

## **A Local Setting for a European Text**

**See leaflet description, “Children’s Chapel,” St James’ Church, 173  
King Street, Sydney, NSW, 2000, Australia**

Mrs Anderson has written the following description of the ideas that form the motif of the chapel decorations:- “To bring the story of Bethlehem into surroundings perfectly familiar to the mind of the Australian child, and to give these familiar surroundings a beauty strange enough to awaken wonder in a child’s mind, so that through this wonder might come a suggestion that beyond the world they know there is another world; to show the spiritual by means of the material — these are the ideas underlying our scheme for decoration of the Chapel. Since the Chapel is small and dark, since so much must be said in a small compass, the technique we have adopted is that of the painters of old illuminated manuscripts. It is our aim to give the tiny room the brilliance of a page from the Book of Kells, or the Duc de Barry’s ‘Book of Hours’. That is why we have used so much gold, and why we are allowing a slight archaic touch to show in the drawing and in our choice and arrangement of colour.

Our subject is that contained in this old English carol:

As I sat under a sycamore tree,  
A sycamore tree, a sycamore tree,  
I looked me out upon the sea,  
On Christ’s Sunday at morn.

I saw three ships a sailing there,

A sailing there, a sailing there,  
Jesu, Mary and Joseph they bare,  
On Christ's Sunday at morn.

Jesu did whistle, and Mary did sing,  
Mary did sing, Mary did sing,  
And all the bells on earth did ring,  
For joy, our Lord was born.

O they sail'd in to Bethlehem,  
To Bethlehem, to Bethlehem,  
Saint Michael was the steersman,  
Saint John sat in the horn.

And all the bells on earth did ring,  
On earth did ring, on earth did ring,  
Welcome be Thou, Heaven's King,  
On Christ's Sunday at morn.

We have chosen to illustrate this carol, as it is an earlier attempt to do just what we are trying to do. In translating an idea out of one art into another it is rarely possible to get the same effect. The design that has emerged out of these varying factors (and a thousand others) is as follows:-

Rising across the ceiling is to stand a pavilion of beaten gold, open to the Harbour, through the arches show, above the blue sky, fuchsias and flowering cedar for sycamore. To the right we are putting the southern

plinths of the Bridge, Circular Quay, St James' spire, Garden Island; on the left will be shown the north pylons of the Bridge, Admiralty House, Taronga Park; by the door will stand a waiting group of angels and children, with McMahon's Point in the background. In the two larger panels will be shown children embarking in yachts manned by angels. In the middle distance in both panels there are to be yachts — Morna, Acrospire, Norn — so laden, in full sail up the Harbour. They go to meet the ship of the carol. Set in the golden panelling by the window is the Holy Family, grouped on deck with Sydney Heads showing beyond the rigging.

This Chapel might be called 'The Chapel of St Mary and the Angels'."