

St. Francis de Sales Church REREDOS

(an ornamental screen covering the wall at the back of an altar)

One of the most striking features in the St. Francis de Sales Church is the beautifully ornamented Reredos or Alter Piece with its twelve panels representing the Twelve Apostles [Fishers Of Men].



SAINT PETER: The keys crossed like the letter X is the most usual symbol of St. Peter. They recall our Lord's words, "And I will give to thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven." The inverted cross symbolizes the type of cross upon which Peter was crucified, during the reign of Nero. The papal crown symbolizes Peter as the first Pope and head of the Church, the Church built on the rock of Peter's faith in his Savior.



SAINT ANDREW: Though not one of the inner circle, Andrew proclaimed on the day he met Jesus, "We have found the Messiah." The X

represents the shape of the crucifix he was said to be martyred on. This X-shaped cross has become known as St. Andrew's Cross. The two fishes recall his profession as a fisherman and as a Fisher of Men. The great boat hook is also a symbol for Andrew.



SAINT JAMES: (The Greater) James was the older brother of St. John and, along with his brother and Peter, was among the closest to Jesus.

James is symbolized by three scallop shells. They, along with the pilgrim's staff, are symbols of pilgrimage. The sword symbolizes the death of James, beheaded at the order of Herod. He was the first of The Twelve to suffer martyrdom.



SAINT JOHN: The one "whom Jesus loved", John was the Apostle Jesus entrusted His mother to at the foot of His cross. Symbolizing John here is a chalice, out of which rises a serpent, representing a poisoned drink from which the Lord spared him. The sword is the Sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God that he preached. The scroll represents the gospel of St. John,

who is said to be the only one of the Twelve who lived long and died a natural death.



SAINT PHILIP: The Apostle from Bethsaida, Phillip is symbolized by a tall, slender cross and the loaf of bread and fish recalling his words when our Lord fed the multitude, "Two hundred denarii would not buy enough bread for each of them to get a little." The spear recalls his martyrdom in Asia. When scourging failed to silence him, he was stoned, crucified, and

finally run through with a spear.



SAINT BARTHOLOMEW: Seized by the governor of Albanapolis in Armenia, the faithful Bartholomew met a violent end. His death is symbolized here by a scimitar and flaying knife, representing his crucifixion, beheading and actual flaying. The open bible recalls his belief in God's word, and the fig branches recall the fact that our Lord saw him first under a fig tree.

SAINT MATTHEW:

A Jew who was called by Christ, and followed Him, Matthew was a former tax collector. These money bags symbolize that past profession. Matthew is the author of the First Gospel and in his genealogy of Jesus Christ, he emphasizes the Lord's human nature and origins. He was said to have been crucified in Ethiopia on a Tau cross.



SAINT THOMAS:

Called "The Twin" because he offered to die with Jesus on their way to Bethany, Thomas did have his doubts about Christ's resurrection. But he later confessed his faith in Him: "My Lord And My God." He was the first to proclaim so explicitly the Lord's divinity. Thomas is said to have constructed a church with his own hands in East India, hence the carpenter's square here. He was stoned and shot with arrows, martyred by pagans.



SAINT JAMES (The Lesser):

Not much is actually known about James, but that he labored in and around Jerusalem. Martyred by Jews, he was tortured mercilessly, reflected here by the weapons used upon him – the Jerusalem crosses, the stones, the bat and the saw.



SAINT SIMON: Unfortunately for our Simon the Apostle, the name of Simon was so common in the New Testament that there is some ambiguity about his path. We do know that he preached and was martyred in Persia, probably beheaded. Hence the representation of the battle axe. He was a great Fisher of Men, symbolized by the fish impaled on the boat hook.



SAINT JUDE (Thaddeus): Jude was a "brethren of the Lord" – the Lord's relative. The Apocryphal "Passion of Simon and Jude" depicted the two Apostles in Persia, where they preached and were martyred. They travelled far and wide together, symbolized here by the sailboat with the Cross-shaped mast.



Saint Matthias: Matthias was elected by the Apostles to replace Judas Iscariot, the original Apostle who had betrayed Christ and later committed suicide. Matthias is said to have been stoned and beheaded, his martyrdom symbolized here by the stone and the primitive double-edged battle axe.

