



# MINI WINDOWS

*"Every experience of beauty points to infinity." ~ Hans Urs von Balthasar*

A project of



**Stuck in the mundane?**  
**Feeling weighed down by the burdens of life?**  
**Tired of all the negativity of our world?**

Maybe it's time to take a mini-retreat ... online.

Sacred Windows is an inspirational website that uses stories, imagery, film, music, and art to explain theological truths in everyday language. God makes Himself known to us through the Beauty, Truth, and Goodness in the world, if only we take time to peer through these sacred windows to the beyond.

We post one new resource for spiritual growth every week at [www.sacredwindows.com](http://www.sacredwindows.com).

**A new project for a new era**

But there's more!

Sacred Windows is launching a new project called "Mini-Windows" to celebrate its first anniversary on November 28th. The mini-windows are one-page, downloadable PDFs (text and graphics) ranging over six broad areas to educate and inspire our readers:

**Architecture | Art | Mysticism | Nature | Radiance | Sculpture**

Each one is a mini-retreat in itself. The five examples in this e-book are a prelude to November 28th , when you'll be able to access all eighteen at [SacredWindows.com/mini-windows](http://SacredWindows.com/mini-windows)

You won't want to miss the whole collection. We'll add new mini-windows every month.

# MEET THE AUTHOR

Peter Darcy is the creator of Sacred Windows and the author of ten books, including the recently released Natures of Fire: God's Magnificent Angels. He is an avid promoter of the wonders of the Catholic Faith and Tradition.

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Now, check out these five mini-windows from the categories of Sculpture, Art, Mysticism, Nature, and Radiance:

# The Angel of the Resurrection



## ***Background***

American sculptor, Walter Hancock (1901-1998), created this monument in 1951-52 to commemorate the 1,307 Pennsylvania Railroad Workers who fought and died in World War II.

The sculpture entitled "Angel of the Resurrection" is the centerpiece of the Pennsylvania Railroad World War II Memorial in Philadelphia's 30th Street Station.

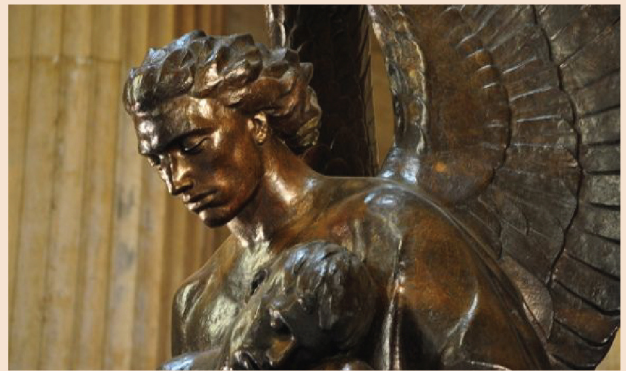
General Omar Bradley spoke at the monument's dedication ceremony on August 10, 1952.

## ***What to Look For***

***Monumental Size*** - the enormous statue stands 28 feet above an 11-foot pedestal, which allows it to fit the open space of the massive train station without seeming too small or too large.

***Verticality*** - the sculpture is 1) centered between two tall Corinthian columns, and 2) narrowly crafted with the soldier upright, aligned with the figure of the angel, giving the impression of ascending, upward movement: resurrection.

***Soldier*** - the angel is raising, not a body, but a soul from the battlefield, symbolized by the lack of a uniform on the soldier.



***Flames*** - at the base of the statue we see flames, which represent the "flames of war" and perhaps also the flames of hell from which the soldier was saved by his act of self-sacrifice for others.

***Bronze*** - a dark metal statue contrasts sharply with the light concrete of the elegant columns.

***Plaques*** - (Front) "In memory of the men and women of the Pennsylvania Railroad who laid down their lives for our country 1941-1945." (Back) "That all travelers here may remember those of the Pennsylvania Railroad who did not return from the Second World War."

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## ***Arti-Facts***

- Date: 1952
- Medium: bronze
- Size: 39' total: 11' (pedestal), 28' (statue)
- Weight: 9.5 tons

# Botticelli's *Madonna of the Book*



## **Background**

Alessandro (Sandro) Botticelli (1445-1510) was an early Renaissance artist. He was apprenticed to Verrocchio, who also taught Leonardo, Perugino, and Ghirlandaio in Florence. Botticelli is known for at least 44 paintings of the Madonna and Child as well as dozens of other religious paintings. For two years (1481-82) he worked on frescoes of the Sistine Chapel. His other constant theme was Roman mythology, of which his two most famous works were *The Birth of Venus* and *Primavera* (Spring). Botticelli's delicate lines and ravishing faces make him a favorite for Christmas cards and religious publications. Botticelli actually has an asteroid belt named after him!

## **What to Look For**

**Sky** - The open window provides depth to the image and symbolizes the entry of heaven into earth.

**Halo** - Notice the lace-like haloes of both figures, which is a development of the Renaissance from the solid gold haloes of previous eras.

**Veil** - Our Lady's veil is translucent, delicate, almost invisible, a sign of her as the one who is "full of grace".

**Fruit** - Almost unnoticed in the background is a bowl of fruit whose contents symbolize Christ's Blood (cherries), love of mother and child (plums), and figs (salvation or resurrection).

**Book** - The Word of God Himself seems to bless the Church's book of prayer which His mother reads and takes to heart (Lk 11:28).

**Symbols of Passion** - The holy Infant holds the symbols of His own Passion (three nails and Crown of Thorns) in his left hand.

**Faces** - The faces, especially that of Mary, are rendered with extreme delicacy and beauty as only Botticelli can.

**Garments** - Our Lady is clothed in a tunic of bright red and a cloak of royal blue, which is the standard Renaissance depiction of the Madonna.

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## **Arti-Facts**

- Date: ca. 1480
- Medium: tempera paint on wood panel
- Size: approx. 15½ in. x 23 in.
- Location: Museo Poldi Pezzoli, Milan, Italy.

# Rublev's *Trinity* Icon

## **Background**

Andrei Rublev (ca. 1370-1430) is a canonized saint in the Russian Orthodox Church, though very little is known of his life; even his birth and death dates are uncertain. However, he is Russia's most celebrated iconographer whose masterpiece, *The Trinity*, is a sublime retelling, in sacred art, of the story of Abraham's angelic visitors in Genesis 18.

Despite four or five inept re-paintings of the icon over the previous five hundred years, a serious restoration effort in 1918 uncovered Rublev's original brilliant colors and artistic genius. He is known for having "softened" the hard lines and severe looks of the earlier Byzantine icon tradition and pioneered the use of bright colors in Russian iconography.

## **Arti-Facts**

Date: 1425-27 AD | Medium: tempera on wood panel | Dimensions: 56 in. x 45 in. | Location: Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow.

## **What to Look For**

**Angels:** The three celestial beings who came to visit Abraham symbolically represent the Persons of the Trinity: the Father on the left blesses the Son in the middle, who points to the Holy Spirit on the right. Both Son and Spirit bow their heads to the Father who bows in turn to them. If you follow the dynamic "movement" of the scene starting with the bowed heads and proceeding around the outlines of the bodies on each side, through the configuration of the legs below, you will see that they form a perfect circle.

**Garments:** The Father's garments are shimmering gold and celestial blue, symbols of heaven; the Son's garments reflect the colors of the world as well as His dual nature, divine and human, with a sash of gold to symbolize His kingship; the Spirit's colors are symbols of air, water, and nature for He is the "Lord and giver of life".

**Haloed:** These symbols of holiness radiate white light, signifying God's creative command in Genesis, "Let there be light."

**Objects:** Although difficult to see, each angel holds a thin black staff which points to objects above the figures. The Father's staff points to Abraham's house, implying His own house: heaven; above the Son is the Oak of Mamre, symbolizing His cross as the Tree of Life; above the Spirit is a rock, indicating the Church, which the Holy Spirit guides through history.

**Positioning:** Fittingly, the angels are seated around a table resembling an altar with a Eucharistic chalice in the middle, which Christ blesses. From the seats on either side of the table to the halo of the Son, you can draw a perfect triangle (trinity) inside the circle (unity), which together encompass the four-cornered altar symbolizing the earth.

**Dynamic Unity:** The contemplative "feel" of the whole scene is one of dynamic unity: all three figures are identical in form but distinct in personality and expressive of their unique personal characteristics in a perfect bond of love. It is sublime Trinitarian theology in sacred imagery.



Andrei Rublev-public domain-Wikimedia Commons

# The Gouldian Finch

## *Background*

Gouldian Finches are certainly the most colorful birds in the world. They are also known as Rainbow Finches for obvious reasons. One writer calls them “handcrafted statuettes” of beauty, emphasizing their sumptuous color schemes and standoffishness as pets. They are beautiful – and they know it – which makes them the little divas of the avian world. A few of their habits confirm this idea.



Onno Kalverda / Pixabay



Above all, *they don't like to be handled by humans!* Their “Don't touch the merchandise”

attitude spans the entire species. Fittingly, they are highly sensitive creatures and easily stressed, so they love the safety of their cages, and they thrive best at a pleasant seventy degrees room temperature. Gouldian Finches also tend toward delicate foods (tasty berries, dandelion greens, lettuce) rather than the hard nuts and briars most other finches eat, and they have smooth voices that chirp pleasantly rather than sing. Perfect divas.

By all accounts, most of them are also fairly negligent parents, to the point that it is best to make sure they live with other finches who can act as foster parents to their babies! On the positive side, they are highly social birds and strictly monogamous.



## *Origin*

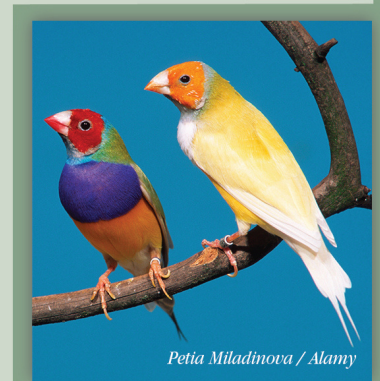
Gouldian Finches take their name from James Gould, an English ornithologist who identified the species in 1841. He named them the “Lady Gouldian Finches” in honor of his wife, Lady Elizabeth Gould. They are natives of the grasslands of northern Australia, particularly the Northern Territory and parts of Queensland and Western Australia. Gould exported the species to Europe, and the beautiful little species actually flourished in captivity.

## *Avian Facts*

- There are only about 2500 Gouldians left in the wild; they are considered an endangered species in Australia;
- Their colorings become richer and more varied in captivity producing color schemes that are found rarely in their natural habitat (for example, only 1% of Gouldians in nature have orange heads, as opposed to a much higher percentage in captivity);
- Gouldian Finches have a high metabolism and need a lot of exercise in order to thrive, which is why it is always recommended to keep them in large cages so they can flit about regularly, burn calories, and advertise their beauty;
- Their feathers are astonishingly brilliant: purple, red, yellow, blue, white, lilac, green, and silver although some are pastel shades; Gouldians are categorized by their head colors, red, black, and yellow/orange, rather than their plumage; the juveniles have olive color plumage until they molt and put on their adult diva outfits. (Images 1 and 3: Wikimedia Commons)



Wegner-Petra / Alamy



Petia Miladinova / Alamy

# The North Rose Window of Chartres Cathedral

## Background

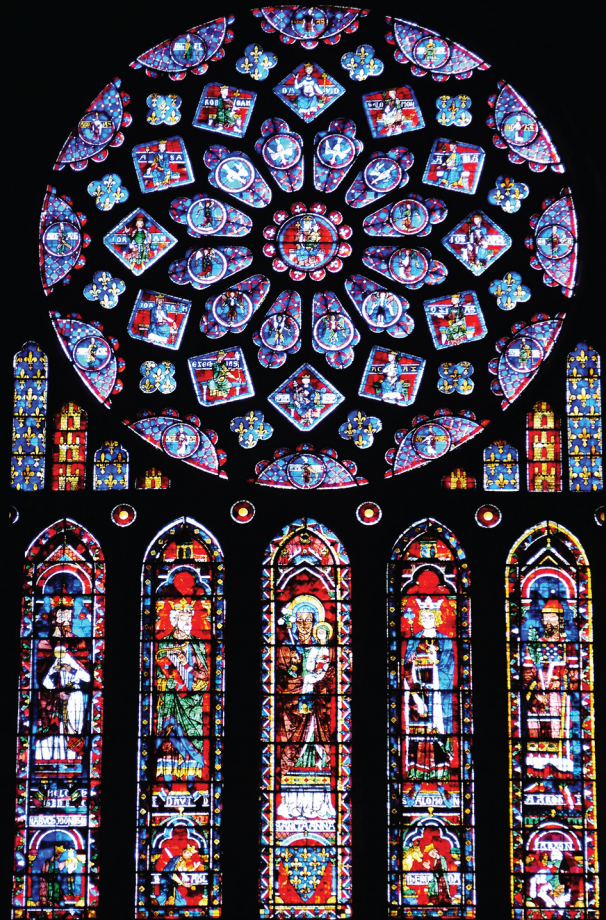
It is sometimes difficult to fathom cultural artifacts that have been around for a millennium, yet the stained glass windows of Chartres Cathedral (56 mi. south of Paris) were created well over 900 years ago and are as brilliant today as the day they were given birth. Chartres contains 167 stained glass windows in total, most of which date from a thirty-year period (1190-1220 AD) during the cathedral's construction. They are the fullest and most complete set of stained glass windows surviving from the Middle Ages.

The large and intricately-designed round windows that light up the walls of Gothic cathedrals are called rose windows because of their resemblance to the flower's rounded and petal-like design. Chartres Cathedral has three of these glorious testimonies to radiant beauty.

## What to Look For

**Theme:** Chartres' North Rose Window is dedicated to the Virgin Mary, as seen by the medallion of Our Lady seated with the Christ Child in the center of the window.

**Geometry:** The central medallion is encircled by four layers of windows of different geometric shapes carefully designed to fill in the entire round space; these small windows feature doves, angels, kings, prophets, and the fleur-de-lis of the French nation.



Wikimedia - Zanon



Wikimedia - Harmonia Amanda

**Ribbing:** The black areas between the panes of glass are the stone ribbing holding the windows in place; seen from the inside, the black spaces create the airy impression of floating points of light piercing the darkness. If you just focus on the design of the ribbing you will get the clear impression of a multi-layered rose in full bloom.

**Lancet Windows:** The tiny vertical windows on either side of the rose window depict the coats of arms of the noble families that sponsored the windows ("lancet" means a sharp, pointed shape, derived from "lance"); underneath the rose window, the central lancet features St. Anne holding the infant Virgin, and is flanked on either side by figures of kings and priests of the Old Testament whose offices foretold the Savior Christ.

## Window-Facts

- The North (Virgin Mary) Rose Window is 33 ft. 4 in. in diameter – about as tall as a three-story building; the larger lancet windows are 24 ft. 6 in. in height, roughly the size of a two-story house.
- Most modern stained glass windows are 1/8" thick; however, medieval stained glass was fully 1" thick, which contributes to the intensity of their color as the light passes through the thick glass.
- The famous "Chartres-blue" of the cathedral's windows was created by mixing cobalt oxide with molten glass; for the medievals, blue always symbolized heaven and was especially associated with the Virgin Mary.





# INVITATION

Maybe it's time for you to take that mini-retreat!

Feel free to visit Sacred Windows and browse all the topics to your heart's content.

Nearly a thousand subscribers now enjoy our Sacred Windows Newsletter which is issued every other Sunday.

By downloading this resource, you're already on the list and will receive the twice-monthly publication (which you may unsubscribe from at any time.) If you enjoy the storytelling, please pass the newsletter on to others.

Our prayer is that Sacred Windows will assist you on your spiritual journey.

*"Beauty is an ultimate value — something that we pursue for its own sake, and for the pursuit of which no further reason need be given." ~ Roger Scruton*

In the meantime, check out the other mini-windows at [SacredWindows.com/mini-windows](https://SacredWindows.com/mini-windows)



## SACRED WINDOWS

An invitation to gaze into heaven's stained glass windows  
Beauty, Truth and Goodness

Visit us at [SacredWindows.com](http://SacredWindows.com)