

The panels representing **angels** at the outer edges of the altarpiece show the influence of 15th century Italian sculptors such as Donatello (c-1385/6-1466), who pioneered this type of very shallow relief sculpture.



Feast of Herod: Donatello
c.1425 (Baptistry, Florence)



angels playing musical instruments



The Peter Pan
Statue Sefton
Park—also by the
sculptor *George
Frampton.

The altarpiece like St Clare's church itself, is an outstanding product of two related episodes in 19th-century architecture and design: the Gothic Revival and the Arts and Crafts movement. Both the Gothic Revival and the Arts and Crafts movement taught that every aspect of a building – furniture, metalwork, sculpture and painted decoration, as well as architecture – should combine to make one work of art. This would therefore have been conceived as an essential part of the interior of the church by the architect of St Clare's, **Leonard Stokes** (1858-1925).

The altarpiece was the joint work of two artists, ***George Frampton** (1860-1928) and **Robert Anning Bell** (1863-1933).



St Clare's
Arundel Avenue,
Sefton Park

The Altarpiece

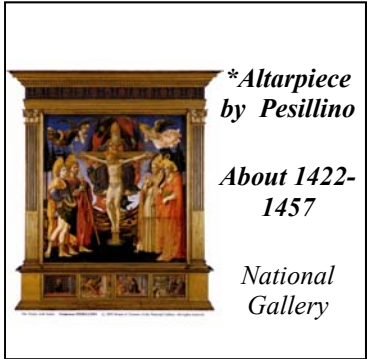


We are indebted to Joseph Sharples who provided most of the detailed descriptions and to Vincent Ng for the photograph of the reredos

St Clares Church : Arundel Avenue : Sefton Park : Liverpool



This altarpiece combines painting and coloured low relief sculpture and draws on Renaissance precedents, particularly the centre panel adapted from a painting of the Holy Trinity by the 15th century artist Pesellino, now in the National Gallery in London.* It has been described as "not only a beautiful work of art in itself, but also a crucial element in the overall design of this exceptionally important Liverpool church".



*Altarpiece by Pesellino

About 1422-1457

National Gallery

The side panels are identified by Latin inscriptions below each figure, and also by traditional symbols.

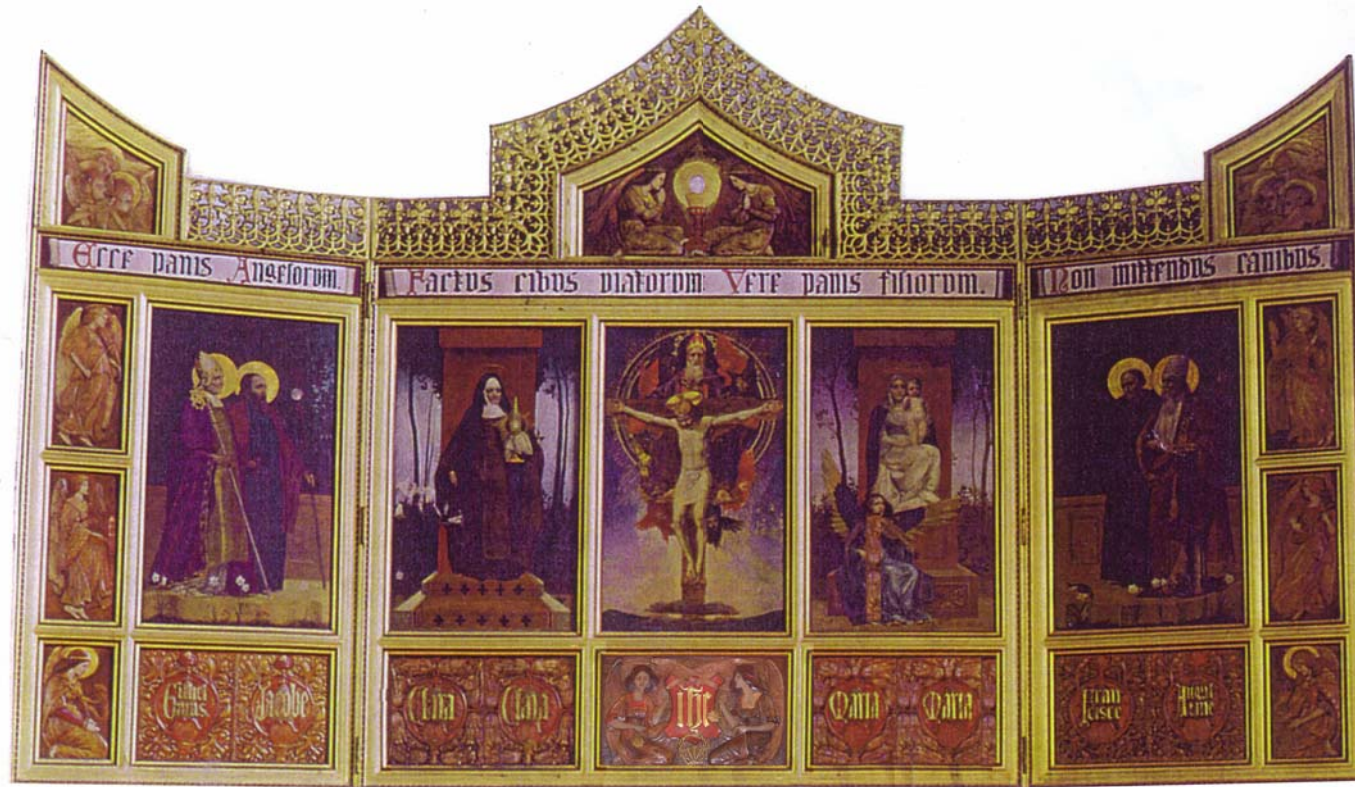
St William, Bishop of York, wears a bishop's mitre and carries a crozier;

St James carries a staff bearing a scallop shell, the badge worn by medieval pilgrims to his shrine at Compostella in northern Spain.



With its rich colours, gilding and carving the altarpiece contrasts with the relatively plain interior of the church and is designed to focus attention on the altar and sanctuary. Its shape – several separate paintings arranged to form a wide central section with narrower folding wings is modelled on 15th century examples,

The main theme of the altarpiece is the Holy Eucharist. The eucharistic theme is taken up by the central panel, a representation of the Holy Trinity in which the crucified Christ is most prominent. In the small panel above, two kneeling angels adore the chalice and Host, while in the panel below another pair of angels incense the sacred monogram 'ihc' (an abbreviation of the name Jesus in Greek) and the nails and crown of thorns associated with the Crucifixion.



At least three of the saints depicted on the side panels were included because they were the name saints of the joint founders of St Clare's, the brothers **William James** and **Francis Ecksley Reynolds**.

St Francis wears the Franciscan habit and there is a bird at his feet, recalling his sermon to the birds; and above the shoulder of St Augustine, Bishop of Hippo, is a heart pierced by arrows, a symbol derived from the saint's autobiographical Confessions in which he describes his own heart having been pierced by the arrows of God's love.

On the right, the **Virgin Mary** holds the **infant Christ** who raises his hand to bless, while on the left **St Clare** holds up a **monstrance** in a gesture of benediction: the **infant Christ** and the **monstrance** containing the Host are evidently meant to echo one another, affirming the doctrine that the consecrated Host is the body of Christ.

St Clares Altarpiece