

Press release

Future for Religious Heritage (FRH) celebrates the reopening of Notre Dame Cathedral in Paris

The European network for the safeguarding of religious heritage applauds the work of all professionals involved in its restoration process and encourages European society to enjoy our rich religious heritage

Brussels, 9 December 2024. Future for Religious Heritage (FRH), the European network for the safeguarding of religious heritage, celebrates the much-anticipated reopening of Notre Dame de Paris, which took place on 7-8 December 2024, five years after the devastating fire that destroyed its iconic spire and caused extensive damage to the building.

This reopening marks a historic moment for the cathedral, as it represents not only the recovery of an impressive architectural and artistic landmark but also an exemplary case of resilience, cooperation and society's support for religious heritage in the 21st century.

Our network had the honour of witnessing the grandeur of the building during our 2018 Biennial Conference in Paris, which started precisely with a concert of sacred music at Notre Dame Cathedral. In 2019, shortly after the infamous incident, our then-president, Olivier de Rohan, wrote a letter expressing our sadness and solidarity with French society and with all those who value and appreciate our religious and cultural heritage.

Five years later, the restoration of Notre Dame Cathedral has underlined the importance of collaboration between diverse stakeholders and the key role of skilled crafts professionals in restoring and maintaining historic buildings in good condition.

Such an extraordinary achievement would not have been possible without the hundreds of architects, art restorers, engineers, craftsmen and many other professionals, who, under the coordination of the French Ministry of Culture and religious authorities, were involved in the removal of the burnt scaffolding, the restoration of vaults, buttresses, the wooden framework and numerous movable assets, and, naturally, the reconstruction of the wooden spire.

Pilar Bahamonde, FRH President, commented: *“For centuries generation after generation, European craftsmen and artists have devoted their lives and careers to raise these amazing historical buildings for a common good, for something greater than themselves. Today we are contemplating their contribution to mankind. It is an honour to witness that in 21st century Europe, craftsmen, artists, and other professionals remain committed to the legacy handed over to them, building a bridge of knowledge for the new generations of professionals, as well as raising awareness among citizens of the importance of this heritage.”*

Lilian Grootswagers, President of the FRH Advisory Board, added: *“The reactions from all over the world on the day of the fire, showed once again that religious heritage connects people. Europe has a huge*

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religious heritage that is part of our identity and history. To preserve it and pass it on to future generations, the commitment of all of us is needed.”

As we witness the rebirth of Notre Dame de Paris, FRH calls on European society not only to visit and admire its grandeur, but also to acknowledge the vital role played by those who work for the future of historic religious landmarks such as this, and to discover and enjoy the great cultural heritage represented by the over 500,000 historic places of worship across the continent.

Note for the editors

Future for Religious Heritage (FRH) is an independent, non-faith, non-profit European network founded in 2011 and based in Brussels to promote, encourage and support the safeguard, maintenance, conservation, restoration, accessibility and embellishment of historic places of worship.

The network represents more than 80 organisations and 200 individuals working to protect and promote religious heritage across Europe. Members include NGOs, governmental organisations, religious bodies, university departments, researchers, academics and people with an interest in religious heritage.

<https://www.frh-europe.org/>

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