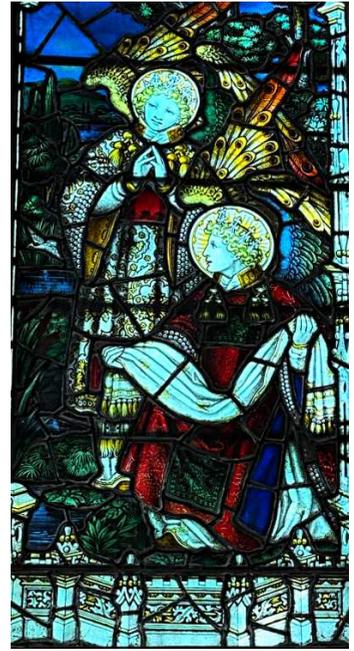




First window, North side of the chancel, left panel



First window, North side of the chancel, centre panel



First window, North side of the chancel, right panel

Last month we left Jesus in the Temple discussing scripture with the Chief priests and Teachers at about the age of 12. After this we know little more of His life until He meets with His relative John the Baptist to be baptised. This event is depicted in the three panels of the first window on the North side of the chancel in St Mary's Church, in Dedham. This provides an important message to those who view the window, reminding them of the importance and significance of Baptism within the Christian Faith.

John baptises Jesus in the River Jordan. Whether Baptism at that time was by immersion or the pouring or sprinkling of water over the one being baptised is much debated. In this window it appears as if the interpretation is a combination of the two. In the central panel Jesus is shown standing in the water, his feet still submerged and it looks as if he is emerging from the river and is wrapped in a cloak or towel but otherwise naked. In the left hand panel John the Baptist holds a container, perhaps a shell, for pouring water over Jesus as well.

The Bible tells us that when Jesus emerges from the River Jordan after his baptism, the heavens open and the Holy Spirit descends onto Him in the form of a Dove and a voice from heaven is heard saying "This is my Son, whom I love; with Him I am well pleased". (Matthew 3: 16 – 17). We see all this depicted in the central panel: The dove with wings outstretched, with a halo is emerging in front of the sun and surrounded by its rays, and above Jesus' head we see a speech ribbon in Latin "Hic est filius meus dilectus-" ('This is my beloved Son').

Jesus' baptism

In the right hand panel two beautifully portrayed Angels, their finely embroidered and opulent garments fringed with pearls, look on and one of the Angels holds Jesus' neatly folded robe. As always in stained glass panels of the late Victorian period the Angels are depicted with wonderfully elaborate wings. In this case, the wings are partly made up of peacock feathers, a feature typical of Angel "portraits" from the Studio of Charles Kempe.



Makers mark for Walter Ernest Tower

Often there is no indication of the origin or maker of the Stained Glass Windows but in this window and indeed in the other three narrative windows of the chancel which we have looked at (The road to Emmaus, Jesus presented at the Temple, and, Jesus discovered in the Temple) we have a Maker's Mark.

Charles Eamer Kempe was a celebrated and prolific maker of Stained glass windows in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. His mark was a golden "garb", the heraldic term for a wheatsheaf, which was part of his coat of arms. On Kempe's death, his studio was taken on by a distant cousin Walter Ernest Tower and after this the mark was a black tower superimposed on the wheatsheaf. The best example of this mark can be seen in the bottom left hand corner of the left hand panel of this Baptism window.



The Holy Spirit Descending as a Dove (Detail)

Adrian Beckingsale