

# Introduction and Invitation to Prayer: The Chartres Cathedral



Prepared by Jill K H Geoffrion  
[www.praywithjillatchartres](http://www.praywithjillatchartres)  
[www.jillgeoffrion.com](http://www.jillgeoffrion.com)

Chartres Cathedral from Porte Guillaume (Basse Ville of Chartres)



How can the Chartres Cathedral  
help us to know, love and serve God better?

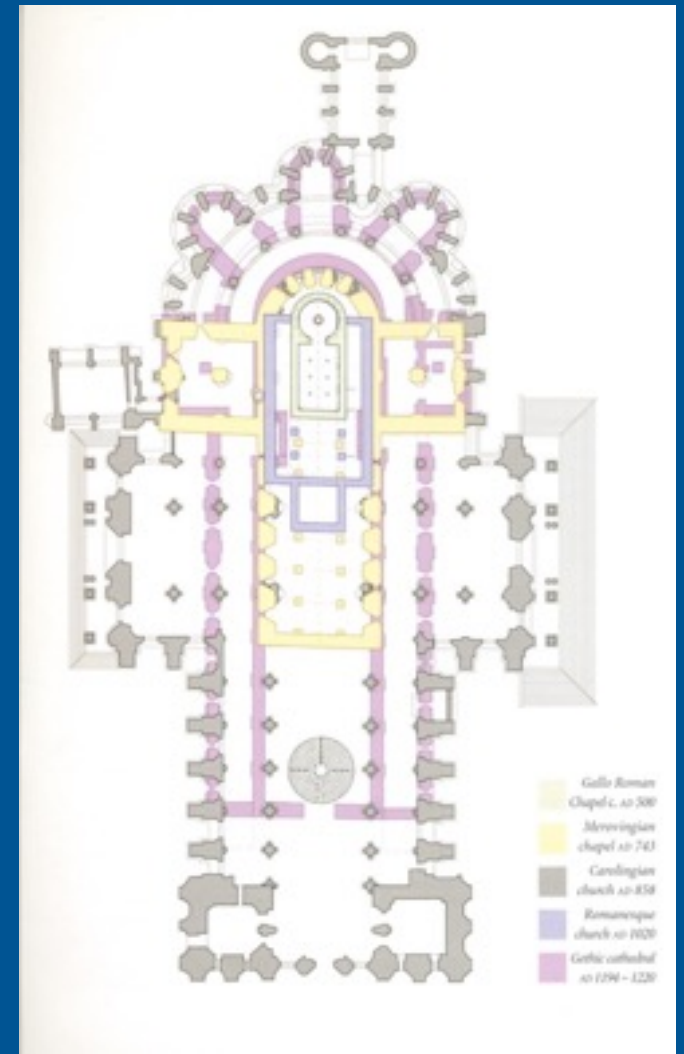


The south porch

At least four previous churches built here were destroyed by war or fire.  
Each time a new structure replaced the old.  
Each successive church was built with new understandings of theology  
and construction practices.



Models of Chartres Cathedrals:  
10 & 11th centuries





Pilgrim, ask yourself, “What is changing in my life?”



Jesus washing Peter's feet (John 13:3-7) in the Life of Christ Window (west wall of Chartres Cathedral)



Chartres Cathedral is a UNESCO World Heritage Site.  
It's collection of medieval stained glass and sculpture  
is unique and world renowned.



Inscription found in the Bishop's garden (east of the cathedral)



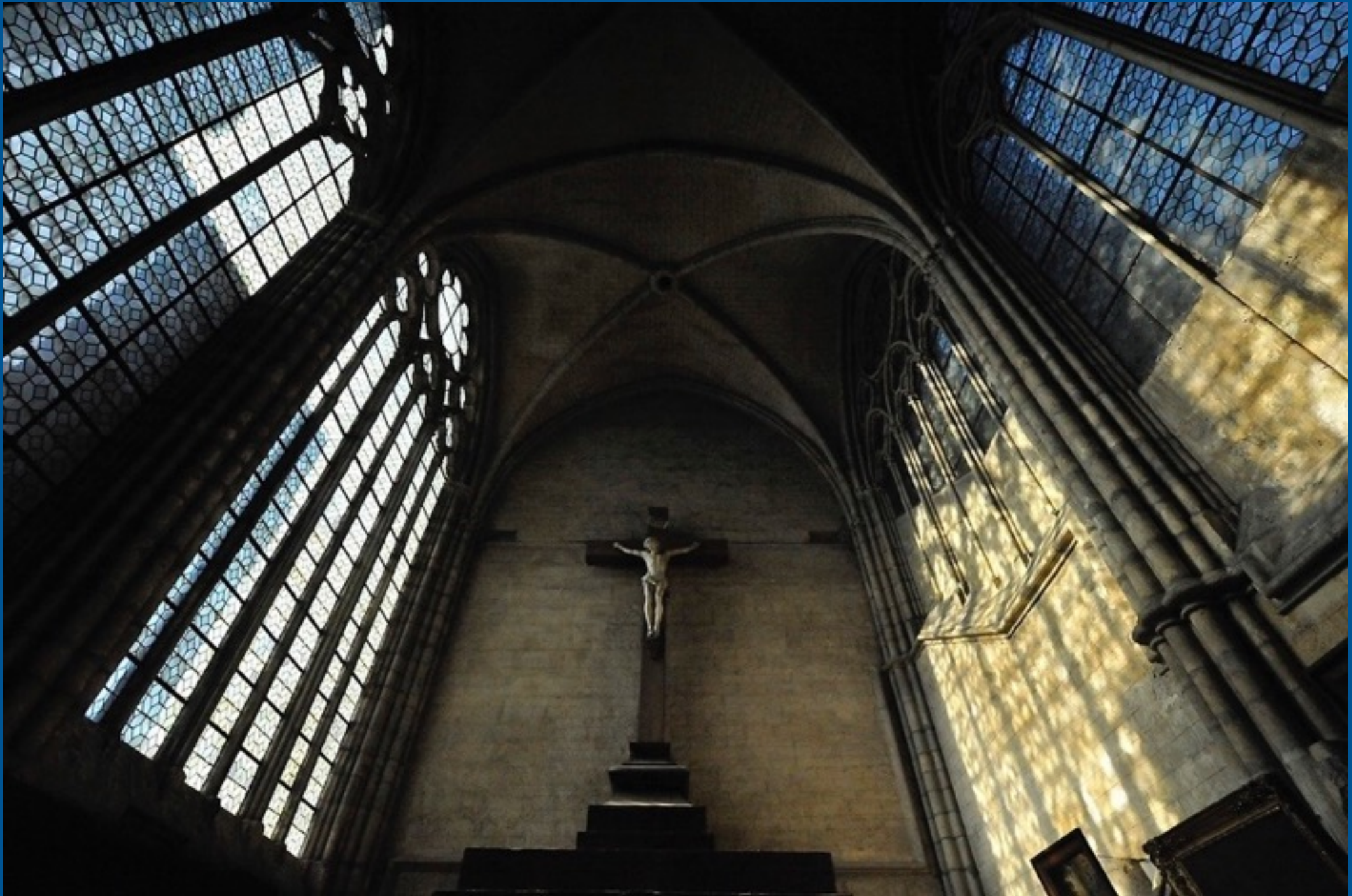
The Chartres Cathedral supports the prayers  
of pilgrims and the local worshipping community.  
Take a moment to ask God to bless our retreat.



The Paschal Vigil, Chartres Cathedral nave



The cathedral is sometimes called a Bible in glass and stone.



The Sacristy of the Chartres Cathedral



Ask yourself, “What aspect of God’s love or my faith am I hoping to experience this week?”



Jesus healing the man born blind. Outer choir sculpture.



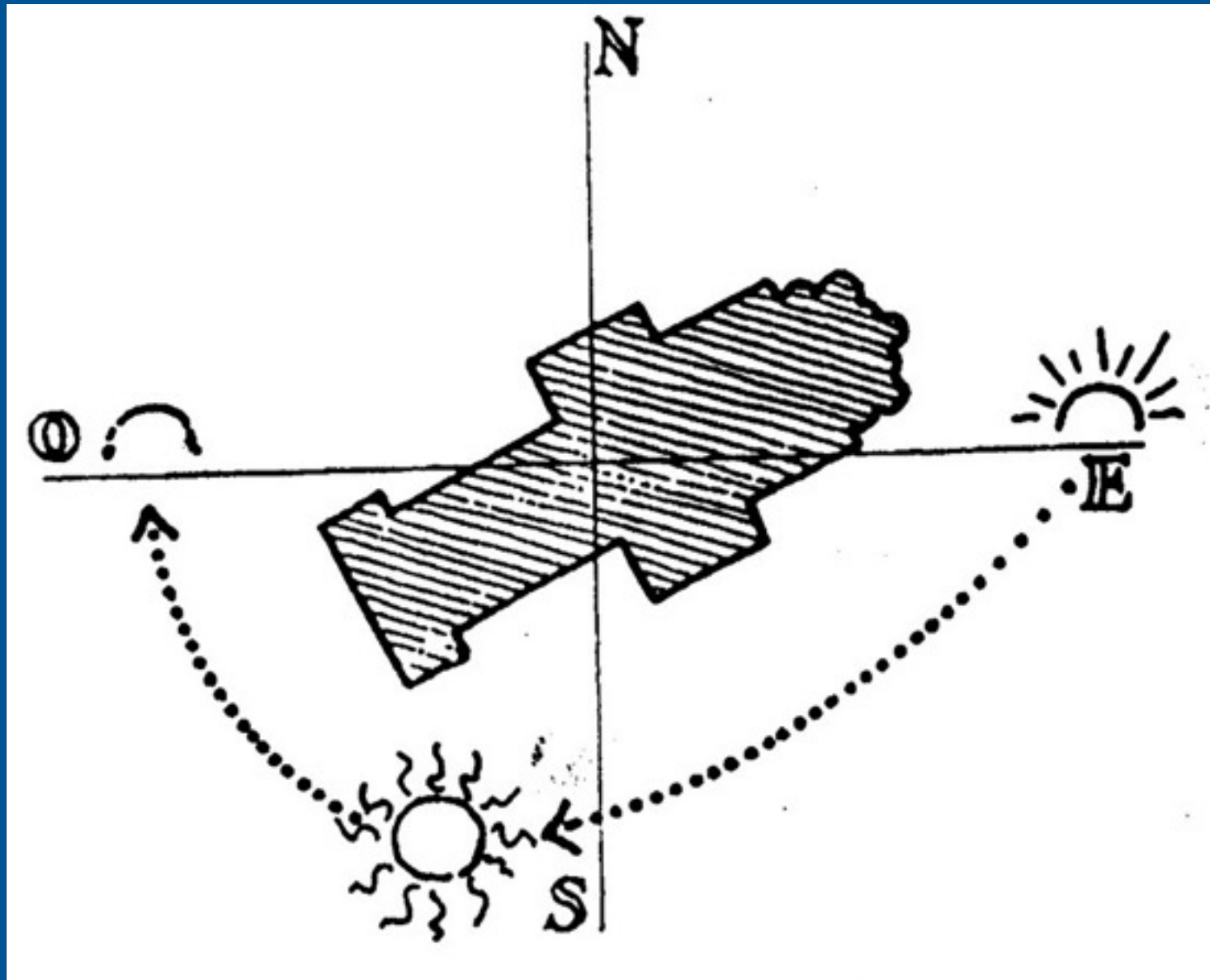
# Getting Oriented: A Medieval Understanding of the Directions

North: (Cold) Old Testament times & truth

East: (Rising sun) Resurrection, Christ

South: New Testament, Martyrs & Confessors

West: End of time (Death & Final judgment).







Members of Chemin Neuf welcome pilgrims

Pray:  
“Help me  
to find the orientation  
that I need.



Altar in the crypt (Sous-Terre Chapel)



Chartres was the first cathedral in France to be dedicated to Mary.





Pilgrim, ask yourself, “Who is Mary to me?”



Notre Dame du Pilier



Elizabeth and Mary, East Window in Choir

Consider: “In what ways is Mary important to me?”



Mother of Sorrow, Outer Choir Sculpture



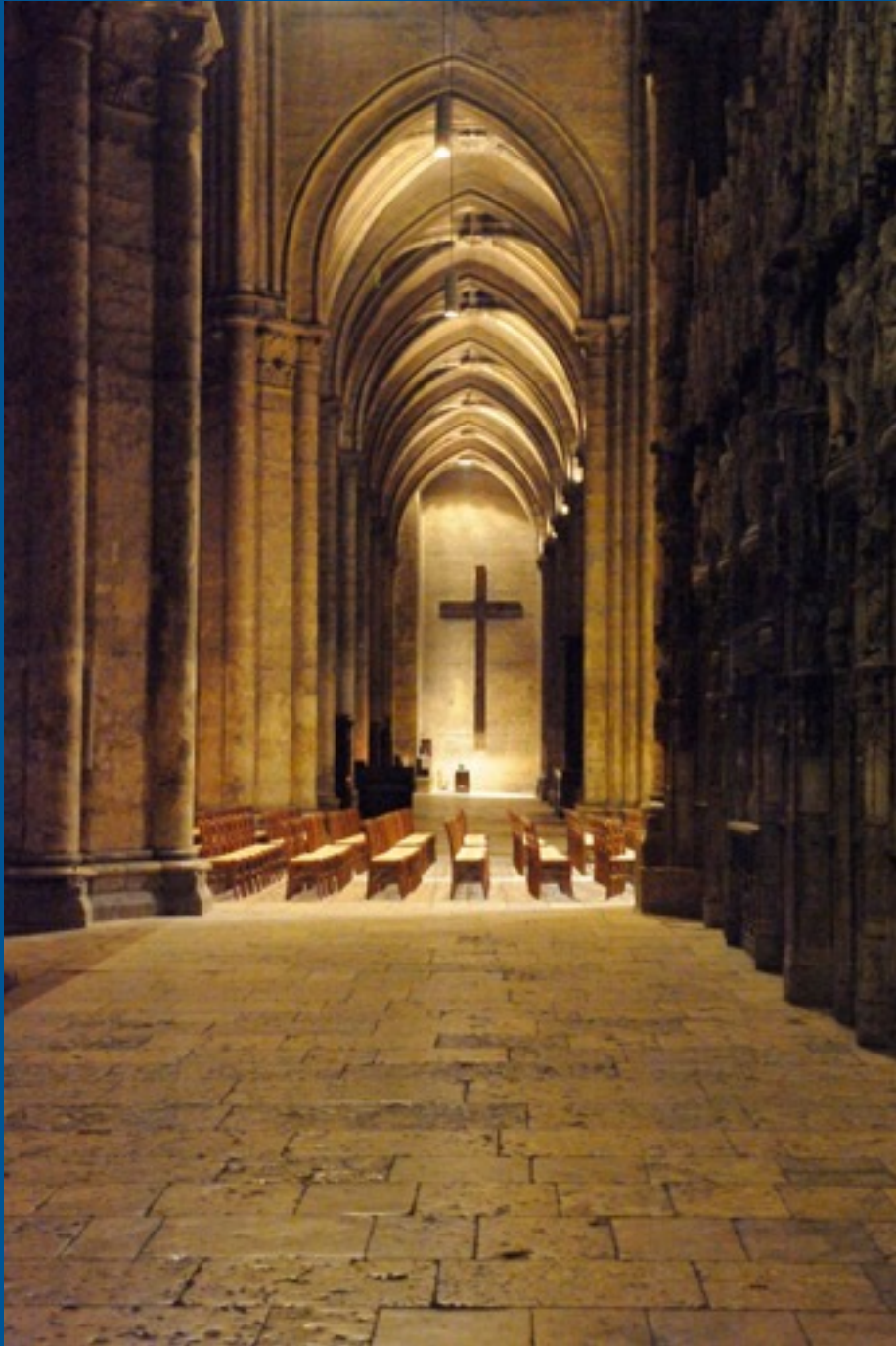
Chartres Cathedral is both dark and full of light.



Light entering the cathedral through the South doors.



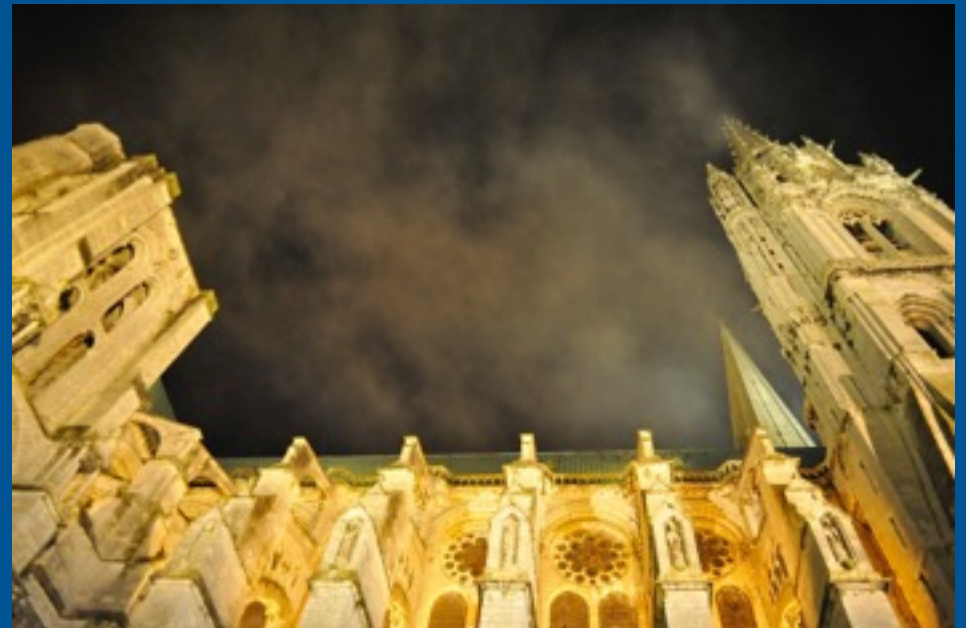
Ask yourself, “What light am I seeking?” What illumination is needed?



Le Mission Cross, southwest ambulatory



Prayer candles



The cathedral on a cloudy night



The main cathedral relic is the veil that Mary is claimed to have worn during the Annunciation and/or at the birth of Jesus.



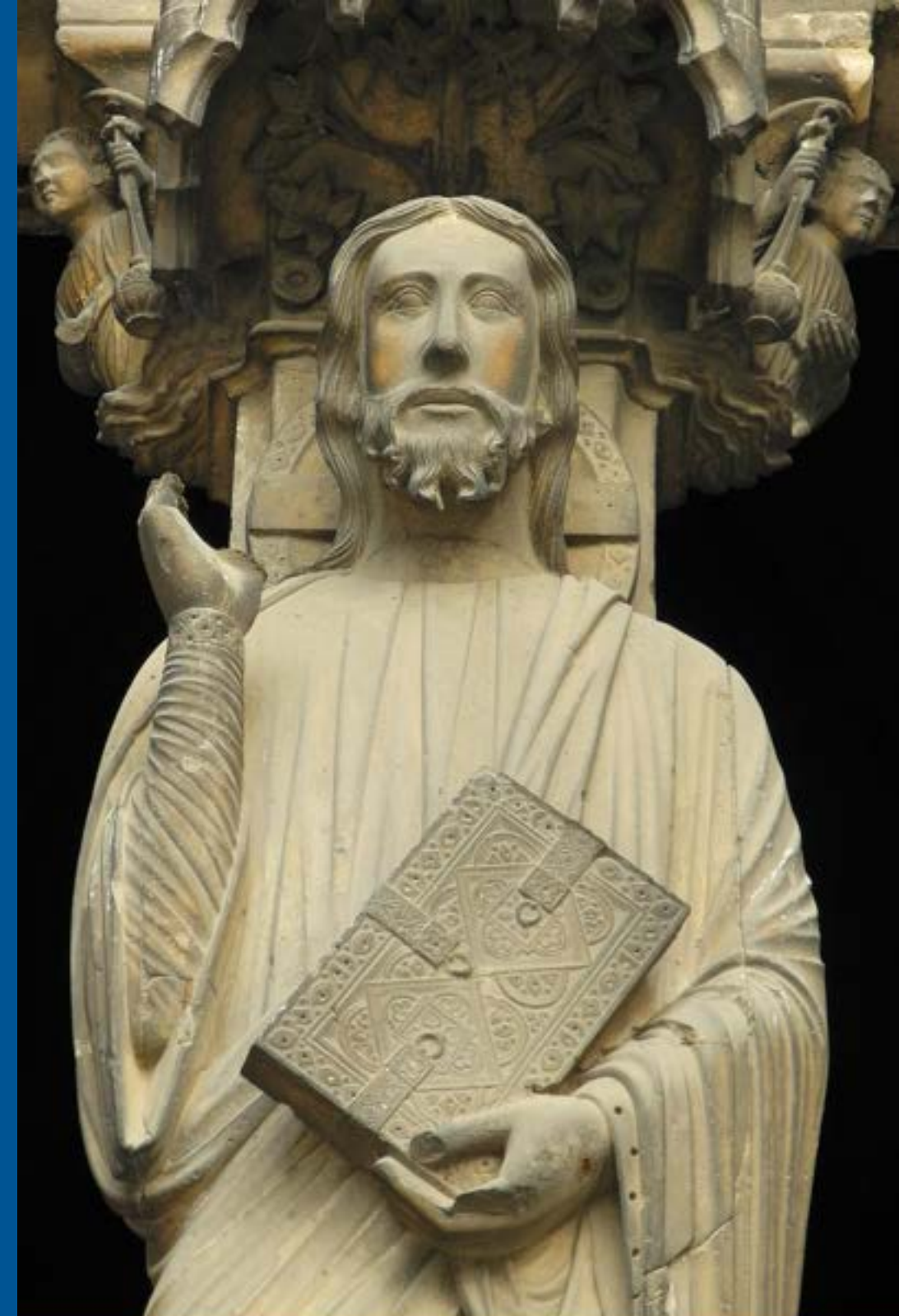
Chapel of the Sacred Heart of Mary, Chartres Cathedral

The veil has been carbon dated to the first century. Pollens in the cloth come from Palestine.

Charles the Bald, offered “Mary’s Veil” to the cathedral in 876.

Ever since, pilgrims have come  
to be close to something that touched Jesus.





Christ is here.

He is waiting for you.

Tell him that you are  
ready to encounter him  
anew.

Le Beau Dieu (The Beautiful God)  
South porch central pillar



Chartres is thought of as “a cathedral of birth.”



The birth of Jesus, 12th century rood screen that separated the choir and the nave.



Pilgrim, ask yourself, “What is gestating within me?”



Friday at the labyrinth, Chartres Cathedral



In France, church buildings belong to the government. Congregations are allowed to use them for worship. Chartres Cathedral is peopled by tourists, pilgrims, and parishioners.



Taking photos of the windows.



Bishop Pansard blessing pilgrims.



The cathedral Canons celebrating mass.



Congregational worship.



Tourists come to see what there is to see.  
Pilgrims come to make sacred connections.



Pilgrim, ask yourself,

“In what ways have I come to Chartres as a tourist?  
In what ways have I come to Chartres as a pilgrim?”

(It is not uncommon to move back and forth between the two identities.)



Chartres Cathedral is built of limestone from a nearby quarry. You may feel/see/sense vibrations, resonance, and harmony.





Pilgrim, in what ways are you hoping to be tuned?





Here God often speaks through the language of beauty.





Pray, “God, help me know You through beauty  
and every other means that You desire.”



The light and colors of the west rose window.



The cathedral is in the midst of many different renovation projects.



The choir with scaffolding.



Pilgrim, what restoration is going on deep within you?



Upper choir with windows undergoing restoration (left) and those already restored (right).



# “Pass by that which you do not love.” Rumi

Three suggestions for contemplative pilgrims:

Keep asking  
yourself,  
“Why am I here?”

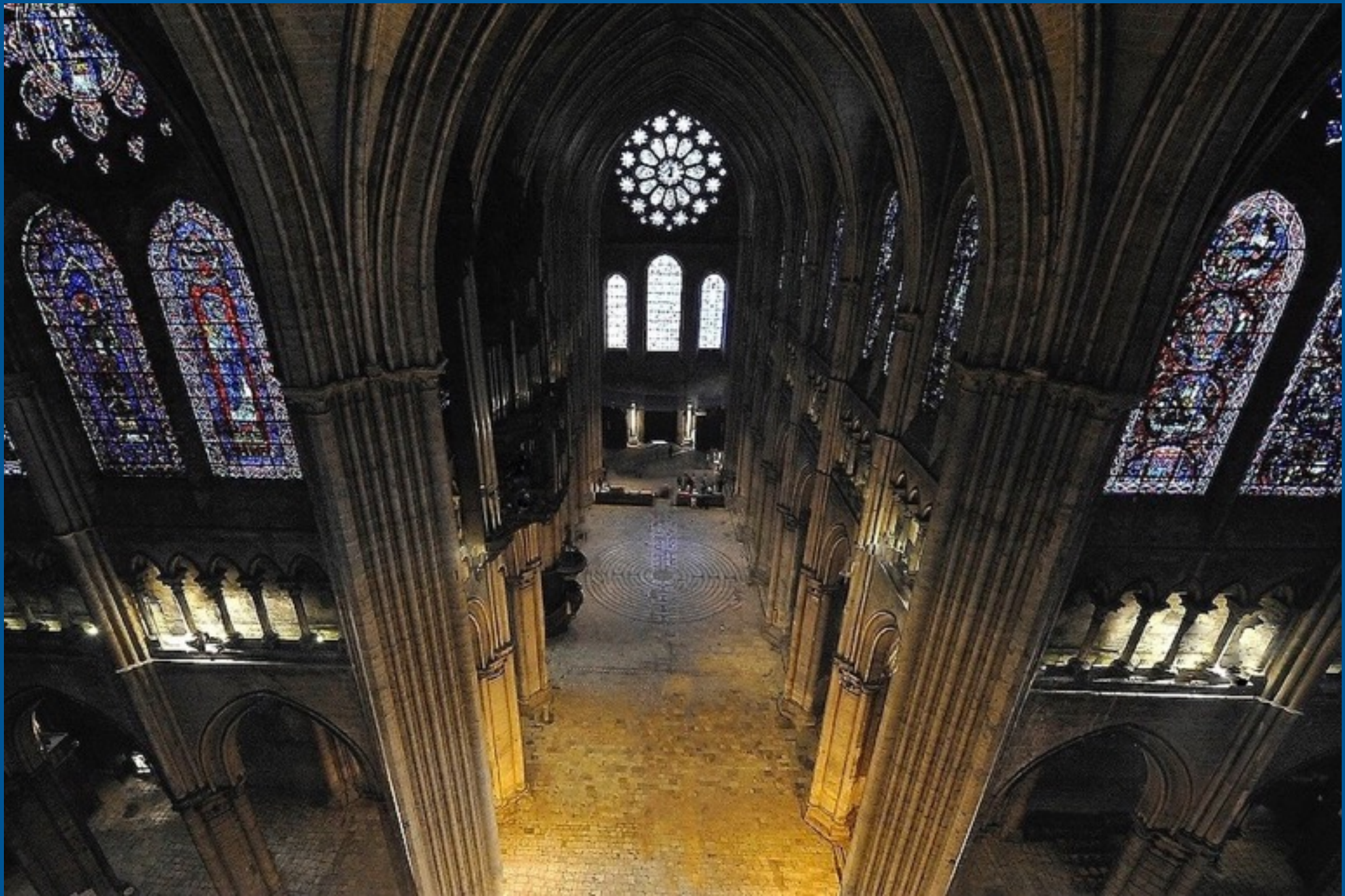
Resist distractions,  
even fun  
and/or interesting  
ones.

Make the most  
of the time here  
while you are here.



Russian pilgrims praying near the veil.





At the beginning of this retreat, what desire are you most attached to?  
Can you offer it to God?



May we know God's blessing each step of the way.



The resurrected Christ, south rose window



Continue your silent prayer.



The hands of the resurrected Christ. Tabernacle from the 13th century, the cathedral treasure.



Continue in prayer...



The seraphim (Isaiah 6) in an upper north window of the choir.



Amen.



Looking out from the north porch