



Middle window, South side of the chancel, left panel
St. Stephen.



Middle window, South side of the chancel, centre panel
St. Paul.



Middle window, South side of the chancel, right panel
St. Luke.

This month we are going to look at windows depicting Saints. These windows do not show a pictorial narrative but instead show the Saints holding various symbolic items which represent their story. The use of symbolism in art was almost universal in Medieval and Renaissance art and was continued in religious stained glass served as a reminder to worshippers of the lives and deaths of Christian Saints and Martyrs.

Three Saints are depicted in the middle window on the South side of the chancel. In the left hand panel we see the Latin "Stus Stephanus proto martyr" (Saint Stephen the first martyr). St Stephen was an early member of the Christian Church and one of its first appointed deacons. He enraged many Jews by his teachings and was accused of blasphemy by false witnesses and stoned to death, thus becoming the first Christian Martyr. (Acts 6 and 7).

In this window St Stephen is shown carrying a palm frond in his left hand. A palm frond, from ancient times in Mesopotamia and Egypt, held religious significance as a symbol of victory, triumph and eternal life. This tradition continued with the Jews and Christians. Jesus entered Jerusalem on Palm Sunday along a road strewn with palm leaves, a triumphal entry but also predicting his victory over evil and his promise of eternal life to those that followed him. It became the symbol of Christian martyrdom which is why St Stephen is usually depicted holding such a palm frond. His right hand is obscured by the rocks he is holding, signifying his stoning to death.

In the central panel we see “S’tus Paulus Apostolus” (Saint Paul the Apostle). St Paul is included amongst the Apostles as although he was not one of the original twelve disciples chosen by Jesus, the Bible tells us that he met Jesus on the road to Damascus and was converted by this experience, and then chosen by Jesus to preach His word. St Paul is often depicted with a sword and a scroll or book, as in this case. The sword, because according to tradition, he was beheaded with a sword, and the book, representing Scripture because he is attributed with writing more books of the Bible than any other single author.

The writing picked out on the open book is somewhat obscured by the lead of the window but is probably the Latin phrase, ‘Caritas Christi urget nos’ and translates as ‘the love of Christ compels us’. This phrase is taken from St. Paul’s second letter to the Corinthians (2Cor. 5:14).

In the right hand panel we see “S’tus Lucas evangelista” (Saint Luke the Evangelist). St Luke is shown carrying a pen and a book, signifying that St Luke, of course, wrote one of the four gospels, ostensibly to someone called Theophilus but undoubtedly for more general consumption by both Jews and Gentiles. He set out “to write an orderly account so that you may know the certainty of the things you have been taught” – “of the things that have been fulfilled” (by Jesus) (Luke. 1: 1 – 4)



St. Patrick

Next month we will look at some more of the bible's inspirational figures. All of the six Saints depicted individually in the Chancel windows of Dedham Church are mentioned in the bible, if only briefly, but later Saints are often depicted, more commonly in Catholic churches but also in Anglican churches.

For example, in the Anglican church in Porto, in Portugal, is a lovely depiction of St Patrick, Patron Saint of Ireland. Here also symbols abound; by his left foot is a toad and wrapped around the base of his shepherd's crook is a snake and in his left hand he carries a bible. Signifying how he brought the Christian Gospel to his “flock” of Christian followers, conquering witchcraft represented by toads, and evil represented by snakes. This harks back to “the serpent” who tempted Eve in the Garden of Eden and thus led to “the fall of Man.” This perpetuates the myth that St Patrick banished both toads and snakes from Ireland.

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