

Visio Divina: Prayer & the Art of the Cathedral

Led by Brynna Carpenter-Nardone
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CATHEDRAL ARTS

THE CATHEDRAL
OF ALL SAINTS †

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Introduction to the art of The Cathedral of All Saints

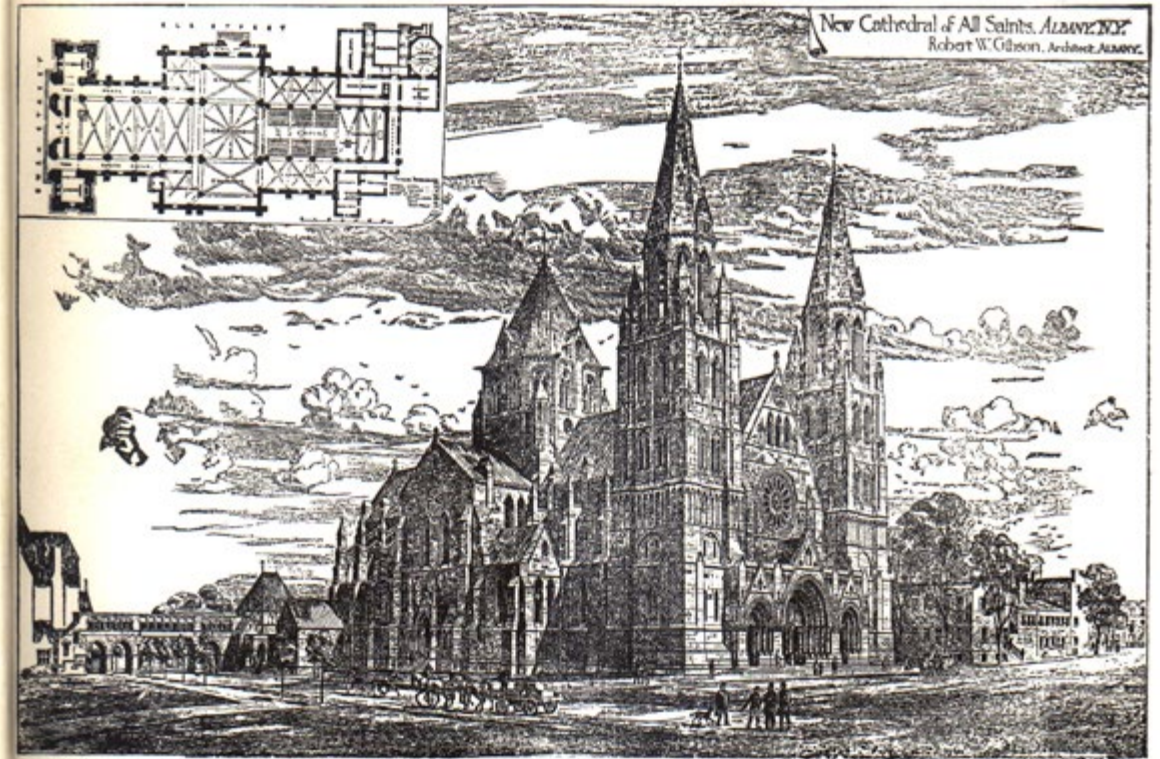
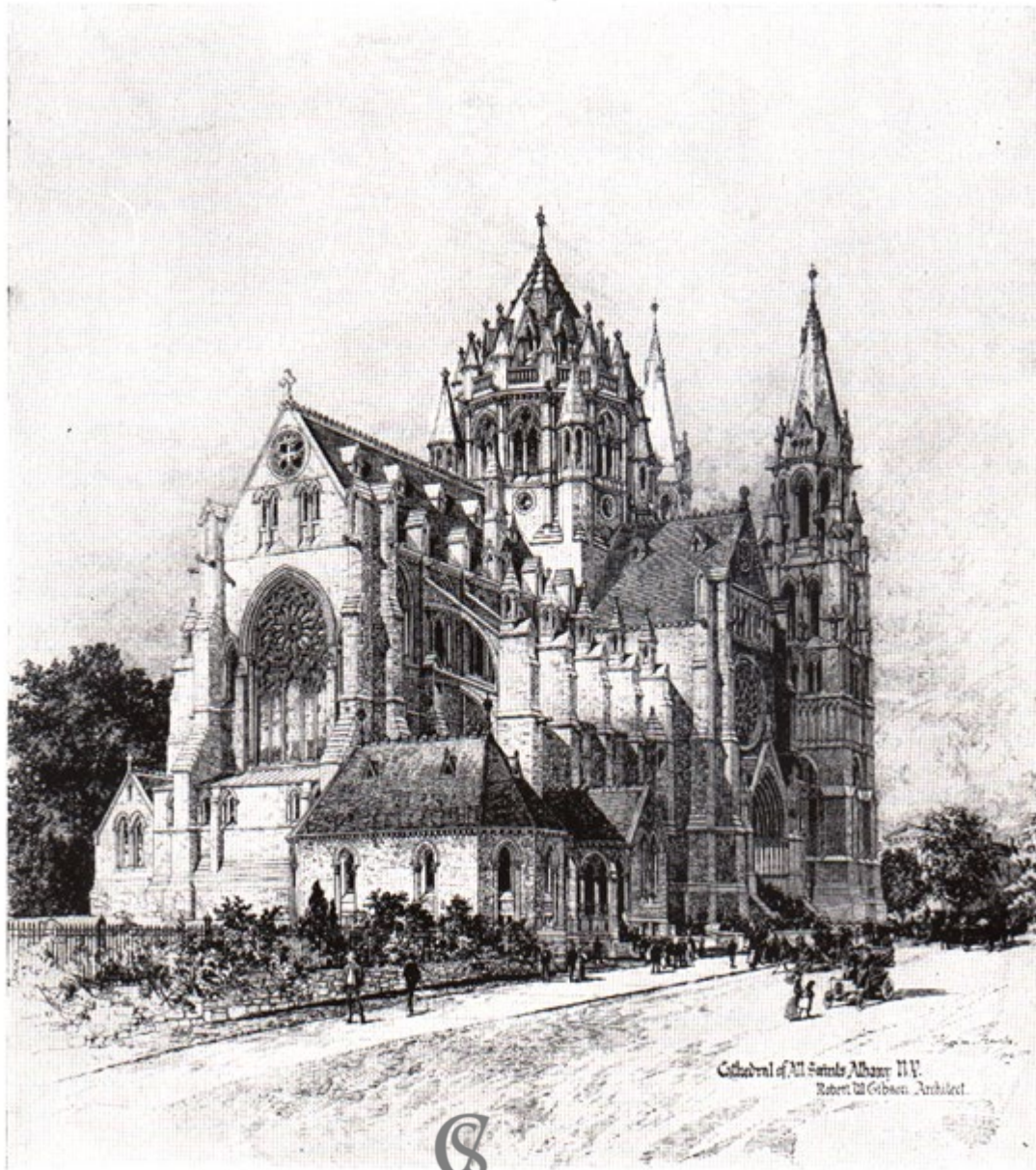
Right: William Crosswell Doane, First Bishop of Albany, and his St. Bernard, “Clooney.”

Bishop Doane was founder of the Cathedral of All Saints, called the “Pioneer Cathedral,” because it was the first Episcopal cathedral intentionally built to be a cathedral church with a hospital and school in the manner of a medieval English cathedral. It was incorporated on March 27, 1873, and met for years in a foundry while funds were raised.

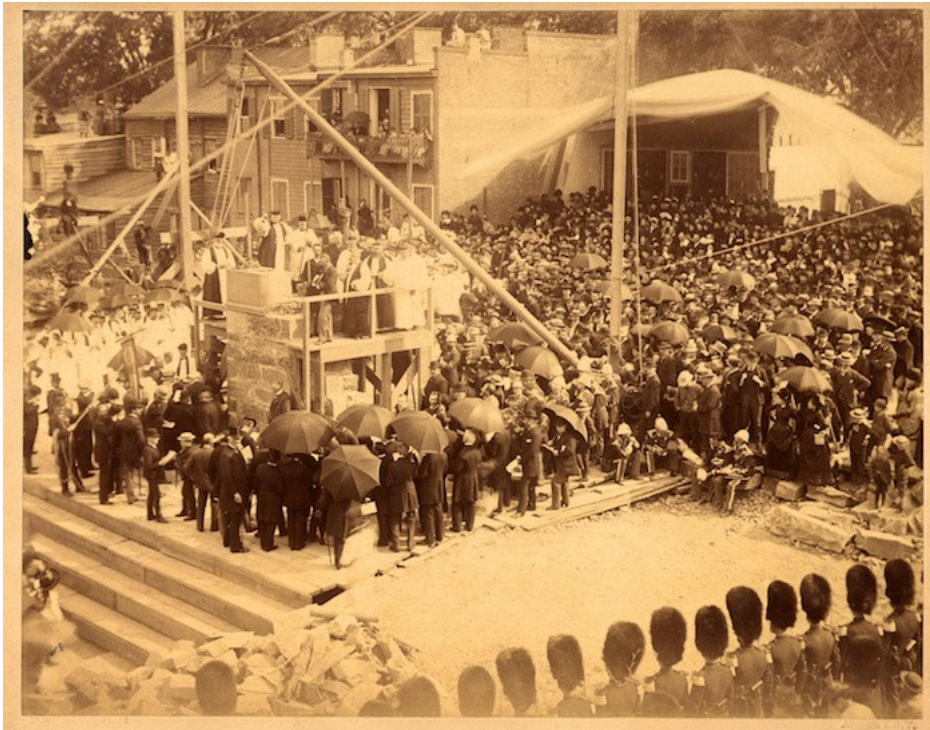
Doane’s vision was influenced by The Oxford Movement (Tractarianism, and the Anglo-Catholic Movement) which began in 1833 with The Rev. John Keble’s sermon “National Apostasy” preached at St. Mary’s, Oxford.

Members of the Oxford Movement sought to reconnect what they saw as a Church identified with the government to the universal church’s foundation in Christ through reintroducing weekly Mass, sung prayer and art; by studying the Church Fathers and by writing theological poetry and hymns. They sought to re-educate the English Church about its pre-Reformation roots, and thereby deepen its spirituality.





William Crosswell Doane studied English cathedrals, which at their best preserved and expressed their layers of history and art as they were built over time. 1/3 of English churches in use today were built in the Victorian era when Neo-Gothic design predominated. But our Cathedral was built not merely in popular style, but as a medieval church of stone supported by flying buttresses which would receive its completion and art through time, as if both ancient and contemporary by design.



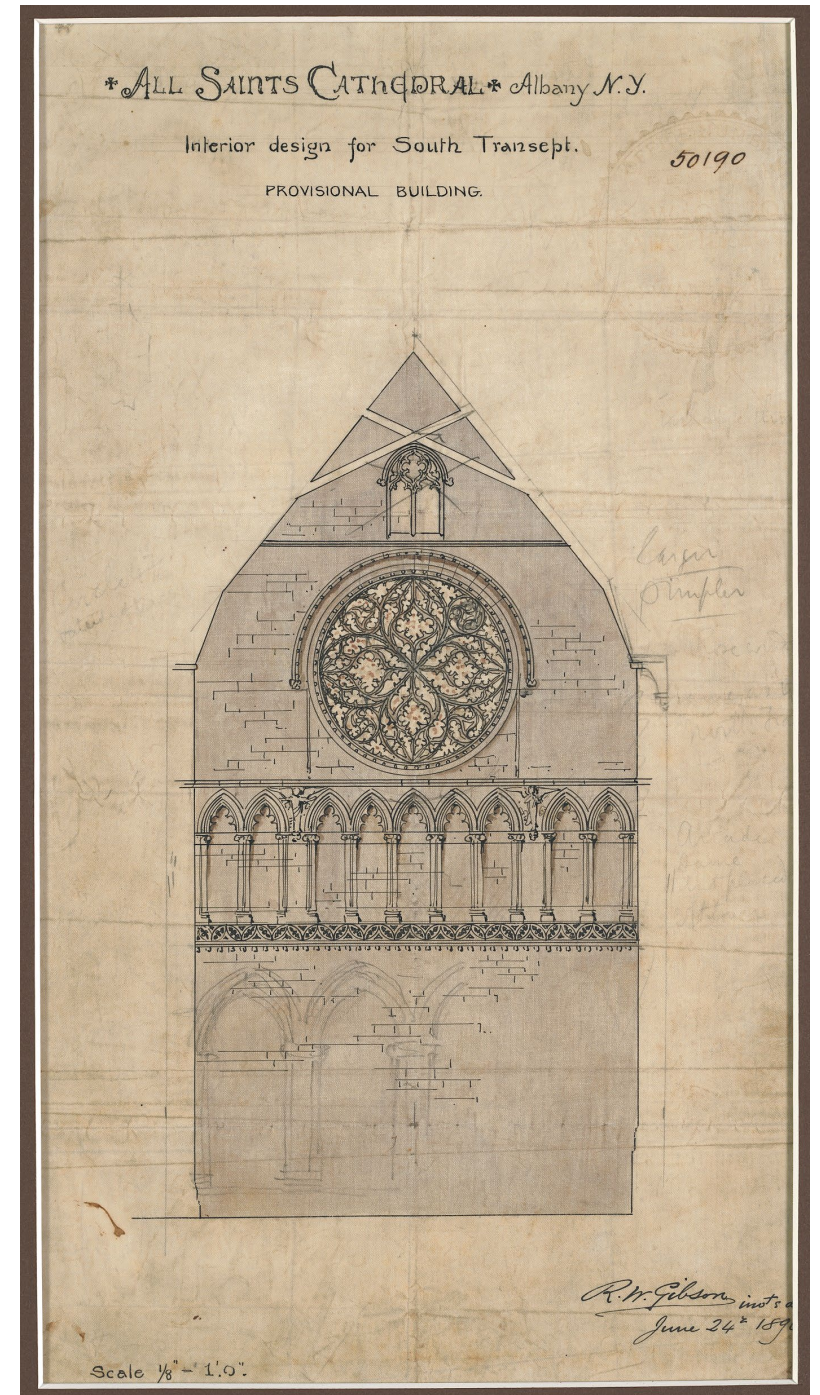
Erastus Corning, Sr. donated the land on which the Cathedral was built.

Left: Bishop Doane setting the cornerstone of The Cathedral of All Saints, June 3, 1884. President Grover Cleveland, then Governor of New York state, stands at the rear of the platform near the umbrella.

Right: the architect's drawing for the South transept.

“It is undeniable that the most beautiful and poetical of the ancient cathedrals and churches are those in which successive ages have contributed, group by group, each its own examples of its best work; and that some of the most perfect specimens entirely of one period suffer by it in a coldness and monotony.”

- from architect Robert Wilson Gibson's 1905 guidebook as excerpted in the "Pioneer Cathedral" by Canon George DeMille, 1967.





A photo from 1878 of St. Agnes School for girls, now the location of the Elk and Swan St. parking lot. The school moved and merged with a Catholic school in 1975 and became Doane Stuart School, now an interfaith school in Rensselaer, NY. While Bishop Doane did not believe in women's right to vote, a former student, Alice Morgan Wright (friend of Eleanor Roosevelt who also attended the Cathedral), helped form the American League of Women Voters.

Cathedral facts, some from "Pioneer Cathedral." written by canon theologian George DeMille.....

As if an ancient Benedictine cathedral community, in its first years our cathedral supported a hospital, school, and convent.

Pew rent was how Episcopal churches supported themselves, unlike their English counterparts which still receive government funding today. But pews were never a part of the Cathedral. Bishop Doane would not allow them because their rent excluded poorer people.

From its beginning, the Cathedral congregation had Black and White people worshipping together. Once, when a murmur arose, Bishop Doane announced there would be no racial divide at his cathedral.

The Cathedral congregation has historically been diverse and including those who value beauty, art and education in worship, and mostly middle and working-class people. It has always struggled to maintain its building and offerings not only for the diocese, but also for the city of Albany and visitors. It has never had a large endowment.

Some of the more "high church" aspects of our Cathedral worship, such as elaborate vestments and weekly incense, were introduced after Bishop Doane. In his time, even having candles on the altar was felt by many Episcopalians to be an intrusion of Catholic ceremony.

The Choir of Men and Boys was a first priority for worshipping the Lord in the beauty of holiness, and for Christian education through song at the Cathedral since its founding. The Choir began singing before the Cathedral was built, while the congregation still worshipped in the foundry.



As it stands, our Cathedral is forty-percent finished according to the plans of its architect. (Elk St. view)

“The building as it now stands has a total length of about 320 feet, which is noble in comparison with the 90 feet or 100 feet which limits most parish churches. The width is about 130 feet across the transepts and about 95 feet across the Choir and aisles, and about 75 feet across the nave and aisles. The height of the walls of the clerestory is about 80 feet from the street, and the cresting of the roofs is about 120 feet.” - from architect R.W. Gibson’s 1905 guidebook

Rather than building the finished choir first and the nave years later, as did many cathedrals, the nave was built relatively inexpensively in the beginning - to hold 2,500 people. Brick, to be covered later in stone, is still bare in some places.

This photo was taken from the loft by the antiphonal organ at the west end of the nave, at the opening of Cathedral in Bloom, 2022.



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The piety and philanthropy of prominent figures of the Gilded Age funded expensive projects in the interior of our Cathedral. It is believed that J.P. Morgan gave the money to finish the choir, high altar and Lady Chapel (left) areas, which involved raising the temporary ceiling and adding windows and mosaics.

Over time art increased in the form of carved memorials and memorial windows. Several New York governors are memorialized. The Roosevelts worshipped at the Cathedral while FDR was governor of New York.

The Cathedral of All Saints contains five side chapels: the State Chapel, the St. Michael Chapel, the St. John Chapel, the Pilgrim Chapel, and the St. Alban Chapel off of Elk St. (right).





The Clarkson family donated the exterior stone and western LaFarge window seen here, and the Stanford family donated the baptistery windows, recalling their philanthropy along with the universities that bear their names, as well as their loved ones.

Our Cathedral contains many memorials to children. The Trask family donated these Belgian choir stalls in memory of one of their children. They left their Saratoga Springs home, Yaddo, to become an artists' colony, having been predeceased by all four of their children.



The remains of over 200 people are immured in our Cathedral, most in the St. John Chapel. Our Cathedral reminds us that we pray with the communion of saints as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are in communion with each other and also One.

The Carver of the Cathedral.....

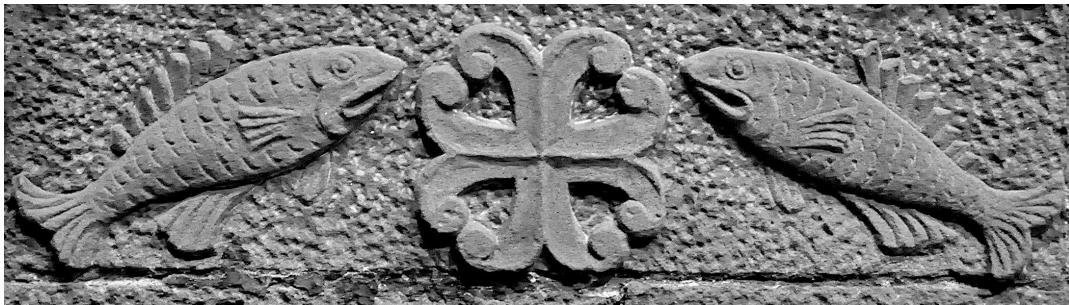
Louis J. Hinton (1845-1931), was the master stone-carver of the Cathedral, and head carver of the team that carved the Great Western Staircase of the NY State Capitol Building. All of the stone carving in the Cathedral is the work of Louis and his son, the sculptor Charles Hinton, and was executed over a period of forty years. What thoughts, meditations, and prayers were made over these forty years of making the Cathedral?

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Louis Hinton carved a memorial on the north wall of the baptistery, seemingly at the request of Bishop Doane, which commemorates his work and partnership in building our Cathedral. Two fish face a cross with a line from Psalm 145 below:

“One generation shall praise thy works to another”



Baptismal font with floral art from Cathedral in Bloom, 2022, designed by the Floral Garden of Delmar, NY



Art and Prayer at the Cathedral.....

Here we see a visitor praying surrounded by the Cathedral's art and life through time.....

A modern, semi-abstract sculpture of Mother and Child is to the visitors' left. A floral arrangement from Cathedral in Bloom stands across from it, obscuring a memorial carved into the stone wall which shows the signs of efflorescence from water infiltration. An icon of Mother and Child hangs on the wall behind the candles.

What in this scene would lead you to pray, and what would you say?

When we think of visio divina, “divine seeing,” or visual prayer, we often think of “icons.”

ICON is translated as “IMAGE”

“He [Jesus] is the *icon* of the invisible God” (Colossians 1:15)

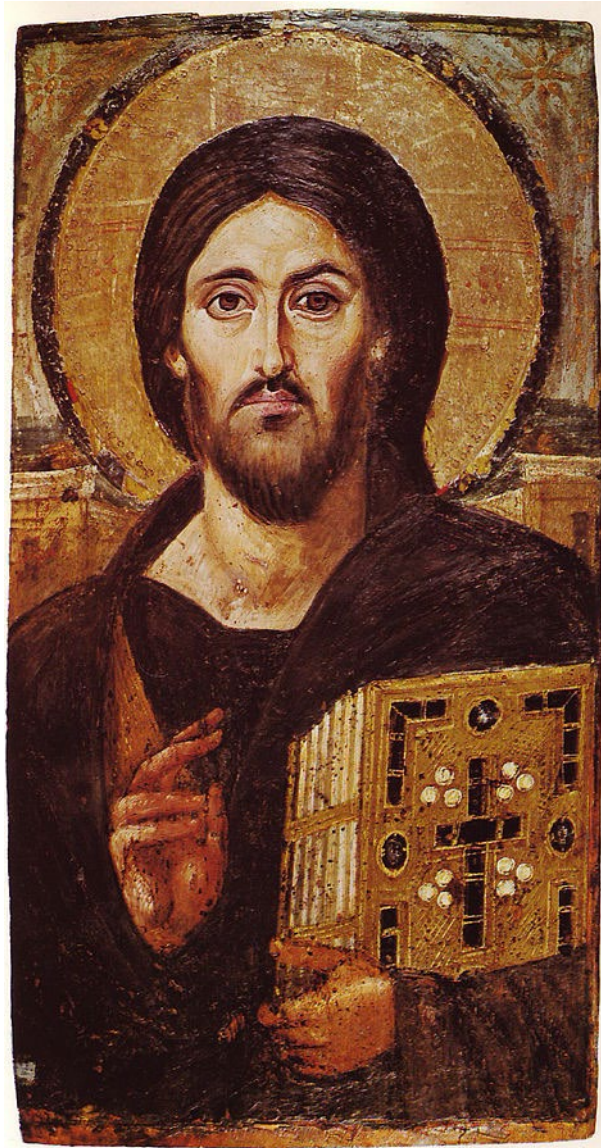
“In their case, the god of this world has blinded the minds of unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the Gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the *icon* of God” (2 Cor 4:4).

“Do not lie to one another, seeing that you have put off the old nature with its practices and have put on the new nature, which is being renewed in knowledge after the *icon* of its Creator” (Colossians 3:10)

“And we all, with unveiled face, reflecting the glory of the Lord, are being changed into His *icon* from one degree of glory to another; for this comes from the Lord who is Spirit” (2 Cor 3:18).



Earliest bearded Jesus, from early 4th century catacombs



icon (from [Ancient Greek εἰκών](#) (*eikōn*) 'image, resemblance')

If an icon is to do its job, it must have throughput in two directions. As we move toward an icon, it moves toward us with a warm and precise Christian content if we understand the language that it speaks. The primary purpose of an icon is to enable a face-to-face encounter with a holy person or make present a sacred event. Icons are also “theology in color.”

~ Linette Martin, Iconographer

Somewhat anachronistically, some have observed that icons contain “reverse perspective.” When one gazes at an icon of the Eastern Church one feels the vanishing point is behind one rather directly in front, and a sense of being drawn into a spiritual space where the figures, and God, study the viewer.

Christ Pantokrator
6th century St. Catharine Monastery
Mt. Sinai

Right: An image from the Cathedral's baptistery of Jesus' baptism in the Gospel of John, and from Hinton's study of the natural world. In the Eastern Church icons are consciously "written" to reflect the uncreated light that has come into the world through Jesus Christ, as it appears in John 1. Here is a unique expression of the Cathedral's Anglican values of scripture, tradition, and reason expressed through beauty and art.

ICONS help us pray through our visual sense toward spiritual wholeness and unity with God.....

"We do not have to be passive victims of a world that wants to entertain and distract us. We can make decisions and choices. A spiritual life in the midst of our energy-draining society requires us to take conscious steps to safeguard that inner space where we can keep our eyes fixed on the beauty of the Lord."

– Henri Nouwen, *Behold the Beauty of the Lord*

"It is the task of the iconographer to open our eyes to the actual presence of the Kingdom of God in this world."

– Thomas Merton





Getting Started- Praying with Images

- Select an image or icon. Frequently an image will almost select you.
- Sit or stand before the visual image, allowing it to point you in the direction of the presence of God.
- If your image portrays a saint, invite that saint to be a companion and guide.

Pray a closing prayer that rises from your heart, or pray the Jesus prayer or the Lord's Prayer.

<https://www.bc.edu/bc-web/centers/church21/sites/c21-engage/articles/Praying-with-Images-On-What-Meets-the-Eye.html>

By Colleen M. Griffith



The art of the Cathedral was made as a visual meditation on scripture leading to a creative response, as in Lectio Divina prayer.

It is He who, coming after me, is preferred before me, whose sandal strap I am not worthy to loose.” John 1:27

Step One: Read the passage, encouraging everyone to listen with the “ear of their heart.” What phrase, sentence or even one word stands out to you?

Step Two: Read the passage again and Reflect on the word of God. Encourage everyone to be aware of what touches them, a thought or reflection that is meaningful. Allow a minute or two of silence.

Step Three: Read the passage again and respond spontaneously to the word of God. Be aware of any prayer that rises up within that expresses the experience. Allow a minute or two of silence.

Step Four: Read the passage a final time and Rest in the word, reflect or pray and allow God to speak in the silence. Allow three or four minutes of silence.



Painting in the Lady Chapel
signed "Herrick" from the
1930's



What kinds of images lend themselves
to contemplation through Visio
Divina?

Do you think art in our age must be
representational or religious to lead us
to awe before God?

Art as a form of imaginative prayer.....

Praying with the five senses, from the *Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius of Loyola*, trans. By David Fleming

....The first Point is to see the persons with the sight of the imagination, meditating and contemplating in particular the details about them and drawing some profit from the sight.

....The second, to hear with the hearing what they are, or might be, talking about and, reflecting on oneself, to draw some profit from it.

....The third, to smell and to taste with the smell and the taste the infinite fragrance and sweetness of the Divinity, of the soul, and of its virtues, and of all, according to the person who is being contemplated; reflecting on oneself and drawing profit from it.

....The fourth, to touch with the touch, as for instance, to embrace and kiss the places where such persons put their feet and sit, always seeing to my drawing profit from it.



One of the Cathedral's Stations of the Cross, painted and given as a gift in celebration of the ministry of Bishop David S. Ball



Some questions about
Visio Divina.....



What can you use?

Can drawing and painting, sculpting or
decorating be a Visio Divina practice?

How is Visio Divina and art appreciation
the same or different?

What are you perceiving when you feel joy
or awe? What makes you want to give glory
to God for its presence?



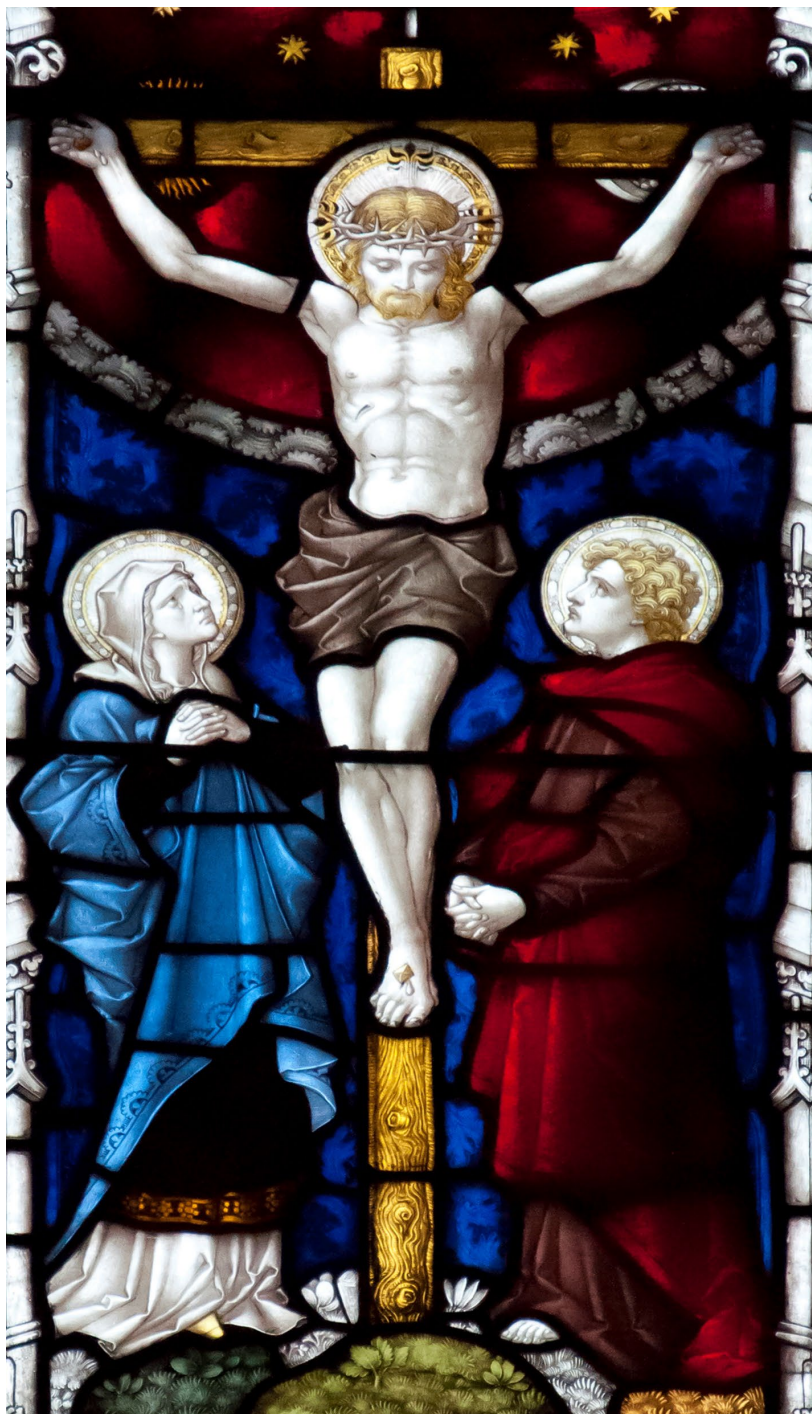
*Left: copy of the medallion
in the baptistery of
The Cathedral of All Saints,
Brynna Carpenter-Nardone
charcoal, 2019*



*Above: embroidered pelican and chicks,
a medieval symbol for Christ and His
Church, from a Cathedral cope sewn by
a member of its Altar Guild*



In the Cathedral, everywhere you look is an opportunity for meditation and contemplation. What does this image call to mind or make you feel?



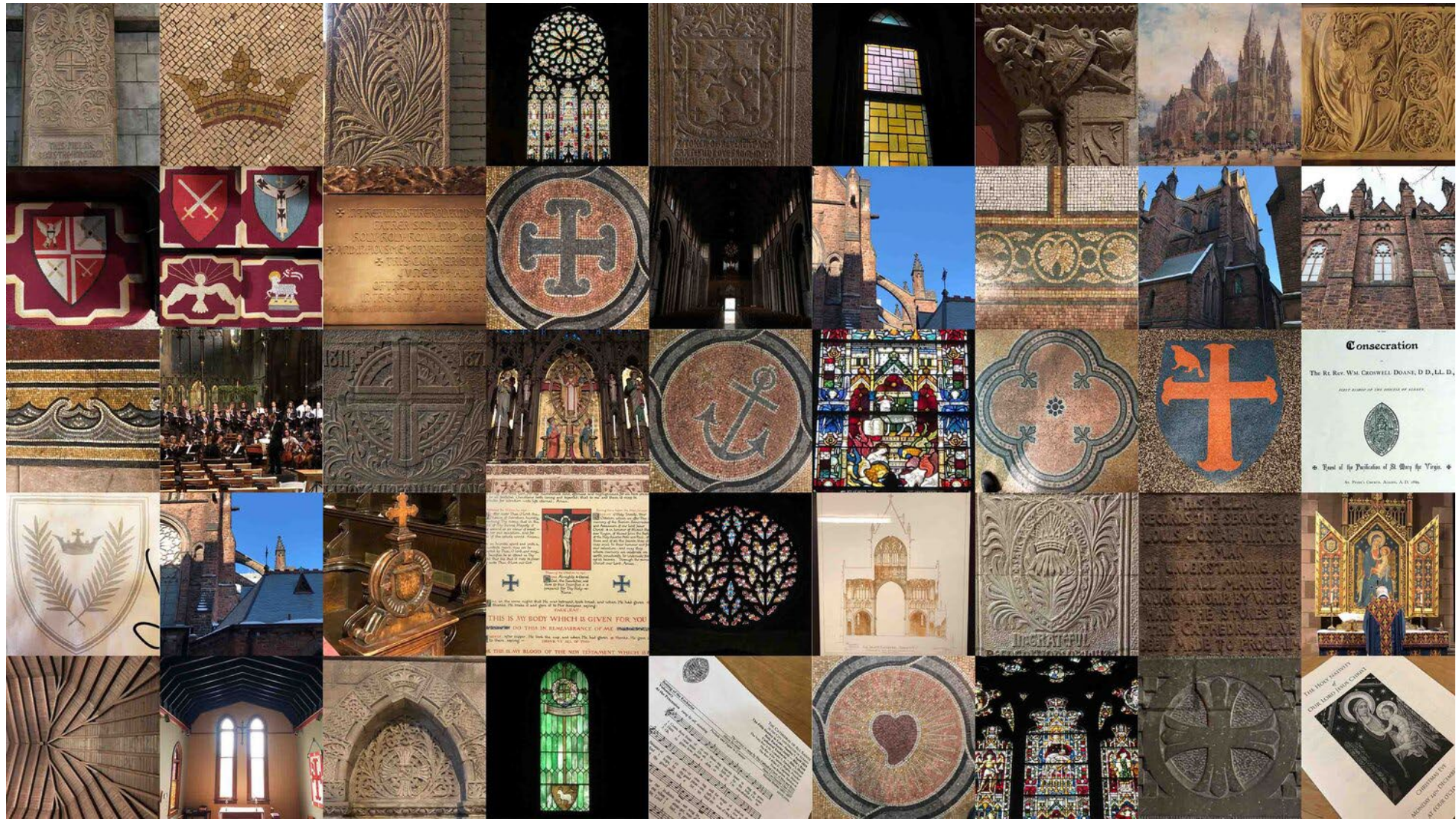
The windows of the Cathedral of All Saints were designed to offer biblical exegesis and catechesis in the tradition of medieval stained glass windows which unfold their meaning over time. Frequent encounters with the windows mean various opportunities for meditation and contemplation as we live with the windows' scenes and characters. We notice how both they change and we change in the presence of God and shifting light.



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Artist of the Cathedral Today.....

Discovering our visual identity was a meditation with images of our Cathedral, which led to the design of our new branding, logo and wordmark by member Andy Jerabek, expressing the qualities of our Cathedral art through time.



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Praying with our Cathedral art and architecture.....

The iron Rood Screen that separates the nave from the choir is over 40 feet in height. It represents the veil of the temple and symbolizes the transition from earth (Nave) to Heaven (Choir).



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*Cathedral in Bloom 2019 in its first year.
Design by Felthousen's Florist*



Glory be to God for dappled things –

For skies of couple-colour as a brindled cow;

For rose-moles all in stipple upon trout that swim;

Fresh-firecoal chestnut-falls; finches' wings;

Landscape plotted and pieced – fold, fallow, and plough;

And áll trádes, their gear and tackle and trim.

All things counter, original, spare, strange;

Whatever is fickle, freckled (who knows how?)

With swift, slow; sweet, sour; adazzle, dim;

He fathers-forth whose beauty is past change:

Praise him.

-*"Pied Beauty"* by Gerard Manley Hopkins, 1877

Closing meditation: poem with an image from the baptistery



Hinton and artists of his time and place made studies from nature and were concerned about its conservation. The poet and priest Gerard Manley Hopkins knew those of the Oxford Movement which inspired the building of The Cathedral of All Saints.

Join us in the Cathedral for
services or a tour and on
Zoom for programs in art and
contemplation



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