

The image features a religious painting of a young child, likely the Christ Child, holding a crown of thorns. The child is depicted with a pained expression, looking upwards. The painting is set within a decorative frame that includes a row of Gothic-style tracery at the top and a large, arched frame around the central figure. The background is dark and textured.

A Living Treasure

Art in the
Saint Mary's Cathedral
in Vitoria-Gasteiz

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Bibliography: Complete list into arte.catedralvitoria.eus/bibliografia

Printing: Diputación Foral de Álava

Legal deposit: LG G 908-2023

Project funded by the Provincial Council of Álava

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A Living Treasure

Art in the Saint Mary's Cathedral in Vitoria-Gasteiz

*Catalogue of the most
emblematic art pieces*



A LIVING TREASURE

The appearance of the cathedral today is entirely different from how it looked centuries ago, for the building was a place in which image and colour were at the service of liturgical paraphernalia whose sole purpose was to captivate the faithful. Its walls spoke, filled as they were with forms and colours, and accompanied by images and altarpieces, ephemeral structures for special celebrations in addition to tapestries and hangings that covered chapels and altars. This polysemic image of our cathedral has undergone many changes since the mid-20th century as a result of a variety of factors. Various aesthetic and religious motifs took precedence with regard to the architectural aspects, leaving an unadorned interior, with the works of art somewhat limited compared to those of previous centuries. Regardless of this fact, there is still an exquisite collection of paintings, sculptures and decorative arts that we wish to showcase.

All these works of art, which we now regard as furniture art have, given their portable nature, always been more susceptible to modifications and to disappearing on account of changes in style, fashion or other reasons. Having said this, lest we forget that their connection with the building they belong to is inextricable, as they form a part of its epidermis and of its cultural, material and constructive history.

The architectural restoration process currently underway in the cathedral will not manage to recover all the works of movable art that formed part of this ensemble. Only a small number of choice pieces have been selected to partially adorn the building and be able to resume its religious and cultural life. The remaining objects are temporarily deposited in the Museum of Sacred Art in Vitoria-Gasteiz.

The purpose of this guide is to showcase some of the major works of art in the Saint Mary's Cathedral. On the one hand, the monumental doorways and sepulchres and, on the other, a breakdown of the main pieces of art furniture: paintings, sculptures, liturgical furnishings and other pieces of art, including metalwork, textiles and other worship-related artefacts. All of these formed part of the artefacts of the Cathedral, serving the liturgical and devotional purposes they were originally intended for.

In this type of publication it is impossible to feature all the works of art in the cathedral and this is why we have only chosen a few of the most representative ones. That said, thanks to technology, through the use of QR codes, the foundation's website can be accessed, where a substantial amount of this living treasure is presented at a glance.



arte.catedralvitoria.eus

We would like to thank the Diocese of Vitoria and, specifically, its Delegation of Historical-Artistic and Documentary Heritage, as well as the Cathedral Chapter for their collaboration and assistance in drawing up this catalogue.



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Carved Stone

Today's cathedral has always provided an accurate representation of society and the history of the city, whereby, the various social groups of each period have always been represented. Its construction and all its artistic artefacts are the product of the collective effort and contribution of society as a whole, as well as the faith both felt and practised by worshippers. Besides adorning and adding to the magnificence of the church itself, the works of art also shared religious and liturgical significance, designed to convey the message of the Gospel and win believers' hearts.

- * **Western Portico**
 - * **Central Tympanum(Cathedral)**
 - * **Last Judgement Tympanum (Cathedral)**
 - * **Saint Giles Tympanum (Cathedral)**
- * **Saint Anne Portal (Cathedral)**
- * **Deesis Tympanum (Ambulatory, Cathedral)**



Western Portico

The western portico of Saint Mary's cathedral is one of the greatest artistic achievements of 14th-century monumental sculpture in Spain. It was completed under the reign of Alfonso XI, in line with the French tradition of Gothic churches. As in Chartres, its iconographic content is arranged over three large portals. The main portal is dedicated to the glorification of the Virgin Mary, the titular figure of the temple, the right-hand portal to the Last Judgement and the left-hand portal to the martyr saints and confessors, in this case to the life of Saint Giles, associated with the royal patronage of the work. The ensemble is complemented by images on the jambs and archivolts that are related to their respective tympana and the overall purpose of the work. Visitors have undoubtedly felt and continue to feel captivated by this marvellous sculptural backdrop, which enthral and welcomes them before entering the church. It thus becomes a transit point between profane and sacred space.

The passage of time has meant that its original appearance has been somewhat altered with respect to the original project. The Chapel of Our Lady of Mercy was founded in the 16th century, promoted by Abbot Diego Fernández de Paternina and occupying the area of a rudimentary gateway to the city. The openings of the portico were sealed in the 18th century to avoid the rigours of winter. They were reopened during the last restoration, replacing the wall with safety glass that allows light to enter, but not inclement weather.

An interdisciplinary team of specialists also worked on the restoration of the entire ensemble over several years. Every nook and cranny was examined and studied in detail, which revealed that the portico had been polychromed and intervened on several occasions over the centuries. Thanks to this painstaking work, it was possible to produce an audiovisual reconstruction using digital video projections of the polychromes that covered the Chapel of Paternina and the portico. We have called this spectacle of light and sound "The Portico of Light", thereby helping us to convey to society in a simple and informative manner the results of years of research and work.

Author: Anonymous

Date: Second third of the 14th century

Technique: Polychrome stone carving

Place: Saint Mary's Cathedral (Vitoria-Gasteiz)





Western Portico: Central Tympanum

The central tympanum of the western portico of Saint Mary's Cathedral depicts a sequence of Marian exaltation. It is therefore not surprising that a beautiful image of the Virgin and Child, the foundation of divine motherhood, presides over the pier to announce the thematic development of the tympanum. The lintel is dedicated to the main scenes of this final mystery. It begins with the Annunciation, when the Virgin conceives the Son of God through the work of the Holy Spirit and the angel announces his reign. This is followed by the Visitation of Mary to Saint Elizabeth, the Birth of Christ, with Mary lying in bed with her son, accompanied by Saint Joseph, the mule and the ox. The narrative continues with the Annunciation of the angel to the shepherds watching over their flock and the Adoration of the Magi with the crowned Virgin, as in other nearby 14th-century portals. This is followed by the Presentation of the Child Christ in the temple, when Simeon recognises him as the Messiah, and it concludes with the Slaughter of the Innocents, when Herod orders the King of the Jews to be put to death. As can be seen, the cycle focuses on the divine maternity of the Virgin Mary.

The tympanum aims to present the glorification of Mary through her Annunciation and Coronation. The Ascension and Pentecost, scenes that refer to Christ's victory over sin, can be found at the end of the first frieze. To the left of the Pentecost is the arrival of the Apostles on a cloud to attend the death of Mary, in this case only eight are included and not all of them can be identified. Beside them, as is logical, is the Dormition, or death of the Virgin, with Mary lying on her bed accompanied by the twelve Apostles. The following register narrates the exceptional bodily Assumption of the Virgin, unprecedented in 14th-century Hispanic monumental sculpture. Christ leads his Mother to heaven, depicted as an adult woman, and places his hand on her womb in reference to her maternity. They are surrounded by clouds and angels with censers and musical instruments, as Mary hands the belt of her tunic to Saint Thomas kneeling at her feet. The side scenes present two prostrate groups, the religious hierarchy on one side and the profane on the other, all devotees of Mary. The programme culminates with the Coronation of the Virgin by her Son, which refers to her final triumph and also that of the Church. It is all completed by angels, patriarchs, prophets and kings of the celestial world occupying the archivolt as well as images on the jambs





Author: Anonymous

Date: Second third of the 14th century

Technique: Polychrome stone carving

Place: Saint Mary's Cathedral (Vitoria-Gasteiz)



Western Portico: Last Judgement Tympanum

The right-hand side portal of the western portico is dedicated to the Last Judgement, following a similar layout to that used in France's Chartres Cathedral. Christ the Judge displays a more human image in accordance with the texts of Saint Matthew. He occupies the most prominent place and is depicted as a suffering man displaying the traces of the Passion, with the wounds on the palms of his hands and accompanied by four angels with the *Arma Crishti* (the Instruments of the Passion). The angels at the cusp carry the cross and those at the sides the pillar, the whip and the nails. Christ the Judge is flanked by the crowned Virgin and Saint John the Evangelist, prostrate as intercessors for humanity.

Saint Michael weighing souls is located in the central scene of the lower register. The narrative is completed on the right with the door leading to heaven and an angel guarding its passage. On crossing the threshold, a thurifer angel crowns a woman, whom some authors have identified as Saint Leocadia. Next are the elect and blessed personified in the form of a holy bishop and Saint Lawrence, identified by his grill. On the opposite side is Hell, represented by the jaws of a Leviathan devouring sinners. The damned are clutched by evil demons punishing earthly vices of greed and lust. Finally, the lintel also depicts the life and martyrdom of the Apostle James in various narrative scenes, culminating in the trial and death of the saint, his throat slit by a soldier's sword. The entire ensemble is completed with saints on the archivolt.



Author: Anonymous

Date: Second third of the 14th century

Technique: Polychrome stone carving

Place: Saint Mary's Cathedral (Vitoria-Gasteiz)





Western Portico: Saint Giles Tympanum

The iconographic interpretation of the left portal is somewhat controversial. According to some specialists, it narrates the life of Saint Giles, while others associate it with the hagiographic cycles of Saint Dominic of the Causeway and his disciple Saint John of Ortega. More recent studies support the idea of Saint Giles, an exemplary saint and intercessor with whom to achieve eternal bliss through good works. He is also associated with royalty and can therefore be related to the royal patronage of the church itself. A short cycle from the life of this saintly confessor can be seen in Chartres Cathedral, and he is very prominent in French Gothic painting. The life of Saint Giles is narrated in four registers, following the same layout as in the other two portals. The first depicts the giving of the tunic and the cures through the saint's intercession. This is followed by the encounter between Saint Giles and the Bishop of Arles, Saint Caesarius, and also Saint Veredonius, as well as narrating the royal hunt.

The upper register depicts the encounter with King Flavius on horseback and the episode in which Saint Giles prays on the beach to prevent a shipwreck. The third register shows the construction of a monastery, an indirect reference to the generosity and magnificence of the Castilian monarchs who promoted Saint Mary's Church. Beside this is the resurrection of the son of the governor of Nimes and, presiding over the tympanum, Christ displaying the Eucharistic Bread together with the Blessed, including Saint Giles, all of who intercede for humanity.



Author: Anonymous

Date: Second third of the 14th century

Technique: Polychrome stone carving

Place: Saint Mary's Cathedral (Vitoria-Gasteiz)





Saint Anne Portal

The recently restored monumental portal of Saint Anna leads to the south arm of the transept. It remained wedged between the first section of the nave of the Epistle and the former Chapel of Saint James due to the presence of the defensive wall of the city. This entrance had to be walled up to offset the architectural problems that the building entailed. It was rediscovered in the 1962 intervention, although with many flaws that make it difficult to interpret the iconography fully. It follows the model used in the portal of Saint Theophilus in the Paris cathedral, which is extremely elegant and has an uplifting effect, although, according to some authors, it also displays structural connections with other portals in Spanish cathedrals.

A complex iconographic programme unfolds between the archivolts, tympanum, lintel and jambs. The five archivolts depict a wide range of themes with incredible dynamism and spontaneity: characters from the Old Testament, Christological themes, angels, religious figures, choirs of saints and the most complete cycle of the Infancy in Gothic monumental sculpture in Alava. The lintel has been treated differently and includes various scenes, some of which are badly damaged and cannot be clearly identified. They seem to be related to subjects connected to the Holy Family in order to exalt the human and divine nature of Christ. The tympanum, also very deteriorated, is presided over by the Baptism of Christ, a unique example of the Gothic style in Alava. Its symbolic nature could refer to the passage, in a physical and spiritual sense, that the neophyte undergoes through this sacrament to become part of the Christian community. The portal also came under the royal patronage of Alfonso XI and is integrated into the urban fabric of the medieval city, where the Jewish quarter was becoming increasingly important. Therefore, according to Professor Lucia Lahoz, it cannot be ruled out that this iconographic programme alludes to the Jewish population, indicating the close relationship between the building and its immediate urban surroundings.

There are two images on each side of the jambs, some of which are difficult to recognise. They were moved to the left portal of the Western Portico in 1563 and were returned to their original location during the restoration carried out in 1967. They date back to the early 15th century.





Author: Anonymous

Date: Second third of the 14th century

Technique: Polychrome stone carving

Place: Saint Mary's Cathedral (Vitoria-Gasteiz)



Sepulchral Journey

The Saint Mary's cathedral mirrored society as a whole and the common collaboration of its parishioners. They lived, prayed and were buried there, with each person occupying the space given to them on the basis of their status and social standing. Without a doubt, it was the elites in Vitoria who shared desires to take up the most representative places in this ancient collegiate church. It was the most powerful families who sought possession of the most prominent chapels, converting them into a symbol of social status and, therefore, into an extremely powerful publicity vehicle in the society at the time. It was for this reason that these chapels always included the family coat of arms and magnificent tombs by which to leave evidence of their existence, authority and earthly power. They were symbols of their pre-eminence and intended to immortalise their remembrance and provide them with eternal salvation.

A diverse collection of tombs from different periods and in different styles is still preserved at the cathedral, which reveals how the way they were buried and became part of posterity has changed over the centuries. There are interesting Gothic tombs such as the Iñiguez de Vasterra family tombs and curious tombstones made of different materials. The Renaissance arcosolia of Martín Sáez de Salinas and Cristóbal Martínez de Alegría and the praying busts of Gabriel Ortiz de Caicedo and Ana de Arana are particularly noteworthy.

- * Tombs of the Iñiguez de Vasterra family
- * Tomb of the Iñiguez family
- * Tomb lid of García Ortiz de Luyando and Osana Martínez de Arzamendi
- * Tombstone of Fernán Martínez de Pangua the Elder
- * Álvaro Díaz de Esquível and Ana Díaz de Salinas
- * **Tomb of Martín Sáez de Salinas**
- * **Tomb of Cristóbal Martínez de Alegría**
- * Tomb of Gabriel Ortiz de Caicedo and Ana de Arana
- * Crypt of the Galarreta family (episcopal pantheon)

Sepulchral Journey



Tomb of Martín Sáez de Salinas

This arcosolium can be found in the centre of the ambulatory in the transept. It dates back to around 1530 and is stylistically situated in the Early Renaissance. Influences from the Burgos centre can be noted and it has been associated with works by Diego de Siloé. It must have been commissioned during the lifetime of Martín de Salinas, although his father Martín Sáez de Salinas was also buried here, as stated in the inscription on the central niche cartouche: *“Here lies Martín Sáez de Salinas, treasurer of the Catholic Queen Isabella. His body was transferred here by his son Martín de Salinas, chamberlain to the most serene king of Romans and Hungary and Bohemia and his ambassador to the emperor and king our lord, whose tomb lies at the foot of this tomb”*.

The tomb consists of two sections, although it originally had three. The lower section contains the coat of arms of the Salinas family, supported by two winged genii and flanked by two niches decorated with grotesques. The second section is the sepulchral niche, formed by a lowered arch, framed by pilasters on balusters and surmounted by a frieze with cherub heads. The niche includes the figure of the recumbent deceased with his head lying on a double cushion. He is fashionably dressed in a cloak with slashed sleeves and a cap, his hands joined together in eternal prayer and holding a rosary as a symbol of piety and a means of divine salvation. The inner part of the lowered arch that shelters the deceased is coffered and the jambs on both sides bear images of Adam and Eve. The third section was made up of a large coat of arms of the Salinas family that had to be moved a few metres higher in 1740 and was lost when the walls of the altarpiece were removed.



Author: Anonymous. Circle of Diego de Siloé

Date: c. 1530

Technique: Stone carving

Measurements: Approx. 326 x 300 x 110 cm

Place: Saint Mary's Cathedral (Vitoria-Gasteiz)





Tomb of Cristóbal Martínez de Alegría

This tomb is located in the Chapel of Saint Benedict, associated with the Martínez de Alegría family since the late 16th century, although it later passed into the hands of the Velasco family. Deputy General Cristóbal Martínez de Alegría was granted the opportunity to position a small altarpiece dedicated to Saint Benedict in 1581, including permission for the tomb in which he was to be buried. It is located at the beginning of the transept arm on the Gospel side and was commissioned to Esteban de Velasco, a renowned sculptor from Vitoria, on 6 May 1581.

The entire ensemble was made with white stone from the Ajarte quarry (Treviño), except for the funerary bundle, which was carved with stone from Santa Pía (Salvatierra). It is an arcosolium tomb in the Renaissance style. The recumbent body of the deceased, Cristóbal Martínez de Alegría, lies under a semicircular arch. He is dressed in armour, an appropriate outfit for a knight who had held various public posts, such as that of Deputy General of Alava or advisor to Philip II. The ensemble is surmounted by an inscription on a choreiform cartouche, a curved split pediment flanked by two virtues and a coat of arms. Both the architecture and entire decorative work of the tomb are in the style of international Mannerism.



Author: Esteban Velasco

Date: 1581

Technique: Stone carving

Measurements: Approx. 590 x 383 x 126 cm

Place: Saint Mary's Cathedral (Vitoria-Gasteiz). Chapel of San Benito



AOVI YAZE D CRISTOVAL
MARTINEZ DE ALLEGR A
DIPVTADO GRAL OVE IVR
DE ESTA PROVINCIA.FALLECIO
AÑO DE 1599



Painted Canvas

The Saint Mary's cathedral is home to an exquisite collection of paintings that graced its walls. Many of these were related to major chapels and were sent by prominent figures who sought, by means of artistic promotion, to decorate these spaces and promote their image and that of their families and friends. Besides reflecting personal success and status, the religious nature of the works and their relationship with the environment that they were intended for were not overlooked. This desire to excel meant the cathedral received pieces from important artistic centres such as Flanders, the court, Seville, Valladolid and even farther afield, such as Mexico. Renowned artists such as Gaspar de Crayer, Juan Carreño de Miranda and Francisco Solís, were also chosen, to name but a few. Besides these pieces that related to the patronage of family chapels, we also have other collections commissioned by the church itself, which were designed to adorn the church and serve the established liturgical and devotional functions. In terms of this environment, we must make special mention of the collection of paintings in the new sacristy built in the 18th century.

- * **Lamentation of Christ**
- * Saint Mark Altarpiece
- * **Immaculate Conception**
- * Apparition of the Virgin to Saint Benedict
- * Saint Anne with the Child Virgin
- * Martyrdom of Saint Bartholomew and Apparition of the Immaculate Conception to the Franciscan Friar John Duns Scotus
- * Handing of the Keys of Seville to Saint Ferdinand
- * Saint Catherine of Alexandria
- * Burial of Christ
- * Mary Magdalene
- * Apostolate on backboard of a chest of drawers
- * Church Doctors and Fathers
- * Virgin of Guadalupe

Painted Canvas



Lamentation of Christ

One of the most outstanding jewels of movable art from Saint Mary's Cathedral deposited in the Museum of Sacred Art in Vitoria is the canvas of the Lamentation of Christ attributed to Gaspar de Crayer, one of the great Flemish painters of the 17th century alongside Rubens and Van Dyck. The work was commissioned by the brothers Francisco and Martín de Galarret, the Secretaries of State and War in Flanders. They intended to decorate the Chapel of Saint Prudentius and the Chapel of the Holy Christ, of which they were patrons, with this magnificent painting.

It depicts an episode following the Descent from the Cross in which those closest to Christ – the Virgin, Saint John and Magdalene – are mourning before the deceased figure of the Son of God. It is an elegant painting of refined technique in which Crayer's personality is clearly on display in its matter-of-fact tone, far removed from the heroic pathos of his predecessors, Rubens and Van Dyck. It is a dramatic subject that Crayer was able to resolve with exquisite refinement, without having to delve too deeply into the pain and drama of Christ's death.



Author: Attributed to Gaspar de Crayer

Date: c. 1640

Technique: Oil on fabric

Measurements: 276 x 208 cm

Place: Diocesan Museum of Sacred Art (Vitoria-Gasteiz)





Immaculate Conception

This excellent Immaculate Conception is signed and dated 1666 by the prestigious court painter Juan Carreño de Miranda. The work originated from the now destroyed Convent of Saint Francis in Vitoria, where it must have arrived through the intervention of Bernabé Ochoa de Chinchetru, whose portrait was painted by Carreño de Miranda a few years earlier. The work was transferred to the sacristy of Vitoria cathedral following the secularisation of the Convent of Saint Francis.

It depicts a young Virgin from the front with a serene look on her face. She has a rhomboidal outline and is opening her arms in a welcoming gesture. The composition is enhanced by a group of child angels fluttering at her feet with Marian symbols. It was during this decade that Juan Carreño de Miranda established his iconographic model for the Immaculate Conception, which was influenced by models from Van Dyck and Rubens. Loose, vibrant brushstrokes are used, although a certain almost classicist restraint can also be observed in his work, a departure from other contemporary painters such as Francisco Rizi, Antolínez, Escalante and Solís, who developed the subject with greater flamboyance and excitement.



Author: Juan Carreño de Miranda

Date: 1666

Technique: Oil on canvas

Measurements: 225 x 185 cm

Place: Saint Mary's Cathedral (Vitoria-Gasteiz)





Carved Wood

The tradition of polychrome sculpture can also be found in this cathedral which has some interesting pieces. Some of these pieces carry a long devotional tradition in Vitoria, such as the Virgen de la Esclavitud (Virgin of Slavery), a gothic Andra Mari that dates back to the last quarter of the 13th century and has presided over this ancient collegiate church since its inception. Much later, the miraculous Virgen del Rosario (Virgin of the Rosary) was brought from the convent of Santo Domingo to the cathedral. A delicate piece from Mechelen, from the early 16th century, which even had its own guild. Also dating back to the same century is the magnificent crucified Christ from New Spanish Mexico, in corn cane and paste. In the 17th century, the cathedral received a delicate Saint John the Baptist relating to the Sevillian circle of the sculptor Juan Martínez Montañés. There is also an interesting Immaculate Conception which presided over the chapel of the same name, relating to the Velasco family. In terms of interesting sculptures representing eighteenth-century academic tradition, there is Saint Joseph with the Child relating to the circle of Luis Salvador Carmona, or the renowned Nativity by Esteban de Agreda. Works by the prestigious sculptor from Vitoria, Mauricio Valdivielso, must also be mentioned. An interesting collection of his work is kept in the old chapel of Santiago, now the parish church of Santa María and La Asunción, which presides over the temple today.

- * **Virgin of Servitude**
- * Virgin of the Rosary
- * **Mexican Crucified Christ**
- * Little Saint John
- * Immaculate Conception
- * Assumption
- * Saint Joseph and Child
- * Saint John the Baptist
- * Candle-bearing angel
- * Birth and Adoration of the Shepherds
- * Crucified Christ
- * Saint Dominic of Guzmán



Virgin of Servitude

This representative Gothic Andra Mari was the one that presided over the main altar of Saint Mary's Cathedral in Vitoria-Gasteiz for centuries. It represents Mary, enthroned and crowned as queen, with the Child on her lap, as he blesses and holds the book of the Gospels. Its chronology is disputed, although most authors place it around the beginning of the last quarter of the 13th century, associated with the time that Alfonso X the Wise of Castile stayed in Vitoria between 1276 and 1278. The chronicles claim that the king fell prey to an illness that he overcame thanks to a miracle of the Virgin, and it is believed that he gifted this image to the town as a form of gratitude.

It had an enormous array of jewels and ornaments in its day that it received from many devotees and was kept by its confraternity. It was taken out in procession on the feast of Corpus Christi to be carried on a platform around the city. It was moved to the Chapel of Our Lady of Servitude when it no longer presided over the old Renaissance altarpiece, after being replaced by a Neoclassical altarpiece in 1805. It was subsequently moved to other locations within the cathedral until it was installed for a time in the Diocesan Museum of Sacred Art. It returned from there a few years ago to ultimately preside over the Chapel of Saint Mary, in the central body of the ambulatory.



Author: Anonymous

Date: Last quarter of the 13th century

Technique: Polychrome stone carving

Measurements: 126 x 50 x 45 cm

Place: Saint Mary's Cathedral (Vitoria-Gasteiz)





Mexican Crucified Christ

This interesting cane image must have been produced around 1580. It is a light New Spanish sculpture made of corn pulp and cane, vegetable fibres and glued cloth. The technique originated in pre-Hispanic Mexico and was assimilated by Spanish colonisers, thereby enhancing the fusion of these two cultures. Professor Pablo Amador considers it to be from the “workshop of the great Christs”, sharing important anatomical similarities to the crucifixes found in Sanlúcar and Gran Canaria. Due to its lightness, these pieces were usually used as processional images, which facilitated its popularisation in Spain. The life-size Christ is nailed to a plain cross with a cartouche and inscription (INRI). He is shown deceased, with his eyes half-closed, his mouth half-open and his head tilted to one side. His hair falls down to his shoulders, and he has his characteristic forked beard. He wears a crown of thorns, which was added at a later date, and a cloth of purity draped around his body. His somewhat retouched flesh displays marks of martyrdom, with abundant blood and bruises all over his body.

We do not know the exact date when it arrived at the collegiate church, but it was most likely sent from Seville by Pedro López de Alday towards the end of the 16th century. It first occupied the north wall of the Chapel of Saint Prudentius until it was later moved around the 1660s to preside over the Chapel of the Holy Christ, whose patrons were the Galarreta brothers. It was already located in a small altar designed by the architect Roque Rubio from Vitoria by 1775.



Author: Anonymous. Mexican school

Date: c. 1580

Technique: Paper, corn pulp and cane, vegetable fibres and glued fabrics

Measurements: 235 x 195 x 60 cm

Place: Saint Mary's Cathedral (Vitoria-Gasteiz). Chapel of Christ





Carved Stories

Altarpieces are the centrepiece of any church's liturgical furniture. And our cathedral is no exception to this, still home to some interesting collections, although not all of them, since changes in aesthetic tastes, which inevitably occur with the passing of time, have taken their toll on these pieces of furniture. Only through awareness and research currently underway can we reconstruct - albeit only partially - the striking presence of these machines on the walls of the church.

Regarded as liturgical and Eucharistic celebration scenarios, these served as indispensable accessories in altars and chapels. They also served as carved and polychrome books that depicted images of sacred history to illiterate people who wanted to see these biblical stories that had been told so many times.

Our cathedral boasts some interesting altarpieces such as Dulce Nombre, created in Antwerp circa 1558. Another magnificent collection is the one kept in the old chapel of Santiago, now the parish church of Santa María. Other noteworthy liturgical furniture includes the chest of drawers and the backing of the sacristy, which has been restored to its eighteenth-century splendour by means of the restoration work carried out.

- * **Sweet Name Altarpiece**
- * Sacred Heart Altarpiece (formerly Virgin of Guadalupe)
- * Altarpiece of Souls
- * Altarpiece of the Virgin of the Sorrows
- * **Chest of drawers with backboard in the sacristy**



Sweet Name Altarpiece

This work was most likely acquired in Flanders by the ambassador Juan Alonso de Gámiz around 1558. It is a small altarpiece that was positioned on a pillar of the transept on the Epistle side. The space contained the family coat of arms and a burial place for the ambassador and his descendants, as well as the Confraternity of the Sweet Name of Jesus. The altarpiece remained in this location until 1856, when it was moved to another part of the cathedral.

It is an Early Renaissance work that was produced in Antwerp around 1550-1558. Although its ornamental repertoire displays an early adherence to Mannerist formulas inspired by the decorations of the Palace of Fontainebleau, with cartouches, Hermes, hanging cloths, masks and arabesques, its Flemish origin is confirmed by the control marks or punches on its two sides and at the base of two scenes in the first section. The polychrome addition is contemporary to the time when the carving was made. The altarpiece is a mix of painting and carving and has a triumphal arch typology. It is made up of a predella, two sections, three panels and an attic. The predella bears the paintings of Saint Joachim and Saint Anne rejected in the temple, the Apparition of the Angel to Saint Joachim and the Parents of the Virgin giving alms in the temple. The central panel depicts the Circumcision and Dormition of the Virgin, and only the Nativity and the Presentation are recognisable in the side panels, as the other two scenes have been lost, although it is most likely that they were themes associated with the infancy of Christ.



Author: Anonymous. Antwerp workshop

Date: c. 1558

Technique: Polychrome stone carving

Measurements: 226 x 255 x 33 cm

Place: Saint Mary's Cathedral (Vitoria-Gasteiz)



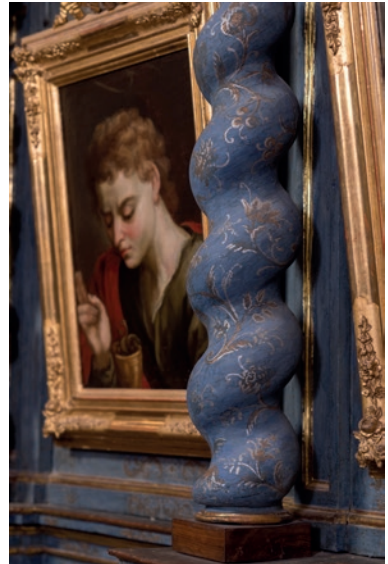
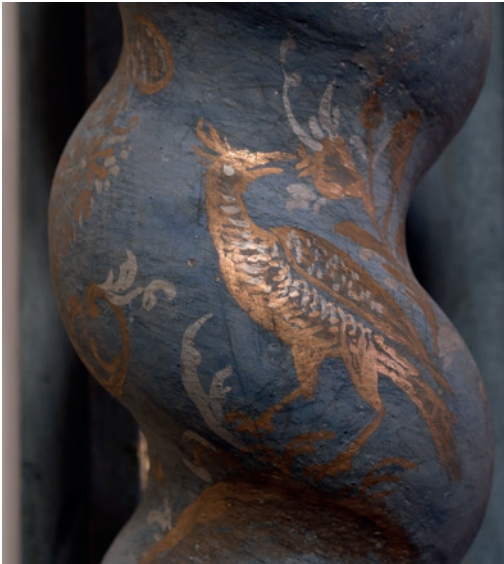


Chest of drawers with backboard in the sacristy

The construction of the new sacristy and chapter house was completed between 1734 and 1736. The architect in charge of the design and conditions of the sacristy was Juan Bautista de Arbaiza. There are various reasons why this work was undertaken: on the one hand, it was intended to enhance the collegiate church, although it is also true that behind this major work lay the intention of achieving cathedral status, a dignity that had been longed for since the 16th century. The entire movable component had to be built once the architectural section had been completed. Miguel Olalde, a carpenter from Vitoria, was commissioned to make the chest of drawers. The conditions were drawn up and signed on 5 December 1734. This piece of furniture has unfortunately not survived, as the Alava Provincial Council financed a new chest of drawers for the sacristy in 1864 to the tune of 2,500 reales. The person who created it is unknown, but it was probably made by the brothers Nemesio and Ángel Iturralde, who were very much involved in all the carpentry work carried out at that time in the cathedral. Today's chest of drawers is made up of four sections of drawers, two for the larger sides of the sacristy and another two for the smaller ones. The larger ones have nine drawers and two cupboards, and the smaller ones have six and two respectively. It has a plain front that is simply adorned with continuous half-round moulding at the ends.

The backboard was made in 1734 by the Cantabrian sculptor Juan Baldor. It is made up of four sections adapted to the size of the chest of drawers, alternating mirrors and paintings of the twelve Apostles with their respective frames, positioned between Solomonic columns with Corinthian capitals. A number of changes were made to the backboard when the new chest of drawers was built in 1864. The Elizabethan painting frames, mirrors and glass of the urns were specifically replaced. Thanks to the restoration work carried out on the whole ensemble, we know that the backboard had been repolychromed on two occasions. The first with an ivory-white colour that was most likely applied during the latter half of the 18th century. The second intervention was carried out during the latter half of the 19th century, a time when the sacristy underwent major alterations, which probably coincided with the acquisition of its status as a cathedral.

The original polychromy of this backboard can once again be enjoyed following the restoration work that was carried out. The documentation indicates that it had been executed by two renowned gilders from Vitoria, Antonio Jiménez and Antonio Rico, who were due to be paid off in 1737. It is an entirely Rococo work in which colour becomes the main protagonist and gold is relegated to a secondary position. Blue is used for the backgrounds and gold for all the additional carving. The decorative work is truly beautiful, comprising a whimsical set of scenes featuring hunting, shepherding, seascapes with galleons and buildings with wading birds, in addition to garlands and floral motifs on the entablatures and shafts of the columns.



Author: Various
Date: 1734-1737
Technique: Polychrome wood carving
Place: Saint Mary's Cathedral (Vitoria-Gasteiz), sacristy



Artistic Jewellery and Fine Art Pieces

In this section we have included a small selection of silverware pieces and other worship and liturgical items that form a part of the artistic artefacts of this cathedral. These small jewellery items are also found at our church as a result of typical commissions from the church itself, gifts from devout parishioners or members of the chapter and private purchases for private use in family chapels. The reasons why these gifts or donations were made varied, ranging from religious conviction, to personal promotion through to manifesting one's standing and social or financial progress. No matter what the case, aside from serving as liturgical items, they were also used to furnish the church as lavishly as possible, thereby emphasising its importance and status compared to the other places of worship in the city. The cathedral plays host to a wealth of fine artefacts dating from the 16th century to the present day including magnificent silverware, all of which have a wide range of uses: reliquaries, ivory pieces, liturgical ornaments for different celebrations and other notable pieces.

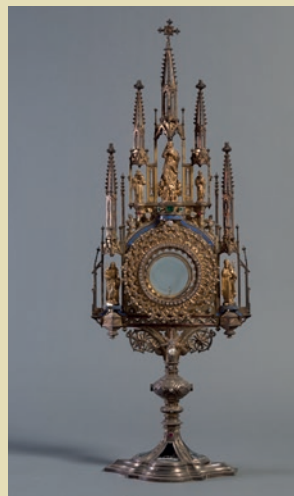
Artistic Jewellery

- * Samaniego cross
- * Processional cross
- * **Processional monstrance**
- * Candleholders
- * Mexican monstrance
- * Crown
- * Pitcher and Basin
- * Chalice
- * Cruet set
- * Elvira Zulueta casket
- * Art nouveau monstrance
- * Crosier
- * Crosier Anitua

Other Fine Art Pieces

- * **Reliquary of the Eleven Thousand Virgins**
- * **Ivory Crucified Christ**
- * **Philippine vestments**
- * English grandfather clock
- * Cell cross.

AND OTHER FINE ART PIECES



Processional monstrance

The cathedral acquired this processional monstrance thanks to the bequest of Archbishop Francisco de Esquivel y Landa, according to the inscription on the lower edge of the base. The work was commissioned in 1623 to Juan Lorenzo, a prestigious silversmith from Valladolid, although Juan Antonio Sotil, a silversmith from Vitoria, later made a base to support it in 1764. It was restored in 1963 by the gold and silversmith José Puigdoller, who made a platform with the coats of arms of Pope John XXIII and Bishop Francisco Peralta.

It is a processional monstrance that follows the typological outlines disseminated by Juan de Arfe in his famous treatise entitled *De varia commensuración*. It should be stylistically categorised as early Baroque classicism, heir to the aesthetics of the Escorial style. Its architectural component has three superimposed bodies that decrease in height as they ascend, culminating in a circular dome and Latin cross. The iconographic programme employed revolves around its Eucharistic nature, as can be seen in the central representation of the high priest before the table with the bread and wine offered to Abraham, a prefiguration of the Last Supper.



Author: Juan Lorenzo

Date: 1623

Technique: Silver

Measurements: 225 x 192 x 267 cm

Place: Diocesan Museum of Sacred Art (Vitoria-Gasteiz)





Reliquary of the Eleven Thousand Virgins

One of the most outstanding items of the Chapel of Christ is a magnificent reliquary that was a gift from Claudia de Lira, widow of Francisco de Galarreta, in 1672. Its formal features must tie it in to Flemish furniture from the early half of the 17th century. It is rectangular in shape in the form of a showcase flanked by two alettes and with ebonised oak wood on the sides. The front is decorated with gilt-brass-plated metal sheets nailed to the wood. The relics are displayed in nineteen windows of various sizes, glazed and framed by embossed and chiselled silver plaques with vegetal decorations.

The reliquary is traditionally referred to as that of the Eleven Thousand Virgins, although it was actually dedicated to the *Lignum Crucis* (wood of the cross). This precious relic occupied the centre of this item of furniture and was surrounded by a retinue of winged silver angels, which can still be seen today. It is ringed by eighteen relics with four skulls of the Eleven Thousand Virgins and the remains of other saints.



Author: Anonymous

Date: c. 1672

Technique: Ebonised oak, gilded brass, embossed and engraved silver

Measurements: 81 x 158,6 x 38 cm

Place: Saint Mary's Cathedral (Vitoria-Gasteiz)





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Ivory Crucified Christ

An ivory, partially polychromed Christ on a wooden cross with gilded silver finials. He is depicted deceased, with his head tilted to one side over his right shoulder and wearing a striking double loop crown of thorns. He wears a dynamic cloth of purity on which rests a small angel that collects his blood, a clear reference to the Eucharist.

It is thought to be a Spanish-Filipino work from the 18th century, although with certain reservations because of the high quality and correctness with which it has been executed. It is a finely proportioned Christ that at first glance is more in keeping with European aesthetics than with usual Eastern idealism. Nonetheless, its affiliation with the East is quite clear judging by certain technical aspects: the almost schematic hardness of several anatomical details, as well as the stiffness of the flowing drapery. To this must be added the carved lace with which the cloth of purity is finished and the polychrome work with which the Eastern ivories are complemented, all of which are alien to European aesthetics.



Author: Anonymous. Spanish-Philippines school

Date: 18th century

Technique: Christ: Carved and polychrome ivory. Cross: Veneered wood with silver trimmings

Measurements: Christ: 73 x 55 x 15 cm; Cross: 130 x 90 cm

Place: Saint Mary's Cathedral (Vitoria-Gasteiz)





Philippine vestments

The cathedral has an interesting collection of Philippine vestments produced in the late 18th and early 19th centuries. They were donated by Francisco Díaz de Durana, Dean of the Cathedral of Manila and Vicar General of its Archbishopric, and have been considered exceptional ornaments ever since their arrival at the collegiate church, reserved for the most important services. He also sent other sets to his home town, Durana, and to other towns, such as Otxandio and Eribe. Judging by their inscriptions, they must have been acquired at two different times, the first batch before 1776 and the second shortly before 1805.

Most of these embroideries were made in Canton, Fujian and the Philippines, although always produced by the hands of Chinese workers. They were executed in silk and were richly decorated with embroidery in gold, silver and silk threads of different colours. Liturgical vestments used repertoires inspired by nature with some additional Christian symbol or emblem.

Author: Anonymous

Date: End of the 18th century and beginning of the 19th century

Technique: Cross stitch embroidery

Place: Saint Mary's Cathedral and Diocesan Museum of Sacred Art (Vitoria-Gasteiz)





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