

A TOUR OF IMMACULATE CONCEPTION CHAPEL

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BACKGROUND

The construction of the Immaculate Conception chapel began on January 3, 1953. It was planned and designed by Mother Margaret Coughlin and the Sisters of St. Joseph along with Philip Carter Johnson. The architect was Peter Tillman of Watt and Tillman of London. The chapel was consecrated on June 9, 1954.

The chapel is in the perpendicular style, reflected in its vertical lines, large windows and high, vaulted ceiling. It has a cruciform design with two transepts at the nave. Father Bradley, a Jesuit described it as “an example of traditionalism transfigured in which something of the old traditions are kept and combined with modern lines – utterly beautiful.”

Ten different kinds of marble are used in the chapel, all of which, along with the mosaics, came from Italy. Emile St. Aubin, of T. Carli Petrucci Ltd. in Montreal supervised the marble installation. He went to Italy and gave a marble company in Petrasanta the architectural plan and his own drawings for the colored inlaid designs in the floor, based on a design by Sr. Mary Agnes Smith.

All the stained-glass windows were made by the Guido Polloni company in Florence, Italy with glass from Florence and Venice, and shipped to Canada between 1953-1955. The total cost was \$21,498 USD!

THE NARTHEX

Note the wheat and grapes motif, which symbolizes the Eucharist, carved in the front doors. This motif is repeated throughout the chapel, on all wood carvings, doors, pews, woodwork above the choir stalls, the pulpit, the border around the back wall of sanctuary and its wrought iron screen. To the left and right of entrance are shrines. One shrine has a painting of Jesus and Joseph and the other shrine has a mosaic of Our Lady of Perpetual Help. This tells the story of Jesus frightened by a vision of angels bearing symbols of the Passion, or final period in the life of Jesus. On the left, an angel carries the lance and sponge, and on the right, an angel carries cross and nails.

GALLERIES

There are two galleries. The lower gallery has a Casavant two manual organ which was originally installed at the Sisters' Sacred Heart Convent in 1930. There are two stained glass windows in this gallery.

ST. GREGORY WINDOW

The window on the west depicts St. Gregory the Great. He is shown wearing his pontifical robes and carrying a book and staff with a double cross. His symbol is a dove which his deacon saw whispering in his ear. St. Gregory founded six monasteries on his family property in Sicily, and became Abbot of St. Andrew's, one of the monasteries, and then eventually the Pope. He was a diplomat who saved Rome from famine by reorganizing the property and granaries of the church. He fought corruption, and sent missionaries from his own monasteries to convert Anglo Saxons. St. Gregory emphasized the chanting of church music and founded the Schola Cantorum. He is one of the four main doctors of the church along with Ambrose, Augustine and Jerome. St. Gregory is the patron saint of musicians and teachers.

ST. CECILIA WINDOW

The stained glass window on the east depicts St. Cecilia, who holds the martyr's palm in her right hand. Because she is the patron saint of musicians, composers, and instrument makers, there are organ pipes in background. According to legend, when she was married to Valerian, she told him an angel had said she should remain a virgin. He said he would respect this wish if he could see the angel, and she said he could if he was baptized. After his conversion, Valerian was martyred, and St. Cecilia gave her possessions to the poor. She was ordered to be burnt at the stake, but since the flames did not harm her, she was beheaded.

THE NAVE

In the nave, the walls are Roman Travertine marble which has been ground to a smooth, matte finish. There are five arches made of green St. Denis marble encasing structural steel beams. Along both walls are the stations of the cross which were made in Venice in mosaic and copied from oil paintings of Martin Feuerstein located in St. Catherine's Church in Munich. The coffered ceiling was built with steel forms that were plastered before being placed, and transite panels painted by Italian craftsmen. These were screwed in place in the sunken recesses. The pews are made of Canadian oak by Globe Furniture in Waterloo. The choir stalls with kneelers line each wall. The seat of each choir bench lifts up, revealing another small kneeler so one can kneel and face the sanctuary. The stained glass windows in the nave were designed by Professor Rodolfo Fanfani.

BLESSED VIRGIN WINDOW

The first window on the west, closest to the transept, shows the Blessed Virgin Mary in the center, and her parents St. Joachim on the left and St. Anne with Mary on the right. Medallions depict events in their lives. On the left, working up, you see the meeting of Joachim and Anne; an angel announcing Mary's birth; the birth of Mary; and Joachim and Anne bringing Mary to the temple. In the centre, working up, you see the Annunciation; the Visitation; the Assumption; and the Coronation. On the right, going down, you see St. Anne praying in the temple; an angel announcing Mary's birth; the birth of Mary; and St. Anne teaching Mary.

CHRIST THE KING WINDOW

The next window shows Christ wearing a crown and the clothes of his priestly and royal rank, seated on a throne and holding the earth in his hand. There are angels beside him, one with a scepter, and one with a scroll on which is inscribed Alpha and Omega, meaning "I am the beginning and the end."

CORONATION WINDOW

The next window shows the Coronation of the Blessed Virgin Mary. She is seated on a throne, with God the Father on the right and God the Son on the left, each of whom is holding the crown over her head. The Holy Spirit is symbolized by a dove. The medallions in the top row show angels with musical instruments, and on the bottom row are angels with censers representing prayer and a torch symbolizing love.

DOCTORS OF THE CHURCH WINDOW

The last window on the west side depicts St. Ambrose, St. Thomas and St. Augustine, who were great doctors of the church.

On the left is St. Ambrose, shown wearing his bishop's vestments. St. Ambrose was the Bishop of Milan who converted and baptised St. Augustine. He wrote sermons that were masterpieces in Latin as well as hymns. His ideas formed the medieval model for church state relations in which the church was dominant. The medallions on the left from the top, show him rebuking the Emperor Theodosius; being acclaimed Bishop; winning over the Arian soldiers to prayer; and as a teacher, preacher, and consoler. St. Ambrose is the patron saint of beekeepers and beggars.

In the centre is St. Thomas Aquinas, portrayed with the sun above his head and his book "Summa Theologica." This book is the principal doctrinal synthesis of Catholic theology. St. Thomas studied under the Dominicans and taught theology. He was made a papal theologian by Pope Clement IV and continued to teach. He founded a Dominican University in Naples. The medallions in the centre from the top show him praying; kneeling before the Pope; being held captive by his family to prevent him joining the Dominicans; and as a teacher. St. Thomas Aquinas is the patron saint of Catholic universities and students.

St. Augustine is on the right, holding an open book representing the transmission of truth, learning, teaching, and writing. St. Augustine had a Christian mother, St. Monica, and a pagan father. He lived a dissolute life for a time, and then taught philosophy. He converted to Christianity and became the Bishop of Hippo. The medallions on the right, from the top, show him being reluctantly taken to school; the death of his mother; his ordination as a priest and then as Bishop; and him disputing with a doctor of the church. St. Augustine is the patron saint of printers, brewers, and theologians.

COMMUNITY PATRONS WINDOW

On the east wall of the nave, closest to the entrance, is a stained glass window depicting St. Ignatius of Loyola, St. Joseph, and St. Francis Xavier.

St. Ignatius is on the left. He was a nobleman who served as a knight, but was hit by a cannonball while defending the citadel of Pamplona against the French. During his recovery, he read a book on the lives of the saints which contained the idea of service to God as chivalry. He liked this notion, and made a pilgrimage, giving up his sword and dagger to a statue of the Virgin Mary. He then lived as an ascetic, and began to write his work, the "Spiritual Exercises." He returned to school and began his studies, and during this time began to acquire followers. He was later ordained, and later still, founded the Jesuit order and laid the foundation for a system of schools for what became a teaching order. The medallions from the top show him as a soldier; recovering from his injury and reading the Bible and "Lives of the Saints;" surrendering his sword; and after university studies, becoming a priest and forming the Jesuit order and presenting their rule of life to Pope Paul III. St. Ignatius is the patron saint of spiritual retreats.

St. Joseph in the centre was by birth of the royal family of David, but lived as a carpenter. He found Mary pregnant when he married her, and planned to quietly divorce her. However, an angel told him the child was the son of God and conceived by the Holy Spirit, so he took her as his wife. After the visit of the Magi, an angel warned him of violence against the child Jesus by King Herod, and so the family fled to Egypt, returning to Nazareth only after Herod's death. Along with Mary, he searched for Jesus in Jerusalem and found him in the temple. Joseph died before the crucifixion and his feast is celebrated on March 19, the traditional day of his death. Medallions from the top show the betrothal of Joseph and Mary, the Presentation of Jesus in the temple in Jerusalem with Simeon who recognized the Messiah, the Holy Family at home in Nazareth, and Joseph and Mary returning to Jerusalem to find Jesus in the temple. St. Joseph is the patron saint of the universal church, workers, social justice, and of Canada.

On the right is St. Francis Xavier. He studied theology at the University of Paris where his roommate was St. Ignatius. St. Francis became one of the first seven Jesuits. He was ordained a priest and travelled as a missionary to India where he lived among pearl fishers. He later travelled to the Malay Archipelago and then Japan. He believed missionaries must adapt to the customs and language of the people with whom they work, and advocated for an educated native clergy and for providing continuing pastoral care to those who were baptized.

Medallions on the right from the top show him with Pope Paul III who made him a Vatican ambassador; healing the sick; working in India; and preaching the Gospel in Japan. St. Francis Xavier is the patron saint of missions and sailors.

ROSARY WINDOW

The next window shows the Madonna of the Holy Rosary on a throne, surrounded by twelve stars. She is holding the infant Jesus who gives the beads to St. Dominic, founder of the Dominican order, shown on the left. The legend is that the Blessed Virgin appeared to St. Dominic at prayer, gave him the rosary, and told him to go forth and preach. The emblem on his forehead represents the star shaped light seen on his brow at baptism. St. Dominic is the patron saint of astronomers.

Shown on the right is St. Catherine of Siena. She is one of only four female doctors of the church, along with Teresa of Avila, Therese of Lisieux, and Hildegard of Bingen. She was a member of the Dominicans, but took simple vows and remained outside the convent. She defended the Pope, cared for prisoners and the poor, and worked in hospitals. St. Catherine of Siena is the patron saint of Europe and Italy.

Working from the left to the right from the top left corner, the medallions show the titles used in the prayer, the *Litany of Mary*: Tower of David, Comforter of the Afflicted, Mystical Rose, Mother Most Admirable, Morning Star, and Mother Most Chaste.

PATRON OF THE UNIVERSAL CHURCH WINDOW

The next window shows St. Joseph holding a miniature of St. Peter's Basilica in Rome, the centre of the universal church. On his left is Pope Pius IX who proclaimed St. Joseph the patron of the universal church. On his right is Pope Leo XIII holding his encyclical on labour "Rerum Novarum." You can see saints holding a rod with purple flowers symbolizing humility, and a white lily symbolizing Joseph's virginity. The legend is that St. Joseph's staff flowered like a lily in the temple and so he was chosen as Mary's spouse.

VIRGIN SAINTS WINDOW

The last window closest to the transept shows three virgin saints: St. Philomena on the left, St. Therese of Lisieux in the centre, and St. Agnes on the right.

Beginning with St. Philomena, the medallions on the left working down, show the her legend, beginning with Emperor Diocletian who wanted to marry her and begged, threatened, and tortured her, finally ordering her beheading; the Blessed Virgin appearing to her in prison; the arrows meant to kill her; and her eventual beheading.

In the centre is St. Therese of Lisieux who became a Carmelite nun and pursued holiness in ordinary life. Her doctrine is known as The Little Way. She is a doctor of the church, and her parents were canonized by Pope Francis. The medallions in the centre show her leaving Carmel after trying to become a postulant; with her father visiting Pope Leo XIII in Rome and asking permission to enter the convent; being accepted at the convent in Carmel where she became ill ten years later; and on her death bed. St. Therese is the patron saint of florists and missionaries.

On the right is St. Agnes who was martyred at 12 or 13 years old. She wanted to remain a virgin, and so she refused suitors. She was taken to a brothel where only one man tried to rape her. He was struck blind, but St. Agnes healed him with prayer. After refusing to renounce her faith, she was killed by the Emperor Diocletian. Working down, the medallions on the right show St. Agnes being tortured for refusing to marry the Emperor Diocletian; the man being struck blind and having his sight restored; the failed attempt to burn her at the stake; and her beheading. St. Agnes is the patron saint of girls, chastity, and gardeners.

RESURRECTION WINDOW

To the west of the transept, is the Blessed Virgin side chapel. Above the entrance is a window depicting the resurrection of Christ. He is in white garments and holding a victory banner above the empty tomb with angels and sleeping guards nearby. The Latin script means "According to the Scripture he arose on the third day." Working from left to right at the top, the medallions show events leading to the resurrection: Jesus taken down from cross; the burial; and Jesus appearing to Mary Magdalen. From right to left at the bottom, the medallions show Jesus appearing to his disciples; Thomas putting his finger in the wound on his side; and Jesus appearing to the holy women. Professor Rodolfo Fanfani's name is in the top right corner.

CRUCIFIXION WINDOW

On the east is the St. Joseph side chapel. Above the entrance is a window showing the crucifixion of Christ. John and possibly Mary of Clopas support the Virgin Mary while Mary Magdalen kneels weeping. The good thief looks lovingly toward Jesus while the wicked thief has a defiant expression. You can see soldiers with spears and a crowd below. There are two soldiers in the lower right who are casting dice for the seamless garment. The Latin inscription means "We have redemption through his blood." Working from the left corner, medallions show the events leading to the crucifixion: the Agony in the garden; the betrayal of Judas with a kiss; and the sentence of Pontius Pilate. At the bottom from the left, medallions show the scourging of Jesus at the pillar; the crowning with thorns; and Jesus carrying the cross.

THE SANCTUARY

The sanctuary has a Botticino marble floor with a honed finish. The entrance arches are Rosa Corallo marble. There are choir stalls on both sides. The pulpit repeats the wheat and grapes motif and has a carved eagle. This represents the eagle flying highest and spreading the Gospel to all parts of the world. The altar is a solid piece of green St. Denis marble with light Sienna marble weighing 4,600 pounds. It has a corner stone with relics of St. Ignatius Loyola, St. Francis de Sales, St. John de Brebeuf and other Canadian martyrs. On the front of the altar is a mosaic of a pelican feeding young pelicans with her blood. This has symbolized Christ on the cross and the Eucharist since the Middle Ages.

The back wall is brown Rosa Roburento marble and coffee brown and cream Flor di Pesco marble with a mosaic border. There are columns of green St. Denis marble cut from a single shaft of marble and hollowed out to enclose structural steel beams, and then joined to keep the veins matching. At the back, the Altar of Repose is covered by a baldachino with an inlaid mosaic of the Holy Spirit. This is where the tabernacle was kept. On the wall, the 14-foot cross is made of laminated oak with symbols of the four Evangelists in the corners: the eagle representing John, the winged lion representing Mark, the winged man representing Matthew, and the winged ox representing Luke. The six-foot corpus is made of cement reinforced with

steel and covered in gold leaf and bronze finish. The wrought iron screen at the back was designed by the architect, Peter Tillman, and made by hand without casting in Italy.

The ceiling is made of red, white, and gold mosaic. It was designed by Count Alexander von Svoboda of the Conn Arts Studio, Toronto. There are seven rows of 17 symbols relating to St. Joseph, Blessed Virgin, the Trinity, and the Eucharist. Each tile was made of pigmented opaque glass fired in a kiln and hand cut with a hammer and chisel. This method produces cubes or tessera that are known as Byzantine smalti. The gold is actual gold leaf pressed between glass and fired twice in a kiln. Each square foot required 650 pieces of tile, so there are a total of one million pieces of mosaic in the ceiling.

SANCTUARY WINDOWS

The stained glass windows in the sanctuary were designed by Sr. Marie Celine Janisse and perfected by Professor Rodolfo Fanfani. They were made in Florence, Italy by the Guido Polloni Company.

The first window, on the St. Joseph chapel side closest to the crucifix, has symbols of our relationship with Christ and his love. Working down from left and right, you see:

- loaves and fishes (symbolizing the Eucharist)
- a lamp or lighthouse (representing love and sacrifice)
- an anchor cross (standing for the cross of Christ)
- a thurible (symbolizing prayer rising to heaven)
- a chalice and host (representing the Last Supper)
- a closed book (symbolizing mystery).

The window next to this has symbols of sacrifice. Working down from left and right, you see:

- a heart surrounded by flames and thorns (symbolizing reparation)
- a dove (representing the Holy Spirit)
- a pelican (symbolizing the crucifixion and Eucharist)
- grapes (representing the precious blood of Christ)
- the Greek letters alpha, omega, chi, rho (which form the monogram for Christ)
- wheat (standing for the Eucharist).

The window across from this last window has symbols of redemption. Working down from left and right, you see:

- a rose (representing the mystical rose or the Virgin Mary)
- a star (symbolizing steadfastness and zeal)
- a pierced heart (standing for charity)
- a crown (representing peace and heavenly union with God)
- the letters A and M (standing for Ave Maria)
- a lily (representing purity, virginity, and St. Joseph).

The last window closest to the crucifix has symbols of the crucifixion. Working down from left and right, you see:

- the spear and sponge
- the sacred nails
- INRI for Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews
- the hammer and pincers
- the crown of thorns
- the cross and winding sheet.