



THE ROMANESQUE CHURCH OF SAINT-MAURICE-DE-GOURDANS

Built during the 12th century, this structure can be seen today almost perfectly intact. From the outside, you can see its cobblestone walls. These are natural elements that are found all over the area. The church's Latin cross layout is simple, yet its 15th century frescoes enhance this church's great heritage significance and it was classed a Historical Monument in 1909 in honour of its aesthetic beauty and the fineness of its capitals.



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Likely start of the structure's construction

1316

Regular priests are welcomed to the priory



13th - 15th century

The nave is extended

19th century

Decor is painted in the northern arms of the transept and hidden under a plaster coating until 2019



1830

The nave is extended, and a buttress is added on the nave's southern side



2019 2020

The structure is restored: frescoes, coatings, heating, lighting and sound equipment. Discovery of painted decor and a window

1153

Pope Eugene III confirms possession of the church and its small priory by the monks of Ainay abbey.

15th century

The frescoes are created

1812-1813

The bell tower is partially rebuilt after the French Revolution

1959

The frescoes are uncovered



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Romanesque architecture

Chronologically, Romanesque architecture developed before Gothic architecture some time around the 6th century and spread across Occidental Europe up until the 12th century. Romanesque architecture is difficult to describe and delineate because the period to which it is linked is very long and there is a wide variety of creations depending on the region. However, several criteria can help to identify it: a massive appearance of the whole due to the presence of heavy stone vaults and thick walls, generally punctured by small openings.

Photo credit : Edouard de Vimal
Design and layout : Marion De Klijn

THE FRESCOES AND THEIR REDISCOVERY

During works carried out in 1946, 15th century frescoes were discovered. They had been hidden under plaster, most likely around the time of the French Revolution.

They were updated in 1959, when church's vault was strengthened.

These frescoes depict the main scenes from the Old and New Testament. It is possible that they

were the work of one or several unknown artists, pilgrims heading along the Way of St. James, or of an artist from Northern Italy.

Painted decor

Works carried out in 2020 revealed a 19th century frieze and an early 20th century pictorial composition in the north apse chapel.

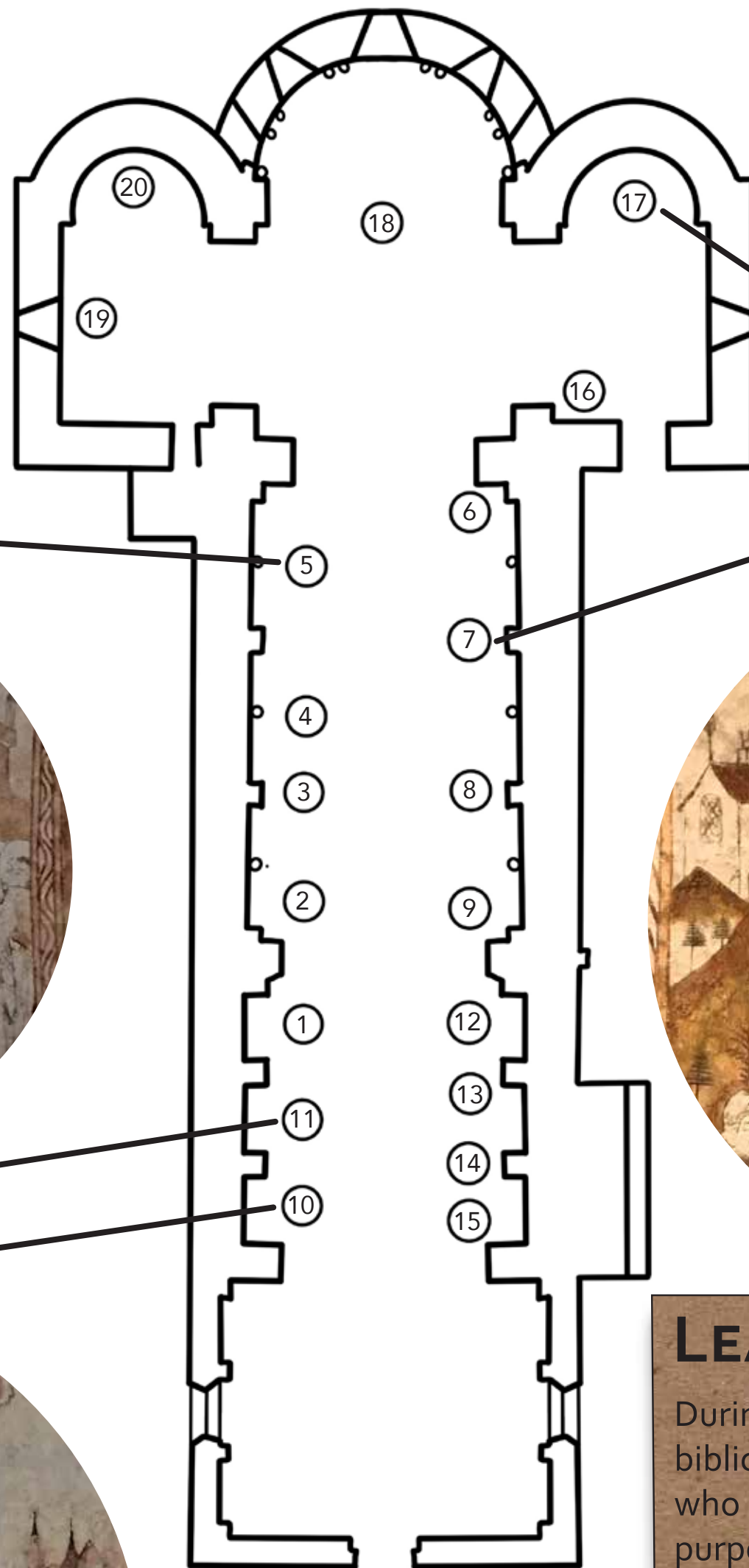


5 - Christ Carrying the Cross



11 - Pentecost

10 - The Ascension



17 - Annunciation



7 - Resurrection

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During the middle ages, frescoes captured biblical texts in images for worshippers who could not read, with an educational purpose. The art of fresco creation was mainly used by Romanesque art. Later, large painted windows would be used by Gothic art to illustrate and tell the story of the Bible.

Such decor is generally painted onto dry coatings (a secco), and only rarely on fresh coatings (a fresco). Most often, they are created by small local workshops that paint on dry coatings, as this technique is easier.

Frescoes

1- Agony in the Garden | 2- Arrest of Christ (Kiss of Judas) | 3- Pilate's court | 4-Flagellation | 5- Christ Carrying the Cross | 6- The Entombment | 7- Resurrection | 8- Descent to hell and freeing of Adam | 9- Appearance to Mary Magdalene and hanging of Judas | 10- The Ascension | 11- Pentecost | 12- Archangel St. Michael | 13- The Creation of the World | 14- The Creation of Man | 15- The Creation of Eve | 16- Litre (Foix coat of arms) | 17- Annunciation | 18- Christ in Majesty | 19- 19th century frieze | 20- Pictorial composition dated 1936