



# Sant Joan de les Abadesses

—

The monastery  
and museum



# Monastery

The monastery of Sant Joan de les Abadesses was founded by the Count Wilfred the Hairy and Guinedella in the place where in the year 880, it was a church dedicated to Saint John the Baptist. Consecrated seven years later, the monastery established a community of Benedictine nuns governed by Emma, daughter of the counts. She was succeeded by four abbesses until the year 1017, when Benet VII extinguished the community. In its place, a congregation of regular Augustine canons was erected that, despite the intrusions of the counts of Besalú, underlined its status in the monastery.

The current monastic church was consecrated in 1150 by the abbot Ponç de Monells. It is a single nave building, with a wide transept and a chevet with ambulatory, a singular structure in Catalunya that can be compared with French models. The monastery also had two Romanesque cloisters, at the North and South of the temple nave.

The 14th and 15th centuries were times of great splendor for the canon. The altarpieces were refurbished and the community was nourished with gowns and liturgical ornaments, altar frontals, works of gold and books for the celebrations. Precisely, in the year 1426, following the polychrome restoration of the sculptures of the Descent, inside the receptacle of the head of one the Christ's, a chaste sacramental bread was found, that was placed there at the

time when the images were consecrated in the year 1251. This is when the devotion to the Holy Mystery was born, name for the set that presides the central apse of the church, where the chaste sacramental bread was preserved for seven centuries.

At the end of the middle Ages, Catalunya was shaken by strong earthquakes. On February 2, 1428, an earthquake provoked the collapse of part of the chevet of the church and the loss of one of the Romanesque cloisters, substituted shortly afterwards by the current Gothic cloister.

In compliance with a papal bull that affected all the Augustine canons of Catalunya, in 1592, the monastery was transformed into a collegiate and was governed by Archpriests, designated by the Holy See. The church saw some transformations in modern times: the chapel of Sorrows was built and, the most important, a niche was designated to the Holy Mystery, profusely decorated with paintings and sculptures of the Morató family that notably transformed the chevet of the church.

In the middle of the 19th Century, the collegiate was extinguished and the monastery assumed the functions of parish that, until then, were exercised by the church of Saint Pol. But the awareness of its importance persisted, aided by the new sensitivity towards the Catalan medieval heritage that was awakened with the Renaissance. All this was specified at the end of the

19th century, in a first intervention to the cloister and, in the 20th Century, in the restoration of the monastery, started in 1912 and led by the architect Josep Puig i Cadafalch that freed the building of add-ons and rediscovered the Romanesque elements of the chevet. In 1948, the work started again thanks to the patronage of the industry worker Jaume Espona, under

the management of Raimon Duran i Reynals, with the clear determination to complete the recovery of the monastery. The Baroque niche was eliminated and the central apse rebuilt with the Romanesque structure and decoration. Now, with the aspect from this last restoration, the monastery continues being, as a parish, a focus of spirituality for the followers and visitors.

### Visit to the Monastery

**1. Altarpiece of St. Augustine. 14th C.** Alabaster altarpiece dedicated to St. Augustine, author of the rule observed by the canons, the religious community that lived in the monastery from 1017 to 1879.

**2. Memorial to Abbess Emma. 20th C.** Gravestone commemorating the figure of the first abbess of the monastery, Emma (898-942), daughter of Count Wilfred the Hairy.

**3. Holy Mystery. 13th C.** Sculptural group made up of seven images depicting the Descent of Christ from the Cross. They were made in 1251 and placed in the central chapel of the ambulatory.

**4. Tomb of the Blessed Miró. 14th C.** Alabaster tomb containing the remains of Miró de Tagament, canon of the monastery who passed away with reputation of sanctity in 1161.

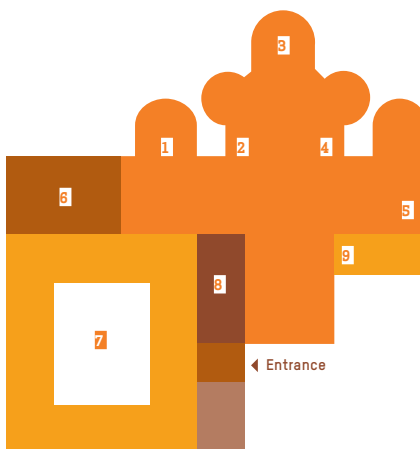
**5. Altarpiece of Santa Maria la Blanca. 14th C.** Alabaster altarpiece dominated by the image of the Virgin and Child. On both sides, there are scenes of Christ's childhood.

**6. Chapel of Sorrows. 18-20th C.** Chapel of the Blessed Sacrament. The presbytery is covered by a dome with Baroque decoration by Jacint Morató. Our Lady of Sorrows by Josep Viladomat.

**7. Cloister. 15th C.** It was erected in 1442 to replace an earlier Romanesque cloister. Canonical dependencies were deployed around it.

**8. Museum.** It preserves works of painting, sculpture, jewellery and textiles from the monastery which date from the 8th C. to the 20th C. It is worth noting the significant collection of religious textiles and religious garments.

**9. Image of the Abbot Ponç de Monells. 20th C.** Sculpture commemorating the great abbot Ponç de Monells (1140-1193), who promoted the construction of the present monastic church.



# Museum

The collection of pieces –sculptures, paintings, fabrics and gold– that make up this museum, inaugurated in 1975, come, almost entirely, from the monastery or other churches of the town, the history of which they help explain.

In front of you there is a beautiful part of the spiritual heritage of a town that loves its patrimony and that, in some cases, has had to make many efforts to save it. The list of the numbers next to each object outlines a possible route through the museum and corresponds to those in the brochure.

**1.** Images of the four evangelists: Saint Luke, Saint Mark, Saint John and Saint Matthew. Polychrome and carved wood. 17th C.

**2.** Altarpiece. Images of Saint Honorat (central) and Saint Anthony Abbot (top). Polychrome wood. 18th C.

**3.** Altarpiece of Saint Sebastian. Polychrome wood. 16th C.

**4.** Relief (fragment). Tympanum with the representation of the Baptism of Christ (?). Sandstone. 12th C.

–Sculpture of an animal. Stone. 12th C.

–Capital. Stone. 12th C.

**5.** Paintings of the main altarpiece of the monastery. Appearance of the Angel to Zacharias, The Visit and Saint John, young, in the desert. Probably linked to

the workshop of the painter Anthony Peitavi. Tempera painting on wood 16th C.

**6.** Window bars. Wrought iron. 12th C.

**7.** Aquamanile. Glazed ceramics. 17th C.

**8.** Brazier. Wrought iron. 14th C. (?).

**9.** Archangel Saint Michael. Oil painting on canvas. From the chapel of Saint Michael of the Infirmary. 18th C.

**10.** Image of Saint John the Baptist. Joan Angeli (Barcelona silversmith). Polychrome silver. 19th C. (1820).

**11.a** Images of Saint Francis of Assisi receiving the stigmata and Saint Anthony of Padua. Carved and polychrome wood. From the old chapel of Ca l'Isalguer (Sant Joan de les Abadesses). 18th C.

**11.b** Tribute to the monastery on its eleventh centenary. Antoni Tàpies. Mixed painting on paper. 20th C. (1987).

**12.** Image of Saint Lawrence. Alabaster 15th C.

**13.** Image of Saint John the Evangelist. Carved wood. 13th C.

**14.** Solomon (lamp). Cast bronze. 16th C.

**15.** Capital. Stone. From Ca l'Isalguer (Sant Joan de les Abadesses). 15th C.  
–Column shaft (fragment). Stone. 12th C.  
–Head of a lion (fragment). Stone. 12th C.  
–Funerary stela. Stone. 14–15th C.  
–Cornice (fragment). Stone. 12th C.  
–Capital (fragment). Stone. 12th C.

- Abacus (fragment). Stone. 12th C.
- Capital (fragment). Stone. 12th C.
- Canopy. Stone. 15th C.
- Capital. Stone. 14th C.

**16.** Paintings of the main altarpiece of the monastery. Saint Augustine, the baptism of Jesus and Saint Ambrose. Probably linked to the workshop of the painter Antoni Peitavi. Tempera painting on wood. 16th C.

**17.** Tympanum. Representation of Christ in the center, flanked by the apostles Saint Peter, to the right of the spectator, and Saint Paul, to the left; two angels close the scene. Stone. From of the door of the church of Saint Pol (Sant Joan de les Abadesses). 12th C.

**18.** Scepters [2] with figures of saints in the crowning. Crowning – Marc Canyes [Barcelona silversmith]. Silver gold. 15th C. [1415].

**19.** Scepters [2]. Silver. 19th C. (1815).

**19.b** Altar cross. Silver. 19th C.

**20.** Image of the Virgin. Carving of polychrome wood. From Isalguer Street (Sant Joan de les Abadesses). 15th C.

**21.** Altarpiece of the Virgin. Tempera painting on wood. From of the missing chapel of the Rosary (Sant Joan de les Abadesses). 15th C.

**22.** Fragments of the collegiate choir seating. Carved wood. 16th C.

- Three chairs.
- Canopy chair with relief. The temptations of Jesus.

–Relief of canopy chair. The expulsion of the merchants from the temple.

–Relief of canopy chair. The doubt of Saint Thomas.

–Relief of canopy chair. The presentation of Jesus to the temple.

–Reliefs of canopy chair. The Visitation and the Birth.

**23.** Arms of the choir seating. Medallions with the representations inside. Wood carving. 16th C.

**24.** Cope. Hood with Saint John the Evangelist. Velvet and silk, embroidery. 16th C.

**25.** Cloth lectern with Saint John the Baptist. Drawing attributed to Joan Antigó. Damask and silk, embroidery. 14th C. (end) – 15th C. (beginning).

**26.** Cope. Hood with the Virgin. Embroidered silk. 14–15th C.

**27.** Altar frontal, probably of Marian character from the inscription of the mandorla (the figures in relief have not been preserved). Tempera painting on wood. 12th C.

**28.** Cope. Hood with the shield of abbot Arnau of Vilalba. Damask and silk, embroidery. 15th C.

**29.** Capital (fragment) Image of a face. Stone. 12th C.

**30.** Image of Saint Peter. Carved and polychrome wood. 18th C.

**31.** Saint Catherine. Tempera painting on wood. 15th C.

- Predella of the altarpiece of Saint Lucy, Saint Ursula, Saint Christine, Saint Helen and Saint Margaret. Joan Gascó. Tempera painting on wood. 16th C.
- Saint Baldiri. Painting on wood. Attributed to Joan de Borgonya 16th C.

**33.** Cross with the representation of the Sun and the Moon on the top; to the right of the spectator, Saint John the Evangelist and to the left, the Virgin; on the bottom, Adam. On the other side is the representation of the lion, symbol of Saint Mark the Evangelist, and in the center, remains of the lamb. Polychrome wood. From of the missing chapel of the Rosary (Sant Joan de les Abadesses). 12th C.

**34.** Saint Anthony of Padua. Oil painting on canvas. 18th C.

**35.** Cloth with two angels holding a monstrance. Linen thread and gold thread, embroidered. 17th C.

*The objects grouped with the numbers 38 and 39 come from the parishes of Sant Martí de Surroca and Sant Martí d'Ogassa, and in storage at the museum.*

**38.** Cups (2). Silver. 18th C.

- Chest of relics. Wood. 12th C.
- Bin images. Saint Isidre Llaurador, Saint Anthony of Padua and the Virgin of the Rosary. Brass. 18th C.

**39.** Monstrance. Silver. 18th C.

- Candelabrum (2). Silver. 18th C.
- Chalice. Silver. 17th C.
- True Cross. Silver. 17th C.
- Reliquary. Silver. 17th C.

**40.** Maiolica. Head of an angel. Ceramics. 17th C.

- Maiolica. Shield of canting arms. Ceramics. 17th C.
- Plate (fragment). Workshop of Barcelona. Painted and glazed ceramics. 15th C.
- Plate (fragment). Painted and glazed ceramics. 14th C.
- Plate (4) (fragment). Ceramics with metallic reflection. 16th C.

**41.** Christ. Josep Viladomat. Carved wood box. S. XX (1954).

**42.** Pinnacles of the main altarpiece (fragment). Wood carving. 15th C.

**43.** Sacramentary sheets. Manuscript of paper, parchment and ink. 11th C.

**44.** Image of Virgin of the Rosary. Polychrome and carved wood. 18th C.

**45.** Image of the Virgin of Hope. Polychrome stucco. 17th C.

- Chest that kept reliquary of Saint Simplicius. Golden and carved wood. 16th C.



**46. Cantoral.** Paper, parchment and ink. 18th C.

**47. True Cross.** Silver. 16th C.

–True Cross. Silver gold. 16th C.

–Reliquary. Silver. 15th C.

–Reliquary. Silver. 19th C.

–Vericle. Used in the exhibitions of the Holy Mystery. Silver. 18th C. (1726).

–Female head. Stucco. 15th C.

**48. Stamp plate of the collegiate church.** Wood and bronze. 18th C.

–Stamp of abbot Ramon of Bianya.

Paper and wax seal. 14th C. (1348).

–Stamp of the curia of Saint John. It is the oldest representation preserved of the eagle of Saint John's shield. Paper and wax seal. 14th C. (1368).

–Skins. Coin of the monastery. Brass.

–Head of Saint of a reliquary. Gilted and chiseled copper. 17th C.

**49. Flemish trays with representations of Christopher, a lamb and flower.** Copper gilt. 16th C.

**50. Chasuble.** Silk and golden thread, embroidery. 16th C.

**51. Cabochons.** Probably decorated a cross or a frontal from medieval times. Rock and jet crystal.

**52. Image of the Virgin of Hope.** Alabaster 16th C.

**53. Red dalmatic.** Velvet and golden thread embroidery. 15th C.

–Green dalmatic. Velvet and golden thread embroidery. 15th C.

**54. Chest of reliquaries.** Wood. 12th C.

–Image of Saint Anthony of Padua. Alabaster. 18th C.

**55. Crown of Our Virgin of Mercy.** Silver. From the church of Saint Pol (Sant Joan de les Abadesses). 18th C.

**56. Image of baby Jesus.** Polychrome wood and plaster. 18th C.

**57. Chasuble with Saint John the Baptist and Saint John the Evangelist.** Velvet and golden thread embroidery. 15th C.

**61. Monstrance of Corpus Christi.** Pere Farell (Barcelona goldsmith). Silver gold. 16th C. (1584). Angels from the 14th C.

**62. Altar frontal with Saint Bernard of Siena (?).** Drawing attributed to Jaume Huguet. Embroidery. From the church of Saint Pol (Sant Joan de les Abadesses). 15th C.

**63. Christ (Hispano-Flemish).** Carved wood. 15th C.





**64.** Bible. Lyon (France). Paper, ink and parchment. 16th C. (1512).

**65.** Front with the resurrection. Velvet and golden thread embroidery. 15th C.

**66.** Funeral cloth of the abbots with Christ welcoming a soul, accompanied by two angels. Velvet and golden thread embroidery. 15th C.

**67.** Capital (fragment). Representation of birds. Stone. 14th C.

**68.** Transept with the representation of a pelican (upper part). Stone. 15th C.

**69.** Frame. Gilt silver.

**70.** Cups (5). Silver and metal. 18th C. (in the front) and 19th C. (in the back).

**71.** Image of Virgin of the Rosary. Joan Angeli (Barcelona silversmith). Poly-chrome silver. 19th C. (1817).

–Cup – Urn. Silver.

–Naveta. Silver. 19th C.

–Cruet. Silver. 19th C.

–Lilies (2). Silver. From of the hermitage of Saint Anthony (Sant Joan de les Abadesses). 18th C.

–Reliquary. Silver. 19th C.

–Pax. Silver. 16th C.

–Chalice. Silver. 16th C.

–Chalice. Silver. 18th C.

**72.** Reliquary of Saint John and Saint Paul. Silver. From of the church of Saint Pol (Sant Joan de les Abadesses). 16th C. (foot).

–Bible. Rome. Paper and ink. 15th C. (1471).

–Christ. Wood and ivory. 18th C.

–Cruet tray. Silver. 19th C.

–Monstrance. Silver. 19th C.

–Candlestick. Silver. 19th C.

**73.** Saint James the Apostle. Attributed to Antoni Viladomat. Oil painting on canvas. 18th C.

**74.** Image of Virgin of the Rosary. Poly-chrome and carved wood. 18th C.

**75.** Cross. Copper and enamels. 14th C.

–Cross. Copper gold. 13th C.

**76.** Cross. Wrought iron. 17th C. (1652).

**77.** Processional cross. Wood and silver. 14th C.

**78.** Cups (2). Silver. 16th C. Reliquary base. Silver gold. 16th C. (base) 15th C. (knot).

The majority of fabrics were found as covering for the reliquaries of the main altar of the monastery's church and the chapel of Saint Michael of the Infirmary.

**79.** Cloth Hispano-Arabic decorated with circles. Silk. 12th C.

**80.** Hispano-Arabic cloth, smooth and with decorative strip (fragment). Silk. 13th C.

**81.** Hispano-Arabic cloth without decoration (fragment). Silk. 13th C.

**82.** Hispano-Arabic cloth with variations of color and stripes (fragment). Silk. 12th C. (end) – 13th C. (beginning).

**83.** Cloth made in Christian areas, probably at the same monastery, and decorated with a frieze (fragment). White embroidered silk. 12th C. (end) – 13th (beginning).

**84.** Hispano-Arabic patterned cloth, decorated with star-shaped flower and geometric elements on the inside (fragment). Silk. 12th C.

**85.** Hispano-Arabic patterned cloth. The fragment preserved does not allow identification of any decorative element. Silk. 12th C.

**86.** Hispano-Arabic patterned cloth. The fragment preserved is very small, but you can see diagonal strips as a decorative element. White silk. 12th C.

**87.** Hispano-Arabic cloth, smooth and decorated with two blue strips forming a Greca (fragment). Linen. 13th C.

**88.** Egyptian or Middle East cloth with Ikkat decoration (fragment). Silk. 12th C.

**89.** Smooth Hispano-Arabic clothing (fragment). Silk. 12th C.

**90.** Andalusian stole, decorated with diamonds and elements that represent the tree of life and facing birds (fragment). Silk. From the tomb of abbot Ramon of Cornellà. 13th C.

**91.** Blue Hispano-Arabic clothing with smooth decoration (fragment). Silk. 13th C.

**92.** Cloth decorated with two facing eagles, separated by a tree of life (fragment). Lucca (Sicily). Silk. 13th C.

**93.** Smooth Hispano-Arabic cloth and decorated with geometric strips. Corresponds to a fragment of women's clothing (fragment). Silk. 13th C.

**94.** Altar frontal of the Eagles (fragment). Sicily. Silk and golden thread. 13th C.

**95.** Patterned cloth from the area of the Byzantine Empire called "of the birds" (fragment). Silk. From the tomb of Abbot Francesc Roig. 10-12th C.

**96.** Sassanid or Iranian cloth from Islamic period decorated with circles and facing birds on the inside (fragment). Silk. 8-10th C.

**97.** Image of Saint Catherine. Alabaster. 14th C.

**98.** Christ suffering. Joan Gascó. Oil and tempera painting on wood. 16th C.

**99.** Cross. Crystal cut glass. 13th C. – Acquitted cross. Wood. From the tomb of abbot Pere de Soler. 12th C.

**100.** Cross. Crystal cut glass. 13th C. – Base (later).





### Opening hours

November, December, January and February:

Weekdays from 10.00 to 14.00

Saturdays and holidays from 10.00 to 14.00 and 16.00 to 18.00

March, April and October:

Weekdays, Saturdays and holidays from 10.00 to 14.00 and 16.00 to 18.00

May, June and September:

Weekdays, Saturdays and holidays from 10.00 to 14.00 and 16.00 to 19.00

July and August:

Weekdays, Saturdays and holidays from 10.00 to 19.00

### Address

Plaça de l'Abadia, s/n

17860. Sant Joan de les Abadesses

Phone 0034 972 722 353

[www.monestirsantjoanabadesses.cat](http://www.monestirsantjoanabadesses.cat)



Generalitat de Catalunya  
Departament d'Empresa  
i Ocupació



MINISTERIO  
DE INDUSTRIA, TURISMO  
Y COMERCIO



Pla de dinamització del producte turístic Terra de Comtes i Abats  
Plan de dinamización del producto turístico Terra de Comtes i Abats