Diptych with the Last Judgment and Coronation of the Virgin, ca. 1250–1270

Gothic Art

Early Gothic 1140-1194
High Gothic 1194-1300
Late Gothic 1300-1500

Scenes from the Passion of Saint Vincent of Saragossa and the History of His Relics, 1244–1247, Church of St. Germain-des-Prés, Paris

Europe ca. 1200

Aerial view of the fortified town of Carcassonne, France, 12th–13th centuries

History

- Originally the word *Gothic* was used by Italian Renaissance writers as a derogatory term for all art and architecture of the Middle Ages, which they regarded as comparable to the works of barbarian Goths. Florentine historiographer **Giorgio Vasari** (1511–1574) was the first to label the architecture of preceding centuries "Gothic."
- Gothic stood for the towering elaborate churches in the style originating in France with the Romanesque. They stood for/represented the city of god, the Heavenly Jerusalem, on earth.

- The style originated in northern France around 1140, while the Romanesque was still flourishing.
- By the 13th century it was spreading beyond Paris and like the Romanesque, it was essentially related to Catholicism.
- In eastern and southern Europe, esp. Italy, the Byzantine style was prominent. In north Africa and the west Asia Islamic styles prevailed.

Gothic
– Historical context

- It was a period of growing wealth and populations.
- The medieval manors and monasteries were slowly being replaced by more and more free men living in towns and cities (feudalism was in decline)
- Manufacturing, banking and trade were growing.
- Large regional kingdoms were being created.
- The great intellectual centers (which now includes universities) were growing beyond the confines of the church.
- Professional guilds were being formed.
- The papacy was at its height of power and Christian Crusades against Muslims in the disputed Holy Land were still underway.

New architectural elements...

triforium


Flying Buttress

Thinner Walls and Piers
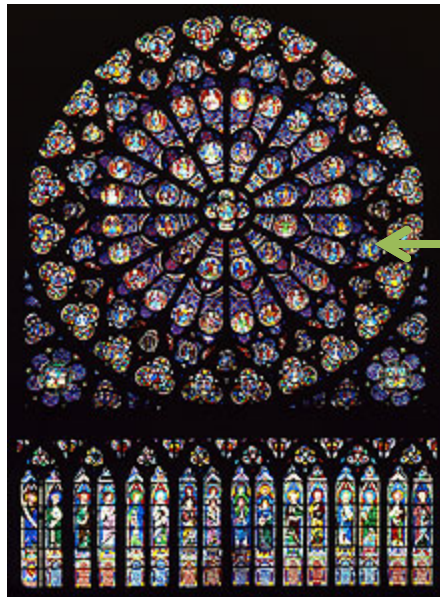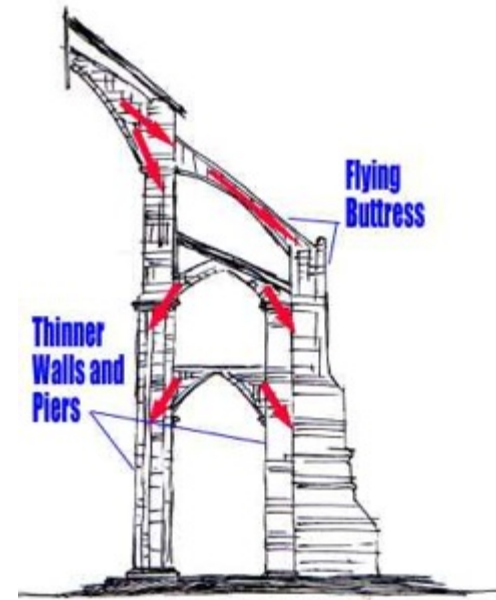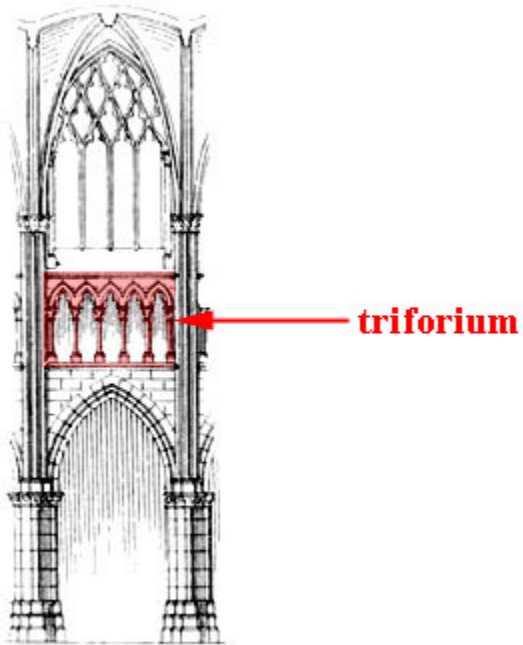
stained glass

Abbot Suger, St. Denis & the Gothic Style

- Saint-Denis (Dionysius), was the apostle who brought Christianity to Gaul. The abbey church of Saint-Denis is the location of not only his tomb (pilgrimage site!), but those of the Kings and Queens of France from the 9th century on.

- The original Church of Saint Denis was constructed ca. 799-810 under the rule of Charlemagne (during the Carolingian era)

- In the 1130's it was rebuilt under the supervision of Abbot Suger. In 1135 a new western, entrance facade was begun, and in 1140 the new east end was begun.

- Once the renovation was completed, Saint Denis was almost a completely new church.

- *The reconstruction on the Abbey Church of Saint Denis influenced all other Gothic architectural structures and marked the beginning of the Gothic era.*
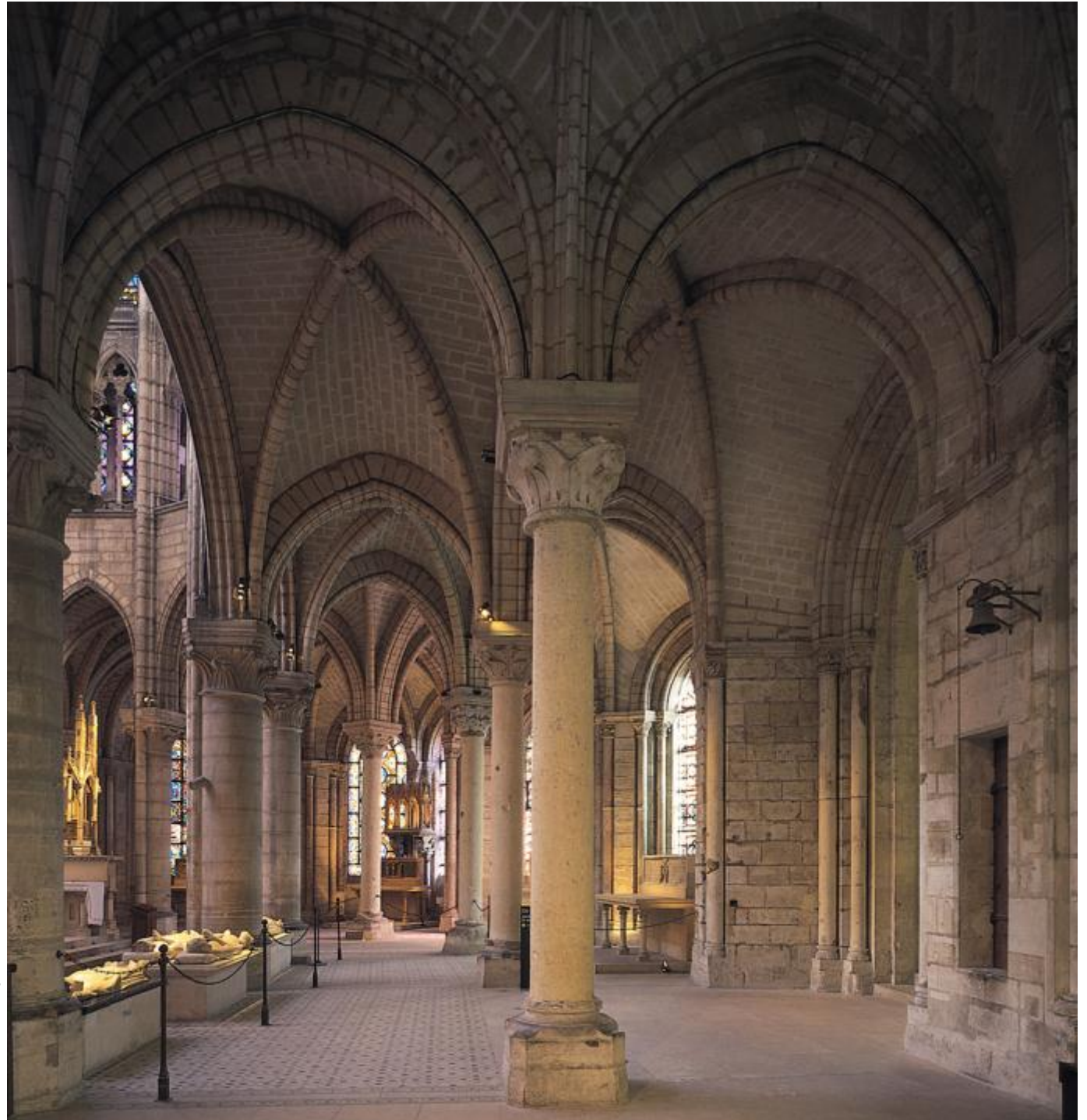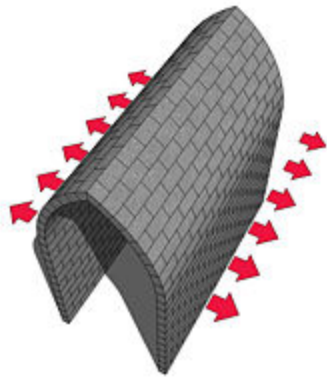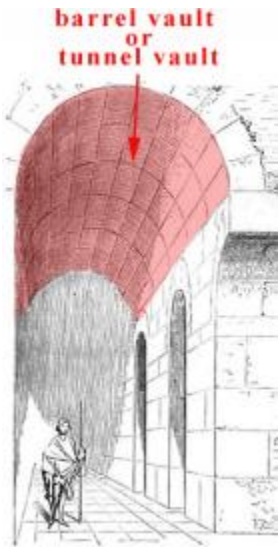
St. Denis
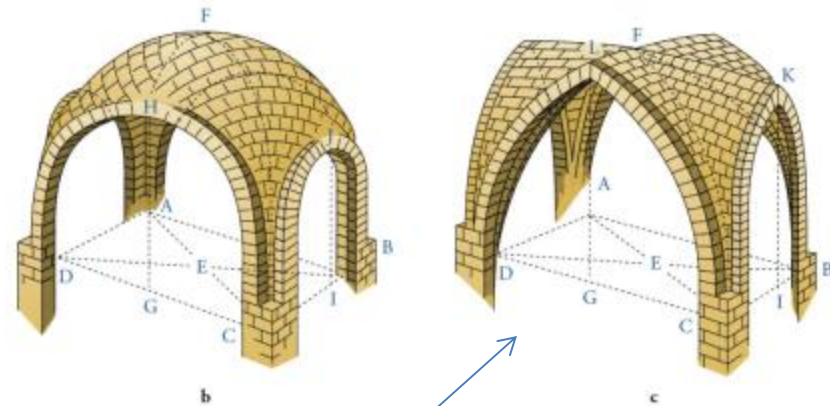
The **pointed ribbed groin vault** allowed flexibility of form and reduced wall space; it is the characteristic feature of Gothic architecture.

France, 1140–1144

Ambulatory and radiating chapels, abbey church, Saint-Denis, France, 1140–1144.
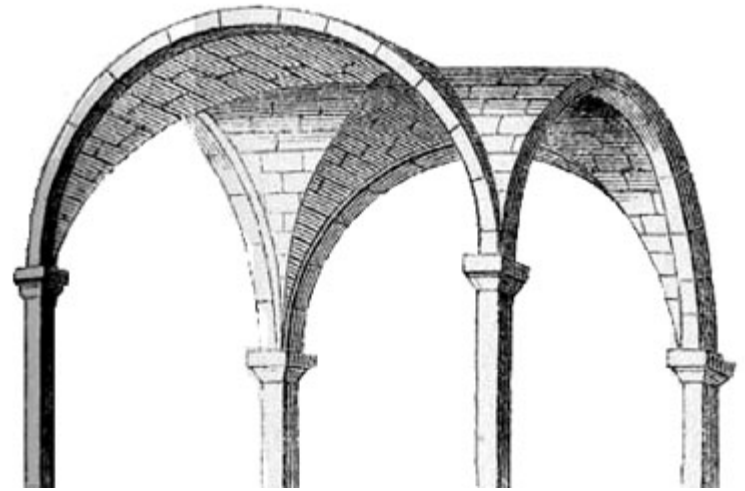
Vaults

barrel vault
or
tunnel vault

Barrel vault w/
pointed arches

Groin vault

Ribbed vault (exterior)

Ribbed groin vault

The Chartres Cathedral

- Chartres Cathedral (Notre Dame de Chartres) is another important monument of the Early Gothic.
  - There have been 5 cathedrals on this site before the current one.
- Became a pilgrimage church in the 9th c when it acquired the tunic worn by the Virgin Mary when she gave birth to Christ.
- A fire destroyed all of the structure, except for the west façade, 50 years after its completion.
  - The rebuilding (east) was completed in the High Gothic fashion, so the church contains both Early Gothic and its high point.

West facade, Chartres Cathedral, Chartres, France, ca. 1145-1155.

Aerial view of Chartres Cathedral (looking north), Chartres, France, as rebuilt after 1194

Royal Portal, west facade, Chartres Cathedral, Chartres, France, ca. 1145–1155

Center: Last Judgment group of Christ in a mandorla surrounded by the eagle, bull, lion and angel of Matthew, Luke, Mark and John. **Left:** Christ's ascension into the Heaven, flanked by a pair of angels. **Right:** Virgin Mary enthroned with the Christ child in her lap flanked by two angels.

Compare + Contrast

Lions and Old Testament prophet (Jeremiah or Isaiah?), trumeau of the south portal of Saint-Pierre, Moissac, France, ca. 1115–1130

Old Testament kings and queens, jamb statues, central doorway of Royal Portal, Chartres Cathedral, Chartres, France, ca. 1145–1155

Gothic Cathedrals of France

- Laon Cathedral, Laon (N. of Paris)
  - Notre Dame, Paris
 - Amiens Cathedral (N. of Paris)
 - Reims Catheral (N.E. of Paris)

Notre Dame, Paris

- Notre-Dame was constructed on the Ile-de-la-Cite, one of the two islands in the Seine that seem to have been the original seed of the city dating back to Roman times.

- It replaced a much earlier, Merovingian church on the site.

Notre-Dame (looking north), Paris, France, begun 1163; nave and flying buttresses, ca. 1180–1200; remodeled after 1225.

French Stained Glass Windows

- In his description of the ideal church, Abbot Suger wanted to fill his Abbey Church of St. Denis, near Paris, with "the most radiant windows."
- With the help of the **pointed arch** and the **flying buttress**, cathedral walls were strengthened and spaces could be cut away for larger window casements - and thereby meet the terms of Gothic's important instruction**: more light.**

- Stained glass window making reached its peak in the Middle Ages.
- Except for the human features and folds of robes, all the color in medieval windows was in the glass itself. The figures in these windows were stylized, simplified, and bold and were derived from Byzantine mosaics and medieval manuscripts.
- The subject matter was religious and derived mainly from the Bible. These great storied windows were the teaching tools of the Church.
- As the great cathedrals grew higher and higher in the 14th century, the windows became taller and narrower, often divided into lancers (slender, pointed window) surmounted by tracery.
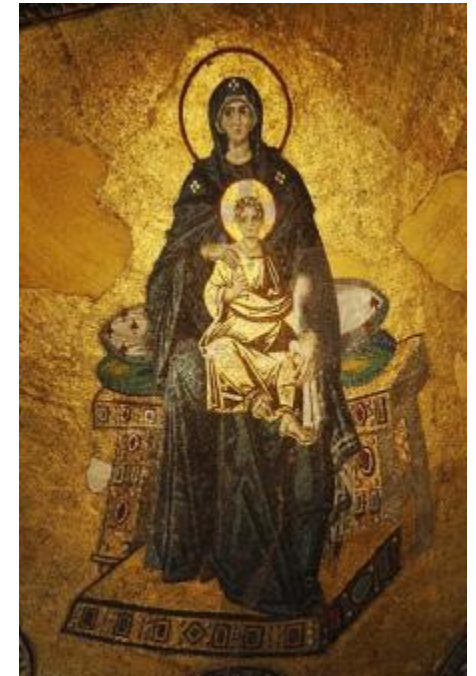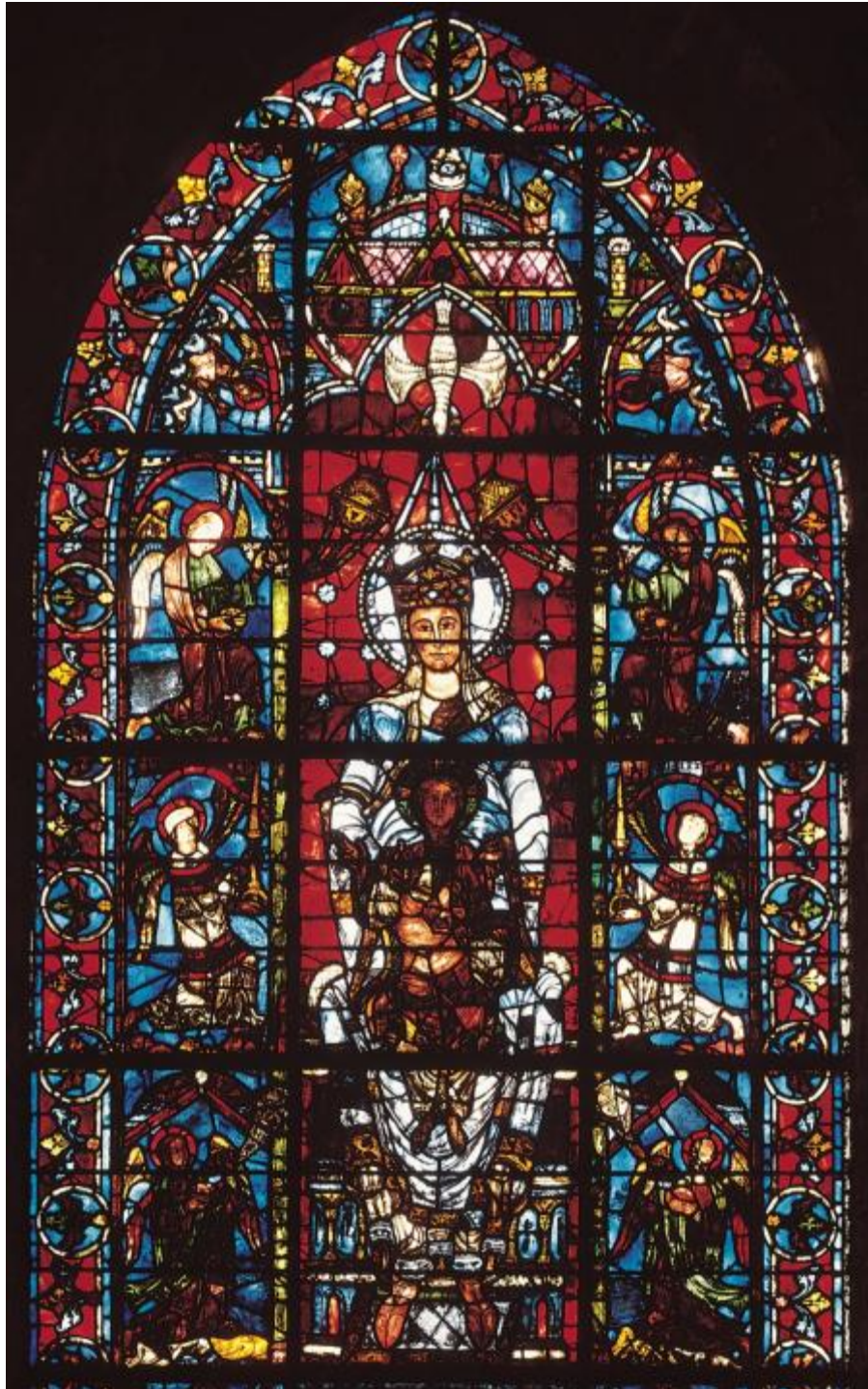
Theotokos & Child,
Hagia Sophia, 867

Virgin and Child and angels (Notre Dame de la Belle Verrière), detail of a window in the choir of Chartres Cathedral, Chartres, France, ca. 1170, with 13th century side panels. Stained glass, full height 16'.

In the large lancets we see Saint Anne flanked by prophets.

Above in the Rose we see the Virgin and child at the center and New Testament figures.

There are labels everywhere, though none could actually be seen from the floor of the cathedral.

Rose window and lancets, north transept, Chartres Cathedral, Chartres, France, ca. 1220. Stained glass, rose window 43' in diameter.
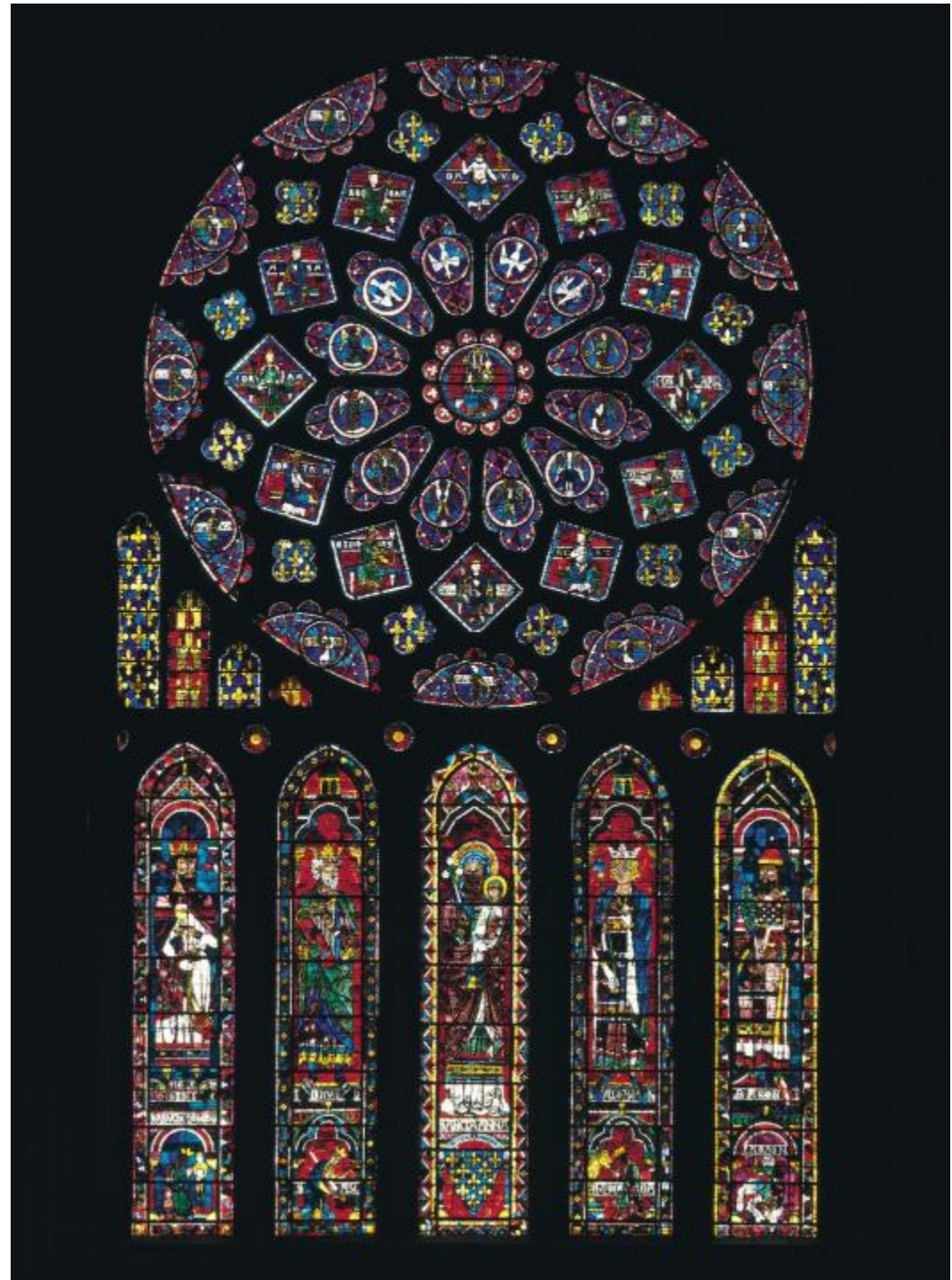
St. Denis
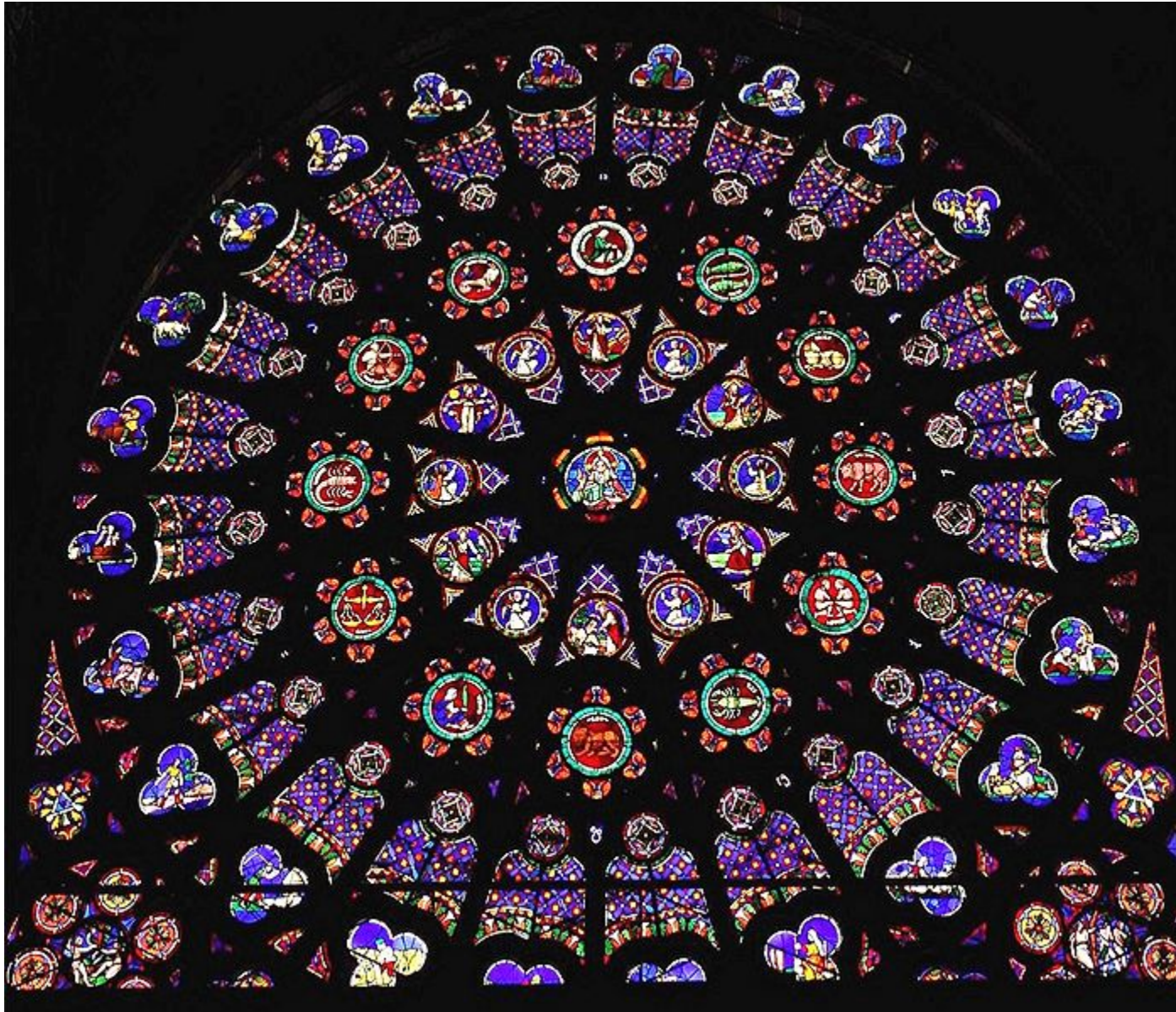
North transept Rose window, **Subject**: The Creation, with God at the centre, the six days of Creation, the Zodiac representing the order of the heavens, the labors representing the order of the earth, Adam and Eve eating the fruit and being expelled from Eden.
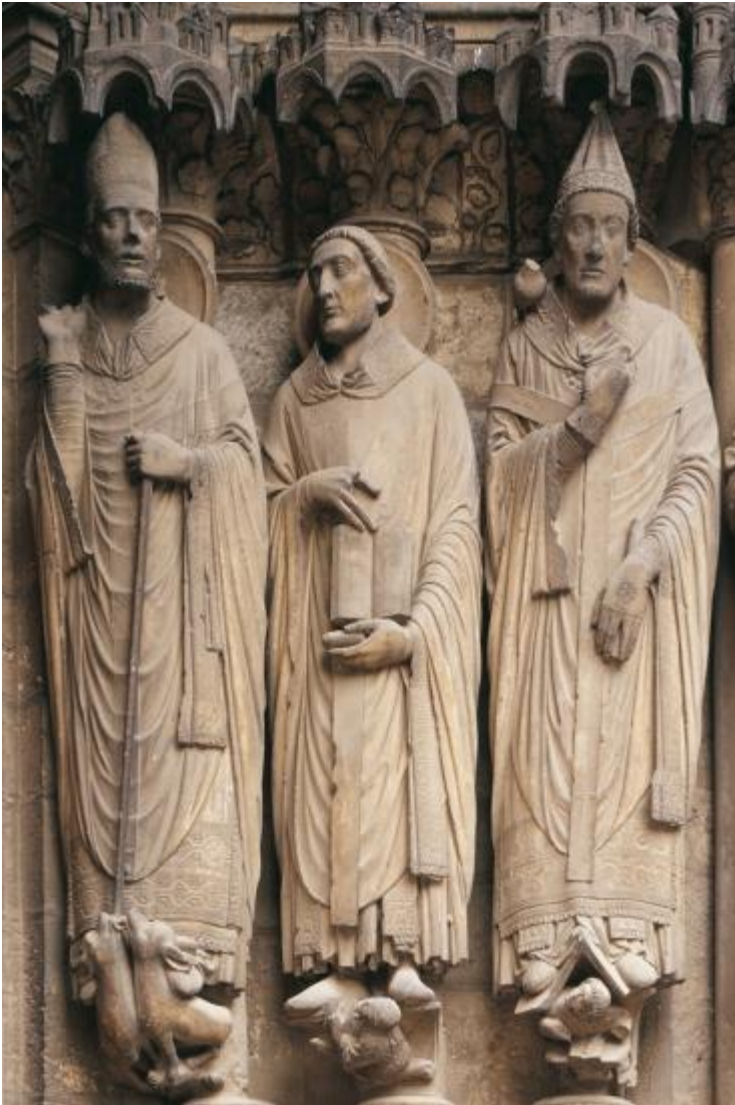
The church was to be a great reliquary for the crown of thorns and other implements of Christ's Passion that Louis IX, had purchased from his cousin Baldwin II, the Latin emperor of Constantinople in 1239.
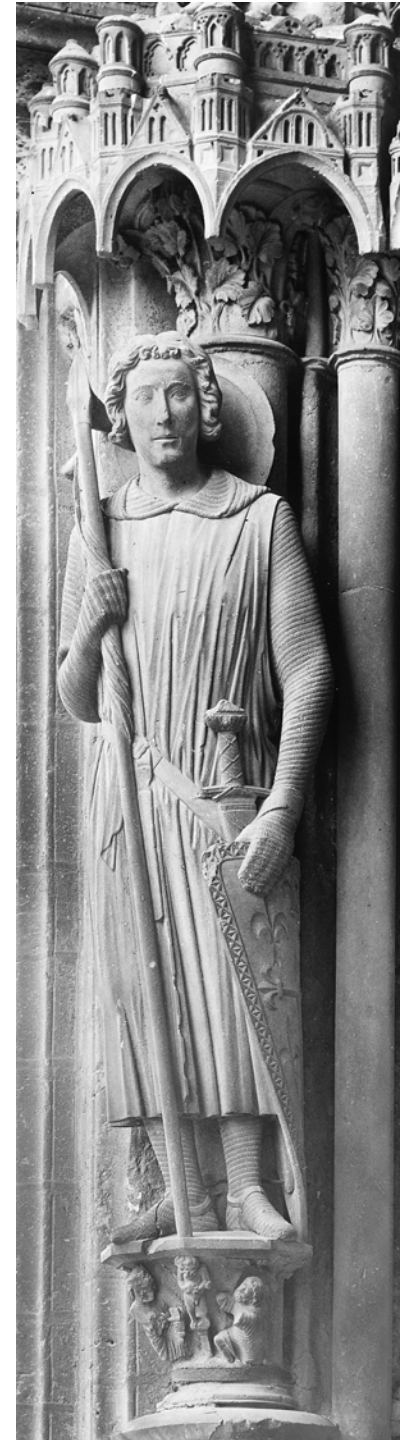
Interior of the upper chapel, Sainte-Chapelle, Paris, France, 1243–1248.

Gothic Sculptures

Saint Theodore, jamb statue, Porch of the Martyrs (left doorway), south transept, Chartres Cathedral, Chartres, France, ca. 1230

Saints Martin, Jerome, and Gregory, jamb statues, Porch of the Confessors (right doorway), south transept, Chartres Cathedral, Chartres, France, ca. 1220–1230

The nearly free standing figure of Christ is located on the *trumeau* of the central entrance.

The canopy above his head is more or less equivalent the structure's radiating chapels. That is the designers are showing off the style of the moment.

The Christ figure is one you should recognize…..

Christ (*Beau Dieu*), trumeau statue of central doorway, west facade, Amiens Cathedral, Amiens, France, ca. 1220–1235
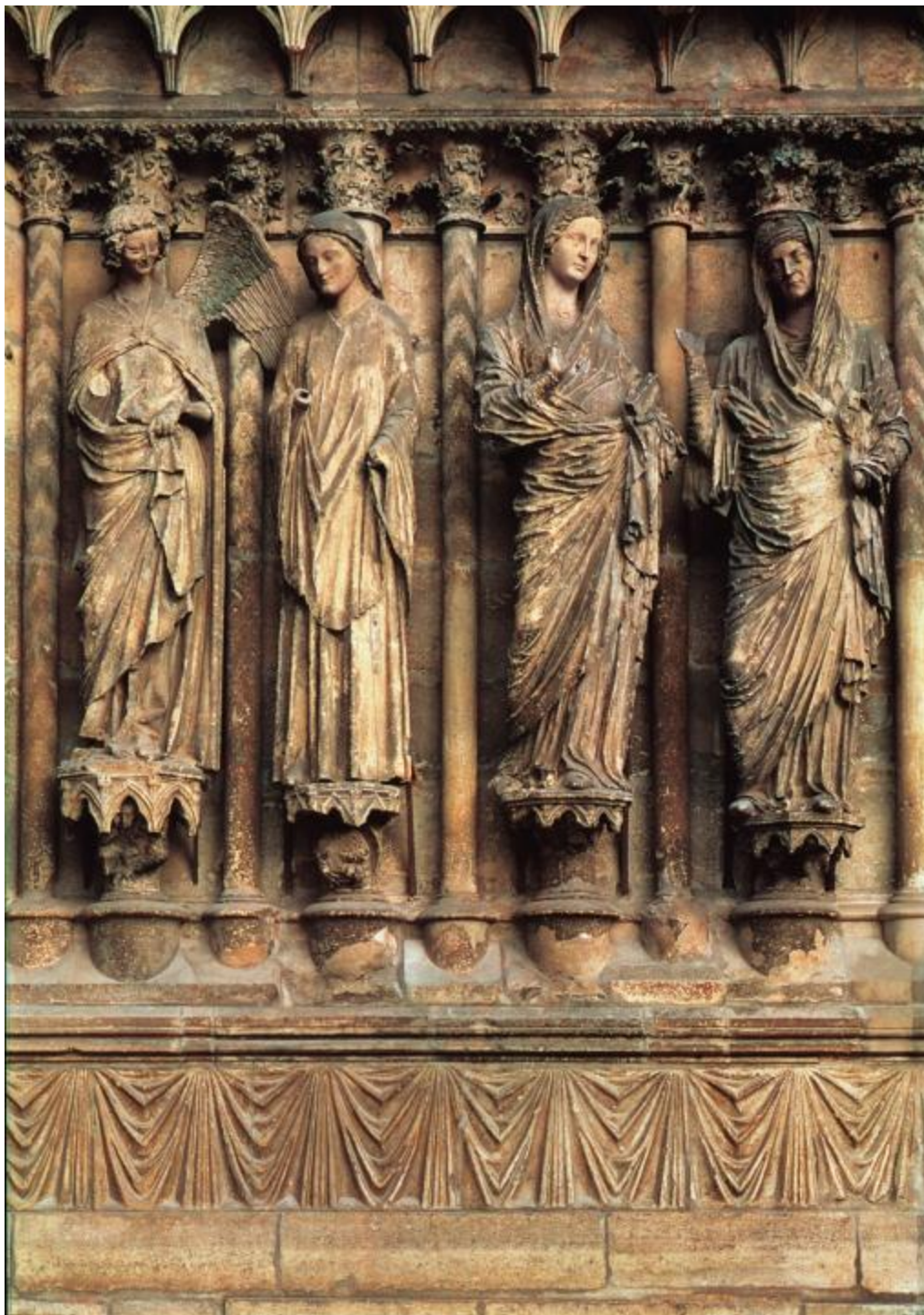
The faces of the Virgin Mary & Elizabeth are more realistic than their predecessors.

Most importantly, these two figures are facing each other. Unlike most sculptures that stand as solitary &/or isolated figures, we see here what appears to be a scene unfolding.

Annunciation and *Visitation*, jamb statues of central doorway, west facade, Reims Cathedral, Reims, France, ca. 1230-1255

Virgin of Jeanne d'Evreux, from the abbey church of Saint-Denis, France, 1339

Virgin and Child (*Virgin of Paris*), Notre-Dame, Paris, France, early fourteenth century.
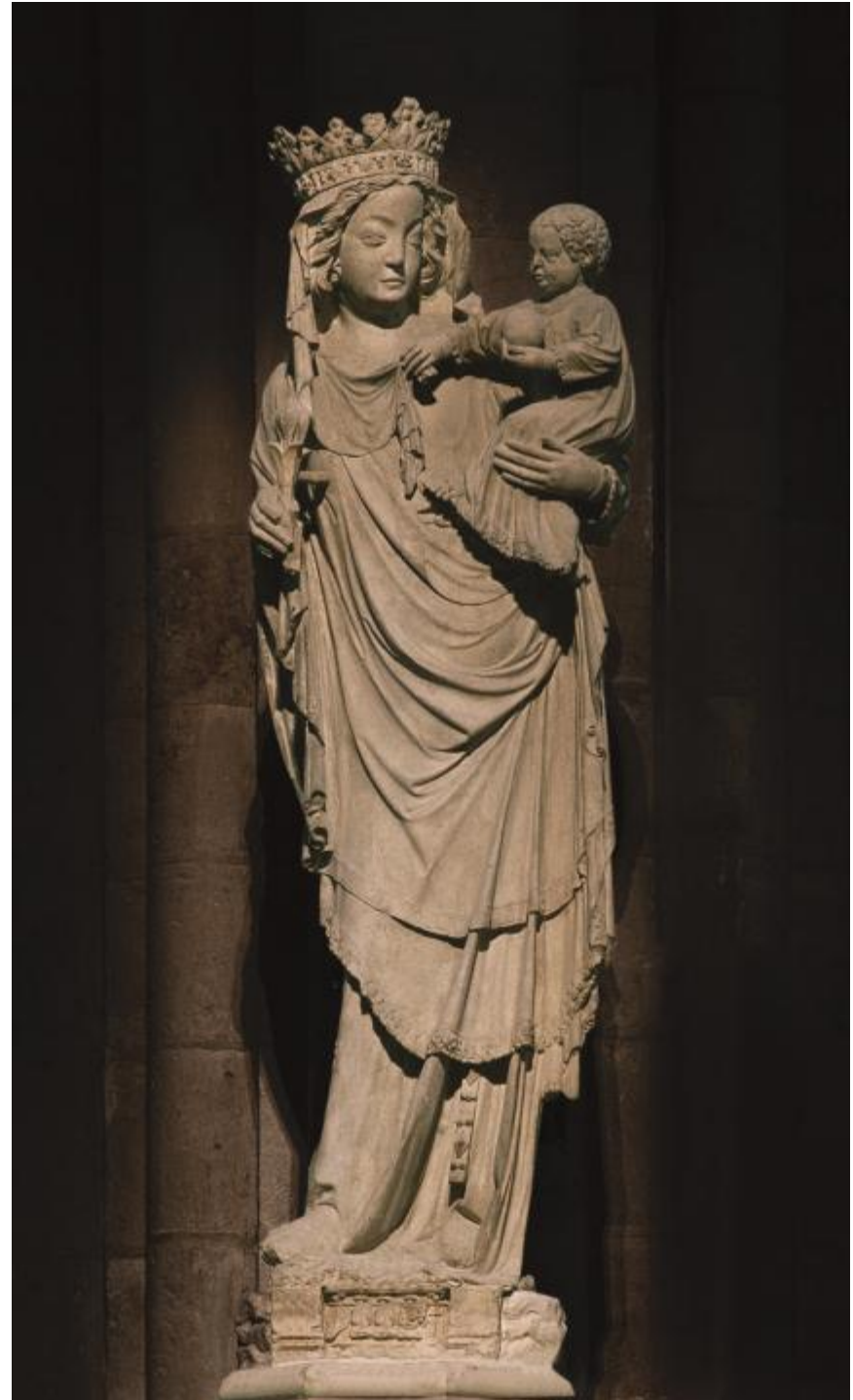
Death of the Virgin, *tympanum* of left doorway, south transept, Strasbourg Cathedral, Strasbourg, France, ca. 1230.
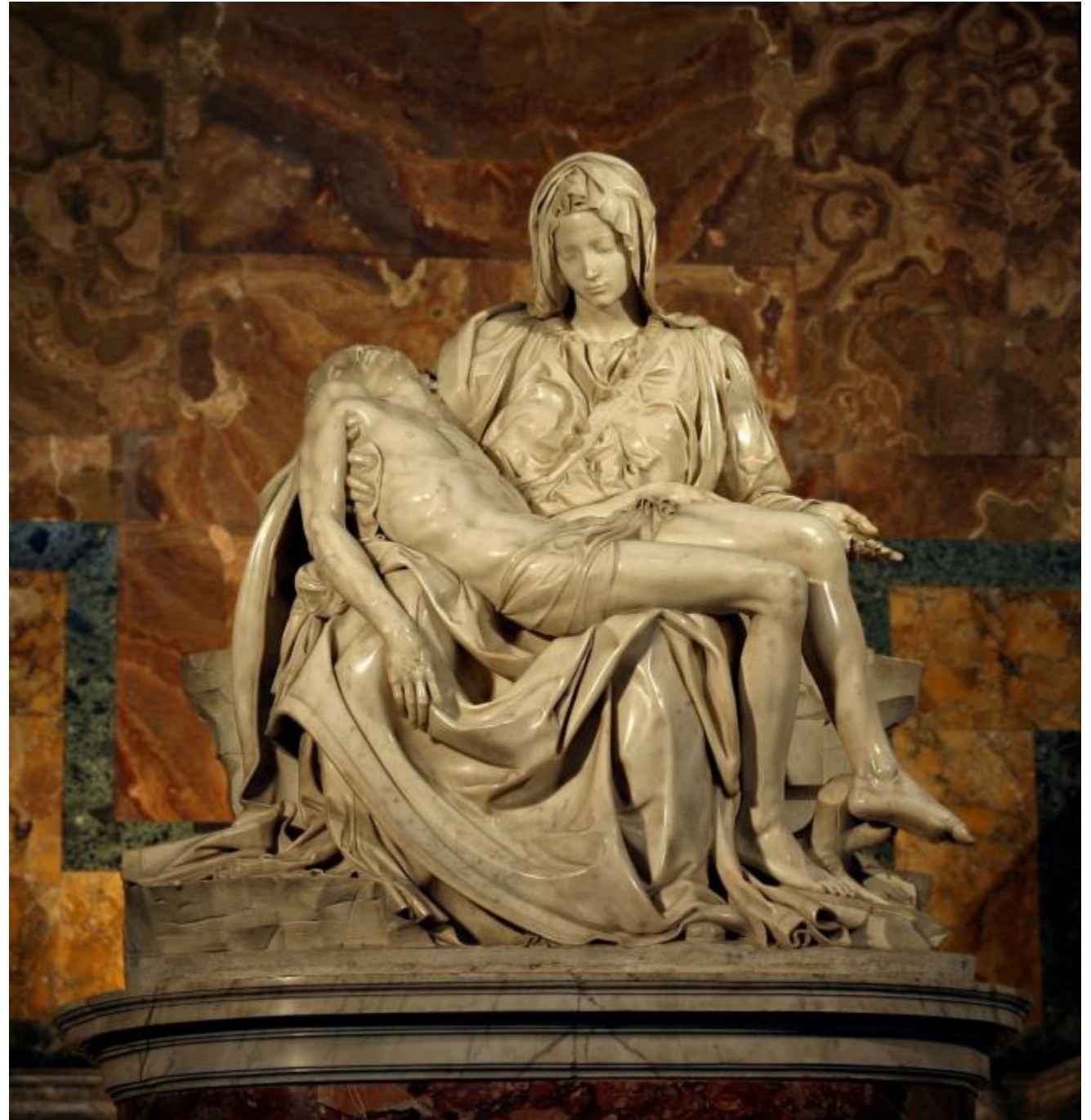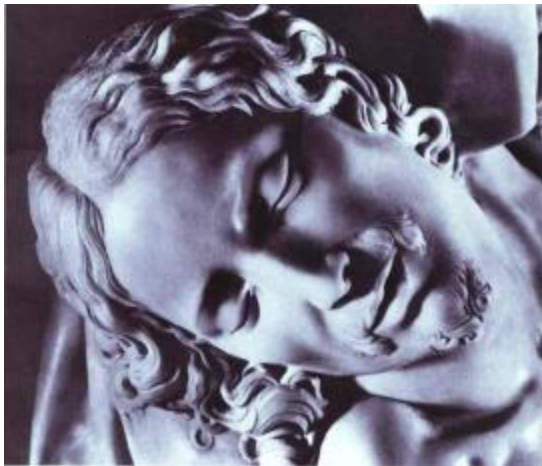
Finally, a new subject matter in the tympanum!

Virgin with the Dead Christ (*Röttgen Pietà*), from the Rhineland, Germany, ca. 1300–1325. Painted wood

Pieta,
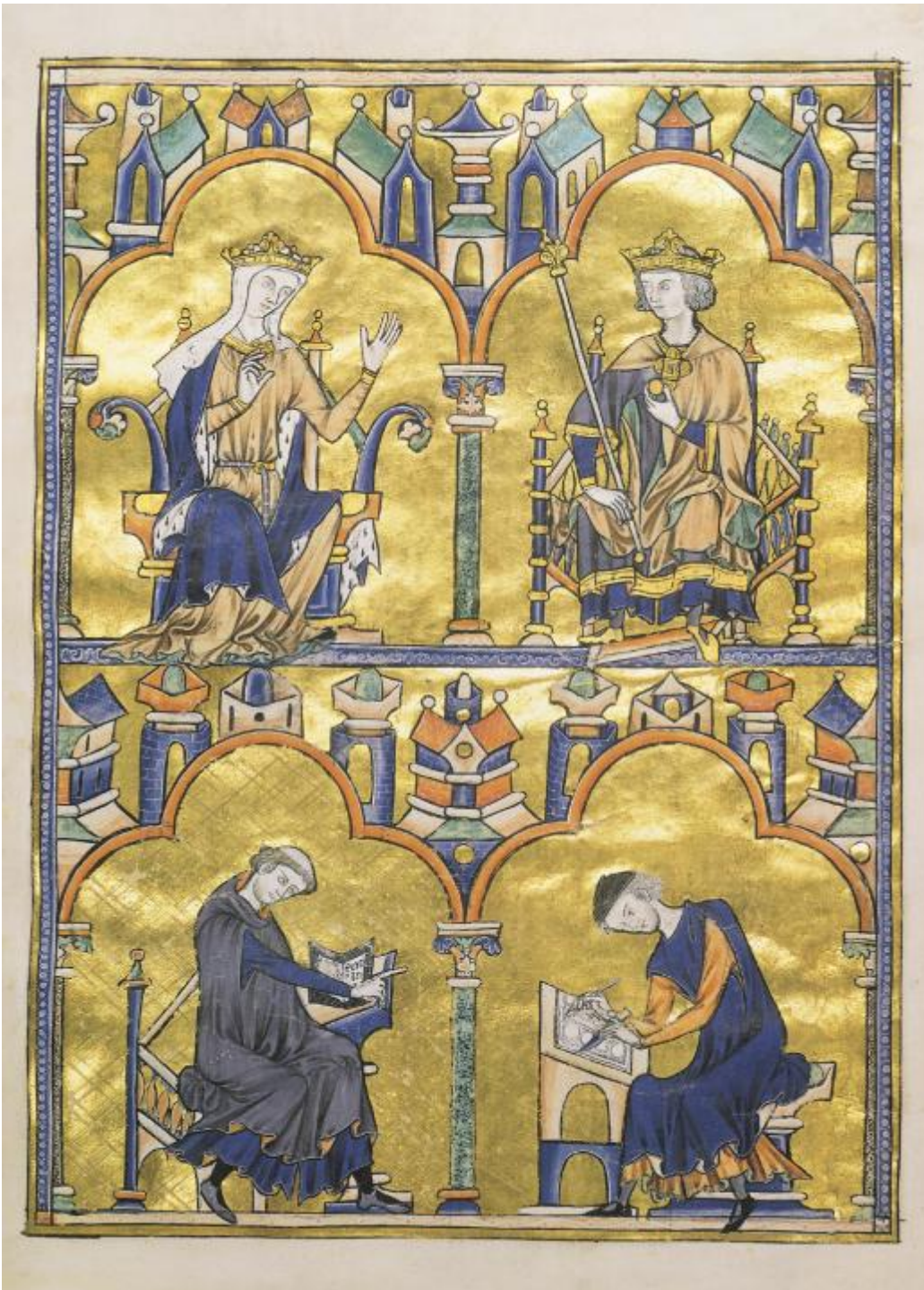Michelangelo,
1498-99

1300-1325

1498-99

COMPARE + CONTRAST
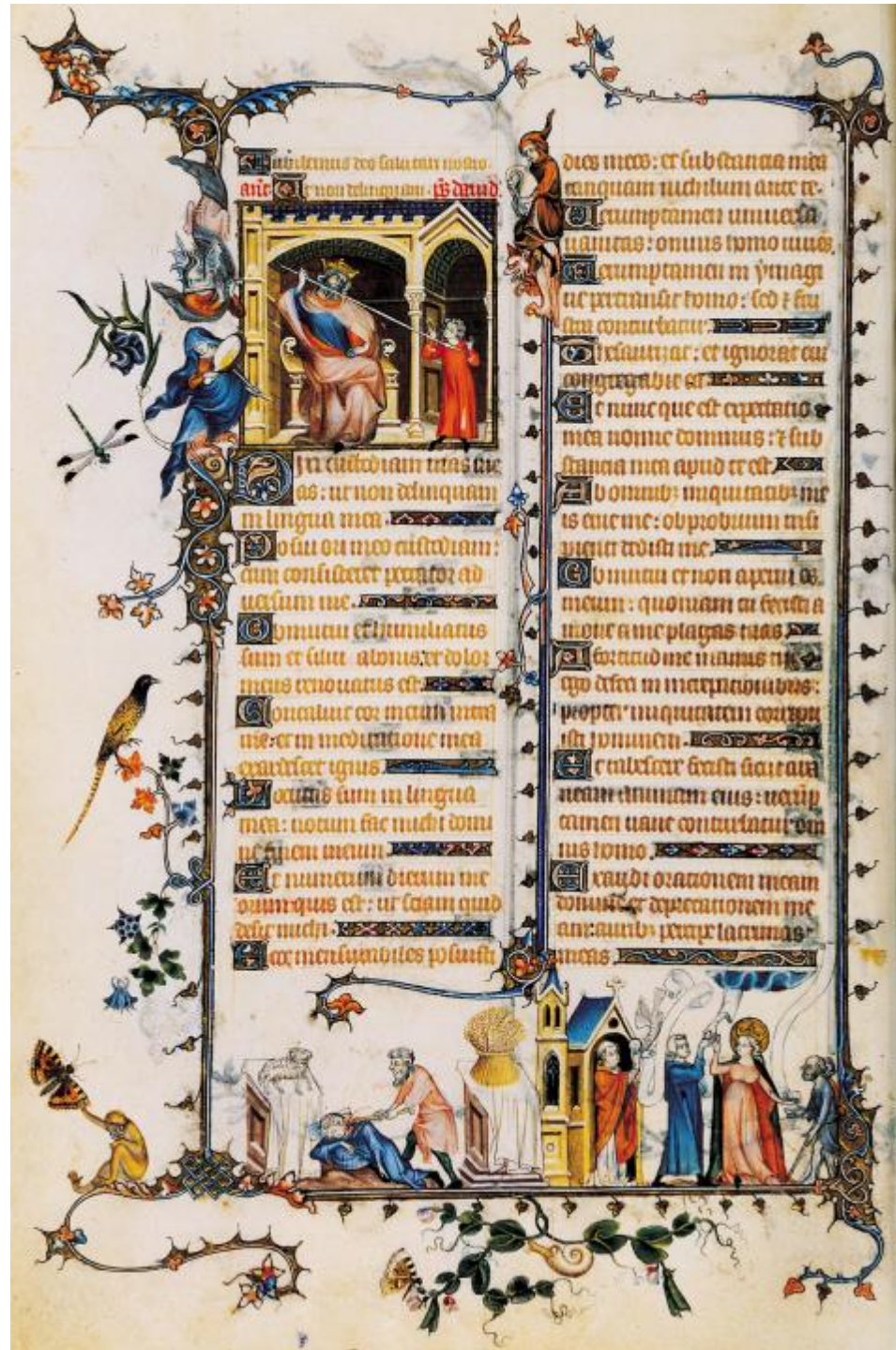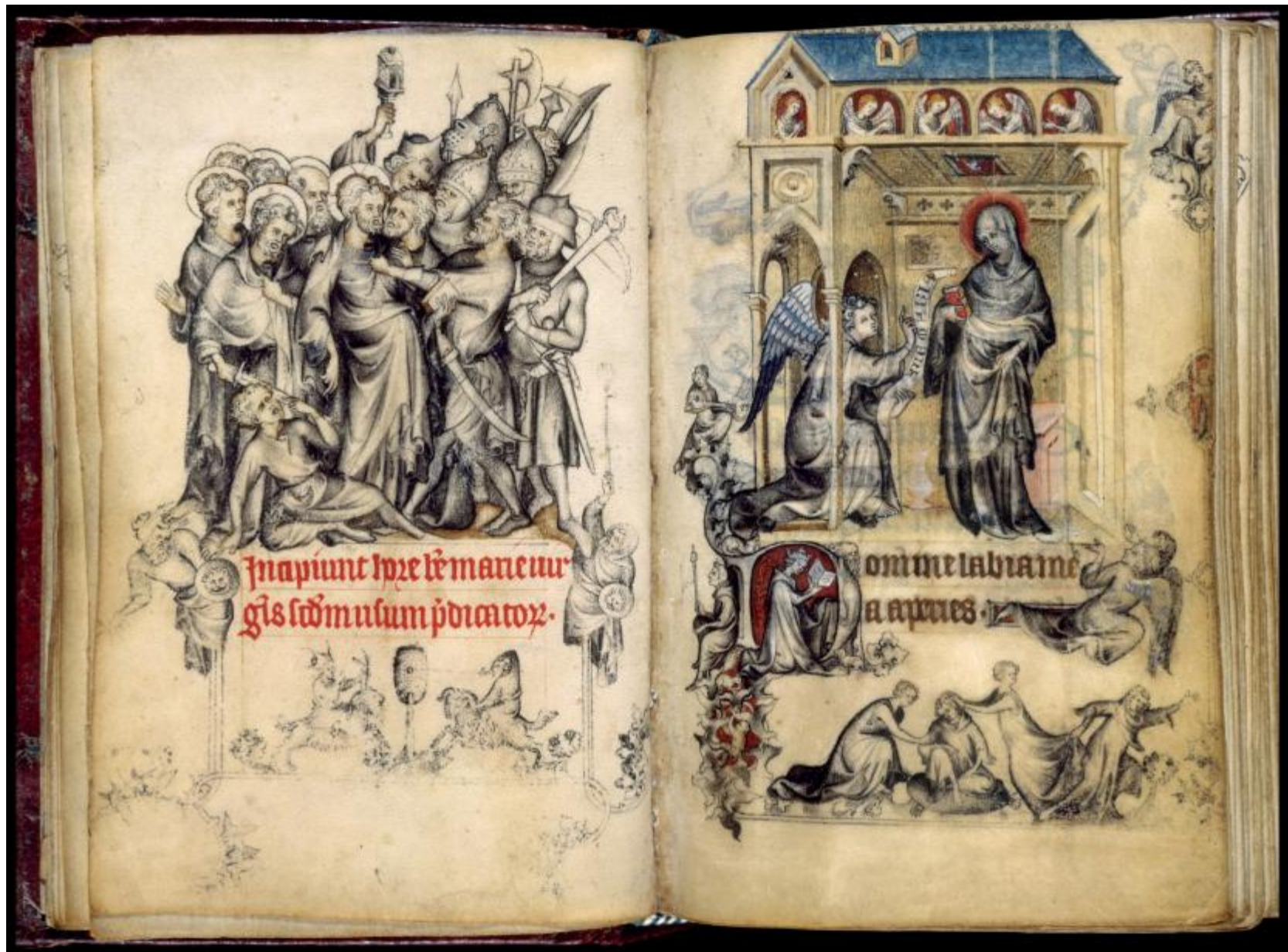
Manuscript Illumination

God as architect of the world, folio 1 verso of a moralized Bible, from Paris, France, ca. 1220-1230

Blanche of Castile, Louis IX, and two monks, dedication page (folio 8 recto) of a moralized Bible, from Paris, France, 1226–1234.

JEAN PUCELLE, David before Saul, folio 24 verso of the *Belleville Breviary*, from Paris, France, ca. 1325

JEAN PUCELLE, *Betrayal of Christ* and *Annunciation*, folios 15 verso and 16 recto of the *Hours of Jeanne d'Evreux*, from Paris, France, ca. 1325–1328

Church Altarpiece

Laid out side by side like a series of manuscript illuminations from the Old and New Testaments to form a complex program

NICHOLAS OF VERDUN, general view of the *Klosterneuburg Altar,* from the abbey church at Klosterneuburg, Austria, 1181; refashioned after 1330

Church Altarpiece

NICHOLAS OF VERDUN, *Sacrifice of Isaac* (right), *Nativity* (left), detail of the *Klosterneuburg Altar*, from the abbey church at Klosterneuburg, Austria, 1181

Identify these scenes

Identify these scenes