



6 CHRISTIAN ART: A LANGUAGE OF FAITH FOR OUR TIME

Architecture, a universal language

All made of stone and glass, the Basilica delivers a spiritual message. All visitors are struck by the harmony and serenity that radiate from the building. The Basilica has expressed wisdom, compassion and faith for a thousand years, in accordance with the long tradition required by the first architects who wanted to pay homage to their venerated saint. The sanctuary has the traditional cross-shape of all churches, with the choir apse oriented to the East, to the rising sun.



Picture 27 – The crown of light above the nave – photo TD



Picture 28 – Detail of a late 12th century stained glass window destroyed during the Great War and reassembled in a new window – photo TD



Picture 29 – The Three Baptisms (1610) – photo TD



Picture 30 – Mater Dolorosa (1542) – photo TD

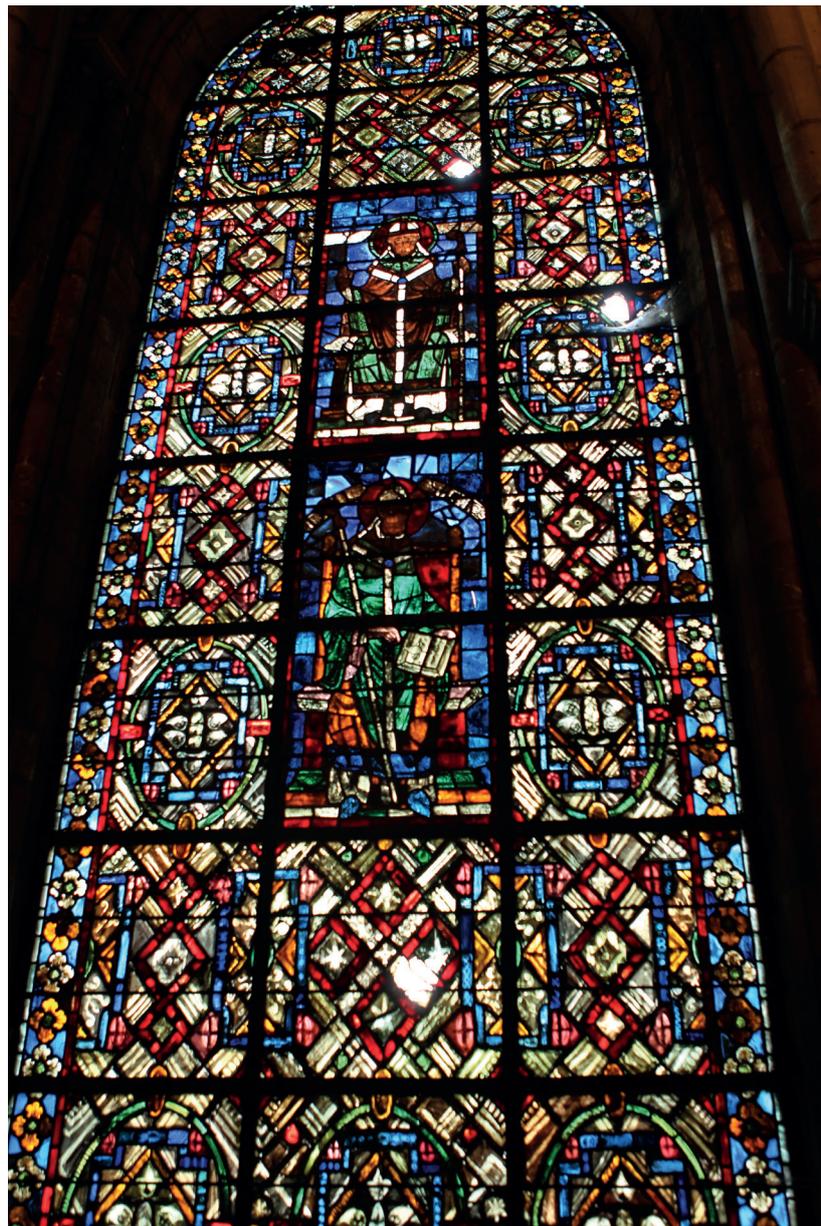
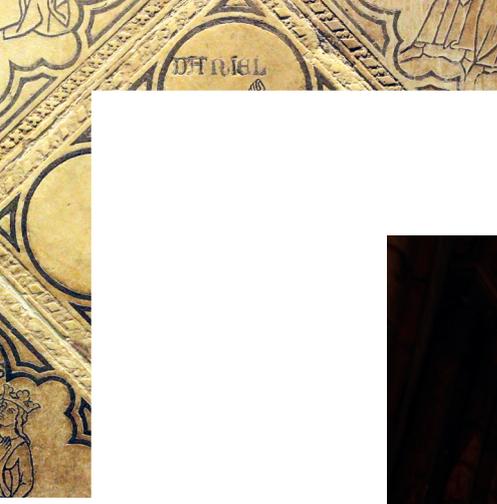
The stained-glass windows and the statues

An inestimable collection of stained-glass windows from the twelfth to the twentieth centuries are themed around the Bible, kings, and prelates like Saint Remi. The most remarkable ones are above the choir, with several windows among the oldest ones in Europe (1150 to 1180), like the great crucifixion in the centre, the Virgin Mary surrounded by apostles, prophets and saints in the higher level. Dating from the twelfth century, these stained-glass windows were partly salvaged from the Romanesque church, and then put in place in the new church with various additions. The windows of the nave are a remarkable gallery of portraits of Frankish kings and prophets.

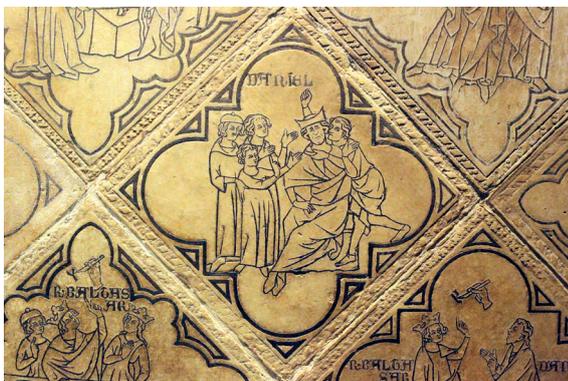
The other windows are more recent. For example, in the west portal, the central rose dates back from 1841. This is also true of the two large windows that depict Saint Remi's life. In the transepts, the windows are from the 20th century. The north rose, which shows the Holy Spirit's dove holding the holy phial in its beak, was made by master glass-maker Jacques Simon (1890-1974). On the south side, the two windows with pink and gold birds and stylised flowers, are the work of the Simon-Marq workshop (daughter and son-in-law of Jacques Simon).

The successive abbots worked to densify the decoration with groups of sculptures. The successive shrines are signs of the will to make the sanctuary always more magnificent. On top of that, numerous majestic works can be seen, in the two sides of the transept, like the Laying in the Tomb (1531) which was brought from the ancient Rheims Temple Commandary, the Mater Dolorosa (1542) or the Three Baptisms (1610). The Sorrowful Christ, from the former Saint-Hilaire church, is from the same period. Another remarkable sculpted and painted group, shows the dressed Christ, with the Virgin Mary and Saint John (14th century).

This rapid inventory would not be complete if we omitted the Pavement of Saint-Nicaise, salvaged from the former abbey church that was destroyed during the revolution in the 14th century, which shows great delicacy.



Picture 31 – Composite stained glass window with Saint Remi and Saint Nicholas reused in the middle of a geometrical decoration – photo TD



Picture 32 – Detail of the pavement of Saint-Nicaise (early 14th century) – photo TD



Picture 33 – Entombment (Holy Sepulchre) - 1531, from the Temple Commandery destroyed in 1792.