



WINDOWS

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dies of royalty used by the crowd to mock Jesus (the crown of thorns mimics a Roman emperor's crown of roses, while the cattail suggests a king's scepter).

Biographies in stained glass

In addition to the "vertical stories" that play out between St. Alphonsus' upper and lower stained-glass panels are two epic narratives that unfold horizontally, on flanking sides of the church.

On the left, the story of the Blessed Mother rolls out chronologically, beginning with Mary's presentation in the temple, accompanied by her parents St. Anne and St. Joachim, and ending with her crowning in heaven (Mary and Christ are seated together on a rainbow).

Beneath this jubilant scene of "Mary, Queen of Heaven" is a much more somber event not specifically referred to in Scripture: "The Death of St. Joseph." The adult Jesus is pictured blessing St. Joseph at his bedside and the soon-to-be-widowed Mary is in prayer, her eyes in a daze.

This death scene is known for an oddity that would have been lost to history had it not been passed down by generations of St. Alphonsus parishioners: a self-portrait of the stained-glass artist himself – F.X. Zettler of Munich – peeks through St. Joseph's bedroom door.

Jesus' story unfurls

Opposite from this Marian side of the church, along the church's right-hand walls, are windows that retrace Jesus' story, from his birth in Bethlehem to his Ascension.



Photo by Beth Donze | CLARION HERALD

The stained-glass artist, F.X. Zettler of Munich, included his self-portrait in the window that dramatizes the death of St. Joseph. Zettler is at upper right, peeking through the doorway. Mary is cloaked in her traditional blue.

The window portraying the Nativity, a rare depiction of Jesus being born at night, bathes its subjects in varying degrees of light, from the

fully illuminated Baby Jesus, to the slightly less luminous faces of his parents, to the more dimly lit shepherds.

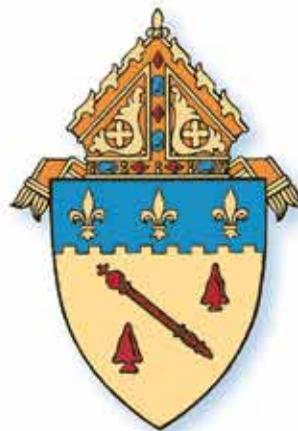
The stained-glass win-

dow showing Jesus being crowned with thorns was intentionally designed to reflect the many cultural groups that were present in the surrounding neighborhood at the time of the church's construction. Faces of Irish, German, African, Native American and Asian men are part of the crowd taunting Jesus as he is crowned "King of the Jews."

"The depiction reminds us that we all crowned Jesus with thorns," Bertin said.

At the top of this somber scene tells the faithful the rest of the story – the part that even death cannot touch: Christ stands triumphantly outside the walls of his tomb. He is risen.

What stories do your church's stained-glass windows tell? Write to Beth Donze at bdonze@clarionherald.org.



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congratulates the
Archdiocese of New Orleans
for 300 years of ministry.
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of your heritage.