

Chancel Panels

The 9 *opus sectile* panels which decorate the Apse of the Chancel depict the story of the life of Christ.

<p>1. The Annunciation</p>	<p>The first panel illustrates the angel Gabriel visiting the Virgin Mary to tell her that she will conceive a child, the son of God and that he will be called Jesus. As Mary kneels before the angel, a dove in the background sends a beam down onto Mary filling her with the Holy Spirit.</p>
<p>2. The Birth of Jesus</p>	<p>In this scene, Mary with her husband Joseph and the baby Jesus are in the stable with an ox, a lamb and a donkey. A beam shines down from a star in the sky onto baby Jesus who sits on his mother's knee with his arm outstretched towards the dove which sits on Mary's other hand.</p>
<p>3. Jesus is Presented in the Temple</p>	<p>Mary and Joseph bring the baby Jesus into the temple where Simeon and Anna greet the Christ child. The entrance to the temple is depicted as a simple architectural structure in the classical style evocative.</p>
<p>4. The Baptism of Jesus by John the Baptist</p>	<p>This panel shows John the Baptist pouring water onto Jesus' head to baptise him. Jesus stands in the river Jordan with John the Baptist on the banks holding a flag which looks to be the cross of St George. A dove flies down towards Jesus symbolising the presence of the Holy Spirit in the baptism of Christ. The phrase 'this is my beloved son in whom I am well pleased' tails down from a bright star/the sun in a blue and gold ribbon.</p>
<p>5. The Crucifixion</p>	<p>In the central <i>opus sectile</i> panel, we see Christ in a crown of thorns hanging on an ornate golden cross, not on a cross of wood as the bible tells us. The inscription on the cross 'INRH' means 'Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews'. He has a nail through each hand, a nail through his feet and wears only a loin cloth. Two angels above his head carry a</p>

	<p>grey ribbon evocative of a gravestone with the words 'it is finished' etched onto it. Two women stand at the foot of the cross; the woman in blue is Mary, mother of Jesus and the lady in the pink robes is thought to be Mary Magdalene.</p>
<p>6. The Resurrection</p>	<p>A group of centurions in the background guard the tomb where Jesus' body lay. However, Christ stands triumphantly at the forefront, looking out of the panel at the viewer. Dressed in fine, cream robes and wearing a crown of gold, Christ raises one hand up and holds a flag with a golden cross in his other hand to signal his triumph over death.</p>
<p>7. The Resurrected Christ appears to Mary Magdalene</p>	<p>Set in a garden with the city in the background, this panel illustrates Mary Magdalene on her knees looking up at Jesus who has appeared to her.</p>
<p>8. Christ gives Peter his Charge</p>	<p>Peter the apostle kneels before Jesus who asks his disciple to look after his sheep. The flock of sheep are behind Jesus and in the background, there are some ships, perhaps suggesting Christ's imminent departure. Another disciple dressed in green looks on as this scene unfolds.</p>
<p>9. The Coming of the Holy Spirit</p>	<p>This tableau depicts Jesus, the disciples and Mary (Christ's mother) all together in one place. A dove sends beams down onto them and the tufts of red on each of their heads resemble flames to represent the coming of the Holy Spirit.</p>