Chartes Cathedral Essay, Research Paper

Chartes Cathedral

Malcolm Miller, an English-speaking tour guide at the Chartes Cathedral states, The Chartes Cathedral is a book. Its architecture is in the binding, and its stories are told through its windows and sculptures. The Chartes Cathedral held true to this statement through my research of this famous gothic cathedral. Located in the heart of a small, sleepy town southwest of Paris, it contains the largest collection of exquisite stained glass, sculptures, and vaulted ceilings. Chartes has been left virtually unharmed through over eight centuries of wars and rebellions. It miraculously survived the French Revolution unscathed when many churches were destroyed by rebelling peasants and it narrowly missed the bombing of Nazi planes during WWII.

The exact time and date that the original cathedral was founded is unknown, but it was before 743 (the first sure date associated with it). The church was dedicated to the Virgin Mary and houses a relic, a piece of fabric that is believed to have been worn by the Virgin as she gave birth to Jesus. Because of this relic, Chartes became a major pilgrimage center and a great cathedral was built. The work on the current Chartes Cathedral began in 1194, after a fire destroyed the old church. Chartes is the largest and arguably the most magnificent of all Gothic cathedrals. The Western Facade, which is the front of the church, has two different steeples, built in different centuries and exhibiting different types of architecture. On all sides of the Cathedral, there are beautiful sculptures. The entire church is covered with icons of the Virgin, Jesus, angels, and biblical figures. Inside the church, the vaulted ceilings are built very high- this was one of the tallest free-standing structures in the world for a number of centuries. The high ceilings draw visitors attention to the sky and give one a sense of sacredness. The church is held up by flying buttresses on the outside of the church. This was a relatively new method in the 12th century and ushered in the era of Gothic architecture. The stained glass art that the Chartes is famous for in many ways breaks the darkness inside the church by a glow of colors emanating from every wall. The many stained glass windows changed the scriptures of the Bible, which were unreadable to non-learned people, into pictures that could be understood by all.

I found the sculptures on the Southern portal to be the most interesting. On this side, the sculptures are of angels, Jesus, and the 12 Apostles. The many intricate sculptures and carvings are overwhelming to the sight of the human eye. The detail put into each sculpture is so great. The Chartes Cathedral s stained glass art is magnificent. The stories that are told through the pictures can leave one staring at them all day long. The inside of the church is not all that is amazing about the Chartes Cathedral. The outside of the cathedral holds its own true story. The elaborate detail is not confined to the inside of the building. The statues and sculptures outside are just as wonderful as inside the church.

The Chartes Cathedral is just what Malcolm Miller stated, a book. Through the magnificent artwork in the sculptures and the stained glass, a person can learn the stories of the bible and the history of a great cathedral. To design a church of my own, I would definitely use some of the elements of this church. The beauty of a church like this one seems to sit in a separate world where one can interact harmoniously with both heaven and earth, which is exactly what a church should do.