

# FOCUS

# SAINT-LÉONARD

# DE FOUGÈRES

# CHURCH



**BRITTANY**

**VILLES  
& PAYS  
D'ART &  
D'HISTOIRE**



**1 - Saint-Léonard in the 19th Illustration.**

Media library Fougères - Agglomeration.

**2 - General view of the church**

© Ville de Fougères

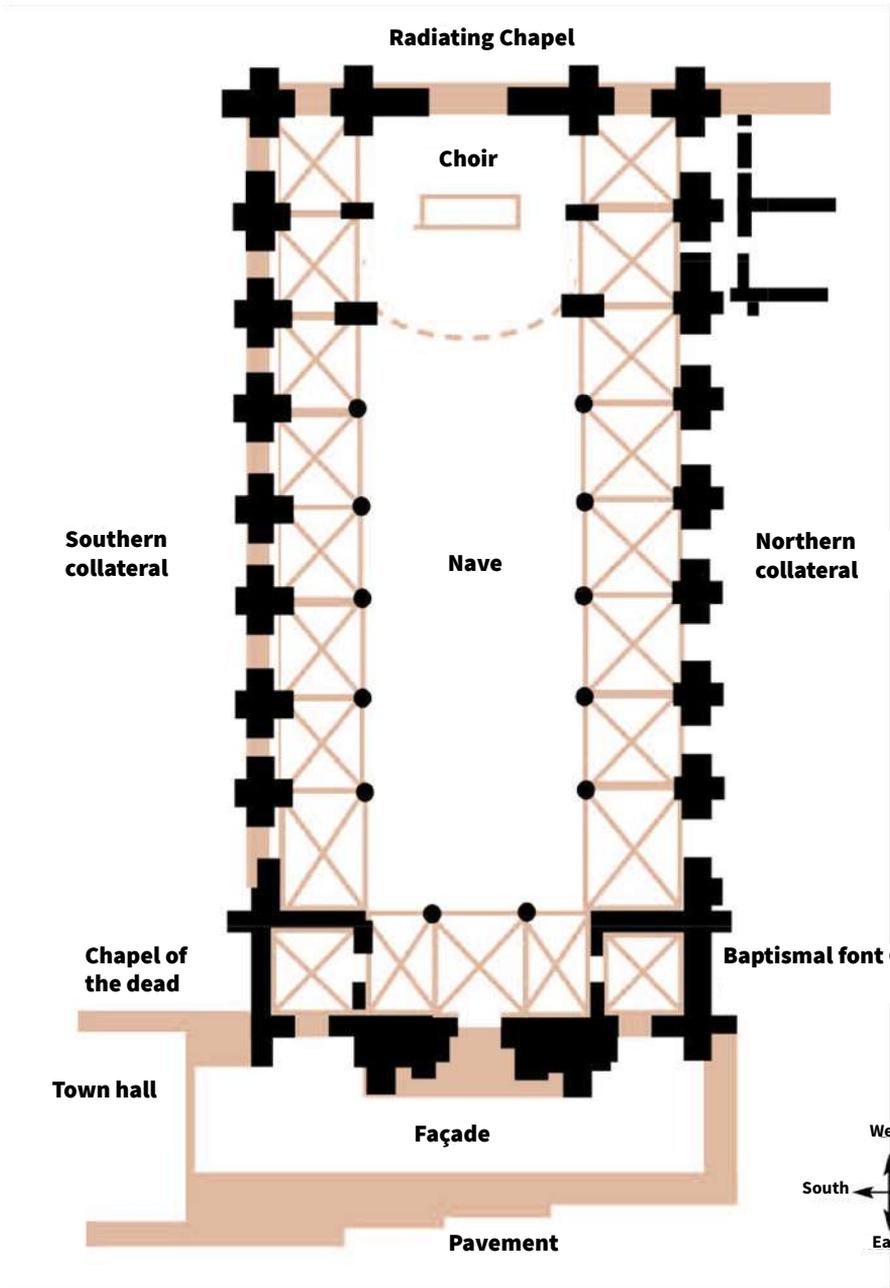
The origins of the church date back to the 12th century. Built for use by the inhabitants of Bourg Neuf, this place of worship takes on the patronage of Saint-Leonard, liberator of prisoners and pregnant women.

From the end of the 15th century and until 1548, the building is profoundly redesigned. The addition of regular collaterals modifies the structure of the nave and gives the Church its current physiognomy. The construction of the bell tower is only completed in 1675.

In the revolutionary period, the church, transformed into a Temple of Reason, goes through much deterioration.

During the industrial revolution, the building is enlarged to accommodate a growing population. The extension being impossible to the East, the church must be reoriented. A new neo-Gothic style façade is built at the location of the primitive radiating chapel, giving the monument its definitive form.

Only the stained glass windows were replaced in 1959, following the bombings from the Second World War.



# THE ARCHITECTURE AND THE EXTERNAL DECOR

- 1 - Southern collateral
- 2 - Rose Window
- 3 - Gargoyle. Northern Façade
- 4 - Gable and decor. Northern Façade

Collaterals formed for regular chapels, a flat radiating chapel and the absence of transept are common characteristics to many churches in Upper Brittany. Saint-Leonard is a representative model of this type of architecture. Saint-Sulpice, another Gothic church in Fougères, has a similar structure, although less homogeneous in its form.



This construction principle makes it possible to enlarge the building by stages, if the increase of the population justifies it, while keeping the overall unit. In the middle of the 19th century, the architect Tourneux also resumes this initial model for the expansion work of the church.

## THE FAÇADE

The façade, created by Mr. Prioul in 1880, is a flamboyant neo-Gothic style, the rose window reminiscent of the great stained glass windows of medieval cathedrals. This reference to the Middle Ages denotes the desire to integrate the new elements into the entire build. However, the use of grey granite contrasts with the shades of the red granite used for the bell tower.



## THE NORTHERN FAÇADE

Defining each interior bay, triangular gables and buttresses punctuate this façade. Oriented towards the main street, it is decorated with a rich decor: Renaissance balustrade, monstrous gargoyles, sculptures with plant and figurative motifs.



# THE INTERIOR DECOR

- 1 - Stained glass window representing Saint Benoit
- 2 - Assumption of the Virgin, Achille Dévéria
- 3 - Worshipping Angel

## THE SACRÉ-CHOEUR CHAPEL

The Chapel of the Dead houses several decorative elements testifying to the "turbulent" architectural history of the Church.

- The oldest stained glass window preserved in Brittany, representing two scenes in the life of Saint Benoit, was given to the church by a parishioner. This medallion of the 12th century comes from Saint-Denis Abbey.
- The Piéta, stained glass showing the Virgin carrying a dead Christ, as well as a donor and Saint Yves, dates from the 16th century.
- Painted in 1836 by Achille Dévéria, the Assumption decorated the choir refurbished at the beginning of the 19th century and now disappeared.
- Christ on the cross from 17th century and the worshipping angels, carved by Jolliet in 1806, adorned the altarpiece of the former high altar.



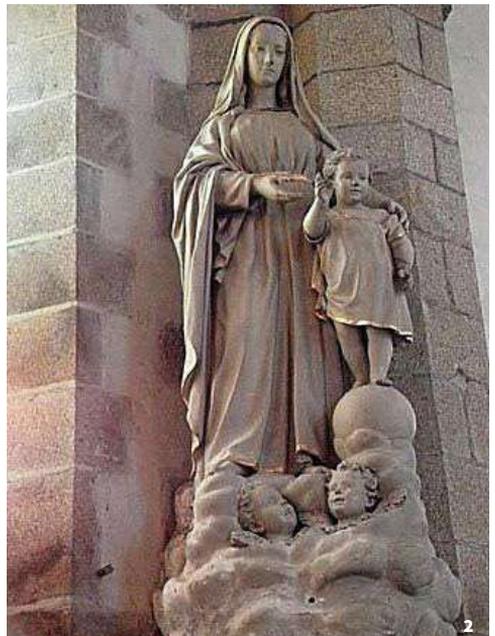


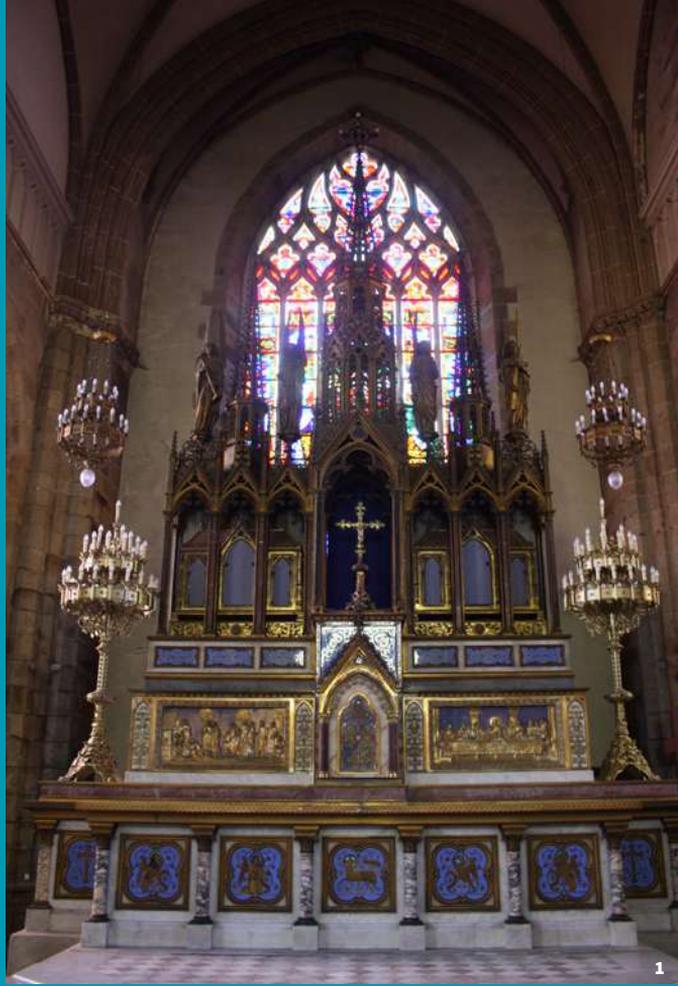
1 - Stained glass representing Saint Léonard, F. Lorin  
2 - Virgin with child, Armand Harel

### THE SOUTHERN COLLATERAL

Formed with regular and vaulted chapels crossed with ribs, this South side aisle shows a simple and harmonious set.

- Essential elements of the church's decor, the stained glass windows are created in 1959 by François Lorin, famous master glassmaker from Chartres. The choice of primary colours and an iconographic programme representing the Saints create an exceptional overall through their unity.
- Tabernacles and sinks recall the presence of altars, now disappeared. The donor families had partly chosen the decorative layout of the chapel they had funded.
- The monumental statue of the virgin with child, carved in 1873, is the work of the artist Armand Harel from Fougères who was assistant to Carpeaux.





## THE CHOIR

Three bays, two of which form the choir, are constructed from 1863 to enlarge the building. An interior adjustments were then necessary.

- In 1873, the Parisian goldsmith Poussielgue-Rusand creates an imposing high altar, decorative centrepiece of the choir. From the neo-Gothic style, all the marble, copper and enamels is adorned with bas-reliefs representing the worship of the Magi and the Supper.
- The current altar and liturgical furniture are created in 2001 by J. F. Ferraton. White stone and blue glass are chosen to harmonize with the colours of the 19th century high altar.
- On each side of the choir, two altars dedicated to the Virgin and Saint Joseph are the work of Granneau, one of David d'Angers' students.

1 - The high altar.  
19th century



### THE NAVE

The nave, raised in 1895, is very simple and now displays only one decorative element: the preaching pulpit from the 18th century. For a long time, terracotta statues, representing Evangelists and Apostles, decorated the pillars. Today, they constitute a gallery of Saints, installed inside the bell tower.

From the choir, the nave offers an interesting perspective on the rose window, inspired by that of Sainte-Chapelle, and on the organ created by Louis Debierre in 1881.



- 1 - View of the nave
- 2 - Gallery of Saints inside the bell tower
- 3 - Rose Window

# THE INTERIOR DECOR

**1 - Saint Anne educating the Virgin, wooden statue polychrome, 16th century**  
**2 - Altarpiece and Virgin with child**

**3 - Stained glass representing the resurrection of Lazare 16th century**  
**Attributed to Pierre Symon**

## THE NORTHERN COLLATERAL

As for the South side aisle, F. Lorin's stained glass windows seem to be the main part of the decor. However several elements are to be noted.

- The polychrome wooden statue, representing Saint Anne and the Virgin, dates from the early 16th century. The child Jesus, initially sitting on Mary's knees, has disappeared. A sculpture similar to this one can be found in Léau in Belgium.
- Another statue, sometimes identified as Saint Barbe, dates from the same period.
- The painting representing Saint Anne educating the Virgin in the presence of Saint Joachim belonged to the Virgin's altarpiece. The decorative element of the choir, is taken down as from 1862, whilst reorienting the church.
- From the initial set of altarpieces, only one remains that of Saint Joseph created by Cordier. It now houses the Virgin carved by Jolliet in 1802 and lets you imagine what the church choir could have been like before the expansion work.

mastery, was partially destroyed. The theme of The Resurrection of Lazarus still remains identifiable.

- The immense canvas, painted in the 19th century by Eugène Déveria for the entire choir, takes on the same subject. It is part of a series of seven paintings, four of which are today exhibited in the Convent of the Urban Planners and another at the Town Hall.

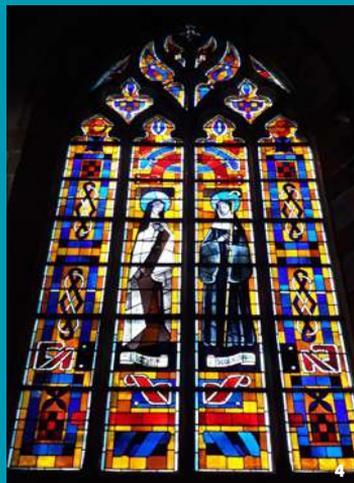


## BAPTISMAL FONT CHAPEL

Base of the bell tower, the Northern chapel shows two major decorative elements:

- The stained glass of the Northern bay, dating back to the 16th century, could be the work of Pierre Symon, famous glass-maker from Fourgères. This stained glass, by great technical





- 1 - Statue sometimes identified as Saint Barbe
- 2 - Preaching pulpit
- 3 - Detail of the bell tower and façade
- 4 - Choir stained glass



- 1 - Radiating Chapel and general view of the church
- 2 - Stained Glass of the Northern collateral
- 3 - General view of the choir
- 4 - Gargoyle

# FROM THE TOP OF THE BELL TOWER, A STUNNING VIEW OVER THE WHOLE CITY OF FOGÈRES



**View of the medieval district from the bell tower**

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