



Dear Visitor,

On behalf of the clergy and staff, I would like to give you a warm welcome to this magnificent building. Not only is our cathedral the largest Gothic church in the Low Countries, it also tells a story of glory and prosperity - and even more so one of sorrow and disaster. This is the story of people who built dreams, people who expressed their allegiance to God and their fellow men. For over a thousand years, Mary has been the patroness of this Cathedral and of the city of Antwerp; each year thousands of people come and express their love and sorrow to Mary. This church is much more than just a museum filled with valuable treasures, it is still an active place of worship.

Time and again, we feel the need to have this story being told. However, we cannot do this alone. The Province of Antwerp and the Flemish Region both donate substantial amounts of money for the restoration of the Cathedral. Yet, daily maintenance of the Cathedral alone costs 1.5 million Euros each year: this makes your entry fee indispensable. We would like to continue welcoming our average of 320,000 visitors each year under the best conditions possible and let them enjoy the beauty of this building - this is a place where light and stones all tell a story. I wish you a "glorious" and enjoyable visit.

Wilfried Verhaert, Father of the Cathedral



Practical information

Mass schedule

Saturday 4 p.m. (*organ*), 5 p.m. (*organ*)
Sundays and public holidays 9 a.m., 10.30 a.m. (*choir and organ*), 12 p.m. (*organ*), 5 p.m.
Monday till Friday 6 p.m.

Visiting hours

Monday till Friday from 10 a.m. till 5 p.m.
Saturday from 10 a.m. till 3 p.m.
Sundays and public holidays from 1 p.m. till 4 p.m.

Guided tours

Under guidance of Cathedral Welcoming Group guides

• Individual

In English (depending on availability of the guides):

Monday till Friday:
11 a.m., 2.15 p.m.
3.45 p.m. mid July-end August

Saturday :
11 a.m., 2.15 p.m.

Sundays and public holidays:
2.15 p.m.
1 p.m., 3 p.m. mid July-end August

• Groups

Groups are kindly requested to notify the Cathedral Information Service of their visit beforehand.

Professional guidance is available to address specific interests of certain groups.

Info

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In the tenth century, a small chapel in honour of the Virgin was

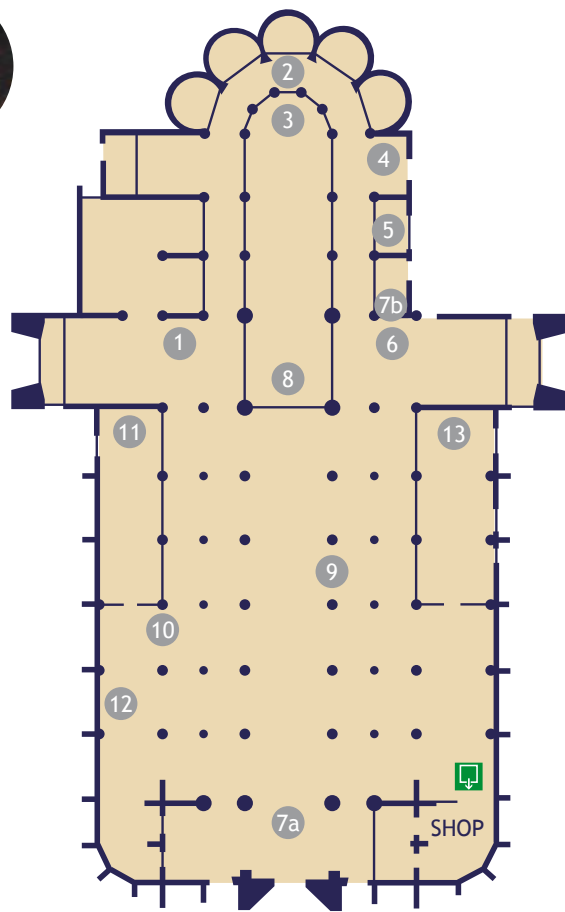
already situated where the present Cathedral of Our Lady is now located. After the establishment of the parish in 1124, the chapel was enlarged into a Romanesque church. This is where in between 1350 and 1520, the largest Gothic church in the Low Countries was constructed, originally with five aisles and later seven. At the time of the establishment of the Diocese of Antwerp in 1559, Our Lady's church was elevated to the status of Cathedral or Episcopal Church.

This masterpiece of Brabant Gothic style was not spared through the course of history. The church was ravaged by fire in 1533 and plundered and damaged during iconoclasm in 1566 and 1581. It also suffered under the confiscation by the French revolutionaries in 1794. But time and again it triumphed over adversity. After the fall of Antwerp in 1585, it was fitted out in Baroque style; after the French revolution, at the end of the 18th century and beginning of the 19th century, it was once again redesigned to incorporate Neo-styles. At the end of the twentieth century, a programme of scientific restoration was started: first the western façade, the portals and the towers; followed by the interior, the nave and the choir. Restoration of the radiating chapels and further outside restoration are next on the agenda.

ENGLISH



In the Cathedral, there are no less than four works by Peter Paul Rubens on display, the best known and versatile Antwerp Baroque painter. Three paintings - including some masterpieces from the 17th Century - were made by Rubens specially for this Cathedral ; a fourth work of art was acquired by the Cathedral after the French occupation.



This pamphlet will show you the way to the most treasured works of art in the Cathedral. More detailed information can be found in various publications available in the Cathedral shop.

1 The Raising of the Cross (1609-1610) (panels, 460 x 340 cm (middle panel), 460 x 150 cm (side panels)) Peter Paul Rubens (1577-1640)

Rubens originally painted the Raising of the Cross for the high altar of the long-demolished Saint Walburga's Church, which was situated in front of the Steen castle. The work of art was brought to the Cathedral in 1816. Rubens was inspired by Italian examples when creating his Raising of the Cross. Chronologically as well as thematically and stylistically, this painting predates Rubens' Descent from the Cross (see 6).

2 The Death of Mary (1633) (canvas, 500 x 325 cm) Abraham Matthyssens (1581-1649)

"The Death of Mary" was selected to be put up at the rear of the high altar. Abraham Matthyssens, a contemporary of Rubens, painted the altar piece in 1633. This work shows Mary in the centre as patroness of the Cathedral and constitutes part of a series. The other two paintings of the cycle are the Assumption of the Virgin at the front of the high altar (see 3) and the Assumption of the Virgin in the cupola (see 8).

3 Assumption of the Virgin (1626) (panel, 490 x 325 cm) Peter Paul Rubens

In 1581, the former altar piece was removed. In 1619, Rubens concluded a contract with Johannes del Rio, who was then Dean of the Cathedral and who had decided to bear the costs for the new altar. Work was started only in 1625-1626 and was mainly continued on-site. Bright and animated colours enhance the composition's dynamic movement.

4 Wall painting at the entrance to the sacristy (beginning of the 15th century) Anonymous

This is a rare example of a the 15 century wall-painting from the southern part of the Low Countries. It depicts the Man of Sorrows, painted on a wall of the former Chapel of Circumcision.

5 The Resurrection of Christ (1612) (panels, 138 x 98 cm (middle panel), 136 x 40 cm (side wings), Peter Paul Rubens

For the tomb of Jan Moretus and Martina Plantin - members of the Antwerp printers' family Plantin Moretus - Rubens chose "The Resurrection of Christ". Both wings show the patron saints of the donors.

6 The Descent from the Cross (1612) (panels, 421 x 311 cm (middle panel), 421 x 153 cm (side panels). Peter Paul Rubens

Rubens designed this world famous triptych as an altar piece for the Cathedral, commissioned by the Arquebusiers Guild. As St. Christopher, patron saint of the guild, carries the Child Christ, each one of the panels refers to the carrying of Christ. The well-balanced and harmoniously proportioned work of art is typified by expressive characters and moderate colours.

7 a) Schyven Organ (14.40 metres high, 10.50 metres wide, 5 metres deep) Schyven (1891) (organ casing: 1657, designed by painter Erasmus Quellin the Younger (1607 - 1678), sculptures: Pieter Verbruggen the elder (1616 - 1686)

Behind the existing Baroque organ front carrying sculptures of Saint Cecilia and angels, Pierre Schyven from Brussels built a totally new instrument in 1891. It is considered one of the most important organs from the Romantic era in this country. Because of its typically symphonic timbre and its exceptional poetic melodious tone, this organ is especially suitable for organ compositions from the 19th and 20th centuries. It contains four manuals and pedals, 90 stops and 5,770 organ pipes.

b) Metzler Organ (12.20 metres high, 4.30 metres wide, 3.45 metres deep) Metzler (1993)

This instrument was built by the Metzler company from Zürich, Switzerland. It is mainly intended for the interpretation of works by J.S. Bach and his French contemporaries. Due to the distinct positioning of the organ pipes and its precise "touch", the organ is also suitable for many different styles of work from numerous other periods.

8 Assumption of the Virgin (1647) (canvas, diameter 580 cm) Cornelis Schut (1597-1655)

Because the Cathedral is dedicated to the Assumption of Mary, Cornelis Schut - a late contemporary of Rubens - continued this theme high up in the cupola (43 metres high). Thanks to the expert manner in which Schut created the perspective, it seems as though the cupola is opening up towards heaven.

9 Pulpit (1713) (oak, 7 metres high, 5.20 metres wide, 3.45 metres deep) Michiel Van der Voort (1667-1737)

This pulpit stems from the former Saint Bernard's Abbey located in Hemiksem, south of Antwerp, and was bought in

1803 by the church council of the Cathedral. The base and support symbolise the dissemination of faith across the four continents. It is a superb example of the naturalistic Baroque.

10 Madonna with Child (approx. 1350) (marble, 127 cm high, 40 cm wide, 27 cm deep) Maasland School

The statue is made from Carrara marble and is attributed to the anonymous "Master of the Maasland marble Madonnas", who worked in Liege around 1350. The statue was only placed in the church in 1866, probably through a private donation. Refined elegance of posture and flowing folds, gentle humanity in gesture and expression, reflect the courtly culture of the 14th century.

11 Our Lady of Antwerp (16th century) (polychrome walnut, 180 cm high, 52 cm wide, 30 cm deep).

The Lady Chapel houses the statue of Our Lady of Antwerp. The statue was probably kept in this church even before the iconoclasm of 1566. Mother and Child radiate graciousness and regal dignity. The statue is now displayed above the globe beneath which there is a crescent moon and which is surrounded by the symbols of the four evangelists.

12 Panelling with nine confessionals (1713) (oak, 1 confessional: 3.46 metres high, 7.80 metres wide, 1.20 metres deep) Willem Ignatius Kerricx (1652-1719) and Michiel Van der Voort (1667-1737)

The oak panelling, together with the six confessionals, is originally from the Cistercian Abbey of St. Bernard in Hemiksem, south of Antwerp. It was put in the Cathedral after the French Revolution, as was the pulpit. The twelve apostles are accompanied by the same number of female figures, who represent the process of conversion, progressing via repentance and confession to inner peace.

13 Ark (1710-1712 and 1753) (gilded wood with gilded brass, approx. 200 cm high, 132 cm long, 85 cm wide) Judocus Ignatius Picavet, after Hendrik Frans Verbruggen (1654-1724) Henricus de Potter the Elder (1725-1781)

This tabernacle in late Rococo style takes the shape of the Ark of the Covenant and is decorated all round with prefiguration of the Eucharist, executed in light relief. It continues to be displayed on the altar of the Guild of the Most Holy Sacrament, for which it was originally made.

