



The Love of God in Jesus the Christ

**A self-guided pilgrimage of the
stained-glass windows created by
John Tatschl**

**St. Michael & All Angels Church
Albuquerque, New Mexico**

ABOUT THE WINDOWS AND THE ARTIST

John Tatschl (1906 – 1982) was a part of the flowering of the University of New Mexico art school in the 1950s and '60s. Born in Austria, he emigrated to the United States in 1936 and joined the UNM faculty in 1946. Best known as a daring and evocative sculptor, he was also a lithographer, engraver, and maker of stained glass windows. As an instructor, he exerted a significant influence on the Albuquerque art scene. While on sabbatical in 1952-53, he went back to his native Vienna to learn the art of stained glass during its post-war resurgence.

In the mid 1950s, Tatschl was commissioned by the recently founded St. Michael & All Angels Church to create a series of ten windows—one of St. Michael, and nine of the Life of Christ. He not only designed them, but cut, painted, fired, leaded and mounted each panel, using specially made glass imported from Europe. (His signature is visible in many of the panels.) Unlike European stained glass, the windows are designed to make most advantage of the intensity and brilliance of the New Mexican sun. As the citation for Tatschl's honorary degree from UNM noted, "Today these windows are an acknowledged part of the heritage of New Mexico." Moreover, the windows are the result of a close collaboration between Tatschl and the rector of the parish, the Rev. Paul Saunders; they remained close friends for many years.

The windows were installed in the church (now the Parish Hall) and dedicated May 19, 1957. The Resurrection window was over the altar, and the St. Michael window presided over the baptismal font. The other windows were placed along both sides of the nave. When the parish built a new sanctuary in 1997, the windows were moved to their present location, where they exert a powerful aesthetic and architectural influence on the building's interior.

The windows cumulatively depict "The Love of God in Jesus the Christ" in tableau form, based on specific passages from the four gospels, with each panel focusing on a particular moment in the story. The images are sometimes playful, sometimes deeply evocative; they are simple and formalized, yet depict a rugged Christ with firm features; and they include hidden eccentric details such as a series of Latin phrases on the theme of art's importance in the spiritual life, and even a small portrait of Paul Saunders himself.

Questions for Meditation

As you make your way from one window to the next, you might ponder these questions as a way to enter into the images:

What is happening in this picture?

What moment in the story does the artist depict?

What feelings do the faces and bodies of the people express?

Put yourself into the scene. As one of the persons pictured, what are you feeling, thinking?

What emotions do the colors, light, shapes, and composition convey?

What other discoveries or questions come to mind?

Most important, be still and quiet. Listen patiently for how God speaks to you through the experience of gazing at the image in relation to the stories from scripture.

How are you called to enter more deeply into your faith, your community, your world, yourself?



I. St. Michael (Located in the chapel)

St. Michael is described in scripture as an archangel who fights against evil. Here, with the sword of righteousness raised above his head, he stands victorious over evil, which is personified in the form of a green dragon (lying defeated at Michael's feet). Michael is a reminder of the victory of God's righteousness and justice in the world (the scales of justice are on his belt buckle), and of the ultimate power of good.

In this window, Michael is surrounded by the "host of heaven." Just to the side of his right foot, however, is one figure that is not of an angel: it is a portrait of the Rev. Paul Saunders, the parish's rector (pastor) at the time.



What needs to be defeated in your life?



And I heard a loud voice in heaven, saying, "Now the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God and the authority of his Christ have come, for the accuser of our comrades has been thrown down, who accuses them day and night before our God."

Revelation 12: 10

II. The Nativity

(Located along the south wall of the church)

At the top of the window, we see three Old Testament prophets: Jeremiah, Micah, and Isaiah. Inspired by the Spirit (whispering in their ears), they anticipate God's saving acts in the birth of a savior.

The middle panel shows Jesus' birth, with the familiar figures of Mary and Joseph, the animals, the kings, and an angel—but no shepherds. The sky includes the moon and stars, and the angel is unusually depicted as crowning the new mother.

In the bottom panel, the infant Jesus is presented in the Temple as an act of thanksgiving by his parents. Simeon, the aged prophet who recognized Jesus as the Messiah and sings the “Song of Simeon” (“Mine eyes have seen thy salvation”) is to the right—but the window focuses upon Anna. She was a prophetess who also came into the temple “at that very hour, giving thanks to God, and speaking of Jesus to all who were looking for the redemption of Jerusalem.” Unlike Simeon, however, scripture does not record her words, so she is shown facing away from us, eyes lifted toward the light of heaven.



What would your song have been?

Top Panel (The Prophets): *“Behold the days are coming,” says the Lord, “when I will raise up for David a righteous Branch, and he shall reign as king and deal wisely, and shall execute justice and righteousness in the land. In his days Judah will be saved, and Israel will dwell securely. And this is the name by which he will be called: ‘The Lord is our righteousness.’”*

Jeremiah 23: 5-6

But you, O Bethlehem Ephrathah, who are little to be among the clans of Judah, from you shall come forth for me one who is to be ruler in Israel, whose origin is from of old, from ancient days.

Micah: 5: 2

For to us a child is born, to us a son is given; and the government will be upon his shoulder; and his name will be called "Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace." Of the increase of his government and of peace there will be no end.

Isaiah 9: 6

Central Panel (Jesus' Birth): And she gave birth to her first-born son and wrapped him in swaddling cloths, and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn.

Luke 2: 7

Lower Panel (The Presentation of Jesus in the Temple): "For mine eyes have seen thy salvation which thou hast prepared in the presence of all peoples, a light for revelation to the Gentiles, and for glory to thy people Israel."

Luke 2: 30-32



III. The Young Jesus in the Temple

When Jesus was twelve years old, his parents took him to Jerusalem for the feast of the Passover, as was their custom. When they left to return home to Nazareth, however, he was not with them. They returned anxiously to Jerusalem to look for him. The window shows Jesus where they found him: in the temple, surrounded by elders who are amazed and perplexed at his wisdom and understanding. Jesus is recorded as having said to his worried parents: “How is it that you sought me? Did you not know that I must be in my Father’s house?”

What do you think of Jesus?

And when they did not find him, they returned to Jerusalem, seeking him. After three days they found him in the temple sitting among the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions; and all who heard him were amazed at his understanding and his answers.

Luke 2: 45-47



IV. The Baptism

At the start of Jesus' public ministry, his cousin, John the Baptist, was baptizing people in the wilderness as a sign of their turning to God. Jesus himself also came to John to be baptized, a sign in his case of the fullness of his humanity, but also of his unique relationship to God. Observe the delicacy of the reeds and other water plants that surround Jesus. A dove, symbol of the Holy Spirit, descends upon Jesus as he stands in the water before John, identifying him as the "beloved."

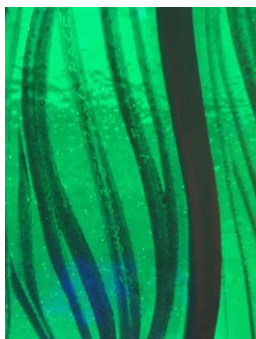
(A cartoon study for this window hangs in the hallway behind the sanctuary, visible through the door to the right of the altar.)



What does God say to us in our baptism?

In those days Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. And when he came up out of the water, immediately he saw the heavens opened and the Spirit descending upon him like a dove; and a voice came from heaven, "Thou art my beloved Son; with thee I am well pleased."

Mark 1: 9-11



Notice the Latin phrase inscribed vertically in the reeds to the left of the bottom hem of Jesus' red cloak: *Si vis artem para pacem* ("If you want art, prepare peace").

V. Jesus and the Disciples
(Located in the church Entry Hall)

After the feeding of the five thousand, Jesus sent the disciples ahead across the Sea of Galilee in a boat. The wind arose, making them afraid, so Jesus came to them, walking on the water. They were still more terrified, thinking him a ghost, but he encouraged them to take heart, for it was he.

Of what are you afraid?

Another time, Jesus saw Simon, James, and John—fishermen who had been out all night without luck. Jesus gets into Simon’s boat, and leads them into deep water where they catch more fish than their nets can hold: notice the abundance of fish! Jesus then calls them to follow him, saying that from now on they will “fish for people.”



Have you been caught?

Top Panel (Jesus Walks on Water): *And in the fourth watch of the night he came to them, walking on the sea. But when the disciples saw him walking on the sea, they were terrified, saying, “It is a ghost!” And they cried out for fear. But immediately he spoke to them, saying, “Take heart, it is I; have no fear.”* *Matthew 14: 25-27*

Bottom Panel (The Miraculous Catch of Fish): *For he was astonished, and all that were with him, at the catch of fish which they had taken; and so also were James and John, sons of Zebedee, who were partners with Simon. And Jesus said to Simon, “Do not be afraid; henceforth you will be catching people.” And when they had brought their boats to land, they left everything and followed him.* *Luke 5: 9-11*

VI. The Healing Miracles

As Jesus encountered people in need, his presence often turned their lives around in what they could only describe as a “miracle.” In the top panel, Jesus restores sight (understanding? confidence? hope?) to a blind man named Bartimaeus, while “a multitude” looks on. (The two figures on the right are portraits of Tatschl’s sons, John and Pete.)



In the lower panel, Jesus confronts the deceased Lazarus, brother of Mary and Martha, in the tomb. He is bound tightly in his burial cloths, looking very dead, and as Jesus asks for the tomb to be opened, one disciple holds his nose, since “by this time there will be a stench.” Jesus proceeds to release him from his physical and spiritual bondage.

What do you want Jesus to do for you?

Top Panel (The Healing of the Blind Man): *And Jesus said to him, “What do you want me to do for you?” And the blind man said to him, “Master, let me receive my sight.” And Jesus said to him, “Go your way; your faith has made you well.” And immediately he received his sight and followed him on the way. Mark 10: 51-52*

Lower Panel (The Raising of Lazarus): *When he had said this he cried with a loud voice, “Lazarus, come out.” The dead man came out, his hands and feet bound with bandages, and his face wrapped with a cloth. Jesus said to them, “Unbind him, and let him go.”*

John 11: 43-44

VII. The Institution of the Eucharist

In this depiction of the Last Supper, Jesus is in the center, dressed in rich, vibrant colors almost as if in Eucharistic vestments. He holds the bread and wine that he designated that night as signs of the life that he would give for the sake of the world. He promises thereby that whenever we gather to share the bread and the cup, he will be present at table with us. The twelve disciples surround him in the top and bottom panels, while to the side soldiers stand menacingly in wait for his betrayal and arrest.



Where do you feel Jesus's presence in your own life?

So Jesus said to them, "Truly, truly, I say unto you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you; those who eat my flesh and drinks my blood have eternal life, and I will raise them up at the last day. For my flesh is food indeed, and my blood is drink indeed. Those who eat my flesh and drink my blood abide in me, and I in them. As the living Father sent me, and I live because of the Father, so whoever eats me will live because of me. This is the bread which came down from heaven, not such as the your ancestors ate and died; the one who eats this bread will live forever."

John 6: 53-58

VIII. The Garden of Gethsemane

After Jesus had eaten the Passover meal with his disciples, he led them to the Garden of Gethsemane to pray. Anticipating what was to come—his betrayal, arrest, trial, and crucifixion—he asked to be spared this agony, represented here by the surrounding flames of fire. But in the end, he accepts the sacrifice he must make. Meanwhile, the disciples can only sleep, already beginning to betray their promise to stay with him, even as the crowd appears in the distance. The contrast between Jesus’ resoluteness, and the disciples’ frailty, permeates the scene: in the lower panel, Judas arrives to betray him with a kiss, as the soldiers arrest him.



Do you ever betray Jesus?

Top Panel (The Agony): *And he took with him Peter and James and John, and began to be greatly distressed and troubled. And he said to them, “My soul is very sorrowful, even to death; remain here, and watch.” And going a little farther, he fell on the ground and prayed that, if it were possible, the hour might pass from him. And he said, “Abba, Father, all things are possible to thee; remove this cup from me; yet not what I will, but what thou wilt.”* *Mark 14: 33-36*

Lower Panel (The Betrayal): *And immediately, while he was still speaking Judas came, one of the twelve, and with him a crowd with swords and clubs, from the chief priests and the scribes and the elders. Now the betrayer had given them a sign, saying, “The one I shall kiss is the man; seize him and lead him away safely.” And when he came, he went up to him at once and said, “Master!” And he kissed him.*

Mark 14: 43-45

IX. The Crucifixion (Located to the left of the altar)

In the top panel, Jesus hangs from the cross, with Mary his mother and John the beloved disciple looking on. Foreshadowing the new community of love that he will establish after his resurrection, he commends the two of them to one another's keeping.

Whom does Jesus commend to you?

The lower panel depicts Jesus' burial in a tomb offered by Joseph of Arimathea, a compassionate and courageous man "who was also looking for the kingdom of God."

Where do you look for the kingdom in your life?

Top Panel (The Crucifixion): *And when they came to the place which is called The Skull, there they crucified him, and the criminals, one on the right and one on the left. And Jesus said, "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do."*



Luke

It was now about the sixth hour; and there was darkness over the whole land until the ninth hour, while the sun's light failed; and the curtain of the temple was torn in two. Then Jesus, crying with a loud voice, said, "Father, into thy hands I commit my spirit!" And having said this he breathed his last.

Luke 23: 44-46

Lower Panel (The Burial): *And when Pilate learned from the centurion that he was dead, he granted the body to Joseph. And he brought a linen shroud, and taking him down, wrapped him in the linen shroud, and laid him in a tomb which had been hewn out of the rock: and he rolled a stone against the door of the tomb.*

Mark 15: 45-46

X. The Resurrection

(Located to the right of the altar)

More than simply coming back to life, Jesus was transfigured by his resurrection into a new humanity, into which we too are incorporated through baptism. He is shown here in that new form: bold, larger than life, not just resuscitated but resurrected! He is surrounded by four women who were among the first witnesses to this new life now offered to all: Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Mary the mother of James, and “the other Mary.”



How do you wish your life to be transformed by the power of God?

But on the first day of the week, at early dawn, they went to the tomb, taking the spices which they had prepared. And they found the stone rolled away from the tomb, but when they went in they did not find the body. While they were perplexed about this, behold, two men stood by them in dazzling apparel; and as they were frightened and bowed their faces to the ground, the men said to them, “Why do you seek the living among the dead? Remember how he told you, while he was still in Galilee, that the Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinful people, and be crucified, and on the third day rise.”

Luke 24: 1-7

So they departed quickly from the tomb with fear and great joy, and ran to tell his disciples. And behold, Jesus met them and said, “Hail!”

Matthew 28: 8-9

Latin inscriptions found in the windows

Si vis artem para pacem (“If you want art, prepare peace.”)

(This is a pun on the usual expression, **Si vis pacem para bellum**, “If you want peace, prepare war.”)

Memento dolorum Christi (“Remember Christ’s sorrows.”)

Arte medicina dolorum (“Art is the medicine for pain.”)

Ars longa, vita breva (“Art is long, Life is short.”)

(The famous saying of Hippocrates, the Founder of Medicine)

DEDICATION

The Resurrection window was given to the Glory of God and in loving memory of Angelica Constance Howden by her son, William Howden.

The other windows were given to the Glory of God by His servants, Ann and Robert Dietz.

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This booklet is based upon a retreat given by Oleta Saunders,
“Light Out of Darkness,” Advent, 2017.

Images of the windows are available from d’Ellis Photographic Art:
www.dellisphotographicart.com

More information on the work of John Tatschl can be found at:
<http://www.drivehq.com/web/tatsch73/NewMexico/index.html>



St. Michael & All Angels Church

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