

# From the Editor's Desk:

## *Tradition and Excellence*

*“Tradition means giving votes to the most obscure of all classes, our ancestors. It is the democracy of the dead. Tradition refuses to submit to the small and arrogant oligarchy of those who merely happen to be walking about.”*

– G.K. Chesterton, *Orthodoxy*

It is the past that makes us who we are. The future can be any one of myriad possibilities, none of which can be foreseen with any clarity and only four of which are certain. The present is simply an imaginary point in time that itself can never be grasped or even considered until it becomes the past; only once they become part of the memory can events be pondered.

Experience is the name given to the wealth of knowledge we gain from understanding our past. An honest awareness of the past is the most diligent teacher one can have; as is so often said, those who forget their past are doomed to repeat it.

Tradition is the thoughtful and deliberate practice that comes from experience. It includes handing on to future generations all that is good from the combined experience of those who have come before. Tradition, then, is the patrimony left to us by the countless multitudes who have lived well, learned much, and died not in vain but knowing that their experience could be put to the beneficial use of those who would come after them. Through tradition, we ourselves can benefit from the experience of others as we allow that experience to inform our own decisions. The result, excellent in its own right, is that others are able to benefit from the knowledge and wisdom we have gained just as we, in our turn, benefited from the knowledge and wisdom of ages past.

The Stained Glass Association of America has deep traditions that were handed to us by the giants of American stained glass. The members of today's Association will, in their own turn, hand on to future generations a benefit of immeasurable worth: their own experience, built on the experience of all those who have come before.



*Richard H. Gross, MTS*

The Association is sometimes accused of moving too slowly; some, apparently, or so I am told, think that the Stained Glass Association of America should be more hasty in its actions and ponder less deeply the course it plots for itself as it works toward a better future for the art and craft of stained, decorative and architectural art glass and for those who practice these trades. Clearly, such sentiments (if they do exist at all) are nothing more than the impatient whims of those who have yet to grasp the richness of the Association's traditions and experiences.

It is the duty of those entrusted with the stewardship of the Association to insure that foolish caprices not be permitted to undo all of the good work done by those guardians of the Association from generations past. The Stained Glass Association of America is like a tower that is forever being built. More than 100 years ago, a firm base was laid by the founders of this organization. Succeeding generations have each built their own storey onto the tower, with each one being formed on top of what was built before. If any generation is careless in the construction of their storey, the entire tower is weakened. If any generation of builders is too careless, the entire tower is in danger of collapse.

As the membership of the Stained Glass Association of America elects its next board of officers and directors at the Annual Summer Conference in Oklahoma City, it will be designating a group of men and women whom it trusts to act as the stewards of this organization and to maintain the tradition of excellence to which they are called. The membership will be designating the next team of builders who, always mindful of the past and working diligently for a better future, will add the next storey to the tower that is the Stained Glass Association of America as it reaches ever higher, advancing the Association's tradition of excellence.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Richard H. Gross". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Richard H. Gross, MTS