JESUS

Jesus was born around 0 AD, and without him, Christianity wouldn’t exist. It was belief in Jesus that inspired this magnificent building to be created. There are many symbols of Jesus on the cross throughout the Minster and the whole building is designed in the shape of a cross to remind Christians of his sacrifice to save the world. In early Medieval times and throughout the Minster, Jesus was represented by a lamb because in the Bible he is called the ‘Lamb of God’.
Magnificent Minster Marvels

MARY
MARY

Mary was the mother of Jesus who was born around 0 AD. The Great West Window and many images in the Minster show the important events in her life. The Lady Chapel at the East End of the Minster is dedicated to Mary and the Chapter House has a statue of Mary at the entrance as well as a window dedicated to her life. It is thought that the carved flowers and plants in the Chapter House also represent Mary and remind people of her importance.
Magnificent Minster Marvels

SAINT PETER
SAINT PETER

York Minster is dedicated to St Peter who was one of Jesus’ disciples and leader of the early Christian Church after Jesus died. There is a large image of St Peter in the Pilgrim Window and many statues and pictures of him throughout the Minster. He can be found on the inside of the Great West doors and is also seated outside at the top of the East End of the Minster. Images of St Peter’s keys can be found in windows, bosses, pictures and floor tiles. The keys to Heaven are a symbol of the authority that Jesus gave to St Peter.
EMPEROR CONSTANTINE

Constantine was declared Emperor in York in 306 AD. He converted to Christianity after seeing the Chi-Rho symbol ♚ that represents the name of Christ in a dream and hearing the words ‘By this sign conquer’. Constantine had the sign painted on the shields of his soldiers before an important battle which he then won. This helped convince him that the message of Christianity was true, and he allowed Christianity to spread throughout the western world and the Roman Empire. His statue stands outside of the Minster.
Magnificent Minster Marvels

KING EDWIN
KING EDWIN

King Edwin of Northumbria converted to Christianity after marrying the Christian Princess, Ethelburga of Kent and became the first Christian King in the North of England. He was baptised in 627 AD here in York and built a small wooden Anglo Saxon church to house the baptism font. The church was then re-built in stone, and it became the first York Minster. Without Edwin, we might not have a cathedral here at all.
Magnificent Minster Marvels

QUEEN ETHELBURGA
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Ethelburga was a princess from Kent. Edwin wanted to marry her, but she was a Christian and he was a Pagan. She agreed to marry him so long as she could continue to practise her religion. Ethelburga moved up to York and Edwin also became a Christian and was baptised in York in 627 AD. Without Ethelburga, Edwin might not have converted to Christianity or built the first Minster in York.
ARCHBISHOP THOMAS OF BAYEUX

After the Norman Conquest, William the Conqueror sent Thomas of Bayeux to become the first Norman Archbishop of York. He was responsible for building the first Norman Cathedral on this site between 1080 and 1100. The Minster we have today was built around his original plans. Without him, we might not have had such a big, awesome building built on this spot.
SAINT WILLIAM

Archbishop William fitzHerbert, known as St William, is the Patron Saint of York. He was the Archbishop of York twice and it is said that his first miracle was to save many villagers from drowning in the river Ouse when the bridge collapsed. William died after possibly being poisoned by one of his enemies in the Minster. He is buried here in the crypt and when he died in 1154, a massive shrine was built which attracted many pilgrims to York Minster. Many miracles were said to have taken place at his shrine and two of our great windows are dedicated to him.
Magnificent Minster Marvels

ARCHBISHOP WALTER DE GREY
ARCHBISHOP WALTER DE GREY

Walter de Grey was the Archbishop of York for 40 years, between 1215 and 1255 AD and he provided a period of stability for the Minster. Walter was responsible for rebuilding the Norman Cathedral into the awesome Gothic building we have today. He had been a chancellor to King John and was very wealthy which helped to pay for the building project. Walter started with the South Transept in 1225 and it is here that you can see his great monument. Walter de Grey also campaigned successfully for Archbishop William fitzHerbert to be canonised (made a Saint).
Magnificent Minster Marvels

JOHN THORNTON
JOHN THORNTON

John Thornton was the artist and glazier who created the Great East Window which is now one of the most beautiful parts of York Minster. He was chiefly responsible for drawing out (cartooning) all 311 panels and he made sure the window was completed in 3 years, between 1405 and 1408. The window represents the beginning and end of all things and has images from the first book of the Bible, Genesis and the last book of the Bible, Revelation. It is also thought John Thornton was the artist who created the stunning St William’s window and people come from around the world to see his work.
FRANCES MATTHEW

Frances Matthew was an important Protestant Christian. She was known for her sewing skills and she created a magnificent set of bed covers for Queen Elizabeth I. When her husband died in 1628, she gave his collection of 3000 books to the Minster which transformed the Minster Library into the largest and most important cathedral library in the whole of England at that time. Frances Matthew died a year later in 1629 and her memorial statue can be found under the Great East Window.
Magnificent Minster Marvels

FERDINANDO AND THOMAS FAIRFAX

FERDINANDO AND THOMAS FAIRFAX

Ferdinando and his son Thomas Fairfax were Generals in Oliver Cromwell’s army during the English Civil War of 1644. During that time many big churches and cathedrals were damaged or destroyed. However, because they were a York family, Thomas and Ferdinando made sure that York Minster was protected from too much damage. Without them we might have lost far more of our precious medieval stained glass.
Magnificent Minster Marvels

DEAN AUGUSTUS DUNCOMBE
Augustus Duncombe was Dean of York for 22 years from 1858 until his death in 1880. He is responsible for introducing services in the Nave which meant that ordinary people could come to the Minster to take part in services for the first time. To do this Duncombe brought in benches, lighting and heating. He also paid for a lot of the restoration and upkeep of the Minster from his own pocket. The impressive monument to remember Dean Duncombe can be found in the South Transept.
JOHN BROWNE

John Browne was an artist and historian and lived between 1793 and 1877. John wrote books about the Minster and created many illustrations of the building, windows and bosses. He has helped us to understand and view in more detail things that you can’t see from the floor. His illustrations were very important in 1840 when the nave roof was destroyed in a fire. It meant we could reproduce the roof bosses accurately from his drawings.
HELEN LITTLE

Helen Little helped raise money to restore the famous Five Sisters’ Window in the Minster and dedicate it to women who had died in the First World War. Helen thought that there were many memorials to men, but women seemed to have been forgotten. Helen’s vision was ‘The Sisters’ window for the sisters’ and it is the only memorial in the country dedicated to all the women of the British Empire who died in the First World War. It was unveiled in 1925 by The Duchess of York who would later become Queen Elizabeth, the Queen Mother.