

# The Woman: Seeing Winefride

Writing about the saints is called hagiography – a way of presenting holy women and men as marvellous individuals for all their human faults, who can be sources of inspiration to Christians as they follow Jesus Christ in their daily lives.

Also important are the traditions of art and representation. Saints are often portrayed with items relating to their stories and to their Christian witness, which provides a way of finding out about them without words. This is a tradition which may feel unfamiliar, but it can be very rewarding just using our eyes and think about what the colours, shapes and symbols mean. Many people are drawn to, and love looking at, stained-glass in churches, for example.

*St. Winefride's Well, Holywell, Flintshire, UK. Stained glass window showing Saint Winefride.*



*Original photo: Andrew/flickr*

In this stained-glass representation, St Winefride is represented in long, flowing blue clothing and quietly listening to St Beuno. They sit together, but also apart, in a pastoral landscape of fields and trees and by the spring of water that sprang from the place where St Winefride died and was restored to life. Nature is green and flourishing and becoming fruitful around them, just as the nourishing words of Jesus bear fruit in people's hearts when they become Christians and seek to follow him.

Both figures are dressed in the clothing of a religious order, showing their dedication to Christ and St Winefride holds a rosary (the prayer beads with a cross), showing the importance to her of prayer. As is traditional, both figures have haloes, showing that they are holy persons who can inspire us.

Behind St Winefride is the cross of Jesus, seemingly supporting her, part of her background, and what is rather more difficult to see here (but see the detail below) is the faint broken line across her neck which tells us, visually, what happened to her.

The colours also tell us something. If you have ever looked at other stained-glass windows you will often see that Mary, the Mother of Jesus, is often represented in blue. This colour is often used by the makers of stained-glass to represent faithfulness, chastity, and hopefulness in faith. The greens in the glass and the nature images speak of hope, rebirth and restoration.

### Some things to do:

- How do you imagine St Winefride if you were going to describe her to someone else? (You could look at some of the pictures on some of the other resources for ideas or at the detail reproduced below.)
- If you were going to produce a picture of St Winefride to encapsulate her life and story for others, what would you put into the picture and why? You even could try icon making, tapestry or painting if you wanted to make something more elaborate than just a drawing.
- Try to visit a church or place associated with St Winefride (or look online) and find out how St Winefride is celebrated visually there.

