

The Heavenly Jerusalem Windows
The windows of Our Lady of Loreto Parish
(to be installed in Spring 2014)

“Then I saw standing in the midst of the throne and the four living creatures and the elders a Lamb that seemed to have been slain....I looked again and heard the voices of many angels who surrounded the throne and the living creatures and the elders. They were countless in number, and they cried out in a loud voice: ‘Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power and riches, wisdom and strength, honor and glory and blessing.’ Then I heard every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and in the sea, everything in the universe cry out: ‘To the one who sits on the throne and to the Lamb, be blessing and honor, glory and might forever and ever” (rev. 5:6; 11-13).

“Then the angel showed me the river of life-giving water, sparkling like crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb down the middle of its street. On either side of the river grew the tree of life that produces fruit twelve times a year, once each month” (Rev. 22:1-2).

The great eight-sided dome of the Our Lady of Loreto parish church consists of five circular windows, the centermost of which faces due east. The dome, being a symbol of eternal life (its eight sides represent the so-called eighth day, that is, the day following the Lord’s day of rest, the day on which creation was renewed and since the beginning of time marks the renewal of time itself.), its five windows were designed to be stained glass representations of the heavenly Jerusalem.



The Lamb of God

In the central window, which faces due east (The direction east is itself a symbol of the Resurrection of Christ, since from the east the new day light of the sun arises.), is set the haloed Lamb of God “that seemed to have been slain” (Rev. 5:6). From the lamb’s pierced heart flows blood and water; the Lamb’s heart is the headwaters of sacramental grace and of “the river of life-giving water, sparkling like crystal” (Rev. 22:1) that flows down the

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streets of Jerusalem. The blood and water turn into a gushing flow of flashing river poured forth from the throne and spilling outward (beyond the window frame) to the north (left) and south (right).

Behind the Lamb can be seen his cross, in red, the tree of life (red is the color of blood) from which, when hung upon it, he draws all people to himself (Jn. 12:32). The cross itself is set within an arch the downward thrust of which bridges the first and last letters of the Greek alphabet, “Alpha” (on the left) and “Omega” (on the right). In the Book of Revelation the Lamb proclaims, “See, I am coming soon; my reward is with me, to repay according to everyone’s work. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end.” Blessed are those who wash their robes, so that they will have the right to the tree of life and may enter the city by the gates” (22:12-13). The alpha and omega of the Lamb’s window are copied from Botticini’s *Assumption of the Virgin* (which can be seen in Washington’s National Gallery), from the book which Christ the King himself holds as he welcomes the Virgin into heaven. The alpha and the omega in the Loreto window are set as if on two lintels framing a doorway, almost as keyholes.

Outside the lintels, to the left and right, the dominant color is orange-red, colors of desert sand. Inside greens and blues dominate colors of fertility and luxuriant life. The

23rd Psalm, the Good Shepherd psalm, reads, “The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want. He makes me lie down in green pastures; he leads me beside still waters; he restores my soul (23:1-2). The luminous emerald greens, too, are meant to suggest the walls of the new Jerusalem descending.

In the upper part of the window are set celestial luminaries. They draw our attention to the throne of the Lamb. But especially they remind us of the promise the LORD God made and fulfilled to Abraham. “[The LORD] brought him outside and said, ‘Look toward heaven and count the stars, if you are able to count them. Then he said to him, ‘So shall your descendants be.’ And he believed the Lord; and the Lord reckoned it to him as righteousness (Gen. 15:5-6). Stars also speak to the creation which has perished and which itself, too, in the resurrection of Christ is given new life, for many stars, as we know scientifically, are actually ancient, dying, or dead suns. The constellations found behind and below the celestial luminaries and the rainbow are of a mid-summer northern sky around 3:30 am (when the artist’s daughter Chaska was born). The sky is rotated 180 degrees with Ophiuchus and Serpens Cauda being most prominent. The luminaries, too, are repeated elsewhere in the angels windows, especially in the window of the thrones, reminding us throughout of the heavens and the heavenly Jerusalem.

In the lower part of the window the crystal blue water flows from the Lamb’s pierced heart and splashes to the right and to the left, connecting the seasonal windows and each side to the central window. On the left the tail of a large fish can be seen as he jumps into the water as if from the window to the left (spring). On the right, just to the left of the Omega, can be seen the head of a large fish jumping forth from the waters in the praise of the Lamb. It was two fish which, along with five loaves of bread, Jesus multiplied and with which he fed the multitude of 5000 people. The two fish are a symbol of the Eucharist.

Finally, the artist reflected on one of his favorite songs of all time, *Lord of the Starfields*, by Bruce Cockburn. The song carries itself like a hymn in melody and a psalm in words to the Creator. It’s lyrics:

:

Lord of the starfields / Ancient of Days / Universe Maker / Here's a song in your
praise
Wings of the storm cloud / Beginning and end / You make my heart leap / Like a
banner in the wind
O love that fires the sun / Keep me burning. / Lord of the starfields / Sower of life,
/ Heaven and earth are / Full of your light
Voice of the nova / Smile of the dew / All of our yearning / Only comes home to
you
O love that fires the sun / keep me burning

The Lamb’s heart is being pierced with an object. The prophet Isaiah prophesied that the Suffering Servant of the LORD God would be “wounded for our transgressions, crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the punishment that made us whole, and by his

bruises we are healed” (Is. 53:5). Then at Jesus’ crucifixion his legs were not broken. “Instead, one of the soldiers pierced his side with a spear...” (Jn 19:31). We recall, too, that the Book Of Revelation reveals that the Lamb of the heavenly Jerusalem “seemed to have been slain” (Rev. 5:6).

In the Loreto window the object piercing the Lamb is a shard of glass. In contemporary times we often use the metaphor of “shattering the glass ceiling” to speak of a class of person’s or an individual’s attainment of a rank or position or promotion which otherwise seemed unattainable. In the death and resurrection of Jesus, the Lamb of God, the true “glass ceiling,” the barrier that by sinning man himself has established between God and man, between heaven and earth, has been shattered and the courts of the heavenly court open to all, Jew and gentile alike. So too with this piercing, as the curtain of the temple was torn in two “from top to bottom,” the old order had been broken, shattered; a new paradigm is ushered in by Christ with his death and resurrection. Like St. Paul said, “Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting?” (I Cor. 15:55).



Spring

To the left of the Lamb window is spring. Flowing from the Lamb's throne crystal waters flow freely through the spring window. As the tree of life bears fruit twelve times a year, the spring window bears fruits of spring. In the middle are set a pomegranate and a cherry.

Pomegranates have long been the symbol of fertility; cherry blossoms a harbinger of spring. To the left hangs a ripening pear. Also to the right a large palm frond reminds us of Palm Sunday, which

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marks the beginning of Holy Week, the true spring of the church's year. At the center left of the window, between the pear and the pomegranate, close inspection reveals a monarch caterpillar. At the very top of the window a translucent winged butterfly hovers aloft. Butterflies are symbols of the resurrection, for at wintertime a caterpillar enters into a cocoon as a worm confined to the ground and in spring emerges as a butterfly, as Jesus' dead body was placed into the earth in a tomb and emerged three days later as our resurrected Lord.

In addition to green, the dominate colors of this window are pinks and lilacs, colors of spring blossoms and fruit tree blooms.



Summer

The northernmost window portrays the season of summer. Here too the crystal waters springing from the Lamb's throne flow through the season. Shining through the window the summer light, at its most intense on June 21st, the summer solstice, gives the impression of an abundance, a cornucopia of summer fruit. A cluster of red grapes hangs to the left. To the right one makes out the shape of an apple. A peach is set at the top of the window and below it an apricot.

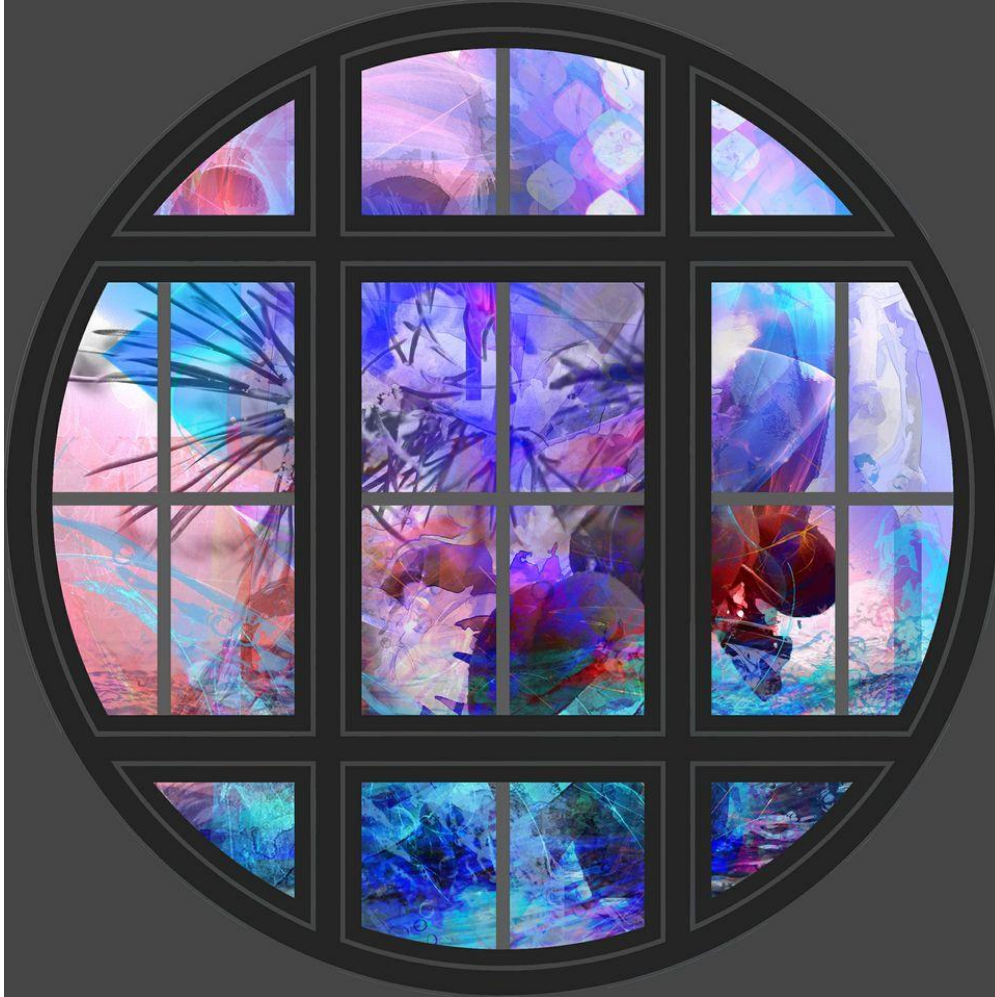
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Fall

Immediately to the right of the Lamb window is portrayed the season of fall. As with the other windows the crystal waters undergird the window and connect it with the Lamb and the season of winter (to the right). The windows theme takes up the theme of golden aspen leaf. The aspen leaf itself is surrounded by golden groves of autumn leaves.

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Winter

To the south, where in winter the sun sets furthest from the northern hemisphere, is set the window of winter. In the background one sees clearly the iconic image of a pine branch covered in snow; the impression of winter winds and ice crystals hang in the air. Three seasonal fruits are imagined in the scene: plums, pears, and currants.

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**The
Celestial
Denver**

In the north-western most window of the church, one finds the window which most singularly complements and completes the dome window of the Lamb: the window of The celestial Denver. In the Book of Revelation the consummation of salvation is

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revealed to be the marriage between the Lamb and the heavenly Jerusalem (see Rev. 21:2-3; 9-27). “And I saw the holy city, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, ‘See, the home of God is among mortals. He will dwell with them; they will be his peoples, and God himself will be with them.’ The angel says, ‘Come here. I will show you the bride, the wife of the Lamb,’ who comes down out of heaven and gleams radiant with the splendor of God.”

The dominant color of the window is gold, the color of eternity and riches. The church and people of Denver are portrayed in gold with two iconic images: the Roman Catholic Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception (the first church named a basilica by Blessed John Paul II, in 1979) is set on the left and before a grand range of mountains; (Note how the pinnacle of the cathedral spires reach higher than the highest of the mountain’s peaks.); on the right is Red Rocks Amphitheater. Set in the center of the window is the columbine flower, Colorado’s state flower. The columbine flower is first and foremost a symbol of the Holy Spirit. The columbine flower (from the Latin *columbinus*, meaning dove) is an ancient symbol of the Holy Spirit. (Holding a

columbine flower upside down one can see how its petals forming the shape of five doves in flight around the central stamen.) The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of God by whom the Blessed Virgin Mary conceived the child Jesus. He is thus rightly venerated as the spouse of Mary, who is herself the archetype of the Church, the bride of Christ. The columbine flower in the celestial Denver window thus becomes a bouquet of a single flower, a bouquet which the Father presents to his Son's bride, the Church of Denver, and at the same time the bouquet the Church of Denver carries as she comes forth to meet her bridegroom, the divine Lamb. A closer inspection, too, of the columbine flower reveals another element of its beauty. The Book of Revelation reveals that it is an angel who says to John, "Come here. I will show you the bride, the wife of the Lamb," who then takes him to a great, high mountain (21:9-10). That angel can be seen in the very center of the columbine.

At the bottom of the window, gushes forth a torrent of water, melted snows of the Rocky Mountain heights, the so-called spring runoff. In the Song of Songs the passing of winter is the sign of the coming of the Lord, the lover of the bride. "My lover speaks; he says to me: 'Arise, my beloved, my beautiful one, and come! For see the winter is past, the rains are over and gone. The flowers appear on the earth, the time of pruning the vines has come, and the song of the dove is heard in our land'" (Song 2:10-12).

The window is encircled by a white ring, a wedding ring. Revelation reveals that the walls of the heavenly Jerusalem are inscribed with the names of the twelve tribes of the Israelites (21:12). The wedding ring of the Lamb with the celestial Denver is inscribed in Hebrews with the names of the twelve tribes of Israel. Denver's faith and Denver's salvation is rooted in and built upon the faith of the patriarchs: of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

The process for creating stained glass gold is itself a symbol on the incarnation of Jesus; its alchemy almost mysterious. Silver-nitrate is poured on a carrier of earth (glass being made of melted sand) penetrating the glass and embedding itself throughout, creating a golden, amber, yellow depth-filled tone. Stained glass gold symbolizes Christ, who is poured out of the Father's heart into earthly man and assumes human nature in everything but sin. What is assumed is penetrated as silver-nitrate penetrates the glass and recreated anew—earthly dirt transformed into heavenly gold. Too, Psalm 45, a psalm entitled *Song for a Royal Wedding*, speaks of the bride of the king "arrayed in Ophir's gold" (10). Finally, the streets of the heavenly Jerusalem are golden streets.