



THE 7 MARVELS



OF SAINT JOHN'S CATHEDRAL

The edifice was rebuilt in the XIIth century, on foundations that date back to the origins of Christianity in Besançon (IIIrd century). The Romano-Rhenish plan of the cathedral presents two unique opposite apses :

- The choir apse (12th century), on the West side, shows Romanesque elements that were altered during the Gothic period (13th and 14th centuries).
- The East apse is a beautiful example of the Baroque style (18th century). Pope Eugene III consecrated Saint John's Cathedral on 5th May 1148.

(The cathedral is the building in which you find the official seat of a bishop, also known as the *cathedra* - « *cathedra* » means « seat » in Ancient Greek -)

« I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly. » (Jesus, the good Shepherd, John 10).



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Reconstruction of the cathedral on the foundations of a Carolingian basilica dating back to the IXth century.



1127 - 1161

A fire destroyed the timber frame



1212



1459

Middle Ages

Erasme and Ferry Carondelet

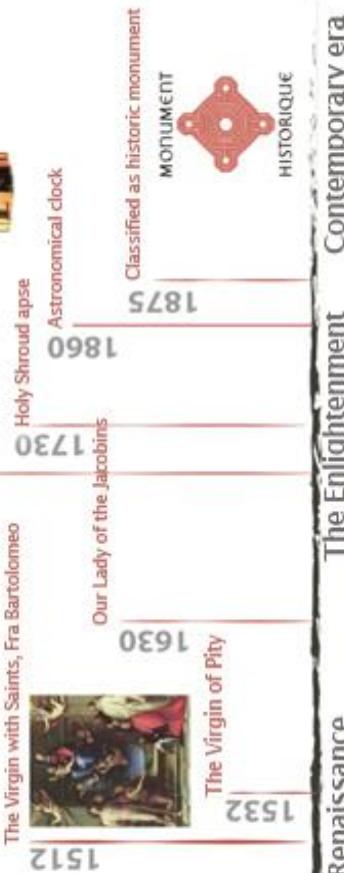
In 1525, Erasmus (1466-1536), the famous humanist from Rotterdam, came to Besançon by invitation of Ferry Carondelet. Lawyers and canons greeted him generously and offered him a house and an allowance. True to his motto : « Nulli concedo - No concession », Erasmus declined the offer in order to protect his mind from any allegiance.

A king in the cathedral !

On 16th June 1683, Louis XIV came into Besançon, capital of the region that had been conquered nine years earlier. Together with the Queen and the Dauphin, he stayed at the Palais Grandville and spent some time in silence before the Holy Shroud in Saint John's Cathedral.

Saint John's cathedral and French literature

The XIIXth century « was two years old » when Victor Hugo was born, close to the cathedral (140, Grande Rue - Museum). In 1833, the atmosphere of the city inspired Honoré de Balzac to create new characters for his literary work, « The Human Comedy » (1842). Stendhal expressed with sensibility the feelings of a seminarist deeply moved by the beauty of a procession to the cathedral of Besançon (The Red and the Black, 1830).



3 The astronomical clock

It was made between 1857 and 1860 by Auguste Lucien Vérité, a clockmaker from Beauvais, at Cardinal Mathieu's request.

It has 30,000 mechanical parts. As a public clock, it controls four faces on the tower, and one in the cathedral.

4



The Rose of Saint John: « Anyone who does eat my flesh and drink my blood has eternal life » (John 6).

This altar of Saint Stephen's cathedral was consecrated by Pope Leon IX in 1050.

Eight lobes (7 days of Creation + Easter day) are carved in a circular marble block. Hosts were put in them to be consecrated.

It is known to be the only circular altar that remains in France.

A Chi-Rho monogram flanked by A and Ω (first and last letters of the Greek alphabet, symbolizing the recapitulation of Human life by Christ) are sculpted in the middle of the altar.

A latin quotation: « This sign (The Eucharist) gives people the Kingdom of God ».

The Chi-Rho monogram stands between a lamb and an eagle that symbolize earth and sky.

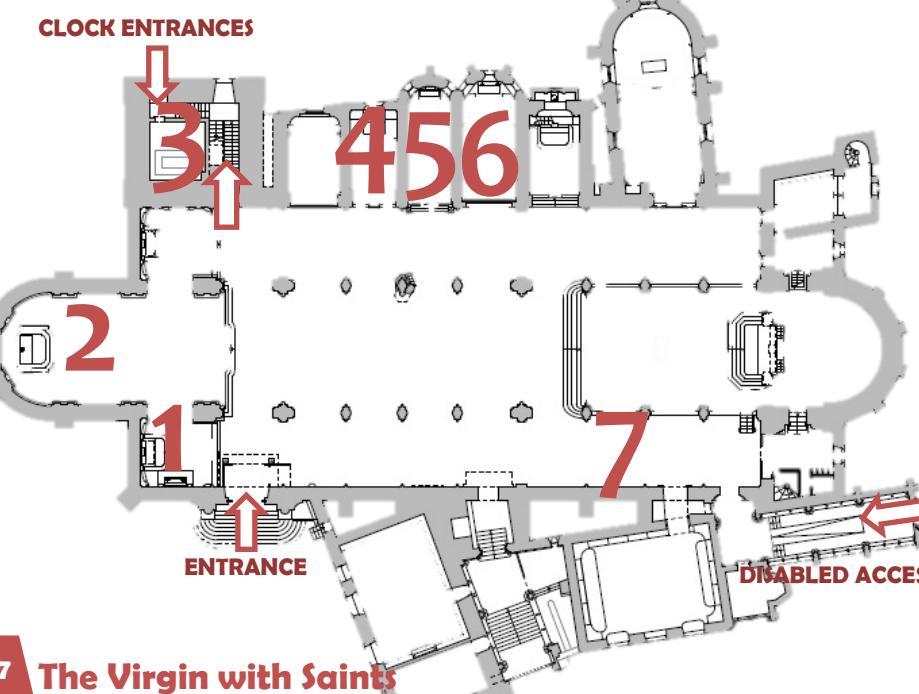
2 The Holy Shroud apse

After the tower collapsed, the East apse was rebuilt (in 1730) and redecorated in Louis XV style ornaments (stucco, marble and gilded wood).

The altar contained the shroud of Jesus, a copy of Turin's, which used to be worshiped fervently between the XVIth century and the French revolution. Then it disappeared.

Paintings by Natoire, de Troy and Van Loo (1750-1755) represent the Passion of Christ whose shroud glorify his Resurrection.

The centre of the marble pavement represents Jerusalem, the city of the Passion and the Resurrection of Christ. The eight doors of the walled city are named from the Old Testament and the four palaces are mentioned in the New Testament.



1 Ferry Carondelet's grave

This remarkable grave was made in Flanders around 1543. Its finely-wrought sculpture was influenced by the Italian Renaissance.

There is a striking contrast between the peace emanating from the recumbent statue and the tragic dimension of death found on the underneath one.

Ferry Carondelet (1473-1528) was a canon of Saint John and a commendatory abbot of Montbenoit Abbey.

7

The Virgin with Saints

Oil on wood by Fra Bartolomeo (Florence, 1512). This painting is a masterpiece of the Italian Renaissance. The Madonna and Child are surrounded by five saints, two of them bearing the symbols of their martyrdoms. From left to right : Sebastian martyred by arrows, Stephen hit by a stone, John the Baptist kneeling down, wearing clothes made of camel hair, Antony with his staff and dark clothes and Bernard de Clervaux wearing a white habit. Ferry Carondelet, who ordered the painting, is dressed in red, kneeling down. He was a representative to Pope Jules II (XVI th century).

5

Our Lady of the Jacobins (1630)

« All generations will call me blessed » (Luke 1)

This work by the Florentine painter Dominico Cresti was previously in the Dominican (= Jacobin) monastery. Today, it is exhibited here in the Eucharist Chapel.

Called « Our Lady of the Waves » after it was saved from a shipwreck between Italy and France, it inspired miracles and attracted many pilgrims.

It was so prestigious that even the revolutionaries did not dare touch it.

6

The Virgin of Pity

« Death is swallowed up in victory » (1 Co 15)

This marble sculpture by a Flemish artist, Conrad Meyt (1480-1550), was commissioned by Margaret of Austria (Aunt of Charles Quint).

The Virgin Mary stands up holding her son. Our Saviour has been taken down from the Cross and a sorrowful angel holds up his right arm.

Forming a real monstrance for the Son of God, Mary and the angel (Earth and Heaven) , it invites us to receive the Christ « whom death couldn't hold captive » (Apostles Acts 2) in his Resurrection.