

Our Beautiful Church

— A SERIES OF ARTICLES DEPICTING THE MAGNIFICENCE OF OUR CHURCH —

PART EIGHT: THE CARVINGS OVER THE ASCAN AVENUE ENTRANCES

The carvings on the tympana () over the portals of the church were carved in limestone and are of great interest as permanent ornaments and veritable homilies in stone. The purpose of all such work is not only to adorn the House of God in designs of lasting beauty, but also to instruct and inspire all who enter the church.*

THE CARVING OVER THE MAIN PORTAL

The carving over the main portal on Ascan Avenue represents the traditional *Pietà* – the figure of the Sorrowful Mother of God, Queen of Martyrs, griefstricken at the sight of the Body of Her Divine Son taken down from the Cross (*photo 1*). The treatment of this traditional subject is beautifully original and the work of Adolph Weinman. It is not the copy of any masterpiece. The gesture of the right hand of the Blessed Mother expresses Her willing submission to the Will of God in the sacrifice of Her Divine Son. Two adoring angels balance the composition. The angel on the left holds the pierced heart, recalling the words addressed by Simeon to Our Blessed Mother: *And thine own soul a sword will pierce*. The angel on the right bears the palm symbolic of the victory of martyrdom.

THE CARVINGS OVER THE SECONDARY ENTRANCES

Over the doorway to the left and to the right of the main portal are carved two original presentations of traditional symbols of the Sacrifice of the Old Law and the Sacrifice of the New Law. Over the doorway to the left is represented the Lamb of the New Testament, bearing the banner of the Cross and resting on the Book with Seven Seals as in the vision related by John in the Book of Revelation (*photo 2*). The Lamb symbolizes Christ, the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world, the Paschal Lamb slain for the sins of humankind. Just as the lamb was slain by God's order and his blood sprinkled on the doorposts to preserve Israelite lives from the sword of the destroying angel, so, through the Blood of Jesus Christ shed for us on the Cross, are we saved from the just anger of God. Over the doorway to the right is carved the figure of a bullock (*photo 3*), one of the temple sacrifices of the Old Testament. Identifying the sacrifice, two angels kneel over the altar holding the Tables of Law on which are inscribed the numerals of the Ten Commandments.



PHOTO 1: The Pietà over the main portal



PHOTO 2: The Sacrifice of the New Law



PHOTO 3: The Sacrifice of the Old Law

Photos by Pepa Tanousis

(*) Tympana: *The space within an arch and above a lintel or subordinate arch, spanning the opening below the arch.*