

THE STAINED GLASS WINDOWS OF ST. ANN'S PARISH

As you walk into St. Ann's from the main entrance and look up to your right, you will come upon our next grouping of saints to be examined.

SAINT ANTHONY

The life of Saint Anthony is known through the writings of Saint Athanasius, who appears with him in our windows. Anthony was born in Lower Egypt in 251 to wealthy landowner parents. When he was about 20, his parents died, and Anthony inherited their estate. While listening to the Gospel of Matthew, he was moved to follow the words of Christ: "If you wish to be perfect, go, sell what you have and give to {the} poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me." (Matthew 19:21) Anthony did just that, and began a life of asceticism and prayer. He lived with other aesthetes in his local area, eventually moving into a tomb for further isolation. Local villagers brought him food and sustenance, and Saint Athanasius tells of how Anthony was tempted, tormented and beaten by Satan. He held to his beliefs, and was eventually retrieved by the villagers who nursed him back to health. Upon his recovery, he resumed his isolated existence, moving into the desert. He took up residence in an abandoned Roman fort, and remained there for 20 years. He attracted followers, who set up huts surrounding the fort, and he would share, speaking through his walled enclosure, his visions and advice to them on living a spiritual life. When he finally left his seclusion, all were amazed to find that he was healthy, serene and enlightened. His name and devotion spread because of this. He organized his followers to work the land and pray, and occasionally ventured out of the area to preach against Arianism. He lived to the age of 105, and is considered the founder of Christian monasticism. Saint Anthony is seen in our window holding a hog. The origin of this depiction is somewhat hazy, but it is believed that Saint Anthony had a special ability to heal those with skin afflictions. A remedy for these conditions was to apply a paste made with pork fat.

SAINT CHRISTOPHER

Much of what is known about the life of Saint Christopher has been lost to history, and shaped by myth and local stories. He is believed to have been alive during the reign of Emperor Decius (249-251), and was originally a captured combatant of a tribe west of Egypt. He was supposedly named Reprobos, and was extremely large and fierce. He eventually was converted and was baptized, and sought to serve Christ, who he determined to be the most powerful master. He met a hermit who told him he could best serve his new Master by carrying people on his strong back over a particularly dangerous river crossing. He agreed to provide such a service, and did so. One day, a child came by and wanted to be carried across the river. As Reprobos proceeded, he noticed the child seemed to become increasingly heavy, until he was just able to reach the other side under the enormous weight. When he related this to his passenger, he was told that he had just carried Christ, who bears the weight of the sin of the world. The child then

vanished. Now called Christopher (Christ bearer), he was eventually martyred for his refusal to venerate the pagan gods. Although there is some confusion on his status among Catholics, Christopher is still a martyred Catholic saint. In 1969 the Church removed his name from the Roman Catholic calendar because it was determined that there was insufficient information upon which his name was initially introduced into the calendar's feast cycle. He is imaged in a lovely representation in our windows carrying the Christ Child through the river.

SAINT ATHANASIUS

Saint Athanasius is chronologically the first Doctor of the Church, and his life mirrors the controversies of the early Church. He was born in c.297 into an educated family, and was recognized as a youth as a potential leader of his Christian faith. The bishop of Alexandria, Alexander, was preparing for a meeting with his brother prelates at his home. While waiting for his guests to arrive, he stood by a window, watching a group of boys play on the seashore below his house. He soon observed they were imitating, in earnest, the ritual of Christian baptism. He called for the boys to come to his house, where he spoke with Athanasius, who had been baptizing his friends. The bishop arranged for these boys to have training for a clerical career. Athanasius eventually became secretary to Alexander. He became a noted defender and writer of the Faith, and also spent time with the solitaries of the Egyptian desert, including the previously mentioned Anthony. At that time, Arius, a priest in the Alexandrian Church, was vigorously arguing against the concepts of the divinity of Christ. This controversy caused great volatility in the Church, and threatened to create schism. Constantine, the Emperor, called a meeting of the bishops to decide the issue. This was the First Ecumenical Council at Nicaea. Athanasius was a strong presence, and helped to convince the gathering that Arius's teaching was heretical. This position was expanded at the second Ecumenical Council at Constantinople, which produced the Nicene Creed, which has become part of our Mass. Athanasius became bishop of Alexandria in 328, and spent his life defending the Faith, sometimes being exiled (as many as five times), because of his differences with the succession of emperors. His last years were spent in peace, and he continued to write, and earned the title "Father of Orthodoxy". He died in 373.

OTHER IMAGES

The upper aspect of each window holds the image of an angel, a Cherubim. The Cherubim have three pairs of wings, with the uppermost having eyes. Below the saints we continue with the Cycle of All Things called to Praise. Beneath Anthony, we see a snow covered house warmed by a fire (cold and heat), beneath Christopher, leaves covered with dew (dew and hoarfrost), and beneath Anastasias, a window covered with frost and ice (frost and cold).