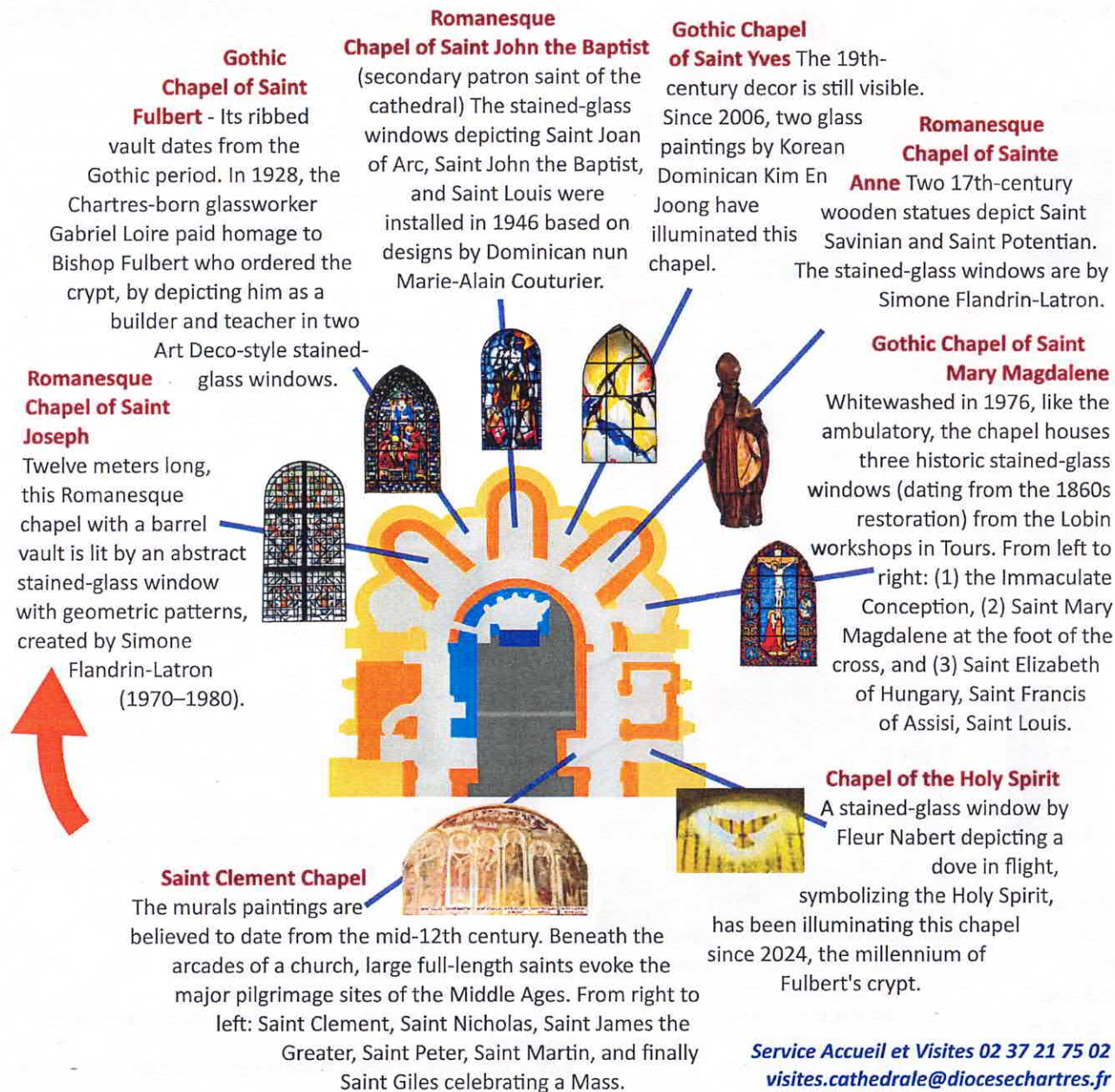


The Chapels of the Ambulatory

The chapels have changed names over the centuries.



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The Crypts of Notre Dame de Chartres

Chartres Cathedral, visible from 15 km away, is a major Marian pilgrimage site. Since the 9th century, it has housed a veil, a relic* attributed to the Virgin Mary, Mother of Christ (it is displayed in the upper cathedral).

Of the previous cathedrals*, two crypts* remain, each having different functions.

After the fire in 1020 of the so-called Carolingian cathedral, Bishop Fulbert remodeled an older, inner crypt (known since the 19th century as the crypt of Saint Lubin), and built a U-shaped, 200-meter-long enveloping crypt, serving as a lower church.

It consists of two parallel groin-vaulted galleries connected by an ambulatory, which opens onto three Romanesque chapels. Four Gothic chapels were added in the 13th century.

Dedicated to the reception, walking, and processions of canons and pilgrims, Fulbert's long crypt remains a fine example of 11th-century religious architecture, known as Romanesque.

Over the course of 1000 years, it has undergone several decorations (paintings, sculptures, windows, etc.) testifying to the history and devotion of Chartres Christians and pilgrims to the Virgin Mary and the holy intercessor saints.

Now semi-buried, the crypt serves as a base for the 13th-century Gothic cathedral. It offers an overview of the evolution of stained-glass art from 1860 to the present day.

Crypt Tour

4- Ambulatory Chapels: See back

3- The Well of the Brave Saints

This 33-meter-deep well is probably Gallo-Roman in design. Tradition reports that on two occasions, the bodies of Christians were thrown into it (hence its name). This well quickly became not only a highly venerated burial site but also a place of superstition. First filled in, then walled up in the 17th century, it was rediscovered in 1901.



2- Chapel of Our Lady of Underground

The chapel's name refers to the statue of the same name, venerated since the Middle Ages (this is a copy). The decoration dates from 1976, but to mark the crypt's millennium in 2024, a tabernacle created by Augustin Frison-Roche, placed beneath the statue, completes the liturgical furnishings. A Mass is celebrated there every day.

The glass-slab* window, called "Mary, Gate of Heaven", is the work of Henri Guérin (2010).



In a niche is a reliquary (dating from 1822) housing a piece of so-called Veil of Mary.



A 12th-century mural depicts a very solemn Romanesque Virgin and Child: "Mary, Throne of Wisdom". On the left are the Magi, and on the right, Christ is said to be sending Savinian and Potentian, two holy evangelists of the diocese, on a mission.

1- North Gallery

Like a path, this low church will lead us from north to south, from darkness to light. This first gallery has long welcomed sick pilgrims. Desecrated during the Revolution, it was restored between 1855 and 1889 and features multicolored wall-paintings that retrace the great eras of the cathedral, as well as full-length portraits of local saints (same in the south gallery).

4- The Saint Lubin Crypt

The Saint Lubin crypt is accessed through an opening made in the 18th century. Originally, the two crypts were independent of each other.

This semicircular space was previously only accessible from the choir of the upper church. From Fulbert's time onward, this deep space served as a "strongbox" to house relics and precious religious objects. To the right, a corridor excavated around 1900 leads to the floor level of the choir of a previous cathedral.

The power of the architecture of this crypt, with its thick walls, the silence that reigns there, and the history it is steeped in, connects us to the builders and to all the generations of believers who have followed for more than a thousand years.

5- The South Gallery



A beautiful door made in the 17th century allows us to access the south gallery dedicated to Saint John the Baptist.



A "Wall of Light", created by Udo Zernbock, has separated the area dedicated to baptism since 2006.



The 12th-century stone baptismal font houses a hammered silver basin, the work of the goldsmith Goudji in 2019.

- 11th century and earlier
- 11th century
- Mid-12th century
- 13th century
- Backfill/Unknown
- Crypt Today

Glossary

- **Crypt:** vaulted, semi-buried space
- **Cathedral:** large church, seat of the bishop.
- **Relic:** bone or object belonging to a saint and is the object of great veneration.
- **Glass slab:** pieces of glass cut with a hammer and finely joined with cement.