

■ CHRISTIAN INTERPRETATION

A church is a building, but above all, it is a place of worship and prayer, the house of God on the Earth.

The plant layout remembers a human body, thus the Mystical Body for Christians whose head is Christ. The apse represents the Sanctuary of God and its semicircular shape is the image of the curve of the human skull. Even in some churches, it has its axis leaning, as it was the head of Christ at the Crucifixion.

If the apse symbolizes the image of the divine, the altar is its reflection on the Earth. It is the place where the Eucharist takes place.

Symbolically, the church aisle represents three spheres: the Earthly, which is the long nave and represents the body of the church. The Transition, which is the transept and the Divine, represented with the apse. The dome joins the Earthly world and God together.

The apse runs east, where the first sun rays reach the Romanesque church, through its center window. The main entrance of the church is placed on the opposite side in order to be reached by the last sun rays. This way, it goes from west to east. Symbols are powerful since in this case, we can think about the dark world and the light one, with a road joining them together to go from the darkness to the light. This is just the road the believers go across, from the entrance to the apse with Christ at the great altar, as a guide.



St. Millán Church

SEGOVIA, 12TH CENTURY

“A place of worship and prayer”

Saint Millan's church is one of the most ancient temples of the town. It is the most important Romanesque church of Segovia, due to its beauty and size and also because of its 50 meters in length and its 20 meters in height to the dome.

In its construction, it was influenced by the architecture of the region of Aragon, since the floor of Jaca's Cathedral was reproduced also in this church. It was built between 1111 and 1126, during the reign of *Alfonso I el Batallador*, who was from the region of Aragon.

There are two main facts which are fundamental in the origin of the construction of this church: the sacred place and the tower. The first one was discovered thanks to digs carried out 'in situ' in the north portico which showed a Celtiberian funerary urn, with an incineration from the 1st century b.c. Next to this urn, also appeared burials from the 10th to the 18th centuries, which also proves that the church had been constructed on pre-existing structures.

The other main fact is its tower; Mozarab remains, probably from the 10th century and which may have been part of an ancient church of the Christians living in the town at the end of the 11th century.



“Art is the radiance of God”

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The arms of the crossing are covered with half barrel vaults and the dome of the crossing is placed on conical vaults of caliphal architecture.

Columns and capitals are large in comparison with the size of the temple and we can find scenes from the Old and New Testament depicted on them, like the one of the Wise Men on their way to Bethlehem or the Flight from Egypt.

We would also like to mention its main altar with a sculpture of the Crucifixion surrounded by ten blind arcades, with the image of Nuestra Señora de la Piedra.

On both sides of the columns surrounding the head of the altar, we can find some Romanesque frescoes of Saint Julian, Saint Basilisa and two apostles praying. Next to them, the epistle, which represents Jesus Christ and Magdalena. The stained glasses of the apses, in Romanesque style, have been made by Carlos Muñoz de Pablos, a painter from Segovia. They represent Saint Millán, Saint Feliz and San Braulio, and are inspired by the ivory plaques of Saint Millán de la Cogolla. The stained glasses of the side apses symbolize the suffering and death of Christ as well as some litanies dedicated to Mary.

■ DESCRIPTION OF THE CHURCH

St. Millan Church is formed by four apses, three of which are the naves. The fourth one was added later and corresponds to the sacristy. It has got three façades, one on each side of the building and two arcades with porticos, which were added to the main nave later. It is noticeable inside them, the series or arches which have been placed following a fixed and rhythmic order, together with the pilasters to which coupled columns have been joined. We can distinguish even today animals, vegetation and biblical scenes sculpted on its capitals. Such sculptures were used as catechesis.

The church has three wide naves separated by robust pillars and columns and a simple ceiling, instead of the original Mudejar one, of which some pieces are still preserved.



■ AISLES

The apses of the aisles represent works of the Easter of Segovia: *La Soledad al pie de la Cruz* (1930) and *El Santísimo Cristo en su última Palabra* (1947), donated by Aniceto Marinas (1866-1953), an sculptor from Segovia.

On the crossing, we can find a mural from the beginnings of the Gothic which portrays these three scenes: Christ on the cross, Saint Cristobal and a shepherding scene. On the walls of the naves, paintings from the 17th Century can be contemplated. The main ones are those portraying *Our Lady Virgen de la Fuencisla*; the Patroness Saint of Segovia, St Jerome, the Birth of Christ, the Incarnation of Christ (Francisco Camilo and *Our Lady La Virgen del Populo*. In addition, images of Saint Roque and The Risen Christ, both from the 17th Century.

The baroque organ, which is a valuable instrument for the Spanish Music History, was built by Manuel Pérez Molero in 1711 and it is preserved in its original form.

On the southern wall, it is housed the sculpture of Saint Millán dressed as a bishop; with a cope and a biretta on. He holds a book closed on his left hand and a staff on his right hand. At the bottom of such wall, we can find a board of the Crucified Christ (16th century) and a mural painting representing the Circumcision of Christ. This is a paint of Diego Aguilar (1585), an artist from Segovia. Together this painting, there is a Gothic baptismal font and the altar of Saint Peter, representing on its top section, the Resurrection of Christ. It is a work by Cristóbal Pedril.



“Religious art transmits the faith in Christ in a living way”