

Visit of the Cathedral St Stephen, Toulouse, France (sept 2012)

St Stephen is the first martyr in Christian history. He was stoned to death after the Resurrection of the Lord. His martyrdom is staged in the baroque *altarpiece* .

St Stephen in Toulouse is a puzzling cathedral because it is the result of a juxtaposition of buildings that have been either amputated or left unfinished , between the 11th and the 17th century, and even in the 20th century with the North *portal*.

The Organ

Was built in 1613, after the fire which destroyed all the church furnishings and the wooden roof in 1609.

It is in walnut wood and 17 m above the floor.

It was the only organ in Toulouse for a long time.

Some improvements were conducted by Cavaillé Cool, a very famous organ builder in 1848.

There are 50 organ stops (jeux), 450 (?) pipes, 4 keyboards.

5 organists play in turn for the offices.

The triforium runs around the choir.

The roof: ***stained glass windows*** ruined by a hail storm 4 or 5 years ago.

The Choir

From the organ, you can see ***the choir*** where the bishop and his canons attended the offices, hence the double row of 114 ***stalls*** (Louis XIII period), and at the end on the right with 3 seats: the largest one for the bishop, and the other 2 for the provost and the president of Parliament.

There used to be gates to separate the choir from the people. (jubé)

The baroque altar piece with on either side the statues of the 4 evangelists. (Luke, John, Matthew and Mark)

A 5-sided ***apse*** (abside) and an ambulatory onto which open 5 sided chapels.

This choir was built by bishop Bertrand de Lisle in between 1279 and 1286, in the Southern Gothic style.

It was to be the choir of a new cathedral to replace the old romanesque one which was too small for the growing population of Toulouse.

So the old choir was demolished and replaced by a new gothic one But it could not be built along the old cathedral as there was a cloister on the southern side which stood in what is now only a courtyard.

The cloister doesn't exist any longer: it was demolished after the French revolution, like many religious buildings.

The old nave was to be replaced by a new one along the new choir, but because of financial difficulties, the new nave was never built.

So, to sum up, we have a new choir and an old nave which are not on the same line.

The Raymondine nave

It is a single nave, reminding the cistercian architecture

One modern stained-glass window shows the men who worked for the building and the fame of the cathedral.

The pillar added by bishop Jean d'Orléans: he is the one who renovated the clock tower and built the sacristy.

Under a white marble flagstone lies **Pierre-Paul RIQUET**, the builder of the canal which links Toulouse to the Mediterranean sea, called the Canal du midi.

The Baptistry

The Bell Tower

The basis dates back to 1078.

It looks like a fortress from the outside in the Middle ages style.

The current tower was built by Jean d'Orléans.

There used to be a set of bells (carillon) but it has been out of order for a long time. (there is one at St Sernin)

The vault of the raymondin nave, in bricks.

pigeon droppings

The oldest fountain of Toulouse

The Bishop's palace, now the seat of the prefect.