

## A "MINUTE" **FOR LENT** -

To engage; to enrich; to help us "connect" as we make our way to Easter: within our sanctuary stained glass windows, we can find at least six symbols that are part of the Lenten/Easter Season. Maybe you will find more!



In the side windows toward the front of the sanctuary - two on the east, two on the west, are four crosses - Cross of Nails. Jesus suffered a cruel death on a cross. Two criminals were crucified beside him. One of the criminals spoke to Jesus saying, "Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom." Jesus told the man he would be with him "in Paradise that very day."

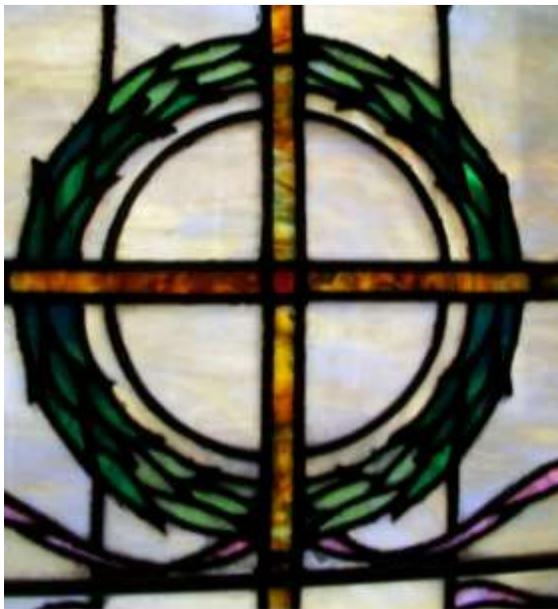
[Luke 23:42]

A "Window" on Lent: The Crown of Thorns  
[Matthew 27:27-31]

The chief priests and elders handed Jesus over to Pilate with the trumped up charge that he claimed to be the *King of the Jews*. It was a crime for any to make such a claim. There was only one "King" in the Roman Empire - the ruling Caesar. Any such claim by another was seen as sedition (treason) - an attempt to revolt against Rome. Such a claim was a capital crime - punishable by death.

The Roman soldiers made a mockery of Jesus' *claim* to be a king, dressing him in a scarlet robe and "twisting some thorns into a crown," they "put it on his head," pushing it down securely, the thorns tearing into flesh. The "crown of thorns" is a symbol of the suffering Jesus endured at the hands of his tormentors before the crucifixion.

As you sit in a pew in the sanctuary, there are four "crowns" of leaves circling the center of the four *nail crosses* in the side windows located at the "front" of the sanctuary (two windows on each side.)



On your left, the leaves are barbed - sharp-ended and encircle a separate "circle" that serves to define the "crown" shape. Compare these two *thorny crowns* with the leaves encircling the nail crosses on the right side of the sanctuary.

On the right side, the leaves are smooth with little red berries. There is no separate circle shape defining the wreath. It looks like a wreath! There are also two pretty "baubles" in the stained glass beneath each wreath. No such decoration bedecks the left side thorny crowns. (see first two pictures)

## A "Window" on Lent: Thistles & Lilies?

"Consider the lilies, how they grow; they neither toil nor spin." Luke 12:27

Bring a white lily into church on Easter Sunday and for many, the word, *celebration*, is trumpeted out of every blossom and rings across the sanctuary! These flowers are so central to our keeping of the day we automatically identify them as "Easter" lilies.

Both the Easter Lilly and the white Calla Lily grow a tall green stalk with leaves, from what would appear to be a dead, brown bulb beneath the ground, symbolic of the miracle we celebrate every Easter morning with our traditional greeting: *Christ is risen! He is risen indeed!*



As you are seated in a pew, the window on your left nearest the hymn board has a spray of white lilies in the uppermost panel. Two are standing upright, and appear to be callas. The others, with heads bobbing down are white lilies.



In the uppermost panel in the window beside the "lily window" you will see a spray of thistles. Thistles and lilies? Well, just the thistles (which are a beautiful blossom to spot in a summer landscape) are symbolic of our Scottish Presbyterian Roots, the thistle being the national emblem of Scotland.

It's a great reminder of our heritage, *but* I think there's a bit more to the story, with the thistles being "paired" next to the lily window.

After the Fall described in Genesis 3, the ground was cursed by God with "thorns and thistles." Thistles became the symbol of our estrangement-our separation from God because of our sin. Christ died on the Cross for our sin-*was crucified, dead, and buried, and on the third day, rose again from the dead. Alleluia! Alleluia!*

Thistles & lilies? Apart from the love of Christ and our God "who so loved the world," where would we be?

*Christ is Risen*, and the love of God abides in our hearts through the Spirit. We're right here, looking at thistles & lilies; lost in wonder & grace!

## A "Window" on Lent: The 'Radiant' Crown

When Jesus was born, the story goes, wise men from the East came to Jerusalem asking, "Where is the child who has been born king of the Jews?" Their understanding that they were searching for a future king would be echoed in the deadly charge against Jesus that resulted in his death.

In the midst of a near riot stirring on the eve of Passover in Jerusalem, Pilate led Jesus before the crowd and said, "Here is your King!" And to Pilate's chagrin, they cried out, "Away with him! Away with him! Crucify him!" So Pilate asked them, "Shall I crucify your King?" The chief priests answered, "We have no king but the emperor." Then he handed Jesus over to them to be crucified. [John 19:14b-16]

Each of the Gospels tells of the sign Pilate had placed at the top of Jesus' cross. John adds that it was written in three languages; Greek, Latin, and Hebrew; this "title" announcing to the *world* the man hanging on that cross was "Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews." That is what the symbol "NRI" stands for—the Greek initials for Jesus, Nazareth, King, Jews.



We're familiar with the language that glorifies Jesus as our "King of kings, and Lord of lords," found in Rev. 19:6. The radiating beams surrounding the 10-jeweled crown on the upper panel of the second sanctuary window on your left, announce Christ's triumphant rising from the tomb—conqueror of death; ruler of all the earth.



Paired with the first window's "radiant" cross, these two symbols of our faith tell yet *another* story, but we'll leave that for *another time*!

A "Window" on Lent: "Hosannas" with Palms! [John 12:12-15]

*Back in the day*, long-ago far-away days when the Greeks "Hellenized" Western civilization and the Romans conquered and brought order to all the people they ruled, palms were a symbol of triumph used to show honor to a mighty victor or great ruler. As a Caesar or regional ruler or great general, majestically mounted on horse rode into a city, the people would strip off palm branches and wave them in a celebratory welcome, acknowledging the power of the one paraded in their midst.

All four of our Gospels describe Jesus entering Jerusalem in a *similar* fashion with the attendant "pomp" from the accolades of the crowds waving palm branches and shouting *Hosanna* to the *King of Israel* as he passed through the streets of the great walled city. Jesus rode on a young donkey though, not the mighty horse of a conqueror! A donkey was the ATV of common people; the conveyance of a prophet or rabbi who "came in peace, *not* war!"



As you sit in a pew, each of the two front windows on your left side has a palm *bundled* about the nail crosses. These palms remind us of our Palm Sunday celebration. They also carry another message, that of Jesus' *triumph* over death that comes to us through the cross.

In a vision described in Revelations 7:9, a "crowd of the redeemed" stand before the "Throne of the Lamb" in heaven with palm branches, praising God's reign on earth! Christ is the Lamb *alive*, ruling with God and the Spirit.

On each Palm Sunday, we re-create Christ's triumphal entry into Jerusalem. More to the *heart* of our worship of God with our palms, we celebrate and give thanks for Christ's victory over death and living reign and presence in our lives here and now! *Hosanna!*