

Rev. Derek Fairman

4th Sunday in Ordinary Time A

On this 4th Sunday of Ordinary Time, I want to focus on something different. I want to speak about some of the sacred art in the church, the vestibule, and the social hall. Some of you know the whole stories behind the sacred art, while others do not. Some have far more knowledge than I do! Regardless, it is good to be reminded of what sacred art we have and how it brings us together. It does relate to the Beatitudes. I will get to that.

The Infant of Prague statue at the back of the church came from Fr. Rager. He came from St. Andrew's parish in Johnstown before coming here. They have an annual Infant of Prague novena, and he wanted the people and the parish to be under the protection of the Infant of Prague. Mr. Ford constructed a new pedestal for the statue. The Divine Mercy picture came when Fr. Tomkosky was pastor. He wanted to remind people of God's mercy toward us.

Fr. Patti brought the pews and the Stations of the Cross from a parish in Johnstown that was closing its doors. The pews originally had bright red kneelers, but because the kneelers were not in good shape, we replaced them about 8 years ago with the burgundy-colored kneelers. As many of you know, we got the seat cushions not too long ago, with the burgundy color to match. We also got new speakers even more recently, and new altar server chairs and kneelers.

Fr. Norman Imgrund renovated the sanctuary and got the new windows. Towards the back of the church is a window depicting the ordination of Fr. Demetrius Gallitzin by Bishop John Carroll on March 18, 1795. Bishop John Carroll was the bishop of Baltimore, a diocese which covered the entire United States at the time. Fr. Gallitzin brought the Catholic faith to many people in the area, and the upper part of the window is a depiction of someone sowing seed, which relates to Fr. Gallitzin sowing the seeds of faith in central Pennsylvania.

The middle window on the west side depicts the Lord Jesus with the children, and the upper part of the window depicts bread. This relates to the Eucharist, and that many children would be making their First Communion in this church. The window by the organ depicts Pentecost, with the Holy Spirit in the form of a dove in the upper part of the window, and the Blessed Virgin Mary and the Apostles receiving the Holy Spirit in the form of tongues of fire in the main part of the window, and at the bottom it reads, "Come, Holy Spirit." This likely relates to the Sacrament of Confirmation, which young people would receive.

The windows in the sanctuary relate to the Sacrifice of the Mass. In the upper part of the windows are the nails and the Crown of Thorns at the Lord's Crucifixion. The main parts of the windows depict angels who look at the Sacrifice present here. The window near the altar servers' seats is often referred to as the creation window. It depicts the Father creating the universe, with the equation $e=mc^2$ having to do with the laws of nature. There is the sun, the moon, Saturn, and there are mountains and deer, which come around to visit sometimes. The upper part of the window features a triangle, a symbol of the Trinity, with an actual moon rock from Fr. Norm embedded in the middle. In the vestibule is the St. John the Evangelist window, depicting St. John in ecstasy writing the Gospel According to John. The upper part of the window depicts the eagle on a Gospel book. The eagle is the symbol of St. John the Evangelist.

In the sanctuary, there are the various gold leaf objects. By the altar, there are two cherubim depicted. There is one set of wings colored in silver stretched out behind each cherub, and then another pair of wings in gold wrapped around them. Matching that are the Paschal Candle stand, the Missal stand, and the angel candlesticks by the Tabernacle. There are two other candlesticks in gold leaf that we use at special times. Matching the twist shape are the holy water fonts in the vestibule. There is also the new votive candle stand which we bought 6-7 years ago, featuring the gold-colored cups, depicting the Blessed Mother and St. John at the Crucifixion.

In the Gospel, the Lord Jesus teaches us the Beatitudes, and sacred art is something that can bring people together. The Lord Jesus teaches us, "Blessed are the peacemakers." We might think that art is something that might divide us, since different people have different ideas of beauty and meaning. Granted, yes, people do not always like the same kinds of art, the same art movements, and schools, etc. Yet deep within our hearts, there is a yearning for deeper meaning and beauty. Visual art is something that seeks to put us in touch with that deeper meaning, and beauty. Sacred art can lift our hearts and souls to God. Even though people have different kinds of art and so on that speak to them, searching for deeper meaning is something that we can all understand. Searching for a higher beauty is a journey that we all take.

As we approach the altar, we thank the Lord for the many ways in which He inspires us and in which He has blessed us. We ask the Lord to continue to bless us. There are so many things that can divide us, but the beauty which the Lord has given to our world is something that can bring us together. We pray that the beauty we see in the church can bring peace and beauty into the world and into our souls.