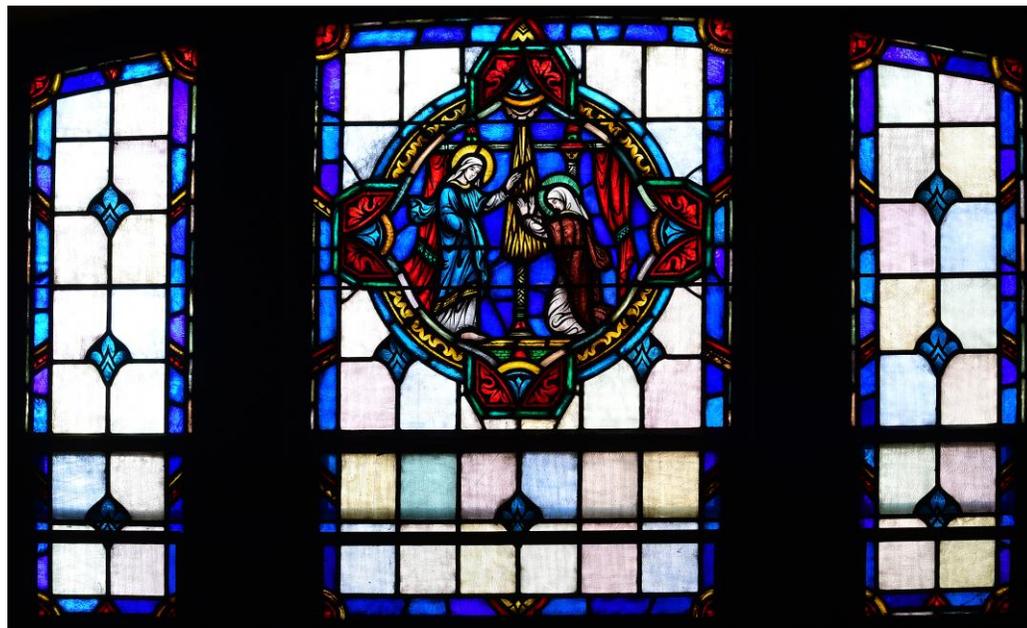


THE MARIAN CHAPEL: IMAGE AND STORY

The windows in the lower chapel are organized around the central episodes in the Life of Christ and the Life of the Virgin, events remembered in the devotional prayer of the rosary. The rosary's origins are complex and part of the use of beads as memory devices for many religions. Popular piety often attributed the popularization of the rosary to St. Dominic, founder of the Order of Preachers, or Dominicans. In fact, Dominic is often depicted with rosary beads as an attribute. Recitation of a set of prayers was devised for individuals unable to read and/or lacking access to written texts. The rosary enabled the unlettered to enter into a personalized cycle of prayers during the day. A string of beads placed at designated intervals organized the repetition of two memorized prayers, the *Angelic Salutation* (or *Hail Mary*) and the *Our Father*.



As the faithful recited a series of prayers - such as ten Hail Mary's - they were instructed to meditate on one of the Joyful, Sorrowful or Glorious Mysteries. In the words of Alban Butler, the practice produced "an abstract of the history of our blessed Redeemer's holy life" (*Lives of the Saints*, August 4, Feast of St. Dominic).

The Joyful Mysteries concentrate on the early life of Christ: the Annunciation of the Angel Gabriel to Mary, the Visitation of Mary and Elizabeth (mother of John the Baptist), the Nativity, the Presentation of the Infant Jesus in the Temple, and the Finding of the Boy Jesus in the Temple. The Sorrowful Mysteries focus on Christ's Passion: the Agony in the Garden, Christ Scourged, Christ Crowned with Thorns, Christ Carrying the Cross, and the Crucifixion. The Glorious Mysteries include the Resurrection, the Ascension, the Descent of the Holy Spirit, the Assumption of Mary into Heaven, and the Coronation of the Virgin as Queen of Heaven. All are represented in the Marian Chapel at Holy Cross.



The culminating events of the series, the Five Glorious Mysteries, are appropriately set in the apse, closest to the altar, and therefore the most honored place within the chapel. They are rectangular panels composed entirely of colored glass, whose intense red and blue harmonies give a sense of cohesion to the space. The sequence can be read not only chronologically from left to right, from the Resurrection to the Coronation of the Virgin, but also as a dialogue between the Virgin and her son pivoting around the central image of the Descent of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost. In this scene the Virgin is seated in the center, with the dove above her head; the Apostles appear at the sides. The scenes focusing on Christ appear on the left and scenes of Mary on the right. This right/left disposition should be read in reverse, that is, if one takes the position of the priest as he faces the congregation, the right side would depict Christ, and the left would have the events of Mary's life. The place of honor is the right, a familiar structure from Christ's time, known from the many biblical references such as the Gospel description of Christ who "sits at the right hand of the Father" (Mark 16:19). Read in this manner, the Ascension of Christ is opposite the Assumption of his mother and the Resurrection faces the image of the Coronation of the Virgin.





Since the installation of a figural glazing program for the Marian chapel came some thirty years after the building was completed, the number of openings was already set in the architecture. This left three extra windows for the sides beyond the ten events of the Joyful and Sorrowful mysteries. Two were added at the end of the Five Joyful Mysteries. After the Annunciation, the Visitation, the Nativity, the Presentation in the Temple, and the Finding of the Boy Jesus in the Temple, there appear the Wedding at Cana and the Encounter of Christ and His Mother on the way to Calvary. The Five Sorrowful Mysteries on the opposite side of the chapel - from the Agony in the Garden to the Crucifixion-are supplemented by the meeting of Christ and his mother after the Resurrection.

There is a discernible pattern in these additions: they were very popular scenes. The onlookers in a modern world

wanted to see their own values reflected in the stories depicted in the windows. Family life, especially the relationship between family members and the child learning both intellectual and practical values as part of the family unit, achieved a high priority. Key issues of parental responsibility encouraged the elevation of the status of St. Joseph from awkward supernumerary to model worker and protector of the family. Joseph is the dedicatory saint for Holy Cross' chapel. The inclusion of the Marriage of Cana, where Christ obeys his mother and saves a family from embarrassment for the shortage of wine, was a natural choice for a model event in Christ's life. The windows' figural composition also emphasizes the family unit. The Presentation shows Simeon holding the child with Mary and Joseph flanking him on either side, thus creating a devotional icon of mother, father, and child.

