St. Joseph Chapel Art & our Four Core Values

Last month Sr. Cecile Gunelson gave a presentation to the staffs of the St. Elizabeth Adult Day Care Centers using the artwork in St. Joseph Chapel to illustrate our four core values. This issue of the bulletin reflects her talk.

Sanctuary Art: Presence

God is present on the altar in the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass and is continually present in the Blessed Sacrament reserved in the tabernacle.

God is present also in the scriptural word proclaimed, especially the Gospel.

God is present in the worshipping community.

God is present figuratively: Above the altar hangs a tester which symbolizes the presence of God, in a manner similar to the cloud which overshadowed the Ark of the Covenant. Nine choirs of angels in ceramic work are represented on the tester.

Another kind of presence is perceived in the relics room at the back of the chapel.

Here one is in the presence of the saints of God, faithful witnesses to the gospel.

One may also sense the presence of the artists who created the reliquaries and artwork.

In heaven and on earth we enjoy the presence of God.
The Stations of the Cross: Reconciliation

Through the Way of the Cross Jesus teaches us the meaning of reconciliation—reconciliation within oneself, with others and with God.

Jesus walked this way to his death because he “walked this way” in his daily living.

Jesus is an innocent man falsely condemned. Pilate (the law) washes his hands of him.

Encounters along the way include people who loved him and people who hated him:

- his mother,
- Simon of Cyrene,
- Veronica,
- his tormentors,
- the Jewish women.

“...through him to reconcile all things to himself, making peace by the blood of his cross.” [Colossians 1:20]

“Indeed, if, while we were enemies, we were reconciled to God through the death of his Son, how much more, once reconciled, will we be saved by his life.” [Romans 5:10]

Bracketing the stations are panels depicting Peter’s denial and his commissioning to “Feed my Sheep.”

Jesus is the model for Christians in living reconciliation. From the cross he forgives those who condemned him to death; he forgives Peter’s denial and calls him to service.
The Windows: Hospitality

The seven windows on the north side are symbolic representations from the Scriptures of the Old Testament: Creation, Fall and Promise, Patriarchs, Moses, Old Testament Women, Root of Jesse, Incarnation (God becomes human in Jesus).

The seven on the south side are depictions of the Christian mysteries of salvation as narrated in the New Testament: New Creation (Baptism), New Commandment (Love), Salvation Day (Good Friday), Resurrection (Good Shepherd), Cenacle (Fire of the Spirit), Parousia (Coming of Christ as King at end of the world), The Lamb (Apocalypse/Revelation).

Hospitality: definition: friendly, welcoming, and generous treatment offered to guests or strangers. The stained glass windows tell the story of God’s gracious hospitality to us. God invites us into a family relationship with God and with one another.

**Creation window:**
God creates all that is, sharing Divine existence with both living and inanimate beings, and declaring all of creation as good.

**Incarnation window:**
God shares the Divine self intimately with the human race by becoming one of us, welcoming us into the communion of the Trinity.

**Holy Thursday window:** Hospitality is often associated with a meal. At the Last supper, Jesus’ hospitality embraced the very core of his being as he gave himself to his disciples and to us: Take and eat: this is my body; take and drink; this is my blood.

**Patriarchs window:**
Patriarch Abraham welcomes God—in the guise of three messengers—and offers them hospitality; indeed he insists on setting a meal before the messengers. In response the messengers tell Abraham that when they return, Sarah will have borne a son—the fruit of God’s promise.

**Revelations window:**
we are welcomed into eternity, heaven, into the presence of the Lamb, into the very home of God, to live with him forever.
Above the arches in the nave of the Chapel a series of medallions depicts the history of the Sisters of the Most Precious Blood. Although prayer, teaching, and ecclesiastical art were the early “works” of the sisters, from the very beginning they responded to the needs around them.

The sisters immediately responded to the pastor’s request for teachers; two sisters took on teaching duties.

The sisters often fed the poor who came to their door.

Seven Sisters in Gurtweil served as nurses at the Mannheim Hospital during the Franco-Prussian War, 1870-1871.

Sisters have continued to care for the sick in various infirmary settings and as chaplains in several hospitals.

Immigrants themselves, the sisters came to America to teach the children of immigrants...

...first at John the Baptist in Belle Prairie...

...then at St. Agatha in St. Louis where they now run a food pantry.

The sisters have engaged in teaching in the U.S and in foreign countries: Peru, Bolivia, Finland, and Estonia.

The sisters cared for orphans in Gurtweil and St. Louis, and still do in Bolivia.

Mindful of the poor and marginalized, especially women and children, the sisters seek to improve the lives of these unfortunates through social services, promoting Gospel justice through involvement with such causes as Human Trafficking.