

An Explanation of the Window at St. Ann-Normandy

"The window is intended to convey a message both by recognizable objects and by the abstract quality of line, color, and mass. A large cross rooted in the hill of Calvary is not limited to the confines of the opening, just as the fruits of the Crucifixion are not limited by time and space. The Holy Spirit to the left and the Hand of God to the right completes the Trinity.

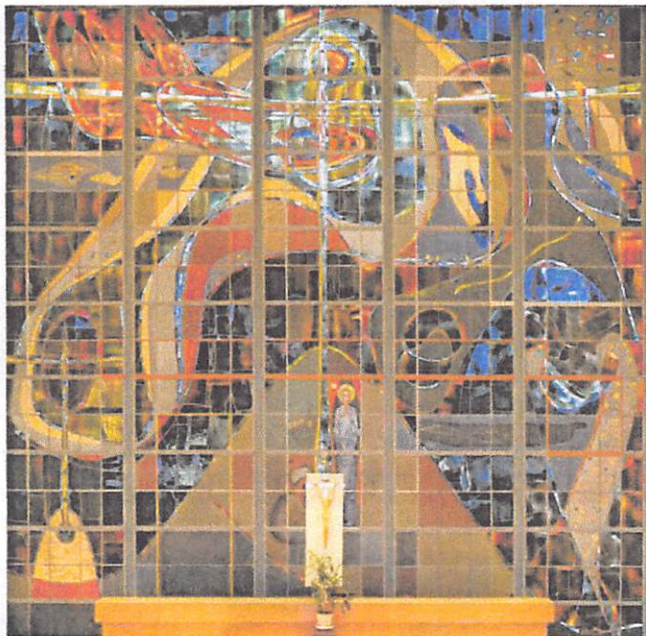
"A form of gold and gray centered around the Chir Rho extends to and encompasses the cross of the repentant thief. In the extreme right-hand panel is the negative, or the void, as it were suggesting the unrepentant thief. The Hand of God reaches out to him, but a large black grey area containing a serpent-like form is a barrier between God and the man who willfully avoids union with God.

"Mary is very much alone in the immensity of the world-shaking events which surround her. The sun and the moon stood still. A new order was being born. Christ's humanity was being consumed and was to be reunited with the Father. This was a cataclysmic event indeed, reaching into the past and into the future. There was no previous time, nor will there be any subsequent time, an event so radical in its effect on the body and soul of all mankind.

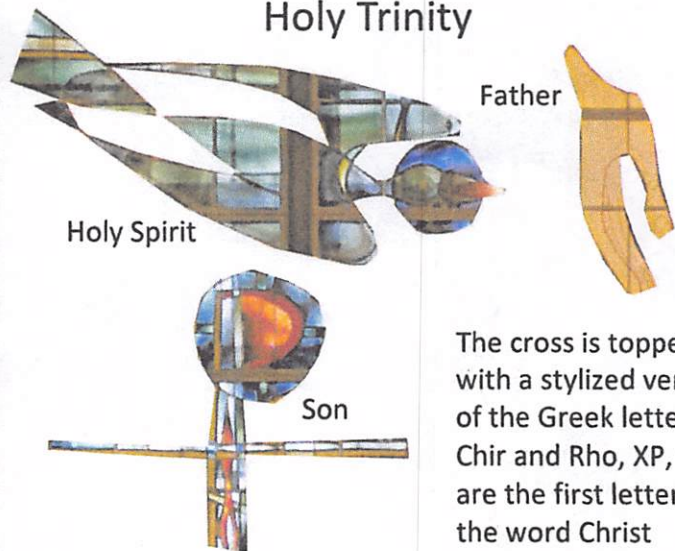
"The weaving of line and color, the play and interplay of forces represented by line and mass... will reach the emotions of the beholder without necessarily going through a mental process.

"The artists hope that the viewer will participate in their work and be brought nearer to their creator by it.

-Official explanation offered by Designer, Artist, and Architect in St. Louis Globe-Democrat 4/27/1952



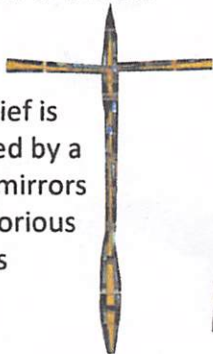
Holy Trinity



The cross is topped with a stylized version of the Greek letters Chir and Rho, XP, which are the first letters of the word Christ

The Good Thief

Good Thief is represented by a cross that mirrors Christ's glorious cross



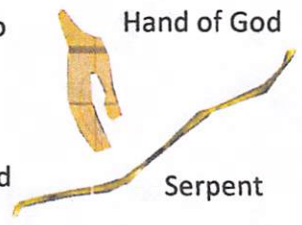
The cross then becomes a lute representing the joy of paradise.



Lute

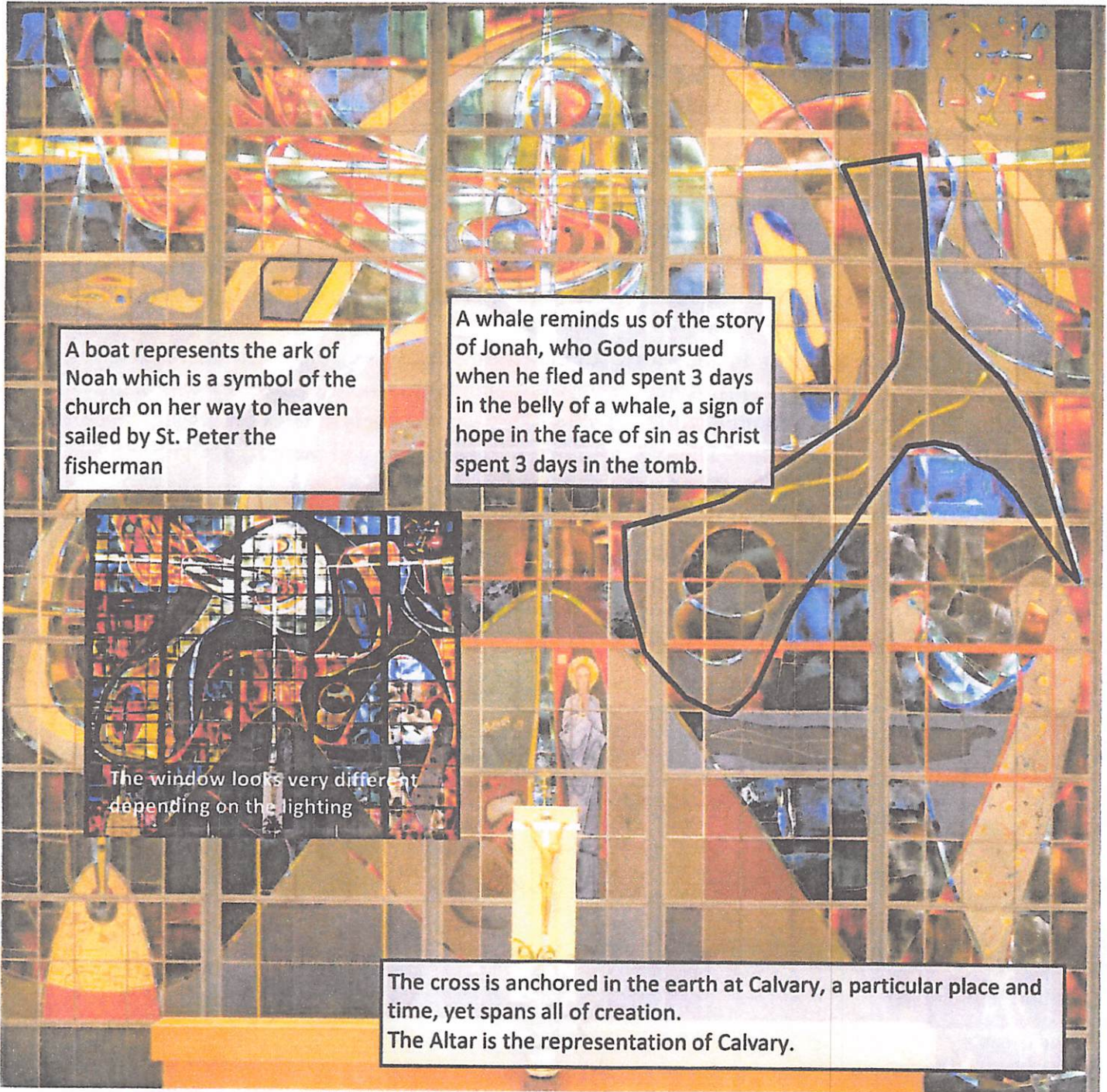
The Bad Thief

Like the one who tempted Adam and Eve, the serpent stands between God and the other thief.



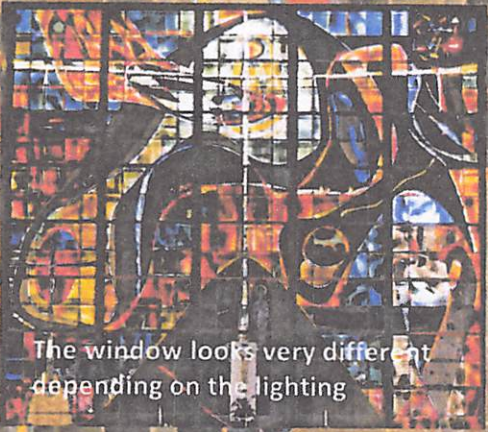
Tomb





A boat represents the ark of Noah which is a symbol of the church on her way to heaven sailed by St. Peter the fisherman

A whale reminds us of the story of Jonah, who God pursued when he fled and spent 3 days in the belly of a whale, a sign of hope in the face of sin as Christ spent 3 days in the tomb.



The window looks very different depending on the lighting

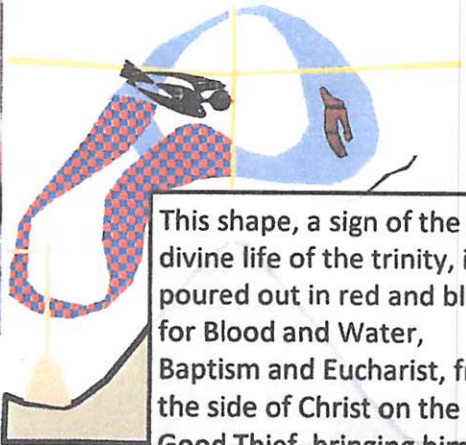
The cross is anchored in the earth at Calvary, a particular place and time, yet spans all of creation. The Altar is the representation of Calvary.



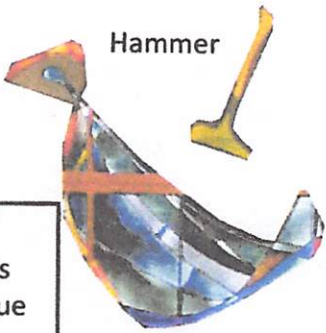
In a traditional crucifixion scene, Mary stands below the cross and is flanked by Mary Magdalene, here a veiled figure, and St. John, depicted as a descending eagle, a traditional symbol, below the good thief's cross.



Under the cross is a spring of water, flowers, and fish.



This shape, a sign of the divine life of the trinity, is poured out in red and blue for Blood and Water, Baptism and Eucharist, from the side of Christ on the Good Thief, bringing him into the heart of the trinity



Hammer

Rooster: Reminding us of St. Peter's denial



Holy Trinity



Holy Spirit



Father



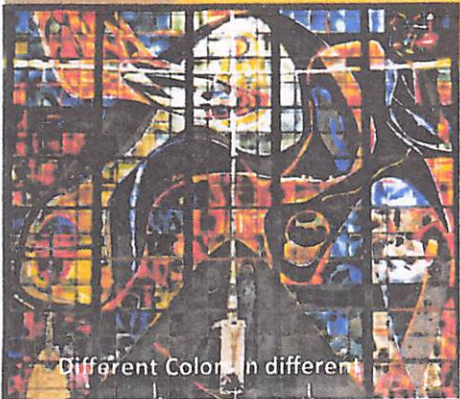
Son



Holy Mary



God Saves Us



Different Color in different

We Run from God

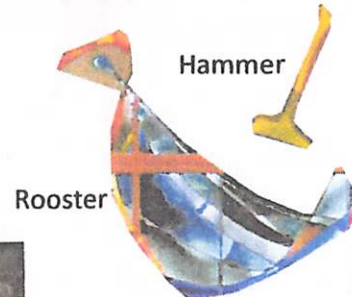


Snake



Tomb

Hammer



Rooster



Mary Magdalen

Ark



Lute



Good Thief



The Artist That Created St. Ann's Frei Stained Glass Window: Robert Harmon A Journey through Light: In Memory of Robert Harmon

*I saw Eternity the other night
Like a great ring of pure and endless light.*

— "The World," Henry Vaughan

As an artist, Robert Harmon had little interest in paint and even less in canvas. Harmon worked with light. It was both his material and his message.

Harmon was a student in his mid-twenties at the School of Fine Arts at Washington University in St. Louis when Emil Frei Jr. chose him to come to work at the Frei stained glass company in the city. Harmon had grown up in a religious family; his father was a minister in the Christian church and an excellent Biblical scholar. His background in religion had not taught him much about Christian iconography, however, and he set out on a life-long study of the symbols of the Christian faith.

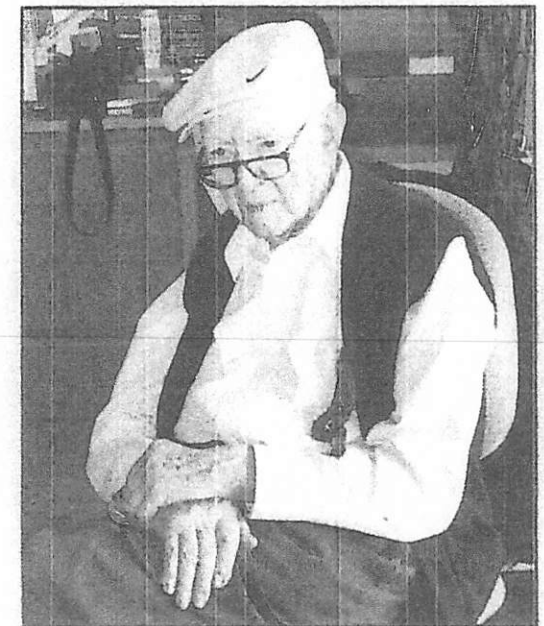
Emil Frei Jr. was interested in moving away from the Munich style windows that had characterized his father's era as head of the company. Harmon's own artistic ideas, based on his interest in and knowledge of modern abstract art in its various styles, meshed naturally into Frei's plans for a new direction for the firm. He never cared all that much about subject matter as an important element in his work, he said. "I can do without it, or I can work with it." What Harmon helped Frei do was to

was to move the company into window design that was revolutionary, that turned away from the old principles of realistic or idealistic portrayals of people and scenes. Harmon and the younger Frei wanted to get at the essence of the religious experience and depict it in such a way that people were challenged to think and to constantly look at the windows anew.

Harmon's career spanned six decades. He made windows for five cathedrals and innumerable churches in the United States. For more than twenty years, he worked independently out of his own studio in rural Missouri. His inspiration came not only from his religious faith and the traditions of religious art, but also from his Ozark environment. Harmon said the essential elements in his creative world included the things around him: the valley, the rocks, and the water. Water is particularly important. In his windows, light takes on a liquid quality. Light flows like water.

Harmon is regarded as one of the premier designers of stained glass windows in the United States during the last half-century. His reputation was built primarily on his design of massive windows.

Sometimes creating a virtual wall of stained glass of immense proportions, his windows are thin membranes barely separating the quiet, sacred space within from the bustling, noisy world without. But, as he pointed out, that world outside is also lit by the Light of the World.



Robert Harmon
in his Missouri
studio, 1999.

A P O S S I B L E E X P L A N A T I O N*

In the window, the artist shows symbolically the greatest drama the world has ever known: the Crucifixion, the Redemption of mankind, and its continuing fruits. Along the base of the window is the hill of Calvary bearing a cross which extends out to the very borders of the window, seeming to go out beyond just as the fruits of the Crucifixion are not limited by time and space. To the left of the cross is the dove of the Holy Spirit, and on the right the hand of God the Father completes the Trinity.

From the apex of Christ's cross, a gold cloud symbolizing love and salvation extends out to and encompasses the cross of the repentant thief, shown at left. But the souls of all the "unrepentant thieves" of the world are suggested by the confused pattern of color and design in the right-hand panels of the window. The hand of God reaches out to them, but a large grey-black area containing a serpent-like form is a barrier, standing between God and the man who wilfully avoids union with his Maker. Appealingly alone, Mary stands by herself next to the cross, asking our tears, our prayers and our repentance.

* There is obviously much more in the picture, the above is provided as the general theme.

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TIME

Monday, Dec. 15, 1952

Art: INSIDE-OUT WINDOW

Nearly all of the world's most beautiful churches are pure Gothic, and many of the least beautiful are latter-day imitation Gothic. Even in the functional-minded mid-20th century, few architects have tried to break the mold, and only a rare few have had any success at it. One of the boldest tries is Joseph D. Murphy's gymnasium-like St. Ann's Catholic Church in Normandy, Mo.

Nothing about the church is more functional, or more imaginative, than its 38-ft.-square window, which Emil Frei and Robert Harmon designed. Since the window faces the congregation, they made it only partly transparent—to cut down glare. By day, the opaque areas appear in silhouette; with interior lighting at night, they create a mural effect. The church itself is somewhat stiff in design, and the window's weaving composition is contrastingly amorphous.

In combination, Frei, Harmon and Murphy have done a difficult job well, and their pioneering will help open the way to freer church designs.

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The window was designed by Emil Frei and Robert Harmon and attracted wide publicity when it was built. It provides a colorful mural in day or night. A pioneering blend of stained glass and painted area, the 38 foot high window is an outstanding artistic achievement, but even more importantly, it focuses attention and invites meditation on the Sacrifice of Calvary re-enacted each Mass.