

Bethinking of Old Orleans

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STAINED GLASS WINDOWS

John testified further, "I saw the Spirit come down from heaven like a dove and remain on Him and although I did not know Him, He who sent me to baptize with water told me Himself, 'On whom you see the Spirit descend and remain, He is the one who baptizes with the Holy Spirit.' And I did see it and I testify that He is the Son of God."

St. John 1:13-14

This beautiful portrait of St. John the Baptist, is located in St. Mary's R.C. Church at Holley. Originally in this church, which was built in 1904, it was designed and executed by Leo P. Frohe. In this window, as several others at St. Mary's, Frohe signed his work rather boldly as if advertising. Near St. John's foot, upon the floor where he is standing, at the lower right, you will notice "Leo P. Frohe, Buffalo, N.Y." Below this, the inscription "In memory of Mr. & Mrs. Wm. Beck" appears. The Frohe Art Glass Studio had its beginning dating back as early as 1845, later being firmly established in Buffalo since 1866. In 1889 Leo P. Frohe, descendant of the founder, and his partner and in-law F.J. Reister, received a Gold Medal at the International Exposition at Paris for their artistic and high quality work which also at the time, included mural painting and church decorating, located on Harlen Road in Cheektowaga, Frohe Art Glass continues today under the leadership of Mr. Paul Frohe.

Now to our subject at hand St. John the Baptist. This stained glass window is strictly devotional in character as it does not recount his history or religious experiences. St. John the Baptist is considered to be the last of the prophets of the Old Testament and the first of the saints of the New Testament as he foretold the coming of Christ and did baptize Him. The parents of John the Baptist were Zacharias and Elizabeth both righteous people who were distressed because they were childless. One day the Archangel Gabriel appeared to Zacharias and said "..... Fear not Zacharias for thy prayer is heard and thy wife Elizabeth shall bear thee a Son, and thou shalt call his name John" (Luke 1:13).

According to legend, John left his parents as a mere child and went to dwell in the desert. Because of this, the representation of him seen here may be accounted for as follows: "And the same John had his raiment of camel's hair, and a leather girdle about his loins, and his meat was acusts and wild honey."

One day John experienced a divine revelation, urging him to become a preacher of the gospel of baptism for the remission of sins. After this revelation, John came into the country near the River Jordan preaching as it is written in the book of the words of Esaias the prophet, saying "..... the voice of one crying in the wilderness, prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his path straight." (Luke 3:4). The power of his message caused many of the people to receive baptism at the hands of John. Some questioned whether he was the Redeemer and he ".... answered, saying unto them all, 'I indeed baptize you with water, but one mightier than I cometh'" (Luketh 3:16). Subsequently Jesus himself came to be baptized. "And Jesus when He was baptized went up straightway out of the water, and lo, the heavens were opened unto him...and lo a voice from Heaven saying, this is my beloved son in whom I am well pleased" (Math. 3:16-17).

Because of his preaching and because he had publicly reproached Herod, King of Judea, for his sins, John was seized by Herod's soldiers and cast into prison. The major sin which John had charged against Herod was that contrary to the law, he had married Herodias, the wife of his deceased brother. She would have had John put to death at once but Herod was afraid, realizing that John was a just and holy man. Some time after John's imprisonment Herod held a great feast on the occasion of his birthday. To entertain his



guests Salome, daughter of Herodias came and danced before them. So pleased, Herod before the assembled company promised to make her a gift of whatever she wanted "and she went forth, and said unto her mother, what shall I ask? And she said, the head of John the Baptist" (Mark 6:24). In accordance with the promise, the king sent an executioner who beheaded John in prison and brought his head back on a platter and gave it to Salome. "And when His disciples heard of it, they came and took up his body and laid it in a tomb." (Mark 6:29).

In this particular window St. John the Baptist is dressed in a camel hair garment which invariably is his symbol. Over this is draped a red mantle, which denotes love. Likewise he holds a cross which here symbolizes the humiliation of greatness, the ends of the cross are fashioned like sponges which symbolize the sponge soaked in vinegar that was given to Jesus while on the cross. The attached banner of blue is a symbol of victory and alludes to "Ecce Agnus Dei" (Behold, the Lamb of God). The face of John is unshaven and his hair is quite long which in itself symbolizes penitence and the fact that John was somewhat of a hermit in the desert.

"Daughter of adultery, there is but one who can save thee, it is He of whom I spake. Go seek Him. He is in a boat on the sea of Galilee, and He talketh with His disciples. Kneel down on the shore of the sea and call unto Him by His name. When He cometh to thee (and to all who call on Him, He cometh), bow thyself at His feet and ask of Him the remissions of thy sins."

— John the Baptist speaking from the play "Salome" by Oscar Wilde