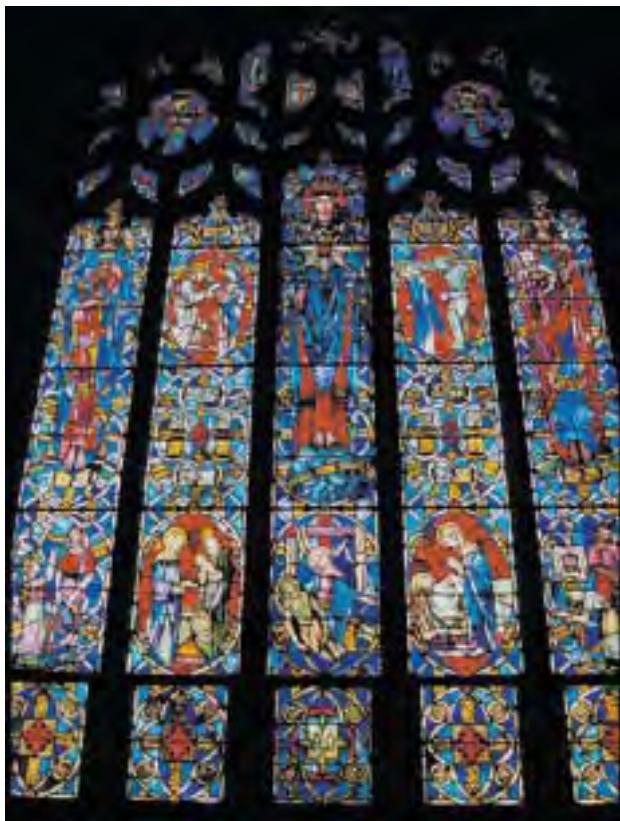


PHOTO 4: The Choir Window – overall view

Photos by Pepa Tanousis



PHOTO 5: St. Catherine



PHOTO 6: St. Agnes



PHOTO 7: The central panel ()*

(*) The inscription on the globe in the central panel reads “**REGINA MARTYRUM**”, Latin for *QUEEN OF MARTYRS*.
Turn to page 8 for a discussion of the secondary windows.

THE SECONDARY WINDOWS

No discussion of the secondary windows would be complete unless we take into consideration light and the rôle it plays in the architectural concept of our church.

The narthex (*vestibule area*) has a low ceiling and windows (*photo 8*) admit only dim light. But step through the glass doors and the entire church seems to expand before you. Bright light floods in from the side aisle windows and from the rectangular clerestory (*second level*) windows above the center aisle. The glass is lightly colored — clear areas and yellows combined with accents in blue and red.

As you move slowly up the aisle, the perspective continuously changes. While your eye is drawn toward the altar, the church widens as the transept (*cross members*) comes within view. It appears at its broadest when you stand roughly ten rows from the rail.



PHOTO 8: The narthex windows, depicting St. William and St. Gertrude

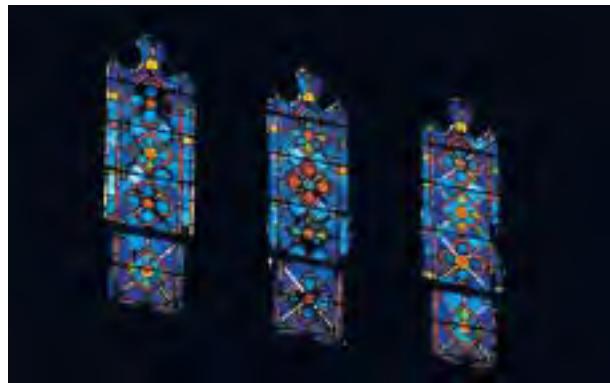


PHOTO 9: The blue windows

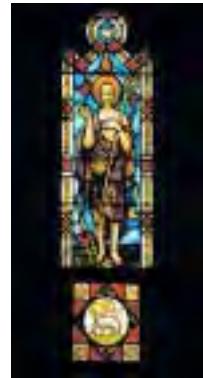


PHOTO 10: The window of St. John the Baptist, in the gift shop

Our Beautiful Church

— A SERIES OF ARTICLES DEPICTING THE MAGNIFICENCE OF OUR CHURCH —

PART EIGHT: THE CARVINGS OVER THE ASCAN AVENUE ENTRANCES

The carvings on the tympana (*) over the portals of the church were carved in limestone and are of great interest as permanent ornaments and veritable homilies in stone. The purpose of all such work is not only to adorn the House of God in designs of lasting beauty, but also to instruct and inspire all who enter the church.

THE CARVING OVER THE MAIN PORTAL

The carving over the main portal on Ascan Avenue represents the traditional *Pietà* — the figure of the Sorrowful Mother of God, Queen of Martyrs, griefstricken at the sight of the Body of Her Divine Son taken down from the Cross (photo 1). The treatment of this traditional subject is beautifully original and the work of Adolph Weinman. It is not the copy of any masterpiece. The gesture of the right hand of the Blessed Mother expresses Her willing submission to the Will of God in the sacrifice of Her Divine Son. Two adoring angels balance the composition. The angel on the left holds the pierced heart, recalling the words addressed by Simeon to Our Blessed Mother: *And thine own soul a sword will pierce.* The angel on the right bears the palm symbolic of the victory of martyrdom.

THE CARVINGS OVER THE SECONDARY ENTRANCES

Over the doorway to the left and to the right of the main portal are carved two original presentations of traditional symbols of the Sacrifice of the Old Law and the Sacrifice of the New Law. Over the doorway to the left is represented the Lamb of the New Testament, bearing the banner of the Cross and resting on the Book with Seven Seals as in the vision related by John in the Book of Revelation (photo 2). The Lamb symbolizes Christ, the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world, the Paschal Lamb slain for the sins of humankind. Just as the lamb was slain by God's order and his blood sprinkled on the doorposts to preserve Israelite lives from the sword of the destroying angel, so, through the Blood of Jesus Christ shed for us on the Cross, are we saved from the just anger of God. Over the doorway to the right is carved the figure of a bullock (photo 3), one of the temple sacrifices of the Old Testament. Identifying the sacrifice, two angels kneel over the altar holding the Tables of Law on which are inscribed the numerals of the Ten Commandments.



PHOTO 1: The Pietà over the main portal



PHOTO 2: The Sacrifice of the New Law



PHOTO 3: The Sacrifice of the Old Law

(*) Tympana: The space within an arch and above a lintel or subordinate arch, spanning the opening below the arch.

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PART NINE: THE OTHER CARVINGS

THE CARVING OVER THE QUEENS BOULEVARD PORTAL

Over the doorway on Queens Boulevard is represented Christ in the Holy Eucharist, the center and source of Divine Grace, poured out for mankind through the Sacraments (photo 1). Christ is represented at the Last Supper, with the Bread to be changed into His Body and the Chalice of Wine to be changed into His Blood. From the altar of the Sacrifice of the New Law may be seen seven streams, from which two balanced figures of deer appear to drink.

The water recalls the words of Christ to the Samaritan woman: *Whoever drinks the water I shall give will never thirst; the water I shall give will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life (Jn 4:14-15)*. The inscription across the tympana refers to the figures of deer, in the words of Psalm 42: *As the hart panteth after the living waters*. (In modern translation, the complete sentence reads: *As the deer longs for the running waters, so my soul longs for you, O God*.) St. Peter, to whom Christ gave the plenitude of His Priesthood as His Vicar on earth, and St. Paul, in whose epistles are explained so completely and beautifully the Sacrifice of the New Law and the Sacrament of the Holy Eucharist, are represented on either side of Christ.

ORNAMENTAL CARVINGS

The ornamentation of the bosses in the arch above the tympana of the main portal (photo 2) follows the traditional symbolism associated with the Passion of Our Lord and the Holy Eucharist:



PHOTO 1: The carving over the Queens Boulevard portal

Photo by Pepa Tarousis



PHOTO 2: The ornamentation of the bosses above the tympana of the main portal . Details: photos 3–12.



PHOTO 3: The Holy Eucharist



PHOTO 4: The Sacred Heart



PHOTO 5: The Book of Laws



PHOTOS, left, clockwise: (6) The fruits of the earth and animals from the air, earth and water. (7) The loaves of bread. (8) The anchor. (9) The sun, moon and stars. (10) The grapes. (11) Pax (Peace), with the Maltese Cross .



PHOTO 12 (right): The Scale of Judgment and the Ten Commandments tablets.

THE WOODEN CARVINGS AROUND THE PULPIT

Viewed from left to right, the four pulpit statues, carved in wood, represent St. Ambrose, St. Peter, St. Augustine and St. Jerome. These saints were chosen because, by the power of the written and spoken word, they were instrumental in spreading Christianity around the world. It is therefore appropriate for the pulpit from which we hear present-day preachers to be adorned with their inspiring images. **St. Ambrose (PHOTO 13)** became the most eloquent preacher of his day (4th century). Ambrose was one of the great figures in early Christianity, and more than anyone else was responsible for the end of paganism and the rise of Christianity in the West, in the dying years of the Roman Empire. He wrote profusely, and many of his hymns became the standard for Western hymnody. He baptized St. Augustine in 387. **St. Peter (PHOTO 14)** was the first Pope and embodied the entire concept of the primacy of the papacy. He is mentioned more frequently in the Gospels than any of the other apostles and became head of the Christians after the Ascension. He was also the first of the apostles to preach to the gentiles and converted many with his preaching. **St. Augustine (PHOTO 15)** was inspired by St. Monica, his mother, and by the preaching of St. Ambrose to embrace the Christian faith. He began to preach, and through his great intellect and eloquence molded the thinking of the Western world to such a degree that his ideas continue to occupy a major position in today's Christian world. He wrote profusely; among his best-known works are his *Confessions* – one of the greatest spiritual classics of all times. **St. Jerome (PHOTO 16)** was highly skilled in Latin and Greek. He was baptized in Rome in 360, settled in Antioch and then went to Rome to become the Pope's secretary. While there, he began to revise the Latin version of the four Gospels, the letters of St. Paul and the Psalms. He devoted most of his time to his translation of the Bible into Latin from the original tongues. His greatest achievement was his translation of the Old Testament and his revision of the Latin version of the New Testament. From this version – the *Vulgate* – almost all English Catholic translations were made.



PHOTO 13: St. Ambrose



PHOTO 14: St. Peter



PHOTO 15: St. Augustine



PHOTO 16: St. Jerome

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PART TEN: THE FINISHING TOUCHES; CONCLUSION

THE FINISHING TOUCHES

The finishing touches around the church often escape notice but are worth a mention, most particularly the woodwork. All cabinetwork, including the paneling, pews, wagon vaulted roof (a medieval detail) and confessionals are crafted of oak. It is nearly impossible today to obtain oak planks in the lengths used in Our Lady Queen of Martyrs pews. The seat backs are stile and rail construction, with floating panels that permit seasonal expansion and contraction. Three carved flower motifs (*PHOTO 1*) alternate regularly down the rows of pews. Care was taken that all other ornamental edging, such as that around the reredos at the back of the sanctuary, along the confessionals and around the statues of Mary and Joseph were designed to reflect the stone tracery of the rose windows and echo their gothic flavor.

The two medallions with trefoil centers carved in an alternating pattern along the marble Communion rail (*PHOTO 2*) reflect a similar attention to detail.

The brass gates in front of the Blessed Virgin Mary altar (*PHOTO 3*) depicts a pelican as the main motif, whereas the one by St. Joseph's altar (*PHOTO 4*) has loaves and fishes at its center. Since medieval times the pelican feeding its young has been used as a symbol of Christ, who feeds us all from His Body. The fish and bread at the center of St. Joseph's gate is appropriate since the Host is housed at this location.

CONCLUSION

Our Lady Queen of Martyrs is a large, even grand church. But there is one place from which it seems a bit smaller, even intimate: the pulpit. From that vantage point the congregation seems to draw closer to the celebrant during Mass. Once again, the designers worked out spatial relationships to help celebrants and lectors feel at ease before fellow worshipers.

We conclude here our booklet on **Our Beautiful Church**. Obviously, we could not cover all details, but may have provided sufficient background information to encourage a wider interest in the treasures of our church. We hope that this publication will provide a useful foundation for those interested in further research, as well as a source of joy and inspiration to all parishioners who appreciate the magnificence of our place of worship.



PHOTO 1: A pew carving



PHOTO 2: A rail carving



PHOTO 3: The pelican gate



PHOTO 4: The bread and fish gate

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