

THE NICHOLSON WINDOW
(**THE PILGRIMS' CHAPEL**)
SALVATOR MUNDI
A Focus for Contemplative Prayer

O Saviour of the World who by thy Cross and precious Blood
hast redeemed us. Save us and help us, we humbly
beseech thee O Lord

The artist has taken as his theme the redemption of the world by our Lord on the Cross. 'The serpent at the foot of the Cross links the Redemption with the Fall of Man, as does the Cross itself, shown not as an artifact made with planed wood, but as a rough tree like the one in the centre of the garden whose fruit was forbidden.

The figures of our Lady and St John the "beloved disciple" into whose care Christ gave his mother, stand to the right and left respectively, and the panels in which they appear are their emblems. In the case of the Blessed Virgin, there appears her monogram, "M", and stylised lilies in the form of fleur-de-lys, and roses, two other of her emblems, whilst in St. John's panel are shown a simple combination of the letters S and J, the eagle, his attribute as an Evangelist, and the chalice from which a dragon emerges. This latter symbol refers to the challenge by a priest of Diana to St. John to drink from a poisoned chalice, from which the evil flew away in the form of a dragon when St. John made over it the sign of the Cross.

In the two side panels over the two figures are angels bearing, over the head of St. John the Host, the consecrated bread of the Eucharist, whilst the one over the head of Our Lady carries the chalice containing the consecrated wine - the blood of the New Covenant. This effectively links the Eucharist with the Passion of our Lord.

The tracery light at the head of the window carries a representation of the Pelican in its piety. In the medieval bestiary it was held that the pelican pecked at its breast to draw blood with which to feed its fledglings, and this is an obvious "type" or prefiguring of the giving of his blood by Christ to redeem Mankind.

In the two panels immediately below the Pelican are to be found the letters Alpha and Omega • the first and last letters of the Greek alphabet which have long been used as signs of the omnipotence of God - The Beginning and the End in this case referring specifically to Christ

Turning again to the central figure of Christ giving his life for us, the background of the panel carries many symbols of the Passion. These all provide a focus for thoughts about the suffering he endured, and references to Old Testament prophecies - perhaps the most well-known being in Isaiah 53 v.5 "He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed." - symbolized by the scourge; the dice used by the soldiers to gamble for Jesus' clothing - Psalm 22 v.18 "they parted my garments among them, and cast lots upon my vesture." The sponge reminds us of verse 21 of Psalm 69 "and in my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink". The nails, and hammer remind us of the piercing of his hands and feet, whilst the pincers look forward to the deposition when the nails were removed.

Yet beyond the Suffering, beyond death, is the hope, the certainty of the Resurrection to new life. Along with the symbols of the Passion is to be found the Chi-Rho monogram which is a combination of the initial letters of the name of Christ - the Anointed One - in Greek, and even on the Cross, Christ wears a cruciferous nimbus, the halo indicating the Deity, as well as the crown of thorns, and the scroll across his body carries the victorious cry which we sing or say as part of the Te Deum : *"Tu devicto mortis aculeo aperuisti credentibus regna caelorum"* Thou hadst overcome the sharpness of death: Thou didst open the kingdom of heaven to all believers.

There is a further piece of symbolism which is not seen in medieval representations of the Crucifixion, and for that reason overlooked by me. I am indebted to Mrs Mary Beaumont, whose father was the Major Becher commemorated in this window, for drawing my attention to a press cutting from the Newark Advertiser dated 19 Oct 1921 which carries a brief description of the window including, and I quote, "Behind is seen the River of Death, and on the far side rises the New Jerusalem." This would reinforce the message of the Redemption leading over the bridge crossing the River to Death to new Life ill the new Jerusalem.

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