

Bethinking of Old Orleans

C.W.Lattin County Historian

Vol. XIV

6-12-92

No. 22

LUMINARIES IN THE FIRMAMENT

LUMINARIES IN THE FIRMAMENT (Gen. 1:5)

It is the title of a book on stained glass windows of Orleans County Churches to be published by the Cobblestone Society this coming Fall. Locally, when it comes to fine art, our most important examples exist in the form of stained glass. Many windows depict actual stories or parables as related through the Holy scriptures, while other windows illustrate allegorically, certain theological concepts. The voluminousness of these windows is equaled in any other art form locally, save perhaps, architecture. Luminaries In The Firmament with a subtitle A Guide To Stained Glass Windows of Orleans County will describe the tremendous symbolism and significant art history of around forty stained glass windows with figural images from twenty churches. Local photographer, Dr. James R. Lattin, is currently working on both black and white and full color photographs for the publication.

One such window to be included in the book will be the "Penitent Woman" from St. Mary's R.C. Church in Medina. It is a wonderful illustration of the text found in Luke Chapter 7 verses 36-50 which follows:

"One of the Pharisees invited Him to dinner; so He went to the Pharisee's home and sat at the table. When a woman of the town, a sinner, learned that He was dining in the Pharisee's home, she brought an alabaster flask of perfume and, standing behind Him at His feet, weeping, began to wet His feet with her tears, then wiped them with the hair of her head, tenderly kissed His feet and anointed them with the perfume. When His host, the Pharisee, saw it, he said to himself, "If this person were a prophet, He would know what kind of woman is touching Him, for she is devoted to sin." Jesus answered, "Simon, I have something to tell you." He said, "Teacher, go ahead and speak." "Two men were in debt to a moneylender; one owed him 125 dollars and the other 12. As neither had anything to pay him, he generously cancelled the debt of both. So which of them will love him more?" Simon replied, "I suppose the one for whom he cancelled more." He said to him, "You have judged correctly." Then turning to the woman, He said to Simon, "You see this woman? As I entered your home you supplied no water for my feet, but she has washed My feet. You did not anoint My head with oil, but she has anointed My feet with perfume. So I tell you, her sins, many as they are, are forgiven, for she has greatly loved. But the person who is forgiven little, loves little." And He said to her, "Your sins are forgiven."

"Those at the table with Him began to say to themselves, "Who is this who even forgives sins?" But He said to the woman, "Your faith has saved you. Go in peace."

The left lancet shows the Pharisees seated at a table while the right lancet portrays Jesus also at the same table. In the foreground is the penitent woman on her knees bent down sobbing and wiping His feet. Near her hands on the floor, is the alabaster perfume jar. Jesus, slightly bending forward and pointing, seems to be saying "Your faith has saved you. Go in peace." The two Pharisees in the background are obviously taking this wholeazaar incident into account as the story suggests. Some scholars have felt that the penitent



woman might well have been Mary Magdalene, but scripture does not say that in so many words.

The window located with a southern exposure is bright and vibrant with brilliant colors and is an original installation. St. Mary's Church was opened for its first mass July 11, 1904. In the base of the window on a little banner it states: "William R. Curry and wife Margaret." They evidently paid for and gave the window to the church. In the 1903 Directory of Orleans County Mr. Curry is listed as vice president of the Medina Gas Co. and a grocer at 901 Main Street.

Gothic Revival in style, the window is made up of both colored and painted glass. In the apex is a triquetra shape which denotes the Trinity. Within the circle of this is a lamb, book and cross symbolizing Jesus' Resurrection.

"...I looked and saw the Lamb standing on Mount Zion ..." Rev. 14:1.