

An excerpt from Archbishop J. Michael Miller's homily on Sunday, 6th of March 2011, on the occasion of the blessing of the stained glass windows at Saint John the Apostle Parish.

Dear Monsignor Hagemoen and friends in Christ of the St. John the Apostle Parish community:

It is a pleasure to be celebrating this Holy Mass with you this morning, during which we shall dedicate the marvellous new east stained glass window, an addition which adds dignity to this already beautiful church where the Risen Lord is worshipped. The gratitude of all of us goes to Father Mark and those who worked with him in bringing this project to such a glorious conclusion, and to John and Laura Gilroy for its superb execution. Here in your church the windows have become great luminous images, suitable for instruction in the mysteries of the faith. A cascade of light pours through the stained glass upon you to tell you the story of salvation and to involve you in the great drama of Redemption, which is crowned with the mystery of the Risen Lord, who—as is inscribed in the new window—“on the third day [he] rose again from the dead,” the promised confirmation that he is the Lord of history and will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead.

One of the great artistic achievements of the Christian Middle Ages, inspired by the profound faith that earthly beauty leads the soul to contemplation of the beauty of the Triune God, was the introduction of stained glass into the cathedrals of Europe, beginning at St. Denis in France in the 12th century. From the outside, stained glass windows are often dark, telling us nothing of the beauty within. But once we enter the church, they suddenly come alive. Reflecting the light passing through them, they reveal all their splendour. Many writers have used the image of stained glass to illustrate the mystery of the Church herself. It is only from the inside, from the experience of faith and the sacramental life, that we see the Church as she truly is: flooded with grace, resplendent in beauty, adorned by the manifold gifts of the Spirit. It follows that we, who live the life of grace within the Church's communion, are called to draw all people into this interior mystery of light which culminates in Christ's Resurrection.



This is no easy task in a world, which can tend to look at the Church, like those stained glass windows, “from the outside”: a world which deeply senses a need for spirituality, yet finds it difficult to “enter into” the mystery of the Church. Even for those of us within, the light of faith can be dimmed by routine, and the splendour of the Church can be obscured by the sins and weaknesses of her members. It can be dimmed too, by the obstacles erected by a society which often seems to forget God and to resent even the most elementary demands of Christian morality. From your daily contact with the world around us, you know how tempting it can be to give way to frustration and disappointment. In a word, it is not always easy to see the light of the Risen Lord illuminating our lives and instilling renewed hope in his victory over the world (cf. Jn 16:33).¹

I pray that every time you leave this church you will look up at the east window with trust that the Lord Jesus accompanies you on every step of your daily life. The Risen Lord is always with you!

✠ J. Michael Miller, CSB
Archbishop of Vancouver

¹ cf. Benedict XVI, Homily at St. Patrick's Cathedral, New York (19 April 2008).