

# CATHEDRALS

A cathedral is a big church that is usually under the control of a bishop. It is usually the **seat** of a **diocese**, a church district **headed** by a bishop. Most cathedrals, **especially medieval** ones, are **located** in the centre of a town or city. They **served** as the centre of **public life**. Markets, meetings and **masses** were held there.

## STRUCTURE

Most cathedrals are built in the **shape** of a **cross**. The main **entrance** is at the west end at the bottom of the cross. There is a long central **aisle** called the nave and two **side aisles**. The arms of the cross are the **transepts** and meet the nave at the crossing. Towers and domes were often built over the crossing.



The altar and the seats for the **choir** are at the eastern end of the nave in front of the **apse**, which looks like a **semi-circle**.

Cathedrals have been built in almost every architectural style. But most of the famous European cathedrals were Byzantine, Romanesque, Gothic or Renaissance. The greatest era of building happened in Europe between 1000 and 1500 **A.D.** Cathedrals were filled with **carved sculptures**. The walls had paintings and the windows were painted with scenes from the Bible and the lives of the **saints**.

## BYZANTINE CATHEDRALS

In the first **centuries A.D.** the centre of **Christianity** was around the city of Byzantium, which was later called Constantinople and is now Istanbul. Architecture in the Byzantine Empire was a combination of styles that came from the Middle East and ancient Rome. Hagia Sophia was one of the first Byzantine cathedrals.

## ROMANESQUE CATHEDRALS

As time went on the centre of **Christianity** moved to Europe. Rome had become completely Christian other countries to the north also **converted** to **Christianity**. The new style came up at around 1000 **A.D.** Northern **art** began to **influence** traditional Roman **art**.

## GOTHIC CATHEDRALS

By the 1100s people the Germanic peoples from the North – Germans, **Goths** and **Franks** – **dominated** European **Christianity**. Their cathedrals were very tall as if they wanted to reach to **heaven**. Most of Europe's famous Cathedrals are built in gothic style but every region had its own style.

### RENAISSANCE CATHEDRALS

In the 1300s a new **spirit** began to grow in Italy. People were **curious** about new things and made new **discoveries**. The period was called Renaissance, which means rebirth. It was a time when the **population** wanted to know and learn things about classical Greece and Rome.

Renaissance architects looked back to the buildings and **structures** of ancient Rome and Greece. They mixed features of old and new architecture. St.Peter's cathedral in Rome is one of the best examples of a Renaissance cathedral. The dome was **designed** by Michelangelo.

### FAMOUS CATHEDRALS

Many cathedrals of Western Europe are famous for their great **beauty**. France is the home of some of the most beautiful cathedrals. St.Paul's Cathedral in London and Canterbury Cathedral are England's biggest churches. Other famous cathedrals in Europe are in **Cologne**, Milan and Seville.

Many cathedrals in North America were built in the style of the great European cathedrals. Among the biggest is St. John the **Divine** and St. Patrick's Cathedral – both in New York.

### WORDS

- **A.D.** = after the birth of Christ
- **aisle** = a long passage between rows of seats in a church, plane, theatre etc..
- **apse** = the curved inside east end of a church
- **art** = paintings and drawings
- **beauty** = the quality of being beautiful
- **carve** = to make an object by cutting a piece of wood or stone
- **century** = a hundred years
- **choir** = a group of people who sing together
- **Christianity** = the religion based on the life and thoughts of Jesus Christ
- **Cologne** = city in Northern Germany, on the Rhine River
- **convert** = to change to a different religion
- **cross** = Christian sign ,
- **curious** = if you want to know a lot of things
- **design** = to make, plan
- **diocese** = the area that a bishop controls
- **discovery** = something that you find out which nobody else knew before
- **Divine** = coming from God
- **dominate** = to be in control of
- **entrance** = a big door that you go through to enter a place
- **especially** = above all, more than ever
- **Franks** = Germanic tribe that lived to the north and east of the Rhine River

- **Goths** = East Germanic tribe that came to Central Europe from somewhere in southern Scandinavia
- **head** = to be in control of
- **heaven** = place where we think that God lives and where good people go to when they die
- **influence** = to have an effect on
- **located** = situated, to be found
- **mass** = church ceremony that celebrates the last meal that Jesus Christ ate
- **medieval** = from the Middle Ages
- **population** = the people who live in a country or other place
- **public life** = everyday life
- **saint** = someone who is given a title by the church after they have died because they have done something very good or holy
- **sculpture** = an object made out of stone, wood or other materials
- **seat** = centre, capital
- **semi-circle** = half of a circle
- **serve** = to have a function
- **shape** = form
- **side aisle** = the passage at the side of a church or cathedral
- **spirit** = feeling
- **structure** = construction, building
- **transept** = one of the two parts of a church that are built out from the main area to form a cross