



The Beatitudes

As we move into the New Year we continue to look at some of the stained glass windows in St Mary's Church, Dedham. At the east end of the north aisle facing East is a three-panel window by Clayton and Bell, one of the most prolific and respected manufacturers of stained glass of the mid-19th century.

The window depicts "The Beatitudes" which Jesus enumerated at the beginning of the "Sermon on the Mount" (Matthew 5: 3-10). Centrally we see "Christ in Majesty" also known as "Christ Enthroned" and He is surrounded by seven Angels.

The seven Angels are all dressed in white with differing halos and gold wings and wonderfully curly blond hair. Each Angel carries a ribbon with the words of the first seven of the Beatitudes on them.

Christ has a ribbon over his head with the words of the eighth Beatitude on it, "*Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness sake for theirs is the kingdom of heaven*".

Christ is seated on His throne wearing luxuriously embroidered and jewelled robes, He has an elaborate halo and His right hand is raised in blessing and His left hand open showing the stigmata. This image of Christ sitting as ruler of the world arose within the iconography of the Church at least as early as the 4th century AD, and has been very little altered in its format ever since. Again this window is in the typical renaissance revival style of its era, which we learn from the dedication inscription in the glass at the bottom of the window is from the 1890's.

Each section of the window depicts detailed architectural stonework, and at the top six more Angels preside over the scene. Below Christ's feet is another ribbon carrying the words, "*Blessed are you when men revile you*". Not included as one of the eight Beatitudes, but what Jesus said directly to his disciples, rather than the crowd, after he had spoken the Beatitudes themselves. Extra vitality and interest is given to the work by the clever use of alternating bright blue and red backgrounds for Jesus and each Angel.



Christ seated on His throne.



At the other side of the Church, at the west end of the south aisle, is a stained glass window in a very different though rather mixed style. This three panel window shows depictions of three ladies, each standing barefoot above a label in Latin: CARITAS (Charity), FIDES (Faith) and SPES (Hope).

The figure of Charity or Love, as more recent biblical translations suggest, holds a burning sacred heart, which signifies Jesus' intense love for us.

The figure of Faith holds a crucifix to remind us that Jesus suffered and gave his life on the cross for us.

The figure of Hope is shown with hands held in prayer, signifying that when we pray we are reminded that by God's love and Jesus' death, we are given hope of forgiveness and eternal life.

No doubt this window is intended to remind the viewer of I Corinthians 13, with its well-known description of charity / love.

It was designed by Wilfred G. von Glehn and bears his initials and the date 1909. He was friend and companion of

Caritas (Charity) Fides (Faith) Spes (Hope)

John Singer Sargent, the famous American artist, and both are known for their portraiture and depiction of Edwardian luxury. Von Glehn was also part of the impressionist movement. The window is a fusion of differing styles. The tall robed ladies are almost pre-Raphaelite in style; they are dressed in long robes of dark purples, blues, reds and browns, and the central figure has red hair, whilst the use of glass with gradations of colour within each panel is typical of the Arts and Crafts movement. The shaping of the individual pieces of glass in the background sky give a distinct nod to Glehn's impressionist leaning, but the architectural surrounds retain the renaissance revival style of many of the other somewhat earlier windows in the church. The overall appearance however is very balanced, eye-catching and effective. The window was donated by Ariana Curtis in memory of her late husband, a cousin and friend of John Singer Sargent and presumably of von Glehn.



Initials of Wilfred G. Von Glehn

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