

“The First and The Last Adam”

The work of stained glass located above the choir was designed as a composition that reminds us of the spiritual freedom Christ has won for us as the “first and the last Adam,” as St. Paul puts it.

The dominant figure of the work is Christ resurrected, in the process of ascending into Heaven, and yet with arms outstretched reminding us of his crucifixion. The gold and black colors symbolize his majesty and kingship as Lord of the Universe, while the elements of golden-red reminds us of the stigmatic wounds he continues to bear in his body. Embedded in this image of Christ is Adam with his arms pointing downwards away from Heaven, a sign of disobedience, and hunched over under the burden of his sin and that of all creation. And yet, Christ who chooses to share in our humanity allows this first Adam to participate in the salvation he makes available to all.

In the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, St. Peter Chrysologus beautifully states this profound relationship between Adam and Christ:

St. Paul tells us that the human race takes its origin from two men: Adam and Christ.... The first man, Adam, he says, became a living soul, the last Adam a life-giving spirit. The first Adam was made by the last Adam, from whom he also received his soul, to give him life.... The second Adam stamped his image on the first Adam when he created him. That is why he took on himself the role and the name of the first Adam, in order that he might not lose what he had made in his own image. The first Adam, the last Adam: the first had a beginning, the last knows no end. The last Adam is indeed the first; as he himself says: ‘I am the first and the last.’¹

Design by Anthony Chiarella
Stained-glass by Jean Louis McDougall
2003

(This work was commissioned by parishioners Tom Strike and Tanya Benoit in honour of their parents Charles and Mollie Strike, and Edward (Ted) and Genevieve Benoit.)

¹ Paragraph 359. For reference to St. Paul’s writings, see I Corinthians 15:20-26,45-49 and Romans 5:12-19.