# TREASURES OF THE ROSEAU CATHEDRAL: the MONSTRANCE.

By Bernard Lauwyck .

**The CATHEDRAL MONSTRANCE**

I got a response from a parishioner on my article on the Cathedral  Baptismal Font, which was stored away for more than a decade, and is now installed in St. Gerard's Hall, officially called  THE CATHEDRAL CHAPEL:

It reads :  "*Your article in today's Chronicle regarding the restoration of the font has brought such joy to my heart.  As one of the thousands baptised in that font. I was shocked on my return to Dominica  after 34 years to see children being baptised in a cheap basin and the font stored away on the floor. To me it was desecration. Praise God someone could appreciate the value of this antique and preserve it.*"

I am sharing this with you, because today I want to write about a Cathedral Monstrance, which was picked up by Mrs. June  Letang out of a dirty location, cleaned and restored to its former glory by Mr. Roy ROYER.   We must thank them for this !



The function of a monstrance, or "ostensorium"  is  to display or "show" the consecrated host, the Body of Christ.

Introduced with the institution of the Feast of Corpus Domini (Feast of the Body of the Lord) on September 8,1264  or the Feast of  Corpus Christi (the solemnity of **The Most Holy Body and Blood of Christ** ), monstrances became more important as their use stresses the validity of the doctrine of transubstantiation ( the bread and wine on the altar becomes the body and blood of Christ during the consecration during the Eucharist). Also in  the Greek Orthodox Church the feast of Corpus Christi is known in the calendars of the Syrians, Armenians, Copts and Melchites. I understand that the feast is also celebrated in some Anglican and Lutheran churches. This is a very old feast of the Real Presence of Christ.

Every Thursday,   the Blessed Sacrament is  placed on the altar for  public veneration and adoration   in the Cathedral chapel as it was before in the Roseau Cathedral. The day finishes with  Benediction  at 6 pm.

The Blessed Sacrament was moved in a monstrance  in procession from the Cathedral to St. Gerard's Hall on  Easter Sunday April 8, 2012 as part  of the Cathedral church leaving ceremony, conducted by Bishop Gabriel Malzaire.

Now let us have a closer look of this magnificent piece of art, a genuine wonder of precision craftsmanship . A huge range of techniques was used in its manufacture as every surface has elaborate decorations. They are embossed with floral designs, encrusted with semi-precious gemstones, contain enamelled designed panels and filigree work( = is a delicate kind of jewellery made with twisted threads, beads , creating curving motifs).

It is immediately clear to any spectator that the focal point of this artwork is the circular space where the consecrated host has to be inserted. A circular metal ring with glass, called the "lunula" or " custodia", holds the consecrated host and is fixed in the monstrance, to display the Real Presence of our Lord . When the monstrance is in use, we, as Catholics, belief that Christ is actually present.

To describe this magnificent piece of art, I am lost for words.  So I will have to limit myself to some of the major features in this article.

**These are the  main components :**

- ❖ the **brass cross** on top,



- ❖ the brass and blue delicately **designed corona with the "lunula"** and two sets of  8  blue enamelled lobes , out of which sprout branches, plants, leaves.



- ❖ **the stem with 4 enamel inserts** facing towards  the  4 corners of the world, depicting the symbols of the 4 evangelists.  These signify that the doctrine of the Holy Eucharist  rests solidly upon the four Gospels:

> **The Eagle**—symbolizing the Gospel of John which soars high above the earth with its  profound insights in the Divinity of Christ;
>
> **The Lion**—symbolizing St. Mark who commences his Gospel narrative with the account of St. John the Baptist in the desert, the abode of wild beasts;
>
> **The Ox**—representing St. Luke because he begins his Gospel with the account of Zachary offering sacrifice in the temple;
>
> **The Man**—typifying St. Matthew because he commences his Gospel narrative with the genealogy of Christ.

❖ the beautifully designed wide **base on four carved feet** with brass and blue ornamentation and semi-precious red gemstones.

I need you to **understand the central symbolism of this monstrance** which is based on Ezekiel 1 and his description of God's throne :

This monstrance is fabricated with as inspiration **Ezekiel's vision of the beauty of God's throne , the Heavenly Throne of Jesus.** (Ezekiel 1 )

Ezekiel in describing his vision of the "Throne of God" says he saw " *a fire infolding itself, and a brightness was about it, and out of the midst thereof as the colour of amber , out of the midst of the fire."*

The fire and brightness is represented by the brass colour of the monstrance, the colour amber by the red gemstones .

Ezekiel continues " *⁵Also out of the midst thereof came the likeness of four living creatures…..they had the face of a man, the face of a lion, … face of an ox and the face of an eagle.*

As mentioned above these images are present on the stem as enamelled small panels facing the four corners of the world.

Ezekiel continues "*²⁶And above the firmament that was over their heads was the likeness of a throne, as the appearance of a sapphire stone: and upon the likeness of the throne was the likeness as the appearance of a man above upon it. ..This was the appearance of the likeness of the GLORY OF THE LORD."* Ez. 1:4-28.

The blue sapphire is represented by the many decorated blue panels on the monstrance.

The artwork of plants, branches, flowers, flowery designs, fruits illustrates God's Glorious Presence in his creation.

Many more meaningful details could be looked at on this fine artwork but the space is limited in this article.

Next week I will present to you my first article on the CRYPT of the Roseau Cathedral. This is an area in the Cathedral that is relatively unknown and which has a fascinating history. Hope you will join me next week in the Chronicle !

Enjoy the pictures below.