

Stained Glass

Thy Life-Giving Side

Thy life-giving side, O Christ, flowing as a fountain from Eden, waters Thy Church as a living Paradise. Then, dividing into the four branches of the Gospels, with its streams it refreshes the world, making glad the creation and teaching the nations to venerate Thy Kingdom with faith.

— Beatitudes Sticheron, Matins of Holy and Great Friday
(Service of the Twelve Gospels)



Chicago artist **Fredrick Redinger** (Fredrick Stained Glass) brings the Holy Week hymn to life with dramatic thrusts and swirls within the elegantly balanced colors and calm stability of the glass as a whole. It teems with symbolism.

The central figure is an ancient Christian symbol, the Chi-Rho (above), the first two Greek letters of “ChRist” (ΧΡΙΣΤΟΣ). In this rendering, its vertical lines represent the blood and water streaming from Christ’s side after being pierced with a spear as He hung from the Cross (Jn 19:34, echoing the rivers flowing from Eden, Gen 2:10). The figure’s diagonal strokes reach to the ends of the world and beyond, Christ Himself filling all things. “In the Grave with the body, but in Hell with the soul, in that thou art God; in Paradise with the thief, and on the throne with the Father and the Spirit, wast thou, O Christ, filling all things, in that thou art infinite” (Divine Liturgy).¹

The center circle, the Church (“a living Paradise”), is as a baptismal font (“The rushings of the river make glad the city of God; the Most High hath hallowed His tabernacle” Ps 45:4). From there the waters (“welling up to eternal life,” Jn 4:14) divide into the Gospels, sweep torrentially above and below the firmament of the original creation (Gen 1, Ps 18:4 “Their sound hath gone forth into all the earth, and their words unto the ends of the world”), and yet hold together all.

The blood transforms into fire (Prayers before Communion: “it is Fire”) as Christ Himself desired (“I am come to send fire upon the earth,” Lk 12:49²). Fire and water, however, are also symbols of the Holy Spirit (Pentecost, Samaritan Woman), and the Father is always present: “the Trinity, one in Essence and undivided” (Divine Liturgy).³

The purple border represents the coming together of the water and blood into the wine of Thanksgiving (Eucharist). Or, as Fredrick explains in his practical, artistic expertise: “There’s so much going on here that we need this [border] to stop the madness.”

The stained glass itself is illumined with sunlight, and all that it represents as by the light of Christ (“The light of Christ illumines all,” Liturgy of the Pre-Sanctified Gifts)—without which there is no light, no life.

The stained glass window is approximately 2 feet by 3 feet. Photograph by Theresa Bertocci Photography.

¹*Service Book of the Holy Orthodox-Catholic Apostolic Church*, Isabel Hapgood (Englewood, NJ: Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese, 1996), p 97. From the *Octoechos*, St John of Damascus Resurrection Canon Tone 4, Ode 1; sung in the Paschal Hours.

²“Fire means the proclamation of the Gospel, for the Word is fire which consumes every materialistic and coarse thought and destroys idols made of whatever substance. Fire also means zeal for the good which is kindled in each one of us.” *The Explanation by Blessed Theophylact of the Holy Gospel According to St Luke*, trans Fr Christopher Stade (House Springs, MO: Chrysostom Press, 2004), pp 159–160.

³Hapgood *Service Book*, p 101.



Stained Glass Interpretation: Fredrick G. Redinger, Fredrick Stained Glass, Chicago
Photo: Theresa Bertocci Photography