

## Saints and Iconography - Elizabeth Black

Iconography: set of conventions: the grammar of art.

· **Sources:** Bible, Apocryphal NT, *Golden Legend*: 13<sup>th</sup> c. Jacob of Voragine.

**1. Narratives:** e.g. large stained glass panels (note hard to distinguish between nativity of BVM and John without context.)

\*Ascension: Notts alabaster and stained glass.

Solomon and 2 mothers with disputed baby. Solomon & Sheba.

\*Annunciation; Flight into Egypt—painting with men sending Herod's soldiers in wrong direction.

St John in oil tub, raising of Drusiana.

Bible tapestry.

**2. Symbols:** e.g. cherries in hand of Christ Child in Mabuse. Ermine=purity. Holy Spirit=dove with vapour trail. Apple with Christ=fall of man echo (in one limestone BVM He holds orb, in another apple). Toft dish ca. 1675, pelican with chicks; symbolic of Christ's sacrifice on cross—she pierces breast to feed own chicks. Ermine=purity (though Herod has it too...need for care!); Hare or rabbit=defenceless, so symbolic of men who put their trust in Jesus: e.g. in Baptist panel. Or merely entertaining? Hence its use in the Baptist window. (Signs and Symbols) Can also rep. lust/fecundity.

Scorpions: Israelis, and their zodiac sign.

**3. Attributes.** These commonly refer to aspects of the narrative of the saint in question, and help to identify them. E.g. St. Mary of Egypt (hair) (and potential for confusion with Mary Magdalene, tho' she normally has an ointment container); Clement with anchor & Vincent with millstone; Peter with keys, Paul with book, Jerome writing with lion; Catherine of Alexandria with wheel, Margaret of Antioch with dragon, Nicholas—various, David with harp. St John with censuring eagle. Cecilia and musical instruments. St Barbara's tower with 3 windows; Dorothy's basket of flowers. They refer to the mode of execution, or an aspect of the saint's story. e.g. St Lawrence on gridiron, Cunibertus with dove on his head or shoulder. 7<sup>th</sup> c. Bp. of Cologne. Dove settled on shoulder while celebrating Mass. An educator, prominent churchman.

There are also **common attributes**, shared by many: palm of martyrdom, crown of Virgin saints in heaven; Bishops with mitre and crozier. Haloes=sanctity.

**Literacy:** recognise when go to strange/own church. Tool of teaching.

**Donors:** significance of, and how to recognise. Rugby team.

**Route:** 1. start with Rodin's Eve

2. Then pictures: Bellini, pseudo-Botticelle, Mabuse; Memlings twice.

3. Small tapestries and dalmatic.

4. St Anne and Holy Family small glass panel (and possibly others: Mary & Martha; Mary Magdalene. St Clare with Abbess and pyx—defeated Saracens attacking Assisi)
  5. BVMs with Child—one with apple, the other orb.
  6. Trinity and Alabaster panels.
  7. Catherine of Alexandria statue
  8. Margaret of Antioch statue
  9. Retable with marriage of Joachim and Anna with Annunciation above.
  10. Large glass panels, starting with Mary of Egypt.
- ?add Sac of Abraham—small stained glass room

Annunciation

David & Abigail: embroidery. 1 Sam 25 1-35

Lamentation limewood,

French roundel ca 1260 St Vincent with millstone round neck.

Consider BVM's headdress, and changes thereof in Nativity tapestry. Sempervirgen?

Stephen and stones: identifying.

John the Baptist in large windows: basic narrative of life, enlivened by details (rabbit!)

Mary:

Visitation, Nativity, Magi, Presentation of Child in temple in small Dominican tapestry.

Mary and St John at foot of cross—Spanish carvings; small reverse tapestry in Gothic room: note also chalice to collect blood.

(Window of conversion of Jew by St Peter at her funeral: Jews try to prevent cortege from leaving city: hands stuck to bier, removed when St Peter converts them. NB **Removed.**)

Mary with Joachim and Anna: dalmatic; marriage of Joachim and Anna—retable, with Annunciation above S. Netherlands 1540. Pomegranates on dalmatic=

Mary with Anna and Child: German tradition: carving, stained glass window and tapestry.

**Holy Trinity:** English alabaster c. 1375-85. High quality carving, painted. Quite unusually, Holy Spirit is shown as napkin full of souls held by the Father. God the Father with Christ on cross between his knees; in his hands He holds a napkin with little people: cf. I Corinthians 3:16 'Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you? Cf. also I Cor. 3:9... 'ye are God's building.' cf. also Romans 8: 9-11 'but ye are not in

the flesh but in the spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his. And if Christ be in you, the body is dead because of sin, but the Spirit is Life because of Righteousness. But if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his spirit that dwelleth in you.'

Tapestry in Gothic room (reversed). Father holding Son, dove dives into halo. Angel carrying resurrection banner.

### **Saints:**

**Agnes:** on small German tapestry of saints with Anne. d. ca. 305. One of the most famous early Roman martyrs. Cult in E. and W. church. Fifth century acts say that she was a 13 yr old who consecrated her virginity to Christ. Killed by having her throat pierced. Two Roman churches claim to have her relics. Archaeologists suggest that they may well be of a young girl. Emblem a lamb, for obvious reasons. Also sometimes 2 doves.

**Anne:** with book, ca. 1500; German. Originally would have had BVM & Child. cf. also tapestry of Virgin Martyrs, and stained glass panel.

**Barbara:** tapestry and small glass panel: this shows her with tower behind, 3 small windows on upper level. Glass panel shows her holding palm of martyrdom. Holds book. In tapestry Barbara holds tower with the three windows. Her father imprisoned her in a tower, and she installed the windows a/c the Trinity. After she was executed by her father (on orders) he was killed by lightning. Legend is found only from 7<sup>th</sup> c. and probably intended as pious fiction. She was originally imprisoned to protect her from suitors, but things turned nasty when her father discovered she had become a Christian, and handed her over to the authorities. While her father was away she decided to become a hermit, retreated to a bathhouse and added a third window....she is patron of those likely to suffer sudden death: miners and gunners. Also small sculpture: with tower, book and rosary.

**Catherine of Alexandria:** glass roundel, 16<sup>th</sup> c. Netherlands. yellow/white. Also on small tapestry: no early evidence of cult. Presumably 4<sup>th</sup> c. legend says she was a noble girl who refused to marry emperor: disputed with 50 philosophers, summoned to show her error of her ways. She converted them; tortured on wheel, which broke down, so she was beheaded. Legend that pieces of the wheel killed bystanders; milk not blood flowed from her neck when she died. Patron of students, nurses, philosophers, and craftsmen whose work involved a wheel. She was supposedly carried by angels to Mt Sinai, where her tomb is shown. The philosophers were also executed, as were 200 soldiers who were converted by her constancy. Oak statue, N German; carries book; Maxentius has sword on his head.

**Catherine of Siena:** with book. Polychrome wood.

**Cecilia:** window with angels with brightly coloured wings. Patron of musicians from 16<sup>th</sup> c. No reason to think she existed, though martyrs associated with her did: Valerian, her husband, a pagan whom she converted, his brother Tiburtius, and a man called Maximus. A matron named Cecilia built a church in Trastevere in Rome, which may have given rise to the legend. Story that she was sentenced to be asphyxiated in her bathroom: after three days of heat and steam she was still alive, so a soldier was sent, who failed to kill her, she lived 3 days before dying. Wonderful chapel to her in Bologna.

**Clare:** small window. Carrying pyx. Legend that it defeated the Saracens when they were part of Emperor Frederick II's army when he was besieging Assisi. Though ill, she was carried to the walls and showed it to them. Kneeling Abbess behind. Both carry Episcopal staves. She was impressed by Francis' preaching, and, after training as a nun, he gave her a church he had restored, and she started an order based on Franciscan ideals. Poor Clares still survive, dedicated to poverty and contemplation.

**Clement:** fourth Pope, legend that he died in Dalmatia, being thrown into sea with an anchor round his neck Was one of the first to assert rule over other churches: admonition to Corinth for misbehaviour. d. ca. 100. Tiara on head. Roundel shows him on papal throne with papal crown—name on halo.

**Cunibert and Bishop St.** from Boppard am Rhein. St Cunibert has Episcopal staff, book, mitre with dove perched on it and a halo. c. 595-663. Son of wealthy family in Mosel valley. Educated at court of Clothair II at Metz; became archdeacon of Trier and director of school. 623: Bp of Cologne. Remembered as an influential Frankish bishop who worked closely with emperors and other bishops; a good administrator. Notable founder of churches and a monastery. Shrine records cures of toothache and fevers. Dove settled on his shoulder when he was saying mass in St Ursula's church.

**Dorothy:** d. ca. 304. Cappadocia: Caesarea. Refused to marry or worship idols. Passing lawyer (some say soldier) jeered—as she was topped, a child approached him with a basket of flowers/fruit from paradise. Instant conversion: so he was martyred too. Sometimes child has 3 roses and 3 apples

**Francis:** small glass panel: angel carrying baby with halo; rich house. *Scottish Arts Review* vol xvi no. 1 'The Burrell Collection' special issue says this panel is Swiss, attributed to Michael Müller IV, one of family of glass painters from Swiss town of Zug. Prolific output. In his order book is found the verse on which the panel is based; also his initials discovered during conservation. The panel depicts an angel dressed as a pilgrim, holding the child in his arms, while maid and mother look on. Angel predicts that devil will tempt child with all his might. Subsidiary scenes on left: active view of hell, with frisky devils, while behind Francis is incarcerated in a tower: a friend or guard sits outside. This probably refers to the year he spent in a dungeon in Perugia as a POW. The legend about his birth comes from Pisanus, who says the day Francis was born an angel came to the house to warn that special care was needed as the devils were out to get him. The Golden Legend says that he was born in a stable. The roundel is now understood to be part of a cycle depicting the life of St Francis. Original location is unknown; some were sold in Bossard auction catalogue, but not known where others went. Some to Wm Randolph Hearst, but disposal not recorded. Original location of cycle unknown.

**George:** small glass panel with dragon. Also Notts alabaster.

**Joachim and Anna:** cult of Joachim developed slowly; Anna more prominent, esp. in the East. Meeting at Golden Gate, as in Giotto's Arena Chapel, suggests Immaculate Conception: which was attacked by Bernard, Aquinas and the Dominicans. Story of the aged couple having a child is based on Samuel. Apocryphal gospel of James is the source, picked up by others. s. Marco in Venice has a pillar dedicated to Joachim: one of the earliest in the West (6<sup>th</sup> c.). Cult of Joachim from 15<sup>th</sup> c. only in the West: not much encouraged by Church. Cult of Anna is older. Iconography of St Anne teaching BVM to read is possibly English, 13<sup>th</sup> c. Luther particularly opposed St Anne and the cult. See Dalmatic: Presentation of BVM in Temple; baby walker, Nativity of BVM at bottom. Joachim and Anna at Golden Gate; angel with Joachim, Joachim being refused to make an offering in the Temple because he had no children and so could not be righteous. He then goes into desert, returns at angel prompt, meets Anna similarly prompted. Read from bottom to top, saints' side first. (Source: *Protoevangelium*). Pomegranates on dalmatic: refer to unity of church: many seeds contained in one fruit. Also, on account of Persephone, hope of resurrection and immortality.

**Jesus:** small Swiss tapestry of Last Supper in Bridgwater room.

**Lamentation:** German; St John and Mary, Mary Magdalen with ointment.

**St John the Evangelist:** Miracle Window: left light: in cauldron of oil; centre: on Patmos with eagle; on right: raising of Drusiana—an apocryphal miracle. Family of donors at base (Bigars de la Londe). From a church in Rouen: note eagle with censer in beak, and book at top, apparently descending from heaven on a shaft of light: Apocalypse.

**John the Baptist** window: also Rouen. In scene where leaves home, rabbit at bottom: defenceless, taken as symbol of people who put their hope of salvation in Christ and Passion. Note shoes in baptism scene; Salome

dancing in centre. On right head on platter, dogs at feast, also a cat, washing itself: symbol of laziness and lust. NB if this were Islamic iconography, cat would be good because one saved the Prophet from a snake. Note use of floor to create perspective.

John the Baptist: Vision of Zaccharias, Visitation, birth and the naming of John. St John leaving home. Agnus is his emblem: cf John 1:29

**Joseph:** in nativity scenes: small tapestry; German limewood carving.

**Lawrence:** window: mid 3<sup>rd</sup> c. deacon in Rome, did almsgiving for Pope Sixtus II, executed in Valerian persecution. Bellows note. In fact, sword was method of execution.

**Margaret of Antioch:** with devil as dragon, statue

**Mary:** glass panel of 9<sup>th</sup> commandment: with Child, and slanderers at bottom of panel. (NB Boppard is Carmelite, and strongly supported Marian devotion).

Birth of Mary; bottom centre Annunciation, above with dove and trail from God's mouth.

Glass panel showing Assumption of Mary from Hampton Court. ca. 1400. Surrounded by angels playing instruments.

Note also **Holy Family** depictions with Anne with young child as Mary, Jesus an infant on her arms—several in Copenhagen, no doubt imports from Germany. Otherwise a rare way of showing relationships.

**Mary Magdalen:** window showing anointing of Christ's feet. Small stained glass panel: with ointment jar. German. Sometimes shown with long hair, so can be confused with Mary of Egypt. Limewood late 15<sup>th</sup> c with ointment;

**Mary of Egypt:** glass window. ?5<sup>th</sup> c. An Egyptian who left home at age of 12 and went to live in Alexandria, as a prostitute for 17 years; at age 29 she joined pilgrims to Jerusalem, paying her fare by prostituting self to sailors. Out of curiosity she went with them to a church, which she was prevented from entering. Looking up at an icon of Mary, she was told to go over the Jordan, where she would find rest; she bought 3 loaves. She lived there for many years on dates and berries. Her clothes wore out, but her long hair covered her. She was divinely instructed in Christian faith; a monk called Zosimus met her, she asked for his cloak, and told her story. He returned on Maundy Thursday to bring her the sacrament, and promised to return for further meetings. When he did, he found her dead. He and a helpful lion buried her. Ælfric tells her story.

**Martin:** and coat, in drawing for glass panel.

**Mary and Martha with Jesus:** small glass panel.

**Nicholas:** small panel depicting him preventing execution of 3 men. 4<sup>th</sup> c. Bishop of Myra (SW Turkey). Ancient cult—from 6<sup>th</sup> c. in East; fictitious biography. Remains translated to Bari when Myra was taken by Muslims. Legend full of triplets—as here, also 3 girls who received dowries to prevent them from becoming prostitutes; 3 boys rescued after murdered in brine-tub by a butcher; 3 sailors near Turkish coast. From his tomb in Bari came 'manna' or 'myrrh': so he is patron of perfumiers, pawnbrokers, children, sailors, unmarried girls, merchants, apothecaries. Origin of Santa Claus. Ca. 400 dedications to him in England. The window (from Scottish Art Review) is S Netherlands (mod Belgium) much glass destroyed by wars. Much that survives cannot have original locations identified, but this comes from part of St Nicholas cycle (2 other scenes in Met., and one in V&A; one in Toronto). The last panel in series has monograph NR, Nicholas Ruterius, Bp. of Arras, d. 1509. Eminent diplomat who served Charles the Bold, Mary of Burgundy and Philip the Fair. Patron who founded College of Arras at Louvain, and made gifts to Charterhouse in city, amongst these the glass panels of St Nicholas. The glazing was probably carried out by Hendrick von Diependale and son Jan (latter active 1509-1535).

**Nicaise:** ?=Nicasius 5<sup>th</sup> c. Bp of Reims and Martyr. 10<sup>th</sup> Bp of Reims. Victorious barbarians at gates of city and even in streets. Tried to save lives of people, stood at door of cathedral, where he was martyred with a deacon, lector, and sister Eutropia. Probably Huns (451).

**Notker Balbulus: Swiss.** (840-912) Monk of St Gallen tempted by devil in form of a dog.

**Paul** with sword: method of execution as he was a Roman citizen.

**Quirinus:** stall end. German, late 15<sup>th</sup>/16<sup>th</sup> c. staff and shield at feet; wearing armour.

**Roche:** St Rollocks—just N of cathedral, beyond . boundary of city in Middle Ages; chapel for plague victims, until 17<sup>th</sup> c. buried in graveyard there.

**Servatius:** small glass panel. With crook and key.

**Stephen:** usual attributes a palm of martyrdom and a stone. Small glass window.

**Ursula** ? 4<sup>th</sup> c. Legend that she sailed to Cologne with a variable number of Virgins: 11.000 is the final count. Possibly she was British. She was a Christian, betrothed to a pagan prince, so she won a 3 year reprieve, spent sailing. Ten companions each with own ship, and 1000 maidens on board. Wind drove them to the mouth of the Rhine; they visited Basel, made a pilgrimage to Rome, returned to Cologne. Martyred by the Huns. Citizens buried them, and erected a church in their honour. There are variants to the legend. When in 1150 a bundle of bones were found, they were taken to be confirmation of the story—despite the fact that some were of children and others of men. Cult centres on Rhineland and Low Countries. Carpaccio has cycle of life in Venice, and Memling in Bruges. She is now allowed only local cult. Glass panel shows her embarkation with Prince Etherius.

**St Protasius:** Gervase and Protase. French window. Late 14<sup>th</sup> c. holds sword and book.

Protomartyrs of Milan. Some think they are Castor and Pollux. Remains found on eve of consecration of S. Ambroggio, miracles at time: restoration of sight to blind butcher, accompanied transfer of headless corpses of 2 tall men to S. Ambroggio. Augustine and Paulinus witnessed miracle. They are buried next to S. Ambrose. Most think they are genuine 2<sup>nd</sup> c. martyrs.

**Simon:** with saw—he was sawn in half.

**Hagar and Ishmael** small panel

**St Sebastian** alms dish in Bridgwater room, German ca. 1500, also spies returning with grapes

**St Vincent:** 4<sup>th</sup> c. Deacon in Saragossa. During Diocletian persecutions he suffered—tortures combined with kindness—he was placed on a bed of down and rose petals; he commended his soul to God and died. Ordered that his body be thrown to wild beasts: protected by a raven. Body taken out to sea and thrown overboard with millstone round neck. Miraculously washed ashore, waves hollowed a tomb for him in the sand. Years later found, and buried in Valencia. Usu. rep. dressed as deacon, palm of martyrdom, special attribute 2 crows that accompanied vessel that took his relics to Lisbon. Attributes include whip, chain, grill with iron hooks and millstone.

Tapestry with 4 Apostles: Simon Zelotes with saw, Matthias with axe, Thomas with set-square ?plane, Bartholomew with knife and crown (flaying): mid 16<sup>th</sup> c German. (Explanations from *Church Explorer's Guide* p. 141)

**Alabasters:** (left to right)

**St Sitha:** with rosary, orb, and book. Keys hang from waist, with bag. (=Zita). From Lucca, she was a servant, and annoyed the family by her almsgiving. 1218-72. angels said to have baked her bread while she was in ecstasy. Popular cult grew up around her tomb, which was eventually recognised. Popular with maidservants and housewives: she could find keys, and protect when crossing bridges.

**George:** on horseback. d. ca. 303. Martyr (Lydda) in Palestine. Cult ancient and widespread. d. in Diocletian and Maximian's persecutions—prob. only historical element of narrative. Dragon was devastating neighbourhood, appeased by 2 sheep a day. When they ran out, a person was chosen by lot. King's daughter last victim: George pierced dragon, led it captive with princess's girdle; told people not to fear. If they would believe in Christ and be baptised he would kill the dragon. 15000 men were baptised, dragon despatched. New dimension in Crusades: a vision of St George and Demetrius at siege of Antioch preceded defeat of Saracens. Richard I placed himself under St. G's protection; he is now patron of soldiers. Invoked against plague, leprosy and syphilis. Patron of soldiers, knights, armourers, and husbandmen (a/c pun on Gk form of name).

**St Roche:** with cloak pulled up; pilgrim hat, and dog. c. 1350-80. b. Montpellier of rich merchant family. Became a hermit, and spent much time on pilgrimages. While in Piacenza he caught plague, was fed by dog in forest. Said that he miraculously cured plague sufferers. Miracles at his supposed tomb in Angleria (Lombardy) where he was imprisoned as a suspected spy. Angel on his left—slightly damaged.

**Servatius:** early 14<sup>th</sup> c. glass panel. Black/gold/white. Holds staff/crook and large key.

**Esther and Ahasuerus:** in Tudor room.

**Hagar and Ishmael:** in Tudor room. Amsterdam, early 17<sup>th</sup> c.

**Judith and Holofernes:** Cranach Sampler;

**Medieval sculptures.** EB

Virgin and Child: Île de France. Mid 14<sup>th</sup> century. Limestone. On left a couple of roundels in blue/gold—presumably enamel. There are slots for others around her dress, which have been lost. Child holding an apple—contrast 15<sup>th</sup> C. Netherlandish bust of V and C where He holds an orb.

**St Margaret (of Antioch).** A non-existent saint. Life has many parallels with Catherine of Alexandria. She was martyred under Diocletian for refusing to marry the man her father had chosen for her—fiancé shopped her as a Christian. She was swallowed by Satan in the form of a dragon—eye witness report. She was eventually executed. Her feast day is 20 July. She is very popular in the Eastern Church, where she is also called Marina. Statue is Fr. Ca. 1500. Chained fig of devil under her feet, he grabbing at handbag like object she is holding=aspergillum—note the sprinkler in other hand. Limestone. Fine carving on dress and headdress. Traces of paint on drapery at sides.

? cf. Cheetham alabaster book, where she is depicted with a spear to kill devil in form of dragon. In her other hand she holds a book.

**St Anne with sm. Virgin and Infant.** Wood carving ca. 1500 oak, S. Netherlands/N.

Germany.