



Collégiale Sainte-Croix de Liège

Belgium

The Sainte-Croix church is one of seven collegiate churches in Liège originally constructed between the tenth and eleventh centuries, when it was the capital of a prince-bishopric and one of the most renowned cities of the Holy Empire. The present structure was built in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries on the foundations of the original church. Its impressive late Romanesque-style octagonal tower is an urban landmark, and was intended as a focal point in the religious topography of the city. The *westbau*, or westwork, differs from the rest of the building and is conceived in the Gothic style. With its two opposed apses, an eastern choir modeled after Paris' Sainte-Chapelle, and a three-aisle nave, Sainte-Croix diverged from the traditional architectural plans of the Mosan region and was an example of new Gothic influence in the eastern part of the Holy Roman Empire.

In the 1960s, a neighborhood of houses to the north of the church as well as other surrounding streets were demolished to allow for construction of a speedway connecting the city center to the outlying highway. This severely altered the historic context of the church and deprived it of its parish. No longer in use, Sainte-Croix has suffered from significant deterioration since the 1970s, the time of the last notable conservation measures. The masonry has decayed and stones fall from the building, the roof has failed, and water infiltration is damaging the interior elements. A major collaborative effort is needed, including the many stakeholders in the city and region, to rescue this centerpiece of Liège's history and urban landscape. It is hoped that inclusion on the Watch will encourage collective action toward the preservation and adaptive use of the Collégiale Sainte-Croix de Liège.