

# THE ELIJAH WINDOW



NATIONAL SHRINE OF OUR LADY OF MOUNT CARMEL

# THE ELIJAH STORY

An interpretation by Aboriginal artist, Vicki Couzens

*The Carmelite Order takes its name from Mount Carmel in the Holy Land. This mountain was the site of a contest between Elijah and the prophets of the false god Baal. The first Carmelites lived on Mount Carmel as a community of hermits gathered around a spring called the Well of Elijah in the thirteenth century.*

*In Carmelite spirituality the Prophet Elijah is still recognized as an inspirational model for today. Carmelites stress that from Elijah they learn to have an undivided heart, dedicated to the service of God. They see in Elijah a man who made a choice without compromise for the cause of God. Carmelites remember, and in some ways relive, the prophet's experience some of which is described in the six panels which make up this window. He hid in the desert in times of dryness and faced the challenge of the false prophets of a dead idol. He journeyed to Mount Horeb, to meet the Lord in new and unexpected ways, and to understand that God is present even when he appears to be absent.*

*This window, located in the Elijah Chapel of Our Lady of Mount Carmel Church, depicts six episodes in the life of Elijah as told in the First and Second Book of Kings.*

## THE ARTIST

Vicki Couzens is a Keerray Wurrong woman from the Western Districts of Victoria. Vicki says "My work is inspired by my culture. It is my passion for the reclamation, regeneration and revitalisation of our cultural heritage knowledge and practices that drives me and informs the work that I do.

The images and installations I create are drawn from the teachings of our Ancestors, Old People and Elders who guide me in my day to day life.

Land, language and identity are who we are..... through the use of language, stories and image our culture is made stronger, our connections are made stronger, we are made stronger."

## THE ARTISANS

Wathaurong Glass & Arts Pty Ltd, North Geelong.

The name "Wathaurong" (wathawurrung or wada warrung) is a recognised tribe, consisting of 25 groups (clans).

The company was formed to express Aboriginal art in glass, including the use of kiln forming, sandblasting or any other technique suitable to achieve the desired result. Great pride is taken in producing unique artwork with a net result of high quality glass products.

All staff are Aboriginal and the company is not for profit. It's structured so that the community of Wathaurong and the broader community will be the beneficiaries of any profit.



## THE DESIGN

*To enclose the design, the artist, Vicki Couzens, has used the outline of a possum skin cloak which was traditionally worn by Aboriginal mothers to enfold their children, to keep them close and warm and to provide a place of comfort and nurture in which to pass on the traditional stories to them.*

*The possum skin cloak therefore represents the parish community, symbolic of “mother church” into which we are warmly invited and enfolded by the love and care that we share for each other and within which, our faith is nourished and nurtured as we gather together to listen to the Word of God.*

*The Prophet Elijah, integral in Carmelite tradition, is represented in all the panels by two parallel lines which are representative of Elijah’s life as parallel to Jesus’.*

# THE PANELS

THE CALL OF ELIJAH BY YAHWEH, GOD OF ISRAEL

*(1 Kings 17: 1-6)*

THE MIRACLE OF THE FLOUR AND THE OIL

*(1 Kings 17: 7-16)*

RESURRECTION OF THE WIDOW'S SON

*(1 Kings 17: 17-24)*

THE CHALLENGE ON MOUNT CARMEL

*(1 Kings 18: 20-39)*

THE END OF THE DROUGHT AND THE MEETING WITH GOD

*( 1 Kings 18: 41-46; 19: 9-18)*

THE PROPHET ELIJAH RETURNS TO GOD

*(2 Kings: 1-13)*



*1 Kings 17:1-6*

Elijah the Tishbite, of Tishbe in Gilead, said to Ahab, 'By the life of Yahweh, God of Israel, whom I serve, there will be neither dew nor rain these coming years unless I give the word. The words of the Lord came to Elijah, 'Go east and hide by the torrent of Cherith east of the Jordan. You can drink from the stream, and I have ordered the ravens to bring you food there.' So he set out and did as Yahweh had said; Elijah went and stayed by the torrent of Cherith, east of the Jordan. The ravens brought him bread in the morning and meat in the evening, and he quenched his thirst at the stream.

---

*Vicki Couzen's interpretation of the text*

**PANEL ONE**

On the left is the river Jordan. The circle represents Elijah's camp east of the river where he waited and was fed bread and meat (small circles and squares) by the ravens which are represented by the tracks.





### *1 Kings 17:7-16*

After a while the stream dried up, for the country had had no rain. And then the word of Yahweh came to Elijah, 'Up and go to Zarephath and stay there. I have ordered a widow there to give you food.' So he went off to Sidon. And when he reached the city gate, there was a widow gathering sticks. Addressing her he said, 'Please bring a little water in a pitcher for me to drink.' She was on her way to fetch it when he called after her. 'Please', he said, 'bring me a scrap of bread in your hand.' 'As Yahweh your God lives,' she replied, 'I have no baked bread, but only a handful of meal in a jar and a little oil in a jug; I am just gathering a stick or two to go and prepare this for myself and my son to eat, and then we shall die.' But Elijah said to her, 'Do not be afraid, go and do as you have said; but first make a little scone of it for me and bring it to me, and then make some for yourself and for your son. For Yahweh, God of Israel, says this: Jar of meal shall not be spent, jug of oil shall not be emptied, before the day when Yahweh sends rain on the face of the earth.' The woman went and did as Elijah told her and they ate the food, she, himself and her son. The jar of meal was not spent nor the jug of oil emptied, just as Yahweh had foretold through Elijah.

---

*Vicki Couzen's interpretation of the text*

### **PANEL TWO**

The river is dry.

There are sticks and the jug of oil and water. There is a grinding stone to make the scone/damper. The mother and son are represented by the two circles beside the grinding stone.



### *1 Kings 17:17-24*

It happened after this that the son of the mistress of the house fell sick and died. And the woman said to Elijah, 'What quarrel have you with me, man of God? Have you come here to bring my sins home to me and to kill my son?' 'Give me your son,' he said, and taking him from her lap he carried him to the upper room and laid him on his bed. He cried out to God, 'My God, may the soul of this child, I beg you, come into him again!' And the child's soul came back into his body and he lived. Elijah brought him down from the upper room into the house, and gave him to his mother. 'Look,' Elijah said, 'your son is alive.' And the woman replied, 'Now I know you are a man of God and the word of the Lord in your mouth is truth itself.'

---

*Vicki Couzen's interpretation of the text*

### **PANEL THREE**

In the centre is a cross with the Elijah symbol in it to show Elijah is a man of God - as the woman realises in the end.

In the top left hand corner is the son when he is dead.

Below are the figures of the son and mother when he has been resurrected.



### *1 Kings 18:20-39*

Ahab called all Israel together and assembled the prophets on Mount Carmel. Elijah stepped out in front of all the people. 'How long', he said, 'do you mean to hobble first on one leg then on the other? If Yahweh is God, follow him; if Baal, follow him.' Elijah then said to them, 'Let two bulls be given us; let them choose one for themselves, dismember it but not set fire to it. I in my turn shall prepare the other bull, but not set fire to it. You must call on the name of your god, and I shall call on the name of Yahweh; the god who answers with fire, is God indeed.' They took the bull and prepared it, and from morning to midday they called on the name of Baal. 'O Baal, answer us!' they cried, but there was no voice, no answer, as they performed their hobbling dance round the altar which they had made. Midday passed, and they ranted on until the time when the offering is presented; but there was no voice, no answer, no sign of attention. Then Elijah said to all the people, 'Come over to me,' and all the people came over to him. He repaired Yahweh's altar which had been torn down. Elijah took twelve stones, corresponding to the number of tribes of the sons of Jacob, to whom the word of Yahweh had come, 'Israel is to be your name,' and built an altar in the name of Yahweh. Round the altar he dug a trench of a size to hold two measures of seed. He then arranged the wood, dismembered the bull, and laid it on the wood. Then he said, 'Fill four jars with water and pour it on the burnt offering and on the wood.' They did this. He said, 'Do it a second time;' they did it a second time. He said, 'Do it a third time;' they did it a third time. The water flowed round the altar until even the trench itself was full of water. At the time when the offering is presented, Elijah the prophet stepped forward. 'Yahweh, God of Abraham, Isaac and Israel,' he said, 'let them know today that you are God in Israel, and that I am your servant, that I have done all these things at your command. Answer me, Yahweh, answer me, so that this people may know that you, Yahweh, are God and are winning back their hearts.' Then Yahweh's fire fell and consumed the burnt offering and the wood and licked up the water in the trench. When all the people saw this they fell on their faces. 'Yahweh is God,' they cried, 'Yahweh is God!'

---

*Vicki Couzen's interpretation of the text*

#### **PANEL FOUR**

Mount Carmel is at the top of the panel. The altar of stones with water around it and the bulls, represented by the horns, are in the lower part. Flames come from the bottom right hand corner to consume Elijah's offering.

The people dancing are represented around the circles.



### *1 Kings 18:41-46*

Elijah said to Ahab, 'Go back now, eat and drink; for I hear the approaching sound of rain.' While Ahab went back to eat and drink, Elijah climbed to the top of Carmel and bowed down to the ground, putting his face between his knees. 'Now go up', he told his servant, 'and look out to sea.' He went up and looked. 'There is nothing at all,' he said. Seven times Elijah told him to go back. The seventh time, the servant said, 'Now there is a cloud, small as a man's hand, rising from the sea.' Elijah said, 'Go and say to Ahab, "Harness the chariot and go down before the rain stops you."' And with that the sky grew dark with cloud and storm, and rain fell in torrents. Ahab mounted his chariot and made for Jezreel. But the hand of Yahweh had come on Elijah and, hitching up his clothes, he ran ahead of Ahab all the way to Jezreel.

### *1 Kings 19:9-18*

There he went into a cave and spent the night there. Then the word of Yahweh came to him saying, 'What are you doing here, Elijah?' He replied, 'I am full of jealous zeal for Yahweh Sabaoth, because the Israelites have abandoned your covenant, have torn down your altars and put your prophets to the sword. I am the only one left, and now they want to kill me.' Then he was told, 'Go out and stand on the mountain before Yahweh.' For at that moment Yahweh was going by. A mighty hurricane split the mountains and shattered the rocks before Yahweh. But Yahweh was not in the hurricane. And after the hurricane, an earthquake. But Yahweh was not in the earthquake. And after the earthquake, fire. But Yahweh was not in the fire. And after the fire, a light murmuring sound. And when Elijah heard this, he covered his face with his cloak and went out and stood at the entrance of the cave. Then a voice came to him, which said, 'What are you doing here, Elijah?' He replied, 'I am full of jealous zeal for Yahweh, God Sabaoth.'

---

*Vicki Couzen's interpretation of the text*

#### **PANEL FIVE**

Again there is the mountain, above the mountain is the cloud and rain and the sea/horizon.

Elijah is there with another single stick/line symbol for Ahab.

Across the bottom are the elements of hurricane (spiral) earthquake (jagged line) and flames. The black interweaving lines are the gentle breeze – 'voice of God'.

The semi circle is the cave.





### *2 Kings 2:1-13*

This is what happened when Yahweh took Elijah up to heaven in the whirlwind: Elijah and Elisha set out from Gilgal, and Elijah said to Elisha, 'You stay here, for Yahweh is only sending me to Bethel.' But Elisha replied, 'As Yahweh lives and as you yourself live, I will not leave you!' and they went down to Bethel. The brotherhood of prophets living at Bethel came out to meet Elisha and said, 'Do you know that Yahweh will carry your lord and master away today?' 'Yes, I know,' he said, 'be quiet.' Elijah said, 'Elisha, you stay here, Yahweh is only sending me to Jericho.' But he replied, 'As Yahweh lives and as you yourself live, I will not leave you!' and they went on to Jericho. The brotherhood of prophets living at Jericho went up to Elisha and said, 'Do you know that Yahweh will carry your lord and master away today?' 'Yes, I know,' he said, 'be quiet.' Elijah said, 'Elisha, you stay here, Yahweh is only sending me to the Jordan.' But he replied, 'As Yahweh lives and as you yourself live, I will not leave you!' And they went on together. Fifty of the brotherhood of prophets followed them, halting some distance away as the two of them stood beside the Jordan. Elijah took his cloak, rolled it up and struck the water; and the water divided to left and right, and the two of them crossed over dry-shod. When they had crossed, Elijah said to Elisha, 'Make your request. What can I do for you before I am snatched away from you?' Elisha answered, 'Let me inherit a double share of your spirit.' 'Your request is difficult,' Elijah said. 'If you see me while I am being snatched away from you, it will be as you ask; if not, it will not be so.' Now as they walked on, talking as they went, a chariot of fire appeared and horses of fire coming between the two of them; and Elijah went up to heaven in the whirlwind. Elisha saw it, and shouted, 'My father! My father! Chariot of Israel and its chargers!' Then he lost sight of him, and taking hold of his own clothes he tore them in half. He picked up Elijah's cloak which had fallen, and went back and stood on the bank of the Jordan.

---

*Vicki Couzen's interpretation of the text*

#### **PANEL SIX**

The spiral and flames represent the chariot of fire which takes Elijah up to heaven.



This window dedicated to the Prophet Elijah  
was blessed by  
Fr Wayne Stanhope O.Carm.  
Prior Provincial  
on the  
Feast of the Triumph of the Cross  
14 September 2008  
commemorating the 60th anniversary of the  
foundation of the Australian Carmelite Province  
of Our Lady, Help of Christians

DESIGNED BY VICKI COUZENS  
MADE BY WATHAURONG GLASS & ARTS PTY LTD

*The Elijah Window dedication panel*