

THE ANGLO BELGIAN AIR FORCES MEMORIAL WINDOWS

The Belgian Branch of The Royal Air Forces Association has taken the initiative to create a fund to finance and instal nine stained glass windows in a chapel of the National Basilica. The windows serve as a reminder of the gallantry not only of the Belgians who served in The Royal Air Force in World War II but also of the heroism of those who organised the escape lines for aircrews who had been shot down to return safely to the United Kingdom. Much is also owed to those Belgian Agents who, at great risk to themselves, supplied intelligence reports which undoubtedly saved the lives of many aircrew.

The windows also symbolise the long standing spirit of comradeship between our two nations, in particular the Belgian Air Force and The Royal Air Force, by paying homage to all those Belgians who gave their lives in the service of The Royal Air Force it is earnestly hoped that future generations will pause and reflect on hardships endured and sacrifices made to maintain freedom and liberty.

The chapel in which the windows are displayed is one of five small chapels in the north transept of the Basilica.

A SHORT DESCRIPTION OF THE CENTRAL WINDOWS

The focal point of the central window is the Royal Air Force emblem set in a background of various shades of blue. The radiant sun, from which emerges a white dove of peace carrying an olive branch, sends forth its rays washing the national flags of the United Kingdom and Belgium in the glorious colours of the rainbow. The whole concept evokes a sense of timeless majesty in the creation of the universe and mankind's place in the scheme of things.

The window on the left represents Jesus Christ with outstretched arms sending forth his spirit of light, love and peace to a warring humanity fighting in outer darkness.

The window on the right depicts a Belgian airman in the uniform of The Royal Air Force listening to the words of Jesus. He is surrounded by birds flying in an anti-clockwise direction signifying the spiritual qualities of his immortal soul reaching upwards in its pilgrimage towards God. A lone agent parachutist falls from a moonlit sky.

THE ARTIST

Born in Poperinge in 1930, Madame Theodora Veranneman belongs to a long line of notable artists, Alphonse and Louis Veranneman being only two, specialising in works of a religious nature. She studied painting under Leon Pringels and architecture under Malcause at the Academie des Beaux Arts de St. Gilles.

Her talented work exudes a freshness and a vivacity which exhilarates and is in great demand. She has realised many important commissions for churches in Belgium including the National Basilica. Her reputation as an international artist is further enhanced by the creation of The Royal Air Force memorial windows.