

Christian Stained Glass Windows: Symbolism

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Symbolism is the representation of events or ideas through the use of images. Many different types of artists—from writers to painters—incorporate symbolism into their masterpieces, and stained glass artists are no exception. For those who specialize in the creation of Catholic stained glass, the Bible offers a rich selection of symbolic images that may serve as the basis for these aesthetically pleasing works. This particular category of ecclesiastic stained glass windows can also be thought provoking. Beyond appreciating the loveliness of these Christian stained glass windows, those who admire them will need to apply their knowledge of the Bible to discern the message intended by the creator.



Stained Glass Window 547: Many Sparrows

An Overview of Symbolism in the Bible

Christ Himself employed symbolism to relate the lessons of the faith contained in His parables, and it is also a device used in the liturgical gospels of the Bible. Additionally, several commonly recognized religious symbols were developed and popularized by the Christian Church. Some of the more widely known symbols found in Catholic stained glass and other types of Christian art are:

- Birds: Eagles, doves, and sparrows are all birds mentioned in the Bible. The majestic eagle is used not only as a sign of God's power, but also of His love since this bird



Stained Glass Window 6641: Grapes

An Overview of Symbolism in the Bible continued

is known for the care it provides to its young. The dove is a symbol associated with the Holy Spirit, while the sparrow is connected with the notion that God watches over even the smallest and least of creatures.

- Grapes and Wheat: These are used to make bread and wine, so it's logical that they symbolize the food and drink consumed as part of the sacrament of the Eucharist. During The Last Supper, Christ described bread and wine as His body and blood.
- Shepherds and Sheep: In the Bible, Christ is described as both the Lamb of God and the Good Shepherd who watches over His sheep and is willing to lay down His life for them. In the latter reference, sheep are usually understood to represent the faithful followers of Christ.
- Cross: The cross on which Christ suffered and died is undoubtedly the most recognized of all Christian symbols. It is used to represent the sacrifice made by Christ and the salvation the suffering and death of Christ brought to all of mankind.

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