

CHRIST IN MAJESTY

As you see each week, over the course of the last year, we have renovated our sanctuary. Last year we focused on the flooring. We removed the many stairs that led up to the altar, which had become a safety issue for some, in favor of a lower, more streamlined view. We removed the carpet and replaced it with beautiful hardwood.

This has made the sanctuary appear larger and it is certainly lighter, brighter, and more accessible.

Before



After



We continued the work beginning in the late Spring by eliminating the temporary, movable wall sections behind the presider's chair and installing a permanent, fixed wall. And, we have installed the beautiful stained-glass

window **Christ in Majesty** to bring an added element of dignity and beauty to our sacred space.

The window itself is a “recovered” window which was originally installed in the former St. Michael's Church in Swansea. That church closed in 2008 and the stained glass was being held at New England Stained Glass in Attleboro.

Since its installation in our parish, several people have asked for a detailed description of what we're seeing in the window.

The window depicts **Christ in Majesty** at its center. This is primarily an image of the risen and glorified Christ reigning as



Lord of heaven and earth. He sits enthroned and in his left hand, holds a book representing Sacred Scripture, particularly the Gospel—the Word of God. It identifies Christ not simply as one who *teaches* God's Word, but as the Word made flesh. This is especially meaningful because Christ is surrounded by the Four Evangelists, whose Gospels proclaim him to the world.

His right hand is raised in blessing. The arrangement of the fingers is part of an ancient Christian iconographic tradition. Christ's right hand is raised in the traditional gesture of blessing. Even the position of his fingers proclaims the faith: the three raised fingers signify the three Persons of the Holy Trinity, while the two folded fingers signify the two natures of Christ, truly God and truly human. Thus, even as Christ blesses us, his hand silently professes the great mysteries of our Faith.

Christ is doing two things simultaneously: He holds the Word and He gives his blessing. He is Christ the Teacher and Christ the Lord. He reveals God's truth and extends God's grace.

Again, he is then surrounded by the Four Evangelists together with their traditional symbols:

- St. Matthew — the winged angel
- St. Mark — the winged lion
- St. Luke — the winged ox
- St. John — the eagle

These four symbols are often called the Tetramorph. Their roots are in the visions of Ezekiel (Ezekiel 1:4–14) and Revelation (Revelation 4:6–8), where four living creatures surround the heavenly throne. Christian tradition came to associate those four creatures with Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John.

So the window has a very specific theological message. Christ in Majesty occupies the center because Christ is the center of the Gospel. The four Evangelists surround him because it is through their inspired testimony that the Church encounters and proclaims Jesus Christ. Four different Gospel voices all point toward the same Lord.

Its placement behind the altar makes that symbolism especially meaningful. At every Holy Mass, we encounter Christ both in the proclamation of the Gospel and in the Eucharist. The window visually connects those two realities: the Evangelists bear witness to Christ in the Word, while directly below the window the same Christ comes among us sacramentally upon the altar.

And then, above the window, we see Christ crucified on the Cross. So the sanctuary now presents a wonderful visual theology: Christ proclaimed in the Gospels, Christ offered upon the Cross, Christ present in the Eucharist, and Christ reigning in glory.

May it bless our worship space for generations to come.

Peace, love, and prayers,

Fr. Tom