

## A Brief History

### The origins of the Cathedral

- 1<sup>tr</sup> C. A church, dedicated to St Stephen, was supposedly founded by Saint Altin, the first Bishop of Orleans, who had been one of the 72 disciples sent out by Christ (cf Luke 10).
- 4<sup>th</sup> C. A church started by Saint Euverte was completed by Saint Aignan. These two bishops are the patron saints of the Church\* of Orleans.
- 848 6 June, anointing of **Charles II 'The Bald'**.
- 970 Baptism of **Robert 'The Pius'**, son of **Hughes Capet**.
- 987 Christmas, Capetien dynasty started with the anointing of **Robert II 'The Pius'**.
- 989 Destruction of the Cathedral in the great fire of Orleans.
- 11-12<sup>th</sup> Building of the Norman church, then one of the biggest in the West.
- 1108 33 August, anointing of **Louis VI 'The Fat'**.
- 1278 Destruction of part of the Norman choir.

Henry IV



Louis XIV

### Construction of the final large gothic Cathedral

- 1287 11 September, laying of the foundation stone of the new gothic style cathedral.
- 1329 13 septembre, opening of the choir. (4)
- XIV-XV<sup>ème</sup> Building work stopped during the 100 Years War.
- 1568 March, the almost total destruction by Protestant fanatics despite opposition by Duke de Conde.
- 1601 18 April. Laying of the foundation stone for the reconstruction by **Henry IV**, as a sign of reconciliation. (2)
- 1679 Completion of the transept dedicated to **Louis XIV**
- 1706 The Choir stalls are installed. (4)
- 1740 Presentation and approval by **Louis XV** of the model for the west face.
- 1790 Completion of the west face.
- 1822 The great organ is installed. (1)
- 1829 8 May, official inauguration of the cathedral by **Charles X**, 542 years after work began.
- 1858 The current steeple is completed.
- 1872 The altar pieces and confessionals for the transept are installed. (3)
- 1873 The Stations of the Cross in the nave are finished.
- 1897 Inauguration of the Joan of Arc windows (Nave).
- 2000 New windows are installed in the chapels. (5b)

\* where church has a capital C it means the cathedral community. A regular c indicates the Cathedral building.

## The Cathedral in Figures

- The building is 144m in length outside (136m inside)  
 The width of the transept is 53m  
 The height of the vaults is 32m  
 The height of the towers is 86m  
 The height of the spire is 114m  
 The ground area covered by the building is 6300 m<sup>2</sup>



### Cathedral Hours

- Opening time : 09.15 every day  
 Closing time: 18.00 from October to March  
 19.00 from May to September  
 20.00 every Saturday



### Services

- Sunday Mass at 10.30. In July and August, Tuesday to Friday: Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament at 17.00, Vespers at 18.00 and Mass at 18.30



### Reception – Shop

- The Reception is open throughout the summer. At other times, the Parvis team provides a welcome for particular events. The shop is open all summer and from 14.00 to 17.00 at other times. (When the shop is shut one can go to the Rectory)



### Cathedral Rectory

- Information about services, the sacraments, spiritual visits, events, etc, is available at the Cathedral Rectory: open from 09.30 to 12.00, Tuesday to Saturday, and from 14.00 to 17.00 Monday to Friday. During school holidays, it is only open from 9.30 to 12.00



### To contact us

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## The Royal Cathedral of the Holy Cross



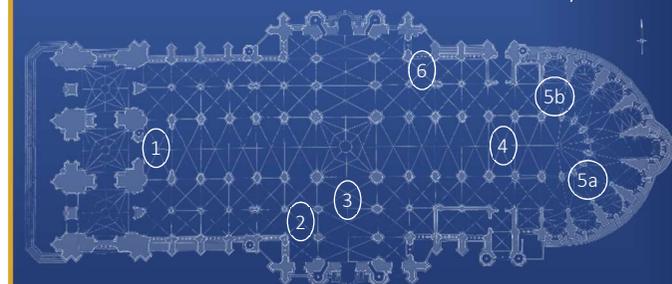
The gothic Cathedral of Orléans is named in honour of the Relics of the Holy Cross; these relics have certainly been here since the 7th century. The cathedral took six centuries to build, under the patronage of the Kings of France.



Joan of Arc came here to pray on 8 May 1429.



We are happy to welcome you to this place of prayer. If you follow the route shown below, you will see the treasures of the cathedral and discover what they mean.



narthex  
18<sup>th</sup>

nave  
16<sup>th</sup>

transept  
17<sup>th</sup>

choir  
17<sup>th</sup>

apse  
13<sup>th</sup>

1

## The Nave, the Angel and the Organ

From the entrance of the Cathedral, which is one of the five largest in France, you can admire the beauty of the huge nave, with its pillars soaring without a break up to the vaults at 32 meters, and its full length up to the apse. The transept cuts across the nave in the middle forming a cross, the Christian sign.



Some 86 meters above, on the highest point of the two towers, are 8 angels carrying the instruments of Christ's Passion. You can admire one of these angels carrying the Crown of Thorns near the main door.



Walking into the nave and turning round, you can admire the great organ which has 3760 pipes, 54 ranks, and is entirely manual. Installed originally in the 17th century at the Abbey of Fleury at Saint Benoit sur Loire, it was sold during the French revolution. In 1882, work began to install it in the Cathedral. Over the years, improvements were made, some of which were carried out by the famous organ maker, Cavaille-Coll.



## The Reconstruction and Henry IV

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In 1568, during the religious wars, Orleans was in the hands of the Duke de Conde, leader of the Protestants. Not wishing to destroy the Cathedral, he bricked up the doors. In March 1568, fanatics from Conde's troops entered the Cathedral through the windows and destroyed the four pillars of the transept. The building collapsed, leaving only the apse chapels and two spans of the nave.



Henry IV, wanting peace in France, came to lay the foundation stone for the rebuilding on 18 April 1601. This stone is in the pillar (see 2).

We date the official completion of the rebuilding by the inauguration of the Cathedral by Charles X on 8 May 1829, 542 years after the placing of the first stone in 1287. But there is always work to be done...

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## The transept altar pieces and Louis XIV

The neo gothic altar pieces or retables are dedicated to Mary the Virgin on the north side and to the Sacred Heart on the south side.

The north retable has scenes from the life of the Virgin: her Presentation in the Temple, the Marriage of Mary and Joseph, the Annunciation of the birth of Jesus, Son of God and of Mary, the trip to Egypt of Jesus, Mary and Joseph (to escape Herod's persecution); and, under the altar, the Nativity scene.



The south retable, dedicated to the Sacred Heart, has scenes from the Passion story: The Last Supper on Holy Thursday when Jesus instituted the Eucharist, the Agony in the Garden of Olives (Holy Thursday night/Good Friday), the Crucifixion on Good Friday, the Ascension of Jesus into heaven 40 days after Easter and, under the altar, the Apostles.



The transept with its altar pieces was reconstructed under Louis XIV and is dedicated to the Sun King. That is why one can see his face in gilded bronze on the rose-window above the altar pieces. They are surrounded by his motto 'Nec Pluribus Impar', possibly meaning 'without equal'.



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## The History of Saint Euverte and the Choir

In the 4th Century, at the time of the consecration of the Cathedral - the act which makes it a sacred place - Saint Euverte, the bishop of Orleans, had a vision of the hand of God blessing the Cathedral. He immediately stopped the ceremony, saying 'this Cathedral has been blessed by the hand of God, there would be no point in a man blessing it'. In memory of this, God's blessing hand is painted on the key stone of the apse at the back of the choir, and the Cathedral is without doubt the only church in the world that does not have consecration crosses on its pillars.



The Canons, who had care of both the spiritual and material welfare of the Cathedral, met in the choir. In the stalls they prayed the offices, sitting or standing. Above, there are 21 medallions beautifully carved in oak, possibly aiding their meditation. These date from 1701 and show the main events in the life of Christ. The red light at the end of the choir denotes for the believer the presence of Christ in the golden tabernacle, under the form of the host (bread consecrated during the Mass).

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## The Holy Cross and the Chapels

At least since the 7th century, and perhaps since the 4th, the Cathedral has possessed relics of the Cross on which Jesus Christ was crucified. For this reason, it has been an important pilgrimage destination, especially on the Camino of Santiago de Compostella. Tradition says that the Holy Cross was discovered in Jerusalem around 327AD by St Helena, the mother of the great Roman emperor, Constantine 1st. The chapel of St Helena (see 5a) was built to commemorate the gift of the relics of the Cross to the Cathedral. These relics (two little splinters contained in the reliquary above) are specially venerated on 14 September, the Feast day of the Exaltation of the Cross, and also the Cathedral's dedication day.



In the chapel opposite (see 5b), which is dedicated to Saint Yves, patron of the Bretons, the window of the Glorious Cross was installed in 1996, with its beautiful golds and blues. This new window, like those in the other chapels, fits in admirably with the other 19th century windows, made according to the designs and paintings of Pierre Caron.



## Saint Joan of Arc

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The chapel (see 6) was built in memory of St Joan of Arc. The bishops of Orleans worked particularly hard for her canonization (recognition that she was a saint). She was canonized by Pope Benedict XV on 16 May 1919. The bishop involved, Mgr Touchet, is represented by a marble statue praying at the foot of the altar. Mgr Dupanloup's monumental tomb is in the opposite chapel (entry to the south); he did considerable research on Joan's virtues.



The dead of the First World War are also honored in this chapel, under the protection of St Joan of Arc.



The biggest cathedral bell, the bourdon or bass bell, which weights 6 tons, is called 'St Joan of Arc'.

Note: Joan of Arc was burned alive at Rouen on 30 May 1431, and her ashes were scattered in the River Seine; she has no tomb.

*The life of Joan of Arc is pictured in the 10 windows of the nave. You will find an explanation of these windows in the leaflet 'Joan of Arc'.*