

THE FRANCES BIGGS  
STAINED GLASS WINDOWS  
IN  
TERENURE COLLEGE CHAPEL

*The College Chapel has received some very beautiful stained glass windows in a series which was commissioned from and completed by Frances Biggs, a well-known Irish artist. The windows are shown below with a brief description of each. The College Chapel also contains four other stained glass windows by other artists.*

*Photographs © Terenure College.*

## The Annunciation to Joseph

*But as he considered this, behold an Angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream saying, “Joseph, son of David, do not fear to take Mary as your wife, for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit. She will bear a son and you shall call his name Jesus .....” When Joseph woke from sleep, he did as the Angel of the Lord commanded him. He took his wife but knew her not until she had borne a son, and he called his name Jesus. (Matthew 1:20-23)*

(The College is dedicated to St Joseph)



## St Thérèse of Lisieux, 1873-1897

The greatest saint of modern times is shown at the point of entering the gates of Carmel, clad partly in Carmelite colours, her hair is still unshorn. The white stars recall her telling her Papa that her name was written in heaven. Highly accentuated is the large host suggesting her love for the Eucharist. The Cross and the red colours suggest her suffering. At the foot of the window the ball recalls her saying that she would make herself into a ball for the Infant Jesus to play with or to leave unheeded. Roses fall in a shower from the cross, illustrating her most famous saying that after her death she would let fall a shower of roses.



## St John of the Cross, 1542-1591

This window illustrates the first of the saints' great poems, *Dark Night*. It shows the lover, in Carmelite garb, leaving his house in darkness, throwing all his cares among the lilies, setting out on the mystical journey. The poem comes to life amid vivid colours which describe the light which burned in his heart amid the night more lovely than the dawn. St John of the Cross ranks among the greatest of the Spanish poets.

*En una noche oscura.....  
Sali sin ser notada  
Estando yo mi casa sosegada*



## St Teresa of Avila, 1515-1582

This window is possibly unique in the world, portraying as it does the spiritual doctrine of the saint. She herself is portrayed as a Doctor of the Church in a seated posture. The fountain of water represents her teaching on prayer. "The water is for the flowers" (good works). The butterfly signifies the transformation of the soul through prayer. The top panel represents in the shape of a prism her most famous work, *The Interior Castle*. The journey of the Christian is a journey inwards into the depths of one's being where the King lives in light inaccessible. The Interior Castle is the finest work ever penned on Mystical Theology.



## Blessed Titus Brandsma, 1881-1942

A Carmelite friar, martyred at Dachau on July 26, 1942. Here he is shown as a crucified figure, hanging from the bars of his cell window, holding the Eucharistic Bread which he concealed during a severe flogging. Around him is the mantle of Mary and the roses of Carmel. The rectangular shapes at the end of the window suggest newspapers. As chaplain to the Catholic journalists in Holland, he came into conflict with the Nazi occupiers for refusing to publish Nazi advertisements. An expert in the Carmelite mystics he visited Terenure College in the Summer of 1935 on his way to lecture in the United States.



## Elijah, Prophet of Carmel

In this window, based on the Elijah story in the Old Testament Book of Kings, we see the prophet of Mount Carmel in his cave, providentially fed by the raven and refreshed by the waters of the brook of Cerith. He will be the one taken up by the fiery chariot, at the base of the window, until the Lord would come again. Today's Carmelite Constitutions describe Elijah in the following words:

*“In Elijah we see the solitary prophet who nurtured his thirst for the one and only God, and lived in his presence. He is the contemplative, burning with passionate love for the Absolute who is God, “his word flaring like a torch.” He is the mystic who, after a long and wearisome journey, learned to read the new signs of God’s presence. He is the prophet who became involved in the lives of the people, and who, by battling against false idols, brought them back to faithfulness to their Covenant with the One God. He is the prophet who was in solidarity with the poor and the forgotten, and who defended those who endured violence and injustice.” (Constitutions 26)*



## Mary, in the Carmelite Tradition

Tradition speaks of Mary as the Lady of the Place. The first chapel on Mount Carmel is dedicated to her. The formal title of the Carmelites is the Brothers of the Blessed Virgin Mary of Mount Carmel. As brothers she is our Sister. The window depicts Mary as both mother and sister. Looking at the window, the figure at the top is Mary in light and glory. There is also another image of Mary nearer to us, almost playful, and showing us the way. She is among us an older sister.

*“Mary lives among us, as mother and sister,  
attentive to our needs;  
along with us she waits and hopes,  
suffers and rejoices.”* (Constitutions 27)

We Carmelites, our hands raised in prayer, turn towards Mary our sister on the journey of life and Mary, the beauty and glory of Carmel, watches over us along our pilgrim way.



## Albert, Lawgiver of Carmel

Albert was born in Italy in the middle of the twelfth century. He became bishop of Bobbio (connected with St Columbanus) in 1184 and subsequently Patriarch of Jerusalem in 1205. He was a good pastor and a peace maker. Approached by the hermits of Carmel to set down a way of life for them, his text is the origin of the Carmelite *Rule*. Albert's feast day is 17<sup>th</sup> of September.

This window depicts one of the core prescriptions of Albert's *Rule* (14):

*“An oratory should be built as conveniently as possible among the cells, where, if it can be done without difficulty, you are to gather each morning to hear Mass.”*

The artist shows Albert presenting the Host to the gathered community. Each figure is unique, yet in the Lord formed into one. They are wrapped in the blue of Mary's mantle with the mountains of Carmel in the background. Their life lived in allegiance to Jesus Christ is the flowing of Carmel amidst the rocks and sand found at the base of the window.

*“Liturgical prayer is the highest form of communal encounter with God, and brings about what it celebrates.”*  
(Constitutions 69)

