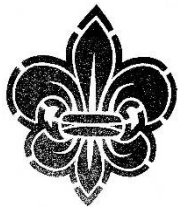




The Marian Symbols

So, what do all these symbols on the back of the Sanctuary Wall mean? It is called a diaper (dee-a-pur) pattern. A diaper pattern in art and architecture refers to a decorative, repeating geometric or floral design, often used to embellish large surfaces such as walls, ceilings, or textiles. In this case, our Sanctuary Wall. It doesn't depict a scene but rather serves as an ornamental background. The diaper stencil for our Sanctuary Wall was designed by New Guild Studio of Pittsburgh, PA, under the direction of Fr. Jordan Hainsey. They were hand stenciled directly onto the wall and the latticed stencil design features four traditional Marian symbols: a fleur-de-lis, the eight-pointed star, the Immaculate Heart of Mary, and the Ave Maria.

Fleur-de-lis



The fleur-de-lis (French for “flower of the lily”) is a stylized lily flower that has long been associated with purity and the Virgin Mary in Catholic symbolism. It represents her chastity and her role as the Queen of Heaven. In Catholic art, it's often used to symbolize Mary's virtues, especially her purity and innocence. Additionally, it has connections to the Trinity due to its three-petaled shape, reinforcing Christian doctrine in visual form. It became especially prominent in medieval European religious art and heraldry.

Eight-Pointed Star



The eight-pointed star is rich in symbolic meaning. In Catholic tradition, the number eight represents new beginnings and resurrection—think of Christ rising on the “eighth day” (the day after the Sabbath). The star is often linked to the Virgin Mary as “Stella Maris” (Star of the Sea), guiding the faithful to Christ like a star guiding sailors to safe harbor. In Marian art, this star frequently appears on her clothing or above her head, emphasizing her guiding role and divine motherhood.

Immaculate Heart of Mary



Next, is the Immaculate Heart of Mary. This is one of the most beloved devotional symbols in Catholicism. The Immaculate Heart of Mary represents her interior life—her joys, sorrows, virtues, and above all, her pure love for God and her maternal love for Jesus and all humanity. It's often shown encircled by roses or pierced with a sword, reflecting Simeon's prophecy in Luke 2:35 (“a

sword will pierce your own soul too”), which symbolizes Mary’s suffering. This image invites the faithful to contemplate Mary’s compassion and to imitate her total devotion to God.

Ave Maria



Finally, the “Ave Maria”. “Ave Maria” (“Hail Mary”) is both a prayer and a symbol deeply embedded in Catholic devotion. In art, “Ave Maria” often appears as an inscription or motif, especially in Marian shrines, altarpieces, and illuminated manuscripts. It signifies reverence and invocation of the Virgin Mary. The phrase honors the angel Gabriel’s greeting to Mary at the Annunciation and is central to the Rosary. In the arts, it reflects the tradition of Marian devotion and the beauty of the Incarnation moment—God becoming man through Mary’s “yes.” In this stencil, the monogram displays both an “A” and an “M” representing Ave Maria, but upon closer inspection, the entire word “MARIA” is subtly spelled out within the design.

So, as we stand before the beauty of our Sanctuary Wall, we realize it is more than decoration—it is a silent proclamation of faith. Each symbol is an invitation to see through Mary’s eyes, to walk by her light, and to love with her heart. The diaper pattern reminds us that even in the seemingly small details, God’s presence is woven into the fabric of our worship space and our lives.

As you gaze upon these symbols during Mass or prayer, let them lift your heart. Let them remind you that Mary is not a distant figure, but a mother close at hand—always pointing us toward her Son, always interceding for us, always welcoming us into deeper trust and love. May the beauty of this wall lead us to imitate the even greater beauty of Mary’s virtues in our daily lives.

Additional Resources:

www.bluearmy.org

<http://catholicapologetics.info/catholicteaching/privaterevelation/fatima.htm>

True Devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary by St. Louis De Montfort

33 Days to Morning Glory: A Do-It-Yourself Retreat in Preparation for Marian Consecration by Michael E. Gaitley, MIC.

Those Who Saw Her: Apparitions of Mary by Catherine M. Odell