

ST NICHOLAS' CHURCH

DUNNINGTON, YORK

The Crucifixion - East Window (1.8m x 3.0m) 2009

This window was commissioned by the Vicar and Parochial Church Council of St Nicholas' Church, who requested a Crucifixion image – the traditional theme for East windows – depicted in a modern and contemporary manner. Thus the central theme is augmented by the secondary imagery of an anchor, which is represented at an angle, partially submerged by the sea. The maritime symbolism of the sea, fish and fishing net refers to St Nicholas, the patron saint of sailors (and of this church) but also relates to Christ, the Crucifixion and the meaning of His sacrifice for humanity.

The image of Christ on the Cross is presented from above, giving the impression that the body of Jesus is being drawn down to earth in the same way that the anchor is drawn to the sea-bed.

The anchor is one of the oldest symbols of the cross. Whilst initially symbolising safety, it became a symbol of hope based on the cross of Christ and our salvation through Jesus' sacrifice. The anchor appears to have a pendulum-like movement in this design. This timelessness of the world of the spirit contrasts with our limited time on earth.

The stormy sea symbolises the difficulties of our path through life made bearable with the assistance of Christ. The fish is an old Christian image and is derived from the Greek: *ichthys* – an abbreviation of the phrase Jesus Christ God's Son Saviour. A dove representing the Holy Spirit oversees the drama of the events. The Trinity is completed through the glowing light on the horizon, symbolising God the Father. Finally we have the fisherman's net which, together with the sea and the fish, symbolises the origins of Christ's disciples.

Three children and the bow of a boat, formed within the arc of the anchor, represent some of legends associated with St Nicholas: the saint saving three innocent children from death; rescuing seamen from distress; restoring three scholars to life.

The tracery light at the very top of the window symbolises the Holy Trinity as three fishes, while the other two tracery lights contain angels holding shields with the symbols Alpha and Omega (the beginning and the end).

An inscription at the base of the first light, with lettering by Charles Smith FRSA, marks the gift of the window by Beatrice and Jim Burniston. Small images drawn by local schoolchildren, and associated with their farming lives, have been incorporated into the surrounding borders.



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