

ENGLISH



# Saint Hedwig's Cathedral Berlin

A Place of Encounter

## **Welcome to Saint Hedwig's Cathedral!**

We are delighted to welcome you and invite you to marvel, to linger, to find stillness and draw strength, in prayer and in worship. Allow the space to speak to you and follow the suggested route through the crypt, the main church, and the Chapel of Adoration.

Yours sincerely,

**Provost Tobias Przytarski**

Cathedral Provost at Saint Hedwig's

Not dominating the Bebelplatz, yet still present: For more than 250 years (1773), Saint Hedwig has served as a parish church for Berlin's Catholics and, since 1930, as the Cathedral for the newly established Diocese of Berlin. The first Catholic church to be built since the Reformation was made possible by the enlightened King Frederick II and, following the model of the Roman Pantheon, was probably designed by Frederick's court architect Georg Wenzeslaus von Knobelsdorff. The shape of the building is unusual for a Catholic Church: not a basilica with a tower, but a dome-crowned central building with a columned portico, a temple whose gable, however, is capped with a cross. The staircase marks the transition from the profane to the sacred, from the everyday world to the sacred space. The reliefs between the columns of the façade, dating from the time of the construction, also tell of transitions. They depict dramatic scenes from the life of Jesus: the Annunciation of his birth by an angel, Jesus on the Mount of Olives, the Descent from the Cross, the Resurrection and the Ascension. The pediment above bears a neo-baroque depiction of the Adoration of the Magi from the East, who followed the star – in the middle above the figure of the Mother and Child. The central themes are thus named: God becomes a mortal man so that humans may receive immortal divine life. The exterior has remained almost unchanged; the interior was redesigned most recently between 2018 and 2024 by Sichau & Walter Architects in collaboration with the artist Leo Zogmayer.



## The Entrance Hall

The threshold has been crossed, the path leads in two directions, both inviting you on a journey through time.

### The Crypt: The Past Made Present

The staircase down into the crypt leads back to the beginnings. Your gaze falls on the cross-shaped **Baptismal Font** <sup>1</sup> in the center, large enough to immerse a person: *Having been buried with him [Christ] in baptism, in which you were also raised with him through your faith in the working of God, who raised him from the dead* (Col. 2:12 NIV). The entire crypt testifies to the unlimited affirmation of life in the Christian faith. In the center, the congregation gathers around the liturgical spaces: to hear the word of God (lectern), to commemorate the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ in the holy meal (altar) and to celebrate Baptism or the baptismal memorial (baptismal font). Surrounding them are the fourteen stations of the Way of the Cross marked on the floor. The Stations on the walls bear the classical designations and are interpreted with words from First Corinthians: *If I speak in the tongues of men or of angels, but do not have love, I am only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal* (1 Cor 13:1 NIV). Between the fourth and fifth stations is the shrine for the **Holy Oils** <sup>2</sup> used in sacramental celebrations: Chrism, the Oil of Catechumens, the Oil of the Sick.

**The ring of chapels** invites contemplation and encounter. The path begins with the precious **Neapolitan Crib from the 17<sup>th</sup> century**, <sup>3</sup> which takes up the theme of “divine exchange” from the façade: God becomes a mortal man to give humanity a share in divine

life. The faith is passed on by the Church, represented in the Episcopal office, to which the **bishops' tombs** <sup>4</sup> bear witness.

The next space is dedicated to the Blessed **Bernhard Lichtenberg** <sup>5</sup> (1875–1943), Provost of the Cathedral, who stood up for persecuted Jews during the Nazi era and died during transportation to the Dachau concentration camp as a result of his prior imprisonment. Beatified in 1996, the Israeli memorial site Yad Vashem recognized him as “Righteous Among the Nations” in 2004. Next, you enter the **Space of Repentance** <sup>6</sup>. The Space of Repentance makes an unsettling impression—with the mirrored image and the upturned prayer stool—that is a deliberate provocation. The perpetrators are not always just the others. This has also become frighteningly clear within the church in the recent past. “Repent!” is a biblical wake-up call that applies to everyone at all times.

This is the purpose of the four **reconciliation rooms** <sup>7</sup> that follow, for spiritual counselling and for receiving the Sacrament of Reconciliation.

The subsequent **History-Space** <sup>8</sup> traces the Archdiocese of Berlin from its beginnings to the present day. Starting with **St Otto von Bamberg** (c. 1060–1139), the “Apostle of Pomerania” and the second patron saint of the diocese alongside the Apostle Peter, historical, geographical, social, religious, and cultural connections are drawn. Then follows the space of the church’s patron, **St Hedwig of Silesia** <sup>9</sup> (c. 1174–1243). After twenty-two years of marriage, she died in the Cistercian convent she had founded in Trebnitz. She was venerated, among other things, for her charitable commitment, canonized as early as 1267 and is regarded as a bridge-builder between Poland and Germany. The baroque statue of the saint comes from a Silesian workshop (ca. 1720). Originally, the left hand of the Hedwig statue held a model of a church, which was stolen: *Give, and it will be given to you* (Luke 6:38 NIV). The next space is intended for further **bishops' graves** <sup>10</sup>. Alongside memorial plaques for former Berlin bishops who are not buried here, a relic commemorates Bishop Otto von Bamberg. This is also the place for a Pietà from the 14<sup>th</sup> century.

The **Space of the Second Coming of Christ** <sup>11</sup> lies opposite the crib, which recalls Jesus’ first coming. On the end wall is the artistic intervention “cross fit” by Hermann Glettler. The delicate weave consists of crosses that were removed from coffins at the crematorium. The end of the route and of the Way of the Cross sums up the message of the crypt: *Death has been swallowed up in victory. Where, O Death, is your victory? Where, O Death, is your sting?* (1 Cor 15:54f NIV).

## The Interior of the Church: Celebrated Presence

When one steps out of the darkness of the crypt into the interior of the church, the light-filled expanse of the newly designed central space is impressive. Twelve pairs of pillars support the **dome**, through whose circular opening in the middle, the opation, light falls onto the centrally positioned **altar** <sup>12</sup>. The altar has an unusual shape and, like the **ambo** <sup>13</sup> (lectern) with which it is paired, an unusual history. The two geometric shapes – hemisphere and cuboid – correspond to each other like Word and Sacrament in the celebration of the Eucharist. The main pieces of each are made of cast stone. The stones embedded in them were brought by numerous people to the Bebelplatz on the Feast of Corpus Christi in 2022 and now fill the “shell” of the Hedwig’s Cathedral with the hopes, griefs, happiness, suffering, restlessness of the world, the anxieties of society, the plight of the poor and the disenfranchised. In concentric circles, the chairs of the congregation are arranged around the altar. The Christian congregation is not a crowd, but a community; all are endowed with equal dignity. They are, therefore, all on the same level and form God’s “royal priesthood” (1 Peter 2:9 NIV). The **chair** <sup>14</sup>, intended for the bishop, was placed on the central axis formed by the altar and the ambo; at the same time, it is integrated into the assembly of the congregation.



On the opposite side, church music has its place. The organ façade, built in 1978 by the Klais company (Bonn), the **organ** **15**, was stylistically adapted to the renewed church interior. The instrument has 72 stops and 4,847 pipes on three manuals and pedals.

On the left side is the statue of **Our Lady with Child** **16** (Ulm, 1<sup>st</sup> half of the 16<sup>th</sup> century) surrounded by a ring of candles. To the left of the passageway to the Chapel of Adoration is the Tabernacle for the **reservation of the Eucharist** **17** from the post-war period (Fritz Schwerdt and Hubertus Förster, 1963). To the right of the passageway, near the Gothic **processional cross (Italy, 14<sup>th</sup> century)**, is the **place for the Book of the Gospels** **18**. Jesus Christ remains present in Word and Sacrament. To the right of this stands a sculpture of **St Peter** **19** (Siena, c. 1340; originally Pope Urban), historically a reference to the origins of St Hedwig's as a "second Pantheon" and, theologically, a sign of the bond between the Church in Berlin and the Church of Rome. The twelve Consecration Crosses with the names of the twelve Apostles between the pillars also recall the apostolic origins of the Church. The fifteen windows in a new artistic glazing are not defined pictorially but, in addition to their atmospheric effect on the space, expand the view beyond its confines. The dots are not randomly placed but depict the constellations on the fictitious date of Jesus's birth in the year zero above Berlin.

### **The Rotunda: A Longed-For Future**

Once again, our gaze is directed towards the dome, which symbolizes the vault of heaven (firmament) and expands the dimensions of experience into infinity. The pattern of the dome is derived from a mathematical system in the tradition of philosophical and





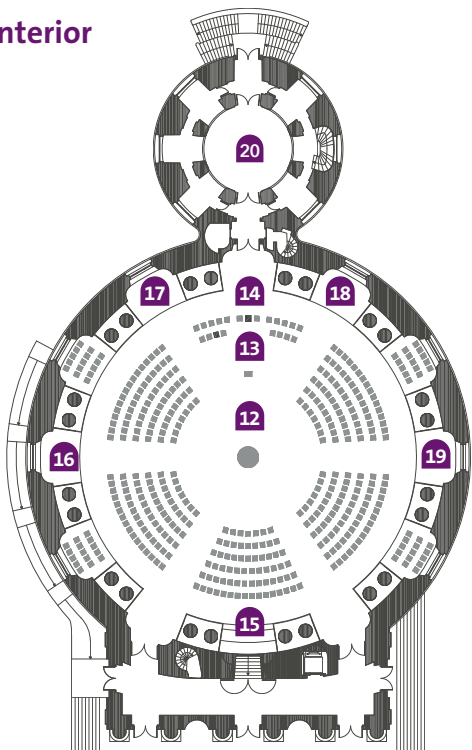
theological models of thought and, with its network-like structure, evokes community (communio). In the middle of the Mass, at the beginning of the Eucharistic Prayer, the priest calls out: “Lift up your hearts!”, heaven and earth unite in a song of praise as if with one voice. In the middle of the Eucharistic Prayer the priest holds his hands over the paten and the chalice and prays: “Therefore, O Lord, we pray: may this same Holy Spirit graciously sanctify these offerings that they may become the Body and Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ” and after the consecration: “Humbly we pray that, partaking of the Body and Blood of Christ, we may be gathered into one by the Holy Spirit.” The open sky in Saint Hedwig’s is a sign that the anxieties and hardships, the horror and the suffering of people, as symbolized in the stones under the opation, do not go unnoticed, that hope is not unfounded. This is why the Christian community regularly gathers in this place – for the salvation of the world.

### **Chapel of Adoration** 20

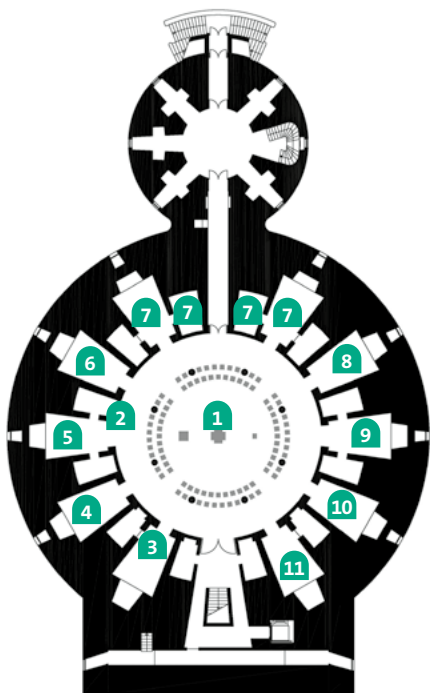
Through the white door at the apex of the church interior, one enters the small rotunda, where the incoming light is softened by blue panes. The stools and kneelers are oriented towards a monstrance with the consecrated host and invite silent contemplation and prayer: *In God alone my soul finds rest, for my hope comes from him* (Psalm 62).

**Prof. Dr. Albert Gerhards**  
Liturgical Scholar

## Church Interior



## Crypt



15



16



12



# Schedule

The Cathedral is open daily.

Please note the liturgical schedule:

## Visiting times

Mo.–Thurs. & Sat., 11:00 AM to 6:00 PM

Fri., 11:00 AM to 8:00 PM

Sun., 1:00 PM to 6:00 PM

(Changes are possible.)

The crypt closes 15 minutes earlier.)

## Eucharist (Holy Mass)

Weekdays at 8:00 AM and 6:00 PM

Fri. at 8:00 PM instead of 6:00 PM

Sun. at 8:00 AM, 10:00 AM, Noon and 6:00 PM

## 30 Minutes of Organ Music

Fri. from 4:00 PM to 4:30 PM

## Musical Noonday Prayer

Tues., Thurs., Sat. at Noon



Additional programs and information on guided tours can be found at:  
[www.sankt-hedwig-mitte.berlin](http://www.sankt-hedwig-mitte.berlin)



**Many thanks to everyone who supports St. Hedwig Mittel!**

In particular, we continue to rely on donations for the furnishings.

We kindly invite you to take a look at our other projects, where your support can make a lasting difference.

[www.hedwigs-kathedrale.de/spenden](http://www.hedwigs-kathedrale.de/spenden)