



THE CATHEDRAL OF TURIN: HOME OF THE HOLY SHROUD

The Cathedral of Turin, Metropolitan Cathedral, is the seat of the chair from which the Bishop exercises his activity of spiritual teaching and guidance for the faithful. The cathedral, dedicated to St. John the Baptist, patron saint of the city, is the main Catholic place of worship in Turin and the diocese, to which the presence of the Shroud confers a universal devotion.

Renaissance Architecture

The Cathedral was erected between 1491 and 1496, at the will of Cardinal Domenico della Rovere, Archbishop of Turin, based on the design of Tuscan architect Meo del Caprino. The cathedral was built on the area of three 6th-7th century basilicas (San Salvatore, San Giovanni, and Santa Maria de Dompno) that were contiguous and communicating, forming the ancient Turin cathedral, which were demolished in 1490.

The facade shows stylistic characteristics typical of the works of Renaissance architect Leon Battista Alberti (1404-1472) and resembles the facade of the church of Santa Maria Novella in Florence.

The interior of the cathedral, with a Latin cross plan, has three naves on pillars with simple and severe lines, and is particularly luminous with a structure that is still predominantly Gothic.

The chapels located in the side aisles contain a rich artistic heritage, with works embracing different styles, from Gothic to Baroque, created by some of the most important Piedmontese artists over the centuries. Among all, the second chapel of the right aisle stands out: the chapel of Saints Crispin and Crispinian, protectors of the Shoemakers' Company. The altarpiece adorning the altar is the work of Martino Spanzotti, with the collaboration of Defendente Ferrari, two of the major representatives of the Italian Renaissance. The polyptych depicts The Virgin with Child, Saints Crispin and Crispinian, and episodes from their lives. It was probably created before 1504. In the 17th century, the altarpiece was disassembled, and the eighteen painted panels, depicting scenes of popular and artisan life in the stories of the two patron saints, were inserted into Baroque stucco frames placed beside the altar.

Inside the left transept is the monumental Royal Tribune, erected in 1583 by Charles Emmanuel I, Duke of Savoy, and expanded in 1777. Over the years, the kings of Piedmont and Sardinia and their families appeared there, surrounded by the court.

The Holy Shroud

In the lower part of the Royal Tribune, where the pages used to sit, the Shroud is now kept, the linen cloth that bears the imprint of a Man who was scourged, crowned with thorns, and crucified, with a deep correspondence to what the Gospels tell us happened to Jesus of Nazareth.

The Holy Shroud is preserved inside a glass and aluminum urn about 5 meters long, protected by a large container covered with a fabric embroidered with the signs of the Passion. Also in embroidered



letters, one can read the inscription: "Tuam Sindonem veneramus, Domine, et tuam recolimus Passionem", which means: "We venerate, Lord, your Shroud and we meditate on your Passion".

The Chapel of the Holy Shroud

The two black marble staircases placed at the head of the side aisles lead to the elevated chapel of the Holy Shroud, designed by Guarino Guarini in 1668, which replaced the original apse of the cathedral in the 17th century. The chapel is located in the symbolic place of unification of royal and religious power, on the first floor of the Royal Palace and at the head of the Cathedral, and kept the relic transferred from Chambéry to Turin in 1578 at the will of Duke Emmanuel Philibert until 1997. In 1997, a fire broke out in the Chapel, causing severe damage to the structure, but the Shroud was saved thanks to the timely intervention of firefighters. Today the chapel, completely restored, is accessible only from the Royal Palace.

Pier Giorgio Frassati

The cathedral tells us about the tradition of faith that has marked Turin, leaving traces of a multifaceted holiness up to the most recent Pier Giorgio Frassati, who will be declared a saint in 2025 and who rests within these walls in the third chapel, dedicated to Saints Maximus and Anthony the Abbot, of the left aisle. In the chapel is the painting depicting Saint Maximus and Saint Anthony the Abbot, work of Rodolfo Morgari, painted around 1860 along with all the decor of the chapel. The altar preserves the mortal remains of Pier Giorgio Frassati (1901-1925), "the man of the eight beatitudes," as John Paul II defined him, and patron of World Youth Days. Pope Francis is fond of Pier Giorgio and often quotes him. Here are some words addressed to young people during a visit of the Pontiff to Turin in 2015: "Only by committing one's life - aware of losing it! - do we create for others and for ourselves the conditions for a new trust in the future. And here the thought goes spontaneously to a young man who really spent his life in this way, to the point of becoming a model of trust and evangelical audacity for the young generations of Italy and the world: Blessed Pier Giorgio Frassati. One of his mottos was: 'Live, don't just exist!'. This is the way to fully experience the strength and joy of the Gospel".

The Cathedral of Turin represents a fundamental reference point for the spiritual and cultural life of the city. Its importance transcends local boundaries, attracting pilgrims from all over the world, especially during the expositions of the Holy Shroud, one of the most venerated relics of Christianity.

