



The Treasures of St. Augustine's



Edition 3

INTRODUCTION Last week, we presented information on one of the most treasured parts of St. Augustine's Church—the beautiful stained glass windows, many of which are in need of help.

PREFACE

In Isaiah 66:1 this is what the Lord says:

**Heaven is My throne,
and the earth is My footstool.
Where is the house you will build for Me?
Where will My resting place be?**

Our predecessors have built His house, and now our ongoing obligation is to clean, repair and maintain it to an appropriate standard, while keeping it safe, functional, and beautiful.

As we noted last week, the present St. Augustine's church has been here for almost 100 years. It represents much more than just its impressive physical structure—it symbolizes a welcoming place of worship and serves as a focal point for our community. Yet, for a church to continue meeting these needs—as well as the requirements associated with its Heritage Designation—the building itself and its surrounding grounds need to be well maintained.

WHY CLEANING, REPAIRING AND MAINTAINING OUR CHURCH IS SO IMPORTANT

As a result of St. Augustine's status as a heritage structure, the City places the onus on the Parish to maintain it properly. Of course, a far more important reason to care for St. Augustine's is because it is **God's House**—and as such, it's also the **Gate of Heaven**. Above the doors to many Christian churches, often you may see an inscription in Latin—**Domus Dei, Porta Coeli**. In the Bible, Jacob exclaims in Genesis 28:17, **How awesome is this place! This is none other than the House of God, and this is the Gate of Heaven.**



In fact, **any door to a Catholic church is truly the Gate of Heaven, because the One who dwells within, the One who makes the place great, terrible, and wondrous, is the same Jesus Christ who reigns victorious in Heaven.** <https://www.stjohncatholic.com/single-post/2020/07/19/Sermon-The-Gate-of-Heaven-and-the-House-of-God>

In 1934, the renowned playwright, author and poet, T.S. Eliot, wrote a pageant play called, *The Rock*, as a fund-raising tool, specifically to assist 45 Catholic churches in Greater London. In the *Choruses* to the play, he wrote:

**And the Church must be a forever building,
always decaying, and always being restored....
There is much to build, much to restore;
Let the work not delay, time and arm not waste.**

With the generous financial assistance from our wonderful parishioners, we must attend to some unfortunate decay on the exterior of St. Augustine's:

- The cross at the very peak of the roof directly above the main entrance badly needs refreshing.
- On both sides of the main entrance stairs, the brick and concrete balustrades need repairs, the metal railings repainted, plus pressure-washing of the granite steps.
- Many of the white concrete decorative panels and arches need repair, cleaning, and painting.
- The roof tiles on several of the lower roof areas need to be cleaned of moss and other organic material.
- In many areas, the brick façade needs attention, with repointing (or at least face-grouting) of cracked or deteriorated mortar, and then complete sealing of the brick and mortar.

The foregoing items do not include attention to our prized possession—the stained glass windows—which over the years, have received occasional maintenance, but now require some tender loving (and unfortunately, expensive) care.

HOW STAINED GLASS WINDOWS DETERIORATE

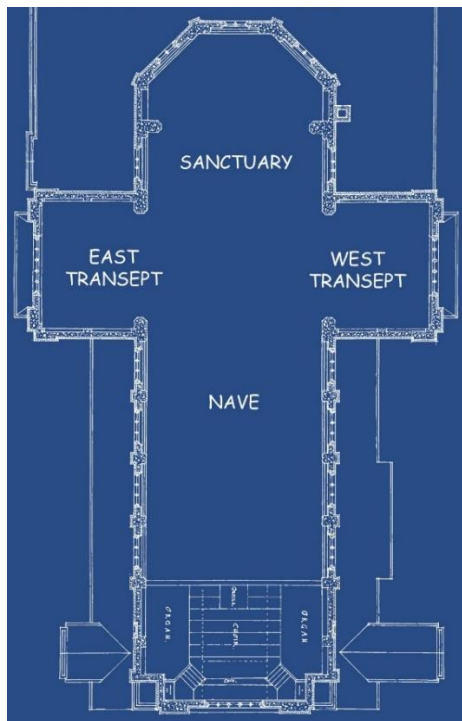
We are blessed to have some truly beautiful stained glass windows in St. Augustine's, many of which would be virtually irreplaceable if damaged.

Aside from accidental damage and vandalism, the most likely sources of deterioration for the windows are the following:

- The very size and weight of the window, with its heavy glass and lead *comes* that, over time, can cause the window to buckle.
- The steel frames supporting the windows are susceptible to rust.
- UV rays from the sun can dull the colours, particularly on the east, south and west faces of the church.
- Extreme weather events, particularly heavy rain, plus the cyclical action of winter freeze/thaw, and the recurring expansion due to summer heat.

In at least two cases, sheets of acrylic plastic—previously installed to protect some lower windows from vandalism—have seriously discoloured and need replacing. The current standard for protection of a stained glass window is a sheet of laminated glass that will maintain its clarity. These glass sheets not only provide UV and weather protection, but they are also energy-efficient and, as an added benefit, reduce any exterior noise.

As noted last week, stained glass windows are far more than just windows—they have been created through a specialist art form and hold history, symbolism and spirituality within their intricate designs.



1931 Interior Floorplan of St. Augustine's Showing Window Locations

Our beautiful stained glass windows need professional care before they suffer permanent damage.

WHERE YOUR TREASURE IS....

66 years ago, it was not only B.C.'s 100th birthday, but also the 100th anniversary of service to the province by the **Oblate Fathers of Mary Immaculate**. On May 27,

1958, the Pastor of St. Augustine's, Father Paul Monahan, sent an important document to his parishioners that is certainly as relevant today as it was then. He wrote:

*The priests and the people of St. Augustine's have accomplished much through the years for the greater honour and glory of God and the salvation of souls. However, **we cannot rest on the laurels of those who have preceded us.** There still remains a great deal to be done....[and] we need the wholehearted, generous giving of every member of our Parish. We are asking each of you to share in this soul-satisfying privilege and to make your sacrificial pledge enthusiastically and cheerfully, realizing that you are not only strengthening and expanding Christ's Kingdom, but are storing up **treasure in heaven.***

[With thanks to the Archdiocese of Vancouver Archives for the foregoing and following quotations.]

YOUR GREATEST TREASURE...

Father Monahan continued: **Your greatest treasure is your Holy Catholic Faith.** Throughout our lives, we sacrifice many things in order to enjoy the spiritual blessings of Catholicism. By giving of ourselves in the spirit of the Sacrifice of the Cross, we gain sanctity in God's Divine Plan.

The church is both spiritual and physical. It must have the material assets and equipment necessary to carry on the religious, educational and social parts of complete parish life....It would be unreasonable and unfair to expect everyone to give the same amount to the church. Each of us has been blessed differently [and] some of us may tend to forget that our accomplishments and success are due to God-given talents and abilities.

Father Paul concluded by saying he was **Asking God's blessing upon you and your family as you consider your gift to His Church.**

As it is today, it was then a difficult period in BC, with ever-increasing prices for labour and materials. On April 16, 1958, in support of Father Paul, the Archbishop of Vancouver, William M. Duke wrote:

What has Christ given you? He is God. "By Him all things were made." Through Him you have received all that you have and enjoy. He has given you His Church, His Sacraments, His Mass, His Life, Himself in the Holy Eucharist....In return, He asks you, not for the least you can give, but for the best and most you can afford.

Blessings to all from St. Augustine's Church.

