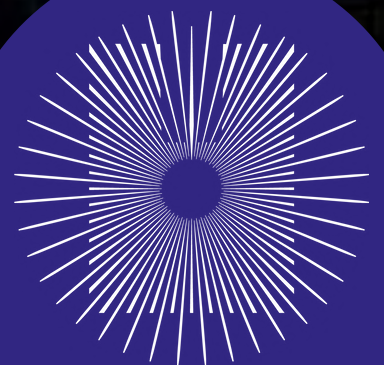




# Educational Guide

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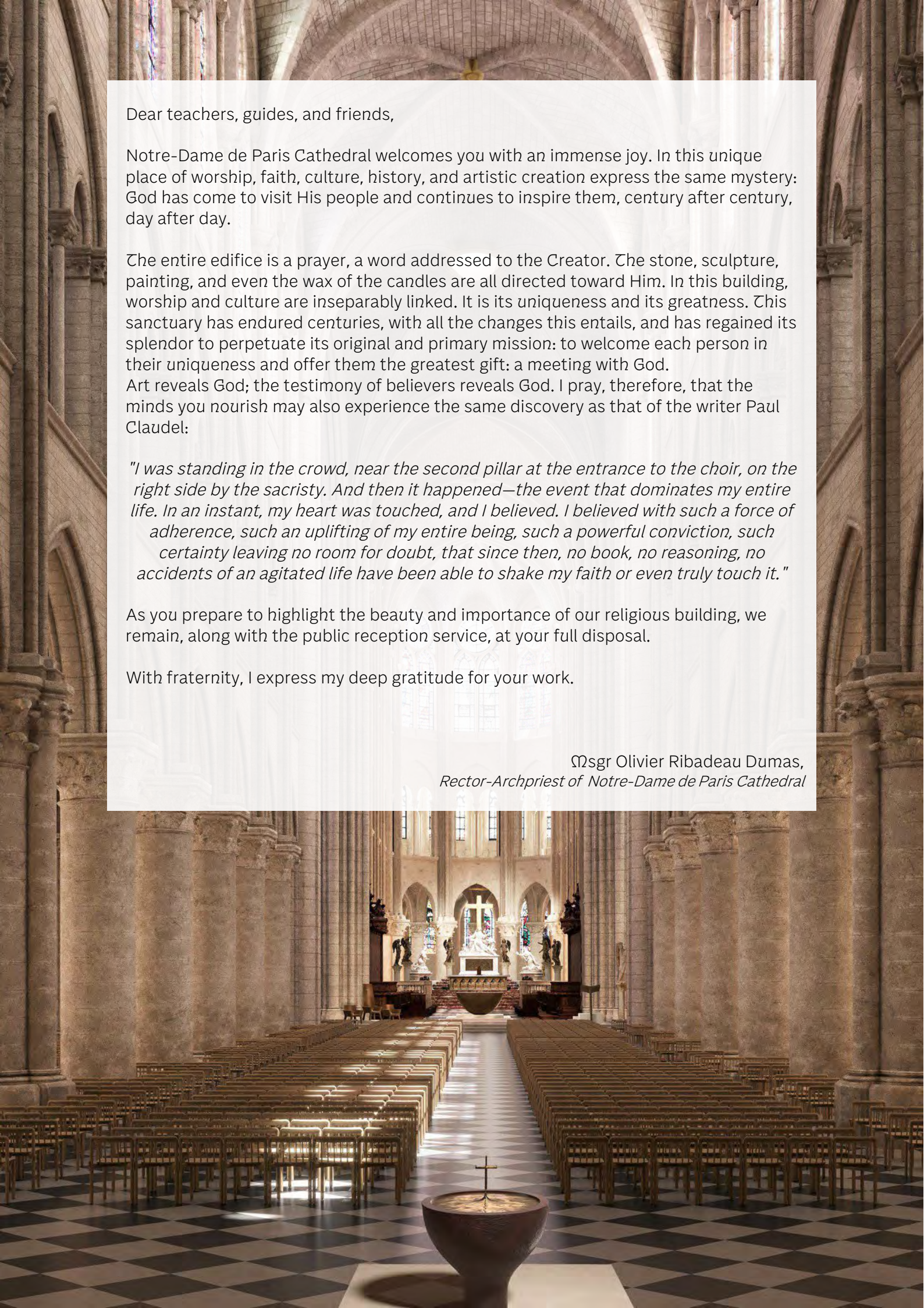


NOTRE DAME  
DE PARIS



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The background of the entire page is a photograph of the interior of Notre-Dame de Paris Cathedral. The image shows the vast nave with its high vaulted ceiling, supported by massive stone columns. The floor is a black and white checkered pattern. In the foreground, a large, dark, ornate chalice sits on a white cloth. The lighting is warm and dramatic, highlighting the architectural details and the depth of the space.

Dear teachers, guides, and friends,

Notre-Dame de Paris Cathedral welcomes you with an immense joy. In this unique place of worship, faith, culture, history, and artistic creation express the same mystery: God has come to visit His people and continues to inspire them, century after century, day after day.

The entire edifice is a prayer, a word addressed to the Creator. The stone, sculpture, painting, and even the wax of the candles are all directed toward Him. In this building, worship and culture are inseparably linked. It is its uniqueness and its greatness. This sanctuary has endured centuries, with all the changes this entails, and has regained its splendor to perpetuate its original and primary mission: to welcome each person in their uniqueness and offer them the greatest gift: a meeting with God.

Art reveals God; the testimony of believers reveals God. I pray, therefore, that the minds you nourish may also experience the same discovery as that of the writer Paul Claudel:

*"I was standing in the crowd, near the second pillar at the entrance to the choir, on the right side by the sacristy. And then it happened—the event that dominates my entire life. In an instant, my heart was touched, and I believed. I believed with such a force of adherence, such an uplifting of my entire being, such a powerful conviction, such certainty leaving no room for doubt, that since then, no book, no reasoning, no accidents of an agitated life have been able to shake my faith or even truly touch it."*

As you prepare to highlight the beauty and importance of our religious building, we remain, along with the public reception service, at your full disposal.

With fraternity, I express my deep gratitude for your work.

Mgr Olivier Ribadeau Dumas,  
Rector-Archpriest of Notre-Dame de Paris Cathedral

## What is a cathedral?

The term "cathedral" refers to the religious building housing the bishop's seat, the cathedra. Currently, Monsignor Ulrich serves as the archbishop who presides there. His title, "archbishop," distinguishes him from bishops, as the entire ecclesiastical province of Paris, comprising seven dioceses in Île-de-France, falls under his direction.

Notre-Dame de Paris is the main church of the diocese. An iconic structure of the medieval period, its architecture follows a basilical plan. It should not be confused with a basilica, typically built over a saint's tomb. A basilica can also be a pilgrimage site where miracles are recorded. The decision to elevate a church to the rank of a basilica is made by the pope. Thus, a cathedral can also hold the title of a basilica, as exemplified by the Cathedral-Basilica of Saint-Denis.

### A perpetual place of meeting

Notre-Dame de Paris is the most visited monument in France, welcoming nearly 15 million visitors per year from all over the world—believers or non-believers, Christians or followers of other religions.

A living building, it hosts four daily masses, as well as the offices of Lauds and Vespers. The cathedral is a space for celebrating worship and gathering the Catholic community. It allows participation in the liturgy through hymns, responses from the congregation, sacred silence, and sacramental participation.

This diverse audience, initiated an unprecedented wave of donations following the fire, ensuring the restoration of this cultural and religious heritage. This reaction illustrates the attachment everyone has to Notre-Dame de Paris, regardless of their beliefs or cultural background.

Throughout the centuries, this perpetual meeting place—associated successively with royal, imperial, and republican powers—has become a hub for prominent figures in France's history. For instance, the trial for the rehabilitation of Saint Joan of Arc took place here in 1431, and King Louis IX (Saint Louis) deposited the Holy Crown of Thorns here in 1239. Philip IV convened the first "états généraux" (national assembly) here in 1302. Napoleon I was crowned emperor by Pope Pius VII here, and on August 25, 1944, during World War II, the bells of Notre-Dame rang to announce the liberation of Paris from Nazi occupation. The cathedral thus plays an undeniably symbolic role in the political history of France.

## The cathedrals of France

Notre-Dame de Paris is arguably the most famous cathedral in France. However, there are many older cathedrals across the country. Notre-Dame of Verdun (Meuse), built in 990, is considered the oldest. Conversely, the country's newest cathedral, Notre-Dame of Créteil (Val-de-Marne), was inaugurated in 2015. The architecture of France's cathedrals highlights the various styles developed over time. The architectural landscape of French cathedrals is far more diverse than it may seem.

Below are the main styles represented in France:

- The earliest cathedrals, from the 10th century, were constructed following the Romanesque aesthetic canon. Their main characteristics include barrel or groin vaults, thick walls lending a sense of massiveness, and limited illumination due to the small size and scarcity of openings. Notre-Dame de Paris still retains elements of this style, notably in the Saint Anne portal on the western façade, built using materials repurposed from the old Saint-Étienne Cathedral, demolished to make way for Notre-Dame.
- The Notre-Dame Cathedral in Paris is an example of Gothic style. The architecture has been revisited many times, and elements from several Gothic periods are incorporated into the architecture of Notre-Dame de Paris. Dating back to the 12th century, the Saint-Étienne Cathedral in Sens, built in 1130, kicks off the style, and it dominates until the 15th century. It is divided into four main periods:





--> The *primitive Gothic* directly follows Romanesque art. Still experimental, the ribbed vault appears, allowing for higher elevations. Some elements of primitive Gothic can still be seen at the Basilica of Saint-Denis.

--> *Classical Gothic* extends from around 1190 to 1230. The Cathedral of Chartres is a testimony of this period. Verticality increases, and the flying buttress becomes widespread in architecture, reinforcing the structure's stability despite the height. This technique allowed the Notre-Dame Cathedral in Paris to reach its 69-meter height.

--> *Radiant Gothic*, present at Notre-Dame de Paris, developed between 1230 and 1350. The significant thinning of the walls, made possible by the flying buttresses that support the vaults externally, allows for the creation of large rose windows and wide, majestic stained glass. Openings become larger and more numerous. The stained glass of the Paris cathedral covers nearly 1,000 m<sup>2</sup> of the building's total surface, making it very luminous.

--> *Flamboyant Gothic*, the final development of the Gothic style, began to be used in the mid-14th century. It takes its name from its flame-inspired ornamentation. The decoration flourishes, and the elevation, which is very high, results from the pillars constructed in one continuous line from the floor to the vault. The entire architecture favors great luminosity. Unlike other Gothic periods, the Flamboyant style doesn't have a prominent place in Notre-Dame de Paris. Examples of this style can be found in France, such as the Church of Saint-Maclou in Rouen.

- The *Baroque style* directly stems from the context of the Council of Trent (between 1545 and 1563), established to address the Protestant Reformation. This resulted in the Counter-Reformation, whose principles were expressed through Baroque art. The goal was to reaffirm the importance of the Catholic Church and to highlight the glory of God. A profusion of decoration is evident, with movement animating the facade. In the 18th century, the choir of Notre-Dame de Paris Cathedral was entirely redesigned and decorated in this style. Only the "Vœu de Louis XIII" remains today. The few "Nays" still present in the cathedral, in the chapels, were commissioned during this period.



*Statue of the Virgin of Pity or Pietà, 1723, Nicolas Coustou, choir of the Cathedral.*

- The *Neo-Gothic style* emerged in the 19th century, during a period of rediscovery of the Middle Ages, idealized in architecture and the arts. Within this style, the creations of the architect Eugène-Emmanuel Viollet-le-Duc are to be cited. This Neo-Gothic art gives a prominent place to ornamentation. The restorations carried out by the French architect on Notre-Dame de Paris belong to these aesthetic canons and his definition of restoration.
- The *contemporary/modern style* is not immediately apparent in the various modifications made to the Notre-Dame Cathedral in Paris. However, the stained glass windows by Jacques Le Chevallier, installed in 1966, reflect these contemporary commissions, which have become more common in our time. The example of Notre-Dame de Créteil, the most recent cathedral, illustrates this. Since the 20th century, the primary materials used have been cement, reinforced concrete, brick, and metal. These churches are typically designed by architects keen on expressing the changes brought about by the Second Vatican Council.

## Notre-Dame de Paris Through Its Key Dates

### Timeline of the construction :

- c. 380: First cathedral in the city

Archaeological data suggests that the first cathedral was established around 380 AD. This early Christian church, now lost, was located next to a baptistery. At the time, Bishop Marcel oversaw the diocese.

- 520–540: The Basilica of Saint-Étienne

The remains of the Basilica of Saint-Étienne were discovered in the 19th century during a restoration campaign. Elements such as capitals and mosaics were unearthed on the square. This basilica, dedicated to Saint Stephen, the first Christian martyr, stood on the site now occupied by the parvis and part of the nave of the current cathedral.

- 1163: Laying of the first stone in the presence of Pope Alexander III

Initiated by Bishop Maurice de Sully, the first stone of Notre-Dame was laid in 1163 by Pope Alexander III. The construction required the demolition of the earlier Saint-Étienne Cathedral to make way for this grander structure.

- 1182: Consecration of the choir

The choir of the cathedral, essential for Christian liturgy, was consecrated in 1182. It serves as the location for the celebration of services and the preservation of the Holy Sacrament (the consecrated bread and wine) within the tabernacle near the main altar.

- 1200–1250: Construction of the western façade

The portals and towers of the western façade were built during this period. Entering through this section, the faithful face the eastward-oriented choir. This westwork was initiated under Bishop Eudes de Sully and completed under Bishop Guillaume d'Auvergne. The first spire was also erected in 1250.

- 1225–1245: Enlargement of high windows and addition of lateral chapels

To enhance interior lighting, windows were enlarged, and the aisles were extended with the addition of side chapels.

- 1300–1351: Construction of the choir screen

Work on the choir screen began with the northern side and later extended to the south. This enclosure created a physical separation between the sacred space of the choir and the ambulatory.



- February 10, 1638: Louis XIII's Vow

King Louis XIII vowed to build a new main altar for Notre-Dame de Paris as a symbol of devotion to the Virgin Mary. His son, Louis XIV, fulfilled this vow in the 18th century under the direction of architect Robert de Cotte.

- 1686: Installation of the "Emmanuel" bell

Sponsored by King Louis XIV and Queen Marie-Thérèse, the Emmanuel "bourdon" bell was installed in the cathedral. After the Savoyarde bell in the Basilica of Sacré-Cœur, Emmanuel is the second largest bell in France.

- 1725–1727: Reconstruction of the south rose window

The south rose, originally offered by Louis IX in 1260, underwent stabilization work in the 18th century due to issues with its coloring. This restoration was funded by Cardinal de Noailles.

- 1786–1792: The spire is dismantled

The original spire, located above the transept crossing, housed five bells before its dismantling. Structural instability caused by wind necessitated its removal to prevent collapse.

- 1793: Destruction of the Gallery of Kings

During the French Revolution, Notre-Dame suffered extensive damage. Under the Convention, the statues in the Gallery of Kings on the western façade were destroyed. The cathedral faced pillaging, the prohibition of Catholic worship, destruction, and repeated repurposing during this tumultuous period.

- 1844–1879: Restoration campaign

Neglected, Notre-Dame de Paris was in a state of critical disrepair at that time, so much so that the Parisian authorities considered demolishing it. The publication of Victor Hugo's novel *Notre-Dame de Paris* in 1831 sparked a popular movement that led to the decision to launch a restoration campaign. For this project, the Minister of Justice and Religious Affairs selected Jean-Baptiste Lassus, who was partnered with Eugène-Emmanuel Viollet-le-Duc. The latter completed the reinterpretive restoration of the Cathedral on his own after the death of his associate.

- 1965: Installation of new stained glass windows by Jacques Le Chevallier

After nearly a century without significant works, contemporary art was incorporated into Notre-Dame with the addition of stained glass windows by Jacques Le Chevallier, replacing 18th-century designs.

- April 15, 2019: Cathedral fire

While undergoing restoration, a major fire destroyed the wooden framework (known as "the forest") and caused the spire, designed by Viollet-le-Duc, to collapse onto the transept vaults. This tragic event marked the building's history and inspired a wave of generosity, enabling swift restoration efforts.

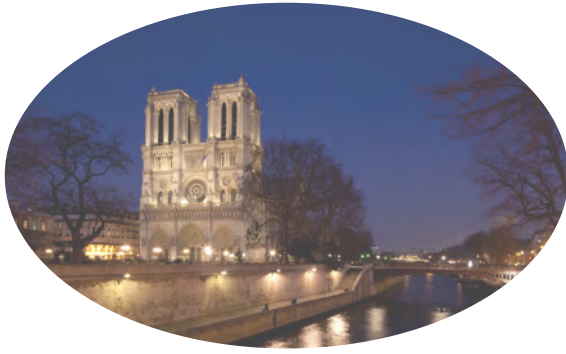
- December 8, 2024: Consecration of the altar

Following five years of restoration, the cathedral will reopen to the public on December 8, 2024. Opening ceremonies will include the reawakening of the organ and the consecration of the new altar by Archbishop Monsignor Ulrich.



*Reliquary of Louis IX, 1857, by Jean Alexandre Chertier*

# Notre-Dame de Paris and the history of France in ten dates



## The Crusades

At the Council of Clermont, Pope Urban II called upon Christian nobles to defend the Holy Christian sites occupied by the Turks. During the Third Crusade (1189–1192), Philip II Augustus and Richard the Lionheart pledged themselves to the cause at Notre-Dame in 1189. Later, during the Seventh Crusade (1248–1254), Louis IX received a blessing there before going on his journey.

1095  
-  
1291

508

## Paris becomes the capital of the Frankish kingdom

During his reign, which ended in 511, Clovis laid the foundations of modern France. Lutetia, the Roman city, was renamed Parisii. At the time, the city was confined to the Île de la Cité, becoming the capital of a unified Frankish kingdom and closely tied to Christianity following Clovis's conversion around 498.



## Saint Louis venerates the Crown of Thorns at Notre-Dame

During the Fourth Crusade, Saint Louis purchased the Crown of Thorns from the Byzantine Emperor Baldwin II of Courtenay. He brought the sacred relic to Notre-Dame, leading a barefoot procession while dressed in a simple tunic. Subsequently, the Sainte-Chapelle was built to house this and other relics of the Passion.

1239



## The Hundred Years' War

Although the war between France and England spared Notre-Dame, it became the backdrop for several key moments. In 1431, Henry VI, at age 10, was crowned King of England and France at Notre-Dame, even as Charles VII had been crowned King of France at Reims in 1429. Later, in 1447, Charles VII celebrated a Te Deum in the cathedral upon reclaiming Paris.

1337  
-  
1453



1804

## Coronation of Emperor Napoleon I in the presence of Pope Pius VII

On December 2, 1804, Napoleon Bonaparte, who had served as First Consul since 1799, was crowned Emperor of the French at Notre-Dame, with Pope Pius VII in attendance. He adopted the name Napoleon I. During the coronation, his wife Joséphine also became Empress. This event was famously captured in two grand paintings by Jacques-Louis David.



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**Publication of Victor Hugo's *Notre-Dame de Paris***

Victor Hugo's novel *Notre-Dame de Paris*, published in 1831, sparked a national movement to restore the damaged cathedral following the French Revolution. The book's phenomenal success led to four reprints within a single month.

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1831



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**Separation of Church and State**

1905

On December 9, 1905, a law central to the Republic was passed: "The Republic does not recognize, pay for, or subsidize any religious worship." Religious worship was no longer a public institution. The State became secular, enabling and guaranteeing the practice of all religions.

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**Magnificat sung for the liberation of Paris**

The liberation of Paris was a decisive moment in World War II. A Magnificat resonated in Notre-Dame in the presence of General Charles de Gaulle and General Philippe Leclerc. This hymn of thanksgiving, with its lyrics drawn from various passages of the Old Testament, is a canticle of gratitude in the Church.

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1944



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**The fire at Notre-Dame Cathedral**

2019

On April 15, 2019, a devastating fire destroyed the wooden framework (nicknamed "the forest") and caused the collapse of the spire designed by Viollet-le-Duc. This tragic event triggered an outpouring of generosity, allowing rapid progress on the restoration project.

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**Consecration of the altar**

After five years of extensive restoration, the Cathedral will reopen to the public on December 8, 2024. The reopening ceremonies will feature the awakening of the organ and the consecration of the new altar by Archbishop Monsignor Ulrich.

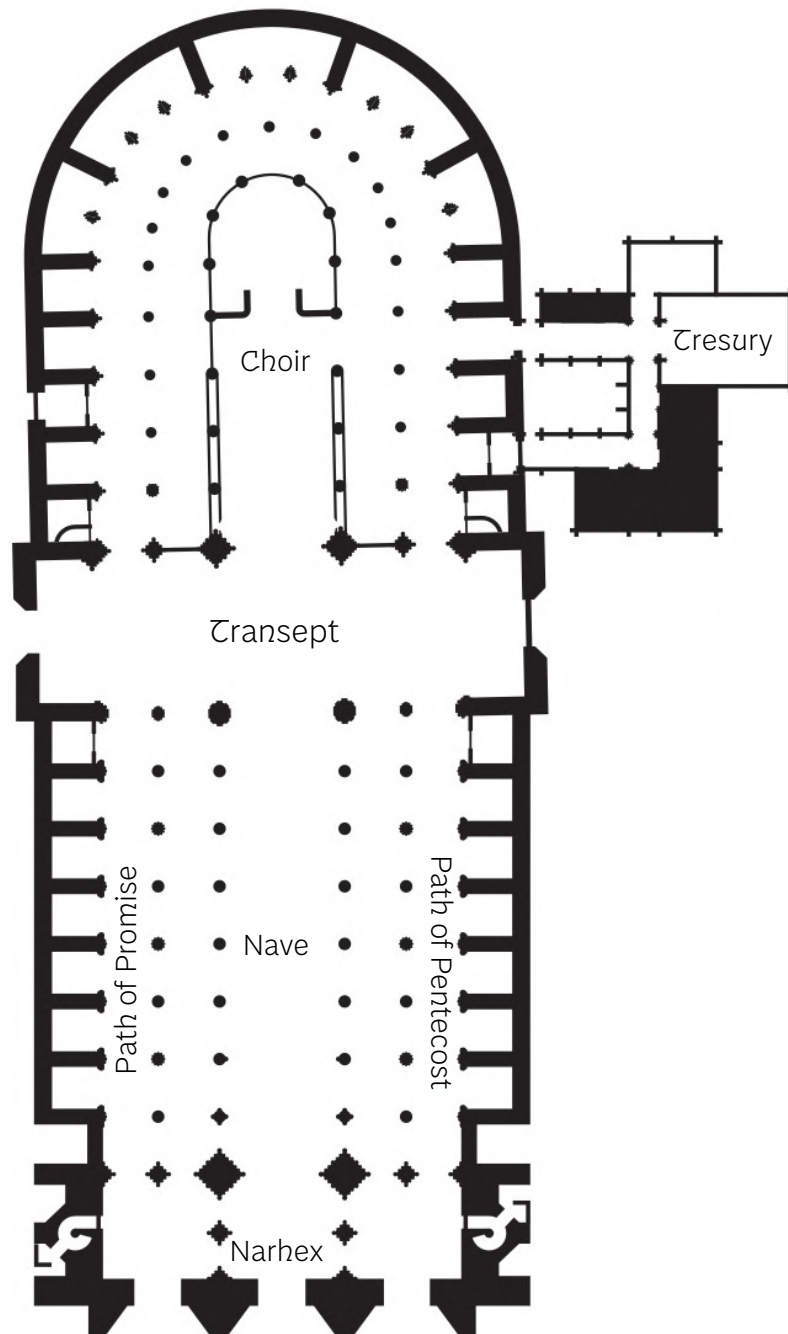
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2024



## Spatial organization and general layout

Notre-Dame de Paris is a vast religious building, covering a total area of nearly 6,000 square meters and reaching a height of 69 meters. Like most French cathedrals, it takes the form of a Latin cross, defined by the major axis of the nave, transept, and choir. The altar, where the liturgy takes place, marks its center. The cathedral is said to be "oriented," meaning the choir faces east, while the main entrance is to the west.



## The Exteriors

Originally, the Cathedral was linked to other buildings in the city. The Cathedral complex included the forecourt, the Hôtel-Dieu, and the episcopal palace. Successive renovations have altered the interaction between these spaces. The Hôtel-Dieu was relocated to the north of the forecourt during the Second Empire. The presbytery, which replaced the episcopal palace, was part of the changes made by Viollet-le-Duc. The historical forecourt was a smaller square that accentuated the vertical thrust of the facade. Today, the church's forecourt forms a large esplanade, where the "kilomètre zéro" is located, marking the starting point of 14 radiating roads from Paris throughout France. Architect Bas Smets, commissioned by the city of Paris following an international consultation, will redesign the areas around the cathedral starting in 2025.

The Cathedral itself remains as impressive as ever. Its spire, flying buttresses, and thick supports are visible along the lateral facades. The north and south facades, on the Seine side, correspond to the arms of the transept. To the south, the Saint-Étienne portal depicts the life of the first martyr. It is topped by a rose window, which was restored later. The facade ends with a gable pierced by a rose. The north facade, facing the historic canonical district and bordered by the Cloister Street, displays architectural elements similar to those on the south. The portal, known as the "Cloister Portal" illustrates the childhood of Christ as well as the miracle of Theophilus. Several episodes from the life of the Virgin Mary are depicted on this portal.

Not far from the portal, the "Porte Rouge" (Red Door) owes its name to the color of its leaves. Associated with the purple of emperors, red is also linked to the Passion of Christ. On the tympanum, Mary is crowned by an angel. Christ holds the Book of Life in one hand and blesses His mother, with her hands joined, in the other. King Louis IX and his wife, Marguerite of Provence, stand on either side of the Virgin's coronation.

The exterior architecture of Notre-Dame de Paris culminates in the apse, which corresponds to the choir inside the Cathedral. The construction began in 1163 with this part, which remains the oldest section of the church. The spire rises above the crossing of the transept. A work by Eugène-Emmanuel Viollet-le-Duc, it replaced an earlier spire built around 1250. Seven bells were installed in it. The original spire was dismantled between 1786 and 1792. This second spire was not intended to serve as a bell tower. During the 2019 fire, it collapsed, consumed by the flames. However, the copper statues surrounding it, depicting the twelve apostles and the symbols of the four evangelists, were spared. The restoration work required the statues to be brought down just days before the fire, as they had suffered from copper oxidation.



## The main facade

The western massif serves as the entrance threshold for all visitors to the Cathedral. The harmonic facade offers a regular rhythm of meaningful horizontal and vertical lines. The four powerful buttresses supporting the facade rise from the forecourt and stretch up to the top of the towers. This verticality symbolizes the aspiration towards God. The elevation is structured around three levels, topped by two parallel towers.

The first level is flanked by three portals. On the second tier is the gallery of kings. Located 20 meters above the ground, this gallery consists of 28 figures representing the 28 generations of the kings of Judea, who preceded Jesus Christ. These statues, mutilated during the French Revolution, were restored in the 19th century. This horizontal gallery is then topped by the gallery of the Virgin, at the center of which is a rose window 9.60 meters in diameter, created around 1225. The sculptures of Mary and the two angels were commissioned by Viollet-le-Duc.

On the next tier are the two towers of the facade that complete the elevation. They rise to a height of 69 meters, built around 1220-1240 and 1235-1250. 422 steps are required to reach their summit. The four faces of the towers are pierced with two tall bays with decorated arches. They house the bronze bells, including the great bell, Emmanuel. The towers are topped with a lead terrace bordered by a balustrade. In the past, the height of the cathedral, with its towers and spires, allowed pilgrims and worshippers to recognize the church from a distance.

## The portals

The three portals highlight the following themes: in the center, the Portal of the Last Judgment portrays the iconography of Christ as the victor over Death; to the left, the Portal of the Virgin Mary emphasizes the preeminence of the Mother of Jesus Christ, the Mother of the Church; and to the right, the Portal Saint-Anne evokes the childhood of the Virgin.

The Portal Saint-Anne, located on the southern side, presents the childhood of Mary, from her conception and upbringing in the Temple to her marriage to Saint Joseph. These representations are inspired by apocryphal gospels, while scenes from the Gospel of Saint Luke depict the history of her adulthood: the Annunciation, the Visitation, the Nativity, and the Adoration of the Magi. On the tympanum, the Virgin in Majesty presents her Son. Below the tympanum, the two lintels depict the marriages of Joachim and Anne (Mary's parents) and of Mary and Joseph (the parents of Jesus). The upper section then illustrates the public life of Jesus with scenes of the Annunciation, the Visitation, the Nativity, and the Epiphany. The piers of this portal are adorned with high-relief figures of Old Testament characters such as King Solomon, the Queen of Sheba, and King David. This portal is the oldest and is a reuse of a portal dedicated to the Virgin, dating from around 1145-1155, originally erected on the Cathedral of Saint-Étienne and later relocated to the new facade around 1200. This is evidenced by the hierarchical nature of the sculpted figures, characteristic of Romanesque sculpture. The Portal of the Virgin Mary, on the northern side, reflects the last moments of Mary's life—her Dormition (her death, Assumption, and Coronation). Notre-Dame de Paris is dedicated to her, and this portal, created around 1210-1220, is particularly devoted to her. The Virgin and Child are placed on the central trumeau, with statues of protective saints (Saint Stephen and Saint Denis) on either side in the jambs. The tympanum depicts the Coronation of the Virgin by Christ, emphasizing the importance of the Mother of the Church. Below, two lintels illustrate the Dormition, along with prophets from the Old Testament, while the arches above are filled with angels.

The Portal of the Last Judgment, in the center, was sculpted between 1220 and 1230. Its theme is inspired by the Gospel of Saint Matthew, Chapter 25, which speaks of the Judgment of God, when the soul of the deceased is resurrected. According to Christian tradition, God "will judge the living and the dead." The tympanum shows a Majesty of Christ in bas-relief, with the Heavenly Jerusalem at His feet. Two angels stand beside Him, holding the instruments of the Passion. The angel on Christ's right holds the lance in one hand and the nails wrapped in cloth in the other, as a sign of respect, while the angel on His left grips the Cross with both hands.



Between the 10th and 13th centuries, the classic image of an emperor's triumph was represented, sitting on a raised throne, surrounded by his court, with officers presenting the sword, lance, and shield. The lower register depicts the weighing of souls. The lintel portrays the deceased rising from the dead, and the arches surrounding the portal show members of the heavenly court. On the piers, the parable of the Wise and Foolish Virgins is depicted. The trumeau features Christ as a teacher, with Viollet-le-Duc having reproduced the features of the "Beau Dieu" from Amiens. His feet tread on the asp and basilisk, two classical symbols of evil. In the jambs, statues of the twelve apostles can be recognized by their attributes. At the base of the jambs, the liberal arts and an allegorical representation of theology are also depicted.

*The entrances to the cathedral have been modified. Visitors now enter through the central portal, the Portal of the Last Judgment, while groups enter through the Portal of the Virgin Mary on the northern side of the facade. The Portal Saint-Anne is now used as the exit from the Cathedral.*

### The Interior Pathway

Upon entering the cathedral, visitors are immediately struck by the grandeur and golden color of the stone. The vaults, visible from the narthex, soar to a height of 33 meters, while the alignment of the capitals creates a sense of unity. The depth of the cathedral unfolds, revealing a perspective that leads all the way to the choir.



This view allows one to see the Latin cross, accentuated by the new liturgical furnishings. The nave, crossed by the transept and culminating in the choir, is filled with new chairs designed by Ionna Vautrin, which allow light to pass through. The redesigned pathway invites the visitor to head toward the northern aisle, also known as the "Allée de la Promesse" (Avenue of the Promise). Seven chapels, dedicated to major figures of the Old Testament, illustrate different moments of the Lord's Covenant with humanity. Figures such as Noah, Abraham, Moses, Isaiah, David, Solomon, and Elijah address themes of Creation, blessing, freedom, the servant figure, prayer, and Wisdom. In these chapels, the *mays* (paintings) unfold the cycle of Saint Paul, awaiting the creation of a contemporary tapestry.

The transept marks the end of the nave and the entrance into the choir. The northern arm of the transept is the best place to view the liturgical platform and the new altar. It serves as a transition from the Old Testament of the northern aisle to the choir dedicated to Christ. The figure of Saint John the Baptist, painted by Parrocel in his *may*, announces the coming of the Messiah and connects the Old and New Testaments. The northern rose window represents the expectation of the Messiah, with the Virgin at its center. The apse narrates the life of Jesus Christ.

The choir is surrounded by the ambulatory, which gives access to various radiating chapels as well as the axial chapel. The northern closure of the choir depicts the public life of Jesus up until the Garden of Gethsemane. On the opposite side, the southern closure portrays the episodes of the life of the Risen Christ. The radiating chapels retain the bright colors of Viollet-le-Duc's restoration. The axial chapel, dedicated to the Seven Sorrows of the Virgin, displays the reliquary designed by Sylvain Dubuisson to house the sacred relic.

The choir, a rare example of modern-era renovations, still features the stalls of the canons.

This area is not accessible to group visitors and is reserved for private prayer before the tabernacle, where the faithful are invited to take a moment of silent reflection. As visitors leave the ambulatory, they join the southern arm of the transept, another pivotal point in the journey. It mirrors the northern transept. The figure of Saint Stephen, the first martyr, as depicted in the *may*, responds to that of Saint John the Baptist. The southern rose window mirrors the northern one and evokes the final coming of Christ (Revelation 1:16). Here, two important features can be found: the 14th-century statue of Our Lady and the plaque commemorating the conversion of Paul Claudel.

The southern transept leads into the southern aisle, where the "Allée de la Pentecôte" begins, dedicated to the Church and the gifts of the Spirit. Each chapel in this aisle honors a saint significant to the Diocese of Paris: Saint Joseph, Saint Thomas Aquinas, Saint Clotilde, Saint Vincent de Paul, Saint Genevieve (patron saint of Paris), Saint Denis, and Saint Paul Chen. Here too, the *Mays* can be found—painted panels commissioned by the Parisian goldsmiths' guild in homage to the Virgin Mary between 1630 and 1707. They depict biblical scenes and episodes from the lives of saints. The cycle of Saint Peter is showcased in this section.

## The works of art in the Cathedral :

Among the inhabitants of the stone vessel that is Notre-Dame Cathedral, there are not only visitors, worshippers, and clergy, but also works of art. These inanimate objects, bearing a history as rich as the Cathedral itself, can be found in every corner. Since the fire of 2019 and the subsequent closure of the Cathedral, the display of these works has been entirely rethought to emphasize the new path, leading from the "Allée de la Promesse" (Path of the Promise) to the "Allée de la Pentecôte" (Path of Pentecost), from shadow to light. Art has always been closely linked to the Church, which has been one of the primary patrons of the arts throughout history. Sculptures, *Mays* (painted panels), paintings, tapestries, stained glass, and liturgical furniture, both ancient and contemporary, are all present in the Cathedral, reflecting the diverse periods of its history.

The Cathedral's artworks reflect its successive renovations. The famous sculpture of the Virgin dates back to the 14th century, the choir enclosure was created at the end of the 13th century and restored in the 19th century, the rose windows are from the 13th century, and the I come from the 17th and 18th centuries. The 2024 restoration also includes new liturgical furniture designed by Guillaume Bardet.

Despite originating from different periods and taking many forms, the works of art in Notre-Dame form a unified whole. Their beauty and richness enhance the understanding of the cathedral.

*The Virgin and the Child, 14<sup>th</sup> century.*



The 14th-century stone sculpture of the Virgin Mary, standing at 1.8 meters tall, was originally meant for the Saint-Aignan Chapel in the former cloister of the canons. It was relocated in the Cathedral by Viollet-le-Duc during the restoration work in 1855, positioning it at the base of the southeast pillar of the transept rather than at the Virgin's portal where it had been placed since 1818. Over time, this statue has become the face of the Cathedral. The Virgin Mary holds her infant son in one hand, while in the other hand, she holds a lily. The infant Jesus holds the orb, a sphere symbolizing the world for which he is the Savior. The statue's hieratic silhouette, combined with the delicate folds of the drapery and the serene expressions on their faces, make it a representation of great grace.



*Saint Joan of Arc 1921, Charles Desvergnès.*



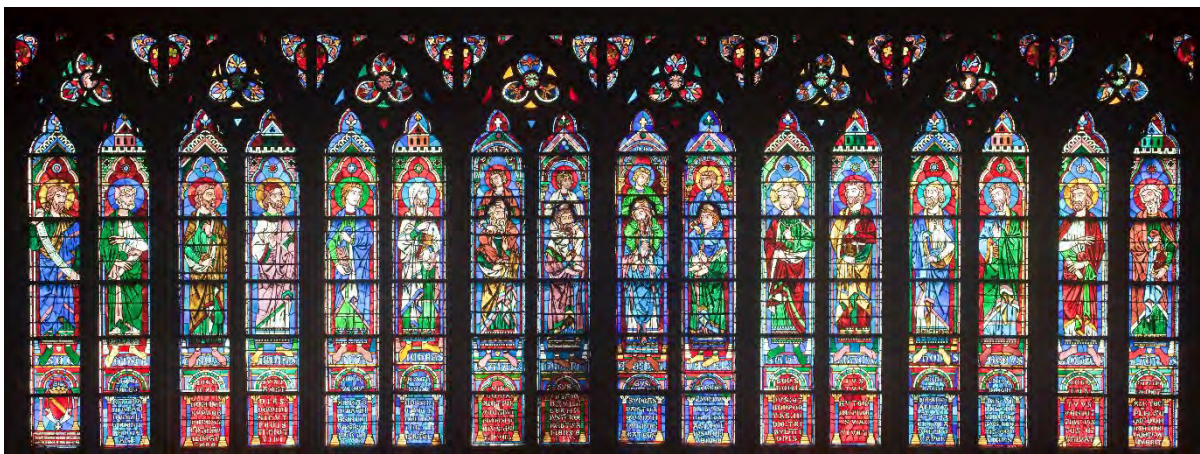
*Saint Denys, 1722, Nicolas Coustou.*

While the Virgin Mary is prominently featured in the cathedral, many other remarkable sculptures of saints can also be found. These have been placed in the side chapels of the nave. Among them is the 1722 statue of Saint Denys by Nicolas Coustou, the same artist who sculpted the Pietà in the choir, which is reserved for the faithful. Coustou's Saint Denys belongs to the Baroque style, characterized by rich drapery. In contrast, the 1921 sculpture of Saint Joan of Arc by Charles Desvergnès displays a certain classicism, with a simplified silhouette, an impassive face, and vertical lines that lend it an imposing height. The marble sculpture portrays the "Maid of Orléans" with her hands joined in prayer. This iconic figure in French history has been frequently represented in the 19th and 20th centuries. Another sculpture from the same period, by Louis Castex (1932-33), depicts Saint Thérèse of Lisieux, who was canonized in 1925. Represented in life-size proportions, with simple and refined forms, Saint Thérèse seems to inhabit the cathedral, alongside many other saints scattered throughout the space.



The recumbent effigy of Bishop Simon Matifas de Bucy, 14th century, ambulatory.

The Cathedral also houses strikingly realistic sculptures of effigies (gisants), which form an integral part of its artistic collection. The only medieval effigy in the Cathedral is that of the 83rd Bishop of Paris, created at the beginning of the 14th century in white marble. The effigy portrays the bishop lying down, eyes closed, in eternal serenity. The practice of sculpting effigies began during the Roman period and continued until the 17th century. A symbol of devotion even in death, this effigy meticulously replicates the bishop's ceremonial attire, with folds falling not as if he were lying down, but as if he were standing and officiating.



Clerestory of the Prophets under the southern rose window, circa 1270, restored in 1860.

### The Mays :

Between 1630 and 1707, the Guild of Goldsmiths offered a painting every year to Notre-Dame Cathedral in homage to the Virgin Mary. These paintings, known as *Mays*, were created in total 76 times, and though dispersed during the Revolution, many were later gathered and returned to the Cathedral. Originally displayed in the central nave during the Ancien Régime, the paintings were relocated by Viollet-le-Duc during his restoration work. Today, they are placed in the chapels and transept arms, and are viewed in cycles: the cycle of Saint Paul in the north collateral chapels and the cycle of Saint Peter in the south chapels.

*The conversion of Saint Paul, 1637,*  
Laurent de La Hyre.



One of the most remarkable *Œ*ays is the seventh commissioned by the goldsmiths' guild. The painting is divided by a large diagonal, creating a striking contrast between light and darkness. In the baroque style, the painting captures the dramatic moment of Saint Paul's fall, with his face turned toward the sky. The light in the composition highlights his face, while the dynamic scene is enhanced by the expressive figures, making the painting all the more grandiose. This *Œ*ay is regarded as one of the masterpieces of the painter, highly praised for his historical and religious scenes, following the style of the great 17th-century master, Nicolas Poussin.

*The Crucifixion of Saint Peter, 1643,*  
Sébastien Bourdon.



The composition of this painting is particularly interesting and resulted from extensive thought by the artist. The diagonal lines, created by the cross, rope, and flag, divide the composition between the chaotic earthly realm below and the serene heavenly realm above. In the upper part, an angel offers a crown of flowers to Saint Peter, representing the Christian world. Below, the crucifixion of one of Christ's first disciples, with his head downward, is shown, as ordered by the Roman governor Agrippa. The light that shines on Saint Peter elevates him as a symbol of Christianity, while the shadowy sculpture on the opposite side symbolizes the pagan world.

Another significant *Maz*, also in two registers, was painted by Charles Le Brun, the official painter to King Louis XIV. This *Maz* depicts the martyrdom of Saint Andrew, with the scene divided between the lower section, showing his condemnation by the proconsul Egeas, and the upper part, where Egeas is seen giving the order. Saint Andrew is shown in an exalted pose, arms stretched toward the sky, bathed in light emanating from a piece of sky in the upper left corner of the painting. His posture forms an X-shaped cross, known as the "Cross of Saint Andrew," a form that has been associated with the saint since the Middle Ages. Despite the chaotic figures in the lower part of the scene, the saint's form remains clearly identifiable.



### **The great rose windows:**

In the Cathedral, the stained glass windows are among the elements that most captivate the eyes, particularly the three great rose windows. They are located on the south and north transepts, as well as on the western facade of the Cathedral, although the latter is partially obscured inside by the organ. In Gothic architecture, thanks to the flying buttresses, the walls can be taller and thinner, allowing for large openings to be placed, and the stained glass windows occupy a significant place. Notre-Dame features many stained glass windows from the 19th and 20th centuries, but it is the Gothic roses that attract the most attention. The north and south roses were built in 1250 and around 1260, respectively. Both have a diameter of 12.90 meters and were created by the architect Jean de Chelles. The west rose, with a diameter of 9.60 meters, was the first to be completed, around 1220, at the end of the reign of Philip Augustus. It celebrates the mystery of the Incarnation, according to which God incarnated as a man, Jesus, at a specific time and place. Thus, at the center of the rose is a Virgin with Child. The north rose represents the coming of the Messiah, God's representative on Earth. The rose features themes from the Old Testament, such as the anticipation of humanity's redemption, the kings of Israel and Judah, and the patriarchs of sacred history. The south rose, on the other hand, focuses on the emergence of Light, that is, the birth of Jesus. Surrounding the Christ of the Apocalypse, placed at the center in the 19th century, are the apostles, martyrs, and wise virgins, as well as scenes from the legend of Saint Matthew.



*The west rose window*



*The Visitation and the Nativity  
Scenes from the north screen  
of the choir*

## The choir screen:

When the ambulatory around the choir was built in the Middle Ages, it was meant to isolate the choir from the rest of the Cathedral to ensure the smooth conduct of the service. Thus, in the 14th century, a screen was created for the choir. Initiated by Jean de Chelles, the screen was completed by Jean le Bouteiller after the death of the former. As a result, two styles coexist in the sculptures. Those on the north screen, the oldest, depict scenes from the childhood of Jesus, while those on the south screen are dedicated to the risen Christ. In the north, the style and compositions of the various scenes, with friezes outlined by small columns, are quite simple, with the figures standing out against a golden background that enhances the colors. In the south, the compositions become more complex, with the addition of numerous details. The figures' postures become stiffer, a rigidity accentuated by the many folds in their clothing. The excellent state of preservation of the screen, despite the passage of time, is likely due to the restoration work by Viollet-le-Duc. By following neo-Gothic principles, he restored the screen's colors, which had been covered in whitewash during the 18th century. Today, thanks to the work of the cathedral's restorers, the screen is once again polychrome, and the details of its scenes have been rediscovered.





### A revival through contemporary Art :

→ The New Furniture : While the 2019 fire caused extensive damage to the Cathedral, the measures taken for its reopening will allow for a completely new layout. This renewal also involves the intervention of designers selected to continue the rich history of Notre-Dame. The former altar, created by Jean Couret, was severely damaged by the collapse of the spire. The diocese then launched a large consultation to create new furnishings. Guillaume Bardet was chosen for the liturgical furniture. Bardet's bronze work combines simplicity and nobility, as well as a certain luminosity. He created the altar, the cathedra, the associated seats, the ambo, the tabernacle, and the baptistery. The sacred vessels are made of silver and gold, featuring a refined aesthetic and great harmony. Ionna Vautrin designed the seating, drawing inspiration from the cathedral's architecture, its vaults, and columns, creating a continuity between Gothic architecture and contemporary design.

→ The Reliquary Shrine : Sylvain Dubuisson was chosen by the Diocese of Paris to create a new setting for the most important relic in Christianity. In a modern and simple frame, directly inspired by the Crown of Thorns, the designer connects with the ancestral relic. Placed in the Chapel of the Seven Sorrows, the Reliquary Shrine was designed as an experience. Set against a blue background recalling the Virgin's color, the Crown once again illustrates the bond between the Mother of the Church, Mary, and her Son, presented here in the Passion.

## Notre-Dame de Paris in art and literature

The city of Paris, whether in the artistic or literary sphere, is known as one of the most important cultural epicenters. The city hosted numerous artists and writers, who endeavored to depict it from all angles. Notre-Dame de Paris, with its central position in the city and its seemingly eternal stones, inevitably attracted attention. While the Cathedral made appearances in painting during the Middle Ages, it was especially during the 19th and 20th centuries that it was rediscovered and once again drew the gaze of many, with the intervention of Victor Hugo playing a significant role in this revival. During this period, both painting and poetry found in Notre-Dame a great source of inspiration.

### Art

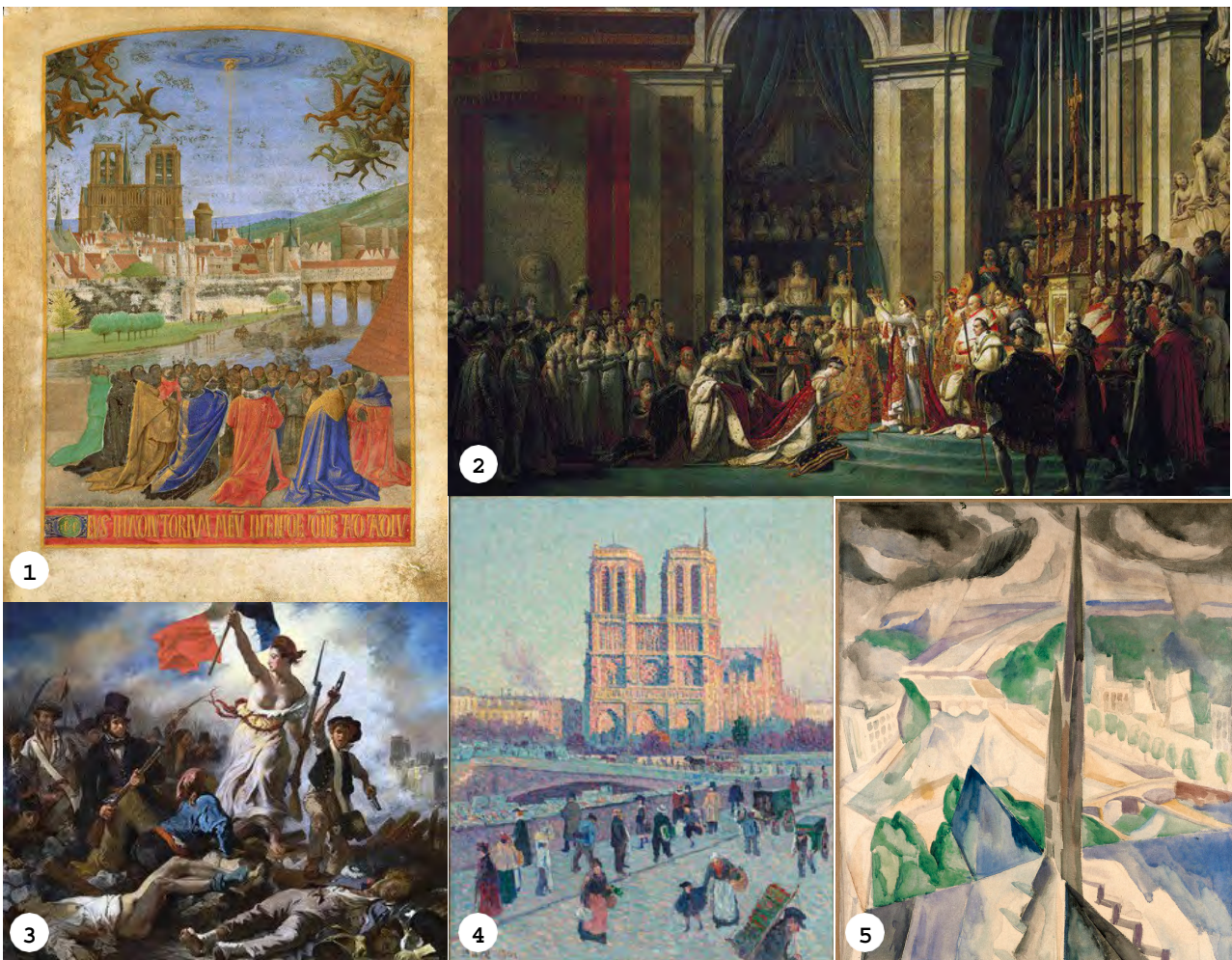
1. The Book of Hours of Étienne Chevalier, c. 1460, Jean Fouquet: On one of the pages of this richly decorated Book of Hours, Notre-Dame stands majestically in the landscape of Renaissance Paris. The page, which depicts "The Hand of God Protecting the Faithful from Demons," highlights the Cathedral in all its grandeur, towering over the city and the faithful below. The Cathedral occupies a large part of the sky, directly connected to the golden hand emerging from the clouds – the hand of God. This image emphasizes Notre-Dame's central role not only in the urban landscape but also in the spiritual protection of the people.

2. The Coronation of Napoleon, 1807, Jacques-Louis David : This monumental painting is reproduced in nearly every history book due to its captivating iconography. The coronation took place at Notre-Dame de Paris, a significant symbolic choice by Napoleon, who sought to break with the tradition of royal coronations in Reims. In the painting, the interior of the cathedral was transformed into a neo-classical set, entirely ephemeral. With faux marble and tapestries adorned with bee motifs, Notre-Dame is almost unrecognizable, yet it remains the setting for this pivotal historical moment. The choice of Notre-Dame, the site of the coronation, underlines the deep political and religious implications of Napoleon's reign and his desire to consolidate power, blending monarchy with the new republican ideals of his empire.

3. Liberty Leading the People, 1831, Eugène Delacroix : Famous for its exaltation of liberty, this painting is one of the most renowned works in the Louvre. Depicting the July Revolution of 1830, it is heavily influenced by the literature of Victor Hugo. This is evident in the young Gavroche climbing the barricade alongside Liberty, a character clearly inspired by *Les Misérables*, as well as the cathedral in the background. Indeed, it was Hugo who restored Notre-Dame's grandeur in the eyes of the world, and particularly in the eyes of Delacroix. The Cathedral serves as a symbol of Paris, anchoring the revolutionary scene in the heart of the city. By including Notre-Dame, Delacroix not only locates the event geographically but also connects the spirit of revolution with the enduring legacy of the French capital.

4. Quai Saint Michel and Notre-Dame (1901), Maximilien Luce : Strong with all the pictorial innovations of the previous century, the painter creates this canvas using the pointillist technique and presents the cathedral in a new light. In a period when urban landscapes become subjects in their own right, Notre-Dame occupies the entire upper part of the painting and is bathed in light. The colors given to it highlight its Gothic architecture, and its presence is meant to be reassuring above the Parisians.

5. The Spire of Notre-Dame (1909), Robert Delaunay: representative of Orphism, a movement derived from Cubism, the painter is accustomed to depicting iconic Parisian monuments, such as the Eiffel Tower, which fascinates him. Interested in industrial modernity, the painter will, however, depict churches, such as Notre-Dame. Using bright colors, derived from Fauvism, and a breaking apart of forms and subjects inherited from Cubism, he represents Notre-Dame in an almost abstract way. Yet, it is indeed the Cathedral, and especially its spire, an architectural feat, that most likely attracted



## Literature

-Victor Hugo (1802-1885): In 1831, Victor Hugo completed his novel *Notre-Dame de Paris*. This historical novel was published when he was still young, yet he was already a recognized writer and an engaged man. It took him six months to write the more than 900 pages of *Notre-Dame de Paris*. Upon its publication, the work was praised by both critics and the public. By placing the Gothic Cathedral at the center of his story, Hugo allowed the public to rediscover it, saving it from certain decay.



*« Undoubtedly, the church of Notre-Dame de Paris is still today a majestic and sublime edifice. But no matter how beautiful it has remained as it has aged, it is hard not to sigh, not to be indignant at the countless degradations and mutilations that both time and man have inflicted upon the venerable monument. »*

Extract from *Notre-Dame de Paris* (1831)

-Gérard de Nerval (1808-1855) : A great French Romantic poet, De Nerval is distinguished by texts imbued with a certain mysticism. Dying too young, his mind affected by madness, he nonetheless left a mark on French literature through his writings on dreams and esotericism. In his literary quest for an ideal, often embodied by feminine figures like the Virgin Mary, De Nerval also wrote about Notre-Dame.



*" Notre-Dame is indeed old: perhaps we will see her  
Bury Paris, which she has seen born;  
But in a thousand years, Time will make her stumble,  
Like a wolf makes an ox, this heavy carcass,  
Twisting her iron nerves, and then with a dull tooth  
She will sadly gnaw her old rocky bones!  
Many men, from all the countries of the earth  
Will come, to contemplate this austere ruin,  
Dreamers, and rereading Victor's book:  
– Then they will believe they see the old basilica,  
Just as it was, powerful and magnificent,  
Rising before them like the shadow of a dead man!"*

Poem "*Notre-Dame de Paris*", extract from *Odelettes* (1853).

-Paul Claudel (1868-1955) : The playwright, poet, and diplomat has very strong ties to Notre-Dame. Indeed, it is the place of his conversion in 1886. A commemorative plaque marks this moment within the Cathedral. He mentions his conversion several times and the emotions he felt during this pivotal moment in his life. His faith will guide him until his death.



*« I myself was standing in the crowd, near the second pillar at the entrance of the choir, to the right of the sacristy. And it was then that the event that would dominate my entire life occurred. In an instant, my heart was touched, and I believed. I believed with such a strong commitment, such an overwhelming elevation of my entire being, with a conviction so powerful, with such certainty that left no room for any doubt, that, since then, no books, no reasoning, no accidents of a turbulent life have been able to shake my faith, nor, to be honest, touch it. »*

Extract from *Œuvres en prose* (1913)

-Walter Benjamin (1892-1940) : The art historian and philosopher, associated with the Frankfurt School, also mentioned Notre-Dame in his writings, in the form of a dream he had. The Cathedral seems to allow him to express deeply buried feelings. Like others who died prematurely, he left behind a number of writings, but he was scarcely recognized. It was only in the 1950s that his thought was rediscovered.



*« In a dream, on the left bank of the Seine, in front of Notre-Dame. I was there, but nothing resembled Notre-Dame. Only, by the last steps of its mass, a brick building protruded from a high wooden frame. Yet I was there, mesmerized, but still in front of Notre-Dame. And what mesmerized me was a feeling of nostalgia. Nostalgia precisely for this Paris where I found myself in the dream. Why this nostalgia? And why this displaced, unrecognizable thing? – It was because in the dream, I had come too close to it. The unfulfilled nostalgia that, at the heart of the desired object, had overwhelmed me was not the kind that, from afar, calls out the image. It was the blessed nostalgia that has already crossed the threshold of the image and possession, and knows only the strength of the name, that name from which the beloved thing is born, by which it ages, renews, and, without an image, becomes the asylum of every image. »*

Extract from *Brèves Ombres* (1933)

-Jacques Prévert (1900-1977) : Popular poet, Prévert also wrote for theater and cinema, notably dialogues, screenplays, and songs. In 1956, he participated in the Franco-Italian project of a film based on Victor Hugo's novel, directed by Jean Delannoy. On the occasion of this film, he wrote these few verses about the Seine and the eternal Notre-Dame.



*"The Seine is lucky  
She has no worries  
She takes it easy  
Day and night  
And she leaves her source  
Quietly, without a sound...  
Without leaving her bed  
And without making any foam,  
She goes towards the sea  
Passing through Paris.  
The Seine is lucky  
She has no worries  
And when she strolls  
Along her quays  
In her beautiful green dress  
And with her golden lights  
Notre-Dame, jealous,  
Immobile and severe  
From the top of all her stones  
Looks at her sideways  
But the Seine doesn't care  
She has no worries  
She takes it easy  
Day and night  
And goes towards Le Havre  
And goes towards the sea  
Passing like a dream  
In the midst of the mysteries  
The miseries of Paris."*

## Suggestions for educational activity themes :

Notre-Dame de Paris, due to its great popularity, is one of the most visited places in France. The Cathedral is also still an active place of worship. Therefore, the possible educational activities are focused around visiting the site. The suggested topics serve as guidelines to enrich the visit according to different educational levels. To accompany the visit, free child and adult tours, following points of interest, are available on the mobile app, enhanced with textual, audio, iconographic, and lexical content.

### Preschool CYCLE 1:

- What is a cathedral: Definition of a church and a sacred space.
- Observation activity: What does Gothic art look like, through its materials, shapes (arches and columns with vertical and horizontal lines), colors (example of radiating chapels or stained glass), and sounds (echoes).

### Primary School CYCLE 2:

- Definition of a church and a cathedral: History of France in the Middle Ages.
- Concepts of Gothic art: The construction of a cathedral, the building site, and the professions involved. A comparison with Sainte-Chapelle is possible to identify the characteristic elements of a cathedral.
- Learning poems about Notre-Dame de Paris.

### Primary School CYCLE 3:

- Definition of the cathedral group: The role of a cathedral in a city like Paris, in connection with the history of Christianity and the Kingdom of France. Historical figures such as Saint Louis, Maurice de Sully, or Joan of Arc can be discussed.
- The Cathedral in its technical aspects: The construction process, architectural vocabulary with terms suited to the craftsmanship and techniques of the Middle Ages (stained glass, different architectural styles).
- Learning poems about Notre-Dame de Paris.

### Middle School CYCLE 4:

- History of construction: The principles of Gothic architecture.
- Image of the power of the Church and the State: The relationship between power and religion, from the Middle Ages to the Revolution, and the separation of the two entities leading to the 1905 law.
- Analysis of works of art: Iconography of Notre-Dame, both medieval and contemporary, with a focus on the restoration choices of Viollet-le-Duc and the associated challenges.

## Highschool

- History of construction: The principles of Gothic architecture.
- Analysis of works of art: A visit following the works of interest in the Cathedral, and their placement within the space.
- Literary and artistic approach: Notre-Dame as a source of inspiration, connected to the History of Art and literature (artworks and poems inspired by the Cathedral).



*Stainglass of Eudes de Sully, circa 1860.*



## Glossary

### A

**Assumption:** A Christian feast celebrated on August 15, commemorating the elevation to heaven of the body and soul of the Virgin Mary.

**Apsidioles:** Small chapels arranged around the main chancel.

**Apostles:** The twelve disciples chosen by Jesus to spread his message.

**Arcades:** A series of arches supported by columns or pillars.

**Archangel:** A superior angel, a divine messenger (e.g., Michael, Gabriel).

**Archdeacon:** A church dignitary responsible for overseeing the priests of a diocese.

**Altar:** A consecrated table used for religious celebrations, such as the Eucharist.

**Abutment:** Vertical elements on either side of an opening (door, window).

**Axial Chapel:** A small chapel located behind the choir, aligned with the axis of the church.

**Ambulatory:** A walkway that allows circulation around the choir of a church, often surrounded by chapels.

### B

**Baptistery:** The place where the sacrament of baptism is celebrated, also called the font.

**Bas-relief:** A sculpting technique where the figures slightly detach from the background.

**Basilica:** A church with a rectangular plan, featuring longitudinal aisles that terminate in an apse.

**"Beau Dieu":** A representation of Christ in Gothic art, often placed at the center of the cathedral's portal.

**Barrel (vault in):** A vault in the shape of a half-cylinder.

**Bourdon:** A large bell with a deep, low tone.

**Bishop:** A priest representing Christ, responsible for guiding the faithful within a diocese.

### C

**Catechumen:** A person undergoing formation to receive baptism in the Christian faith.

**Cathedral:** The main church of a diocese, where the bishop's chair (cathedra) is located.

**Cathedra:** The bishop's seat in the cathedral, symbolizing his authority.

**Canon:** A priest serving the cathedral, sometimes a member of a chapter.

**Chapel:** A lateral space in a church dedicated to a saint or a particular devotion, used for private prayers. The term also refers to the ornaments and objects used for celebrating Mass.

**Capitals:** A stone block at the top of a column, often decorated.

**Chevet:** The external part of the choir, including the apses and chapels.

**Chimera:** A grotesque sculpture of mythical creatures used as ornaments.

**Choir:** The area in a church located between the nave and the altar, reserved for liturgical celebrations and the clergy. It is typically oriented toward the east, toward Jerusalem.

**Chosen:** A person or group chosen by God to serve as an example and fulfill His plan of Salvation for humanity, such as Israel in the Old Testament and the Church in the New Testament.

**Christ in Majesty:** A representation of the glorious Christ, often seated or standing, giving a blessing.

**Chancel:** The rounded part of a church located behind the choir.

**Collateral:** The lateral naves of a church, running parallel to the central nave.

**Crossing of the transept:** The area where the nave and transept cross in a church.

**Crypt:** A subterranean chapel, often located beneath the sanctuary.

**Cul-de-four:** A vault in the shape of a quarter-sphere, often above an apse.

## D

**Dormition:** Representation of the Virgin Mary, asleep on her deathbed, before her Assumption.

**Damned:** People condemned to hell, whose souls are separated from God.

**Diocese:** A territory under the responsibility of a bishop.

**Doubleau:** An arch that separates two vaults in a church.

## E

**Evangel:** The message of Jesus Christ or the books that recount His life.

**Effigy:** A funeral statue representing a deceased person lying down.

**Episcopal Chair:** The bishop's seat in the chancel of a cathedral, or cathedra, symbolizing his spiritual authority.

**Ex-Voto:** An object offered in gratitude for a favor received or to fulfill a vow.

## G

**Gable:** A decorative triangular wall placed above a portal or facade.

**Gargoyle:** A sculpture in the shape of a fantastic animal, serving as a rainwater spout

## H

**Hagiographical:** Relating to the life of a saint.

**High-relief:** A sculpture in which the figures are significantly raised from the background but remain attached to it.

**High windows:** Windows placed at a height in a cathedral to let in more natural light. .

**Host:** The bread used during the Mass, which becomes, for Christians, the body of Christ once consecrated

## I

**Incarnation:** The Christian belief that God became man in the person of Jesus Christ.

## J

**Judgment Day:** The judgment by God of the resurrected dead at the end of times.

## K

**Keystone:** A wedge-shaped stone used in the construction of arches or vaults.

## L

**Latin Cross:** A cross where the lower arm is longer than the others.

**Layperson:** A baptized person who participates in religious life as a member of the community.

**Lintel:** A piece of stone or wood placed above an opening to support the upper part.

**Liturgy:** The public celebration of worship to God, primarily during Mass in the Catholic Church.

## M

**Majesty:** Representation of a figure sitting on a throne, often facing forward, in a religious context.

**Martyr:** One who suffers and/or dies to bear witness to their faith.

**High altar:** The main altar of a church where important liturgical rites are celebrated.

## N

**Narthex:** Porch or gallery at the entrance of a church, often located at the western end.

**Nativity:** Celebration of the birth of Jesus Christ, on December 25th, often represented in Christian art.

**Nave:** The central part of a church, located between the main façade and the crossing of the transept.

**Nimbus:** A luminous halo surrounding the heads of saintly figures in Christian art, symbolizing holiness.

## O

**Ogive:** Pointed arch used to reinforce vaults and distribute loads in buildings.

**Organ:** Wind instrument made of pipes of various sizes, played using one or more keyboards and a pedalboard.

## P

**Paleochristian:** Term used to refer to the earliest Christians in history.

**Pantocrator:** Title given to God, meaning "Almighty."

**Passion:** The suffering of Jesus during his crucifixion, from his arrest to his burial.

**Parvis:** Esplanade located in front of the entrance to a church.

**Pediment:** The upper part of a building, often triangular in shape, located above a portal or door

**Pilaster:** Architectural element similar to a column but integrated into a wall.

**Portal:** Large entrance door, often ornately decorated, in a religious building.

## R

**Reliquary:** Box or container used to hold a relic.

**Relique:** An object that has been in contact with or is part of the body of a saint, venerated by the faithful.

**Ronde-Bosse:** Sculpture in three dimensions that can be viewed from all sides.

**Rose:** Large circular stained glass window in a wall designed to provide light in a building.

**Ribs (vault of):** A vault formed by the intersection of two barrel arches.

**Rood screen:** A decorated gallery or screen that separates the choir from the nave in some churches.

## S

**Sacrament:** Sacred rites that strengthen the bond with God. There are seven for Catholics: baptism, confirmation, Eucharist, reconciliation (confession), marriage, sacrament of the sick (or anointing of the sick), and orders.

**Sacristy:** A room where liturgical objects for worship are prepared, such as chalices and vestments, located near the chancel.

**Shaft:** The cylindrical part of a column, situated between the base and the capital.

## T

**Tabernacle:** A small chest located on the altar, used to store consecrated host (bread) for Christians.

**Transept:** The cross-shaped part of a church that forms the arms of the cross, between the nave and chancel.

**Tetragrammaton:** Symbols representing the four evangelists: Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John.

**Truss:** A structure formed by beams or supports that supports a roof or ceiling.

**Tympanum:** A decorative surface, often semi-circular or triangular, located above a portal of a church.

**Transept arm:** The arm of the transept that is perpendicular to the nave.

## V

**Vessel:** The vast interior space of a building, often vaulted and elongated, with a high ceiling.

**Vane:** Mobile panels or doors of an opening, such as those of a door or portal.

**Virgin with Child:** A representation of the Virgin Mary holding the Infant Jesus in her arms.

**Voussure:** Decorative arches around a portal or opening.

**Vault:** A curved architectural structure covering a space between two walls or pillars.

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## Web resources:

[www.notredamedeparis.fr](http://www.notredamedeparis.fr)

<https://www.culture.gouv.fr/Thematiques/Sciences-du-patrimoine/Thematiques-de-recherche/Le-chantier-de-Notre-Dame-de-Paris>

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## Practical information

### - Opening hours:

The Cathedral is open Monday to Friday from 7:45 AM to 7:00 PM.

Thursday evening until 10:00 PM, with Eucharistic adoration at 6:40 PM.

On Saturdays and Sundays, the cathedral is open from 8:15 AM to 7:30 PM.

*Opening hours may vary depending on special services. For more information, please refer to the website.*

#### Mass Times Monday to Friday:

8:00 AM: Angelus and Mass  
12:00 PM: Angelus and Mass  
3:00 PM: Rosary  
5:30 PM: Vespers  
6:00 PM: Mass and Angelus  
6:45 PM: Eucharistic Adoration  
(Thursday only)

#### Mass Times on Saturday:

8:30 AM: Angelus and Mass  
12:00 PM: Angelus and Mass  
3:00 PM: Rosary  
5:15 PM: First Vespers  
6:00 PM: Anticipated Mass and  
Angelus

#### Mass Times on Sunday:

8:30 AM: Mass  
9:30 AM: Lauds  
10:00 AM: Gregorian Mass  
11:30 AM: Mass  
5:15 PM: Vespers  
6:00 PM: Diocesan Mass

Address : 6 parvis Notre-Dame, Pl. Jean-Paul II, 75004 Paris.

Access : Métro 4 (station Cité) ; RER Lignes B et C (Station Saint-Michel – Notre-Dame) ; Bus 21, 38, 47, 85.

Group visits are available starting from June 9, 2025.

Reservations are required for groups with an external guide (licensed guides or teachers).

Visits can also be accompanied by the associations Casa and Accueil Jeunes.

In order to allow as many people as possible to discover the cathedral, interior visits are limited to one hour.

Audio guides are mandatory for all groups.

No groups are allowed during liturgical services.

*Information is regularly updated on the website. Please consult the visit pages regularly.*

Contact: [accueil@notredamedeparis.fr](mailto:accueil@notredamedeparis.fr)