

The Windows of the Nave – Symbols and Images of the Holy Spirit



The Seven gifts of the Holy Spirit. Isaiah 11:1 describes the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit as: Wisdom, understanding, knowledge, counsel, piety, fortitude and fear of the Lord. However there is another list of gifts in the Book of the Revelation (5:12) which the Lamb who is worthy receives on our behalf. It is these which are depicted in this window. Small Latin Letters list all seven clockwise: *virtus* (power), *divinitas* (divinity or riches), *sapientia* (wisdom), *fortitudo* (strength), *honor* (honor), *Gloria* (glory) and *benedictio* blessing. The Text of the Book of Revelation reads as follows: *And I beheld, and I heard the voice of many angels round about the throne and the beasts and the elders: and the*

number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands; Saying with a loud voice, Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honor, and glory, and blessing. (Rev 5:11-12)

Depicted at the right is the Jewish Menorah, a seven-branched candelabrum that stood in the anteroom to the Holy of Holies in the ancient Jewish temple. At the beginning of the Book of Revelation John sees Jesus: And when I turned I saw seven golden lampstands, and among the lampstands was one "like a son of man," dressed in a robe reaching down to his feet...(Rev 1:12). These seven lampstands recall the menorah in the temple and symbolize further the seven Churches to which John writes. But later John also tells us: *seven flaming torches burned in front of the throne which are the seven Spirits of God (Rev 4:5).* Tradition understands this as referring to the Holy Spirit since "7" in the Scriptures is the number of fullness and perfection.



Directly across the nave is the depiction of those seven torches (see at left). Thus the ancient Jewish Menorah was a prefigurement of the Holy Spirit and the Seven burning torches, the Holy Spirit, is the fulfillment of the menorah. The seven torches are also linked to the fiery angels before the throne and to the seven angels of the seven churches in Revelation 2-3



The Ruby Port Columbine Flower – is a traditional symbol of the Holy Spirit. Columbine petals are shaped like doves which symbolize the Holy Spirit. Further the word “columbine” comes from the Latin “Columba,” meaning “dove.” Although Columbine flowers come in different colors, the red or “Ruby Port” columbine also recalls the tongues of fire at Pentecost.

Winged Wheel – Tradition distinguishes nine choirs of angels. In addition, these nine choirs are grouped into three orders. The first and highest order is called the Counsellors and consist of the Seraphim, Cherubim, and Thrones. The winged wheel is a traditional depiction of the Counsellors. Their connection to the Holy Spirit is the image of fire. Angels of this rank are often described as fire. For example, *the LORD commanded the man in linen, "Take fire from among the wheels, from among the cherubim," the man went in and stood beside a wheel.* (Ezekiel 10:6). Further, God's throne is said to have fire round about and beneath it: *His throne was flaming with fire, and its wheels were all ablaze* (Dan 7:9). Now all of this is linked in tradition to both the angels and to the Holy Spirit. We have already seen how the seven flaming torches before the throne refer both to angels (specifically the angels of the seven churches) and to the Holy Spirit. Hence this window too shows forth a symbol of the fire of the Holy Spirit that interacts with the fiery Cherubim beneath, before and around the throne of God.

