

THE CHRISTMAS STORY IN MANCROFT'S MEDIEVAL STAINED GLASS

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1. THE ANNUNCIATION

- Mary is in her bedroom; a prayer book is open beside her
- Gabriel, attired as the prince of angels, kneels before this simple girl
- She greets him with a humble gesture
- But the artist has given her beautiful robes, a coronet and the monogram MR, because she is now Maria Regina, Queen of Heaven
- Meanwhile the Holy Spirit and the Christchild descend on a sunbeam
- On Gabriel's scroll: "Hail favoured one, the Lord is with you"
- On Mary's scroll: "Behold the handmaid of the Lord"



2. THE VISITATION

- Mary goes to visit her cousin Elizabeth near her home town
- Mary stands tall and beautiful with her head uncovered
- Newly pregnant, she holds a hand to her bosom
- Elizabeth is six months pregnant and holds a hand to her abdomen
- She wears a veil and a front-laced maternity dress; a maid attends her
- On Elizabeth's scroll: "Whence is this to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me?"
- On Mary's scroll: " My soul doth magnify the Lord"



3. THE NATIVITY

- Mary sits up in bed breast-feeding her infant
- Two small angels stand behind the bed, their hands raised in delight
- Three shepherds play merrily, each on a different kind of pipe
- In the foreground a little maid warms the swaddling clothes by the fire
- Joseph sits huddled in a chair feeling rather out of it
- The animals stand behind the manger, happily munching straw
- On the roof two little angels attend to a hole in the thatch which lets in the light of the star



4. THE ADORATION OF THE MAGI

- The wise men of Matthew's gospel are here depicted as European kings
- The oldest king has taken off his crown and ermine coat to pay homage and present a gift of gold coins
- A middle-aged king and a young king wait for their turn, looking rather detached
- In the background are three equerries on splendidly equipped horses



5. MARY AND THE CHRIST CHILD RECEIVE THE MAGI

- The stable is as before: simplicity faces wealth and power
- The animals continue to feed at the manger and the angels repair the thatch
- Joseph is still huddled in his chair, but he scratches his head in mild surprise at the sight of the visitors
- Mary holds up the child to bless the kings
- Unfortunately we do not know how Mary looked in this scene, because the head and body are substitutions for lost pieces



6. THE MASSACRE OF THE INNOCENTS

- Two soldiers in plate armour impale babies on their swords
- Herod leans out of his palace to slice a baby in two
- One woman (top right) courageously grasps a soldier by the neck
- Another (lower left) stares out at us in stoney-faced outrage
- A well-dressed man with a purse stumbles forward as if to protest