

## CHARTRES LECTURE: PEACE AND WAR – Ann Dunn, February 2008

Play AN ENGLISH LADYMASS as enter, over Chartres slide

\*In response to a question posed by a colleague (what do you expect students to get out of your lecture, what should they take away with them?), I want to start with a quote from one of my favorite medieval thinkers, Peter Abelard, from the introduction to his book, *Sic et Non*. Yes AND No. \**“We have undertaken to collect various sayings of the Fathers that give rise to questioning . . . . This questioning excites young readers to the maximum of effort in inquiring into the truth, and such inquiry sharpens their minds. Assiduous and frequent questioning is indeed the first key to wisdom . . . . For by doubting we come to inquiry; through inquiring we perceive the truth, according to the Truth Himself.”*

\*Last summer, Manchester Cathedral threatened legal action against Sony over a Play Station 3 game that they regarded as “virtual desecration” of the cathedral. It involves the player in a simulated violent gunfight set in the cathedral precincts, in which players take on the part of an *army* sergeant. In a formal letter to Sony, the Dean called on the company to withdraw the game, *Resistance: Fall of Man*, apologize unreservedly for using the interior of the sacred building without permission, and

make a substantial donation to the cathedral's education department to enable it "to work more effectively with those aged 18-30 in resisting the culture of gun crime."

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IGMscR1IS-E> the disputed game

Why do we care so much?

\*Today, let's hear from a Cathedral itself on the nature of gothic sacred space.

"Oh thou afflicted, tossed with tempest, and not comforted, behold, I will lay thy stones with fair colors, and lay their foundations with sapphires. And I will make thy windows of agates, and thy gates of carbuncles, and all thy borders of pleasant stones"

(Isaiah 54:11-12)

\*I am Chartres. Pilgrims travel on foot unimaginable leagues to visit me. \*Not only because I am a bustling medieval walled city, with tightly-packed red-tiled witch-hat roofs capping stuccoed homes set along narrow cobbled streets, though I am. \*Not only for the produce from the fertile farmland surrounding me, or the rich trade in goods and ideas that thrives in my marketplace, though I have that. \*Not only for the justice dispensed by my Count, though that, too is here. \*They come for redemption. They come so their faith can stand in a rooted sense of place. \*They come to enact, in a physical ritual, the soul's journey. They come to gaze on the miraculous relic of

Mary's chemise, to participate in the mystery of virgin birth. \*They come so their ailing souls or bodies can be healed by the black madonna. \*They come because the only goal of this life is salvation. The only key to salvation is the sacraments, and the church holds that key. \*I am Chartres – the church – faith translated through stone into architecture, architecture translated through glass into light – a gigantic ornate reliquary of the Holy Spirit itself.

\*I am a testament to human designers, builders, masons, glaziers and sculptors inspired by faith in the divine. \*My design involves “sacred geometry,” the use of numbers, angles and shapes that mirror the principles God used in creating the universe. \*I am a miracle of stained glass and stone. Completed in 1223, I am the last of a series of shrines located on this same hill that has drawn pilgrims since early Christian times. \*I have survived fires, the Reformation, the French Revolution and two World Wars, and my endurance has inspired believers. \*My natural site has long been considered holy, and is believed to have been a place of Druid worship before the first Christian church was built here in the 4<sup>th</sup> century.

\*I dominate the landscape. Pilgrims can see me from miles away. I beckon like a beacon from afar. \*I await them at the end of their journey as the Heavenly Jerusalem

awaits the soul at the end of its journey. \*I get bigger and bigger as they plod nearer, one tired, sore foot in front of the other. \*I am a dream, then a distant hope, then an expectation, then I swell to a huge pile of lacey spires, thin columns, \*intricate carvings, \*serene and timeless and awesome sculptures high above them, \*elaborately decorated porches, \*stories in stone about kings and queens and \*prophets and \*classical thinkers and \*ordinary people like themselves and \*God, \*frightening gargoyles that drip rain like monster-saliva, and \*unlikely flying rock. \*I am their history and vision, their memory and hope. I fill their senses as their faith fills their hearts, and make them feel small, temporal, fragile and human. \*I am “the holy city, New Jerusalem coming down from God, out of Heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband . . . and her light was like unto a stone most precious . . . and the building of the wall of it was jasper, and the city was pure gold, like unto clear glass. And the foundations of the wall of the city were garnished with all manner of precious stones, [12 in all like the 12 tribes of Israel,] jasper, sapphire, chalcedony, emerald, sardonyx, sardonius, chrysolite, beryl, topaz, chrysoprasus, jacinth and amethyst” (Rev. 21: 18-20).

\*From the outside I am monstrous and imposing. I dwarf everything, including the Count’s castle. I am God’s embassy, outside all civic jurisdiction, where the Pilgrim

can find sanctuary – and my bishop is a celestial ambassador. \*I have nine entrances covered with thousands of sculptures – painted, gilded, inscribed – with canopies symbolizing the New Jerusalem. \*My rose windows look like wheels - the Wheel of Fortune. Pilgrims stand below in the mutable world of chance, disease, poverty, lice, famine, rain-spoiled crops, aching arthritic knees, war – the world of random fate, spun by a fickle dame.

\*But come, come inside, through the West portal where the sun sets. Bow your humble head and enter God’s world. \*Awestruck, pass through the gates of Paradise into the heavenly city itself, with its walls opened up and set with glittering, jewel-like stained-glass windows which diffuse the most mystic and divine essence: light. \*I will transport you, through your eyes, upward, to another level of consciousness, closer to the divine. “Let me always be a temple dedicated to you. Call upon me in the day of trouble and I shall deliver thee.” (Josh ?)

\*In here, fluted columns grow like towering first-stand trees in northern forests \*that rise to interlace in a glorious canopy with God’s fixed stars twinkling through.

\*In here, the rose windows do not look like randomly whirled wheels. Light pours through their colors in a clear, unbroken stream trained on the eastern altar far at the other end of the nave, like a forest-clearing radiantly visible through dim woods. \*In this immutable, ordered world of God's grace, God's light points to salvation like those glorious cones of sunlight that bless the earth through a crack in clouds. \*"I am the way, the truth and the light" (John 1:4-6). \*My nave is named from the Latin for ship, "navis," for I am the ship which ferries souls from this life to the next.

\*In here, my labyrinth invites the wandering pilgrim to undertake the penitential Journey to Jerusalem – the Heavenly City for which the cathedral itself is a symbol. \*The journey through my labyrinth symbolizes the human journey through life, culminating not in death, as in ancient Greek labyrinths, but in eternal life in a Christian paradise.

\*In here, Christ's life unfolds along my ambulatory, sumptuously carved into a choir screen – a long historical narrative told in time, \*but also told in timeless individual panels of deep bas relief sculpture that pulls the pilgrim into immediate moments of the story. \*Gothic sculpture brings the lay beholders back to the things they know, in daily life and in nature. \*Mary looks like the pretty baker's daughter down the lane,

beloved, one suspects, by the anonymous carver. \*The intended audience recognizes, identifies with, empathizes, weeps in the end at the powerful, moving Christian tale, and is transformed.

\*In here, my Black Madonna is the color of the most fertile soil – of generation. Artemis of Ephesus, Isis, De-meter (earth mother) and Ceres – earth goddesses who came before Our Lady were portrayed as loam-black. “And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul” (Gen. 2:7). \*Bernard of Clairvaux loved my black Lady and his Knights Templar worshipped her. St. Ambrose said, “from the virgin earth Adam, Christ from the virgin.” And Augustine, “Jesus is of earth born.” Tenderly she holds her son, the second Adam, sadly she smiles. \*In Aramaic, Jesus’s language, black means sorrowful. The Blessed Mother, all blessed mothers, sorrow like Isis in search of Osiris, and know in their hearts that the pilgrim children who stand before them will “return unto the ground; for out of it wast thou taken: for dust thou art, and unto dust thou shalt return” (Gen 3:19). Sweetly she performs miracles for my pilgrims. Silently she whispers to herself, *Negra sum sed Formosa* – “I am black but beautiful” (Song of Songs). And my bells peal out, “Mary’s womb received me like *good earth* a grain of wheat.”(Maronite liturgy from Syria)

\*In here, Mary's chemise, the Sancta Camisa, reposes in its golden reliquary. For this sacred cloth and for the holy lady who wore it – I was built, and rebuilt. Some say Mary wore this delicate relic when Gabriel announced the coming birth of Christ. Some say she wore it when she gave birth to Christ. The Byzantine Empress Irene gave the holy cloak to Charles the Bald, King of the Franks, in 876 C.E. It was given to me, Chartres, not to Notre Dame in Paris, as Notre Dame was not yet built. The Sancta Camisa was carried out three days after a horrible fire in 1194 by my Bishop, completely unharmed. This was a sign that a new and beautiful cathedral should be built for the virgin. The Holy Cloak drew many pilgrims to me, including the English King Henry V, after his victory at Agincourt in 1415.

\*Above all, in here is light. All twelve colors stream in from thousands of window panels, but especially blue,\* a bewildering variety of shades of blue, blues that have never been able to be replicated, for the color blue symbolizes divinity. \*Mary, who was a human, is a different blue than Christ, who was fully divine and also fully human. \*Roland – \*Christ – \*Workers whose identity is their job proudly immortalizing themselves – \*The Zodiac – \*February warming his toes by the fire – \*Jesse from whose loins sprang the tree of life – \*Adam digging with a 13<sup>th</sup> century spade in Eden – \*Old Testament – \*New Testament – \*Political History – \*French

pride – \*Scenes of medieval daily life – \*an overwhelming wonderland of visual stimulus designed to drown the pilgrim in a flood of divine glory (all made by man).

\*I reach into the souls of my pilgrims through their senses. Open your eyes and ears.

Gaze on my splendors and listen to my bells. \*\*\*\*\* [rest of window pics, PLAY

BELLS, sudden silence]

\*“And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes, and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away” (Rev. 21:4), leaving only Peace.

\*[Funny Chartres Tour slide while people stand and stretch. PLAY CARMINA

BURANA #1 for one minute]

[Segue to WAR – Crusades (40 minutes)]

[End whole lecture with 6 minute video clip of The Cathedral]

Think: the relationship of divine to "pilgrim soul" to nature to gothic structure. Think: light, space, flesh, stars, plants, rock. Think: the "experience" of the cathedral for a

pious medieval Christian. Think: the ways we become our religions, translate our “selves” into architecture. Think: the souls of the people who made the cathedral are present and living in the cathedral sculptures and windows. Think: a cathedral is never finished, it is an ongoing, breathing thing always growing and changed by the light of each new day and by the pilgrims who give themselves to its splendor. Think: the end of a pilgrim’s journey. Think. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aJ--qAaRaNg>

\* [maybe prodigal son window as last slide?]

And I will grant peace in the land.

Pray for the peace of Jerusalem.

Those of steadfast mind you keep in peace, in peace because they trust in you.

Peace, peace to the far and the near.

No peace, says my God, for the wicked.

They have treated the wound of my people carelessly, saying “Peace, peace,” when there is no peace.

And he shall be the one of peace.

On earth peace, and goodwill among men.

Peace I leave with you. My peace I give.

The God of peace will shortly crush Satan under your feet.

For God is a God not of disorder but of peace.

The fruit of the spirit is love, joy, peace.

Unity of the spirit is the bond of peace. The peace of God surpasses all.

Righteousness, faith, love, and peace.

Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called the children of God.

[PLAY MUSIC OF THE CRUSADES #18 as exit]