

Chartres Chatedral



Chartres Cathedral, also known as the Cathedral of Our Lady of Chartres (French: Cathédrale Notre-Dame de Chartres), is a Catholic church in Chartres, France, about 80 km (50 miles) southwest of Paris, and is the seat of the Bishop of Chartres. Mostly constructed between 1194 and 1220, it stands on the site of at least five cathedrals that have occupied the site since the Diocese of Chartres was formed as an episcopal see in the 4th century. It is one of the best-known and most influential examples of High Gothic[2] and Classic Gothic architecture,[3][4] [5] It stands on Romanesque basements, while its north spire is more recent

(1507–1513) and is built in the more ornate Flamboyant style.[6]

Long renowned as "one of the most beautiful and historically significant cathedrals in all of Europe,"[7] it was designated a World Heritage Site by UNESCO in 1979, which called it "the high point of French Gothic art" and a "masterpiece".[8]

EARLIER CATHEDRALS

History

At least five cathedrals have stood on this site, each replacing an earlier building damaged by war or fire. The first church dated from no later than the 4th century and was located at the base of a Gallo-Roman wall; this was put to the torch in 743 on the orders of the Duke of Aquitaine. The second church on the site was set on fire by Danish pirates in 858. This was then reconstructed and enlarged by Bishop Gislebert, but was itself destroyed by fire in 1020. A vestige of this church, now known as Saint Lubin Chapel, remains, underneath the apse of the present cathedral.[9] It took its name from Lubinus, the mid-6th-century Bishop of Chartres. It is lower than the rest of the crypt and may have been the shrine of a local saint, prior to the church's rededication to the Virgin Mary.[10]

In 962 the church was damaged by another fire and was reconstructed yet again. A more serious fire broke out on 7 September 1020, after which Bishop Fulbert (bishop from 1006 to 1028) decided to build a new cathedral. He appealed to the royal houses of Europe, and received generous donations for the rebuilding, including a gift from Cnut the Great, King of Norway, Denmark and much of England. The new cathedral was constructed atop and around the remains

of the 9th-century church. It consisted of an ambulatory around the earlier chapel, surrounded by three large chapels with Romanesque barrel vault and groin vault ceilings, which still exist. On top of this structure he built the upper church, 108 meters long and 34 meters wide.[11]

Tourism World War II

The Second World War, in France, was a battle between the Allies and Axis powers of Germany and Italy. In July 1944, the British and Canadians found themselves restrained just south of Caen. The Americans and their five divisions planned an alternative route to the Germans. While some Americans headed west and south, others found themselves in a sweep east of Caen that led them behind the frontline of the German forces. Hitler ordered the German commissioner, Kluge, to head west to cut off the Americans. This ultimately led the Allies to Chartres in mid-August 1944.[18]

On August 16, 1944, the cathedral was saved from destruction thanks to the American colonel Welborn Barton Griffith Jr. (1901–1944), who questioned the order he was given to target the cathedral. The Americans believed that the steeples and towers were being used as an observation post for German artillery.[19]

Griffith, accompanied by a volunteer soldier, instead decided to go and verify whether or not the Germans were using the cathedral. Griffith could see that the cathedral was empty, so he had the cathedral bells ring as a signal for the Americans not to shoot. Upon hearing the bells, the

American command rescinded the order to fire. Colonel Griffith died in combat action that same day, in the town of Lèves, near Chartres. He was posthumously decorated with the Croix de Guerre avec Palme (War Cross 1939–1945), the Légion d'Honneur (Legion of Honour) and the Ordre National du Mérite (National Order of Merit) of the French government and the Distinguished Service Cross of the American government[20][21]

Fire and Construction

Reconstruction

On the night of 10 June 1194, another major fire devastated the cathedral. Only the crypt, the towers, and the new façade survived. The cathedral was already known throughout Europe as a pilgrimage destination, due to the reputed relics of the Virgin Mary that it contained. A legate of the Pope happened to be in Chartres at the time of the fire, and spread the word. Funds were collected from royal and noble patrons across Europe, as well as small donations from ordinary people. Reconstruction began almost immediately. Some portions of the building had survived, including the two towers and the Royal Portal on the west end, and these were incorporated into the new cathedral.[11]

The nave, aisles, and lower levels of the transepts of the new cathedral were probably completed first, then the choir and chapels of the apse; then the upper parts of the transept. By 1220 the roof was in place. The major portions of the new cathedral, with its stained glass and sculpture, were largely finished within just twenty-five years, extraordinarily rapid for

the time. The cathedral was formally re-consecrated in October 1260, in the presence of King Louis IX of France,[15] whose coat of arms can be seen painted on a boss at the entrance to the apse, although this was added in the 14th century.[16]

Restoration

In 2009, the Monuments Historiques division of the French Ministry of Culture began an \$18.5-million program of works at the cathedral, cleaning the inside and outside, protecting the stained glass with a coating, and cleaning and painting the inside masonry creamy-white with trompe-l'œil marbling and gilded detailing, as it may have looked in the 13th century. This has been a subject of controversy (see below).

The cathedral is the seat of the Bishop of Chartres of the Diocese of Chartres. The diocese is part of the ecclesiastical province of Tours.