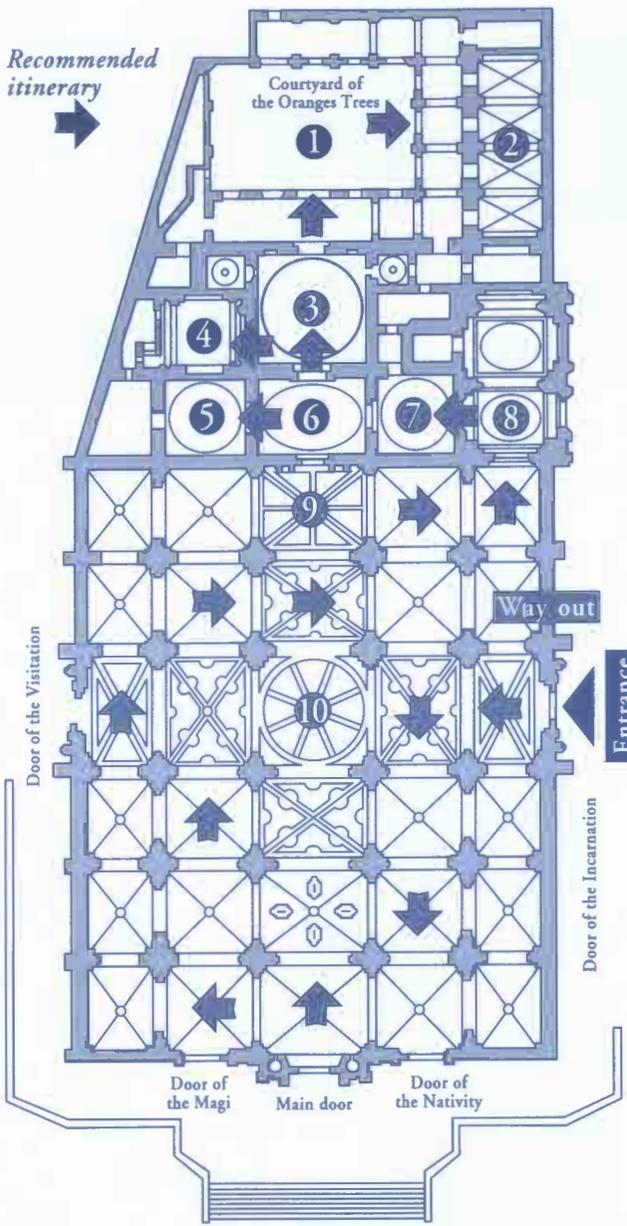


# ASIDONIA- JEREZ CATHEDRAL



- 1 Courtyard of the Orange Trees
- 2 Noble Chambers
- 3 Main Vestry
- 4 Canons' Chamber
- 5 Treasure Chamber
- 6 Hall leading to the Main Vestry
- 7 Vestry
- 8 Tabernacle Chapel
- 9 High Altar
- 10 Central Dome



Our Lady of Bethlehem



Processional Monstrance



The Child Virgin in meditation. Zurbarán



Embroideries. Sacramental Chasuble



Chalice



The Virgin of Guide



This former Collegiate Church was raised to the dignity of cathedral by Pope John Paul II's bull "Archiepiscopus Hispalenses" on 3<sup>rd</sup> March 1980. It is dedicated to Our Lord Saint Saviour.

Since it had become the cathedral of the new Asidonia-Jerez bishopric, the papal bull creating the diocese was issued here on 29<sup>th</sup> June 1980. Its first bishop was Msgr. Rafael Bellido Caro.

The current bishop is Msgr. José Mazuelos Pérez.

PLAZA DE LA ENCARNACIÓN S/N - 11403 - JEREZ DE LA FRONTERA  
TEL. 956 16 90 59

**T**he formation of the Collegiate Church Chapter dates back to the Christian conquest of Jerez on 9<sup>th</sup> October 1264. By 23<sup>rd</sup> September 1265 it had already been constituted as such by King Alphonso X. It had an abbot and up to ten canons, depending on times and circumstances. A cardinal and several bishops were former members of the Church Chapter as well as some others - scholars and benefactors - who are mentioned in the history of Jerez.

Pope John Paul II issued a bull -26<sup>th</sup> May 1984- creating a new Church Chapter formed by twelve canons, each one with different responsibilities within the Chapter.

On 9<sup>th</sup> May 1695 the new Collegiate Chapter made the decision to have a new church built. Its design seems to have been commissioned to Jerez master builder Diego Moreno Meléndez (+ 1700). Its construction took over 80 years. The canons' interest and contribution, the substantial royal and papal help plus Cardinal Arias's properties made it possible to have it finished and blessed on 6<sup>th</sup> December 1778.

Part of the church had already been open for religious services and worship since 16<sup>th</sup> June 1756. The construction was directed by master Ignacio Díaz de los Reyes (+1748), master Juan de Pina (+1778) and master Miguel de Olivares who worked under Torcuato Cayón de la Vega's orders.

The tower, which stands detached from the church, belongs to the former church, demolished in 1695. It has two sections: the lower one, in Mudejar-Gothic style, dates back to the 15<sup>th</sup> century, and the upper one built by Juan de Pina in the 17<sup>th</sup> century.

Since it might become a cathedral in future, this new building was intended to surpass in beauty and grandeur all the other important churches in Jerez such as San Miguel and Santiago. Both in 1580 and in 1781 the local authorities requested the Spanish monarchs to be granted the privilege of having a diocese with a bishop. Their petition was declined and it was not until 1980 that their wish was fulfilled.

This is the origin of the diocese. As far as its name is concerned, Asidonia is one of the most ancient names Medina Sidonia had. It was considered to be a Phoenician foundation and Sidonia refers to Sidon, the famous Phoenician town.

Medina Sidonia was the first capital of Sidonia province during the Arab domination. Later on, Saris -Jerez- became the capital.

Medina Sidonia had been the capital of the ancient Asidonian Bishopric, already known over both the Visigothic and the Arab dominations, but this bishopric disappeared with the arrival of the Almohads in 1146.

The Holy See continued to use the same denomination for this diocese until the present one was actually constituted by papal bull on 3<sup>rd</sup> March 1980, taking the name of *Asidonense Jerezano* in remembrance of the ancient one which stood in this area.

It is a large building in Baroque style. Its most outstanding features dominate the horizon and can be seen from miles away: its huge transept dome, its tower, its flying-buttresses and its rich Baroque façades.

The ornate exterior is especially remarkable in the three façades. They are flanked by Corinthian columns and bas-reliefs carved in stone. The most magnificent façade is obviously the main one as it stands on a mound -called "reducto"- only accessible by means of a flight of steps. This façade is formed by three lintelled doors with a circular window each and a rich amalgam of Baroque columns and decorations.

The interior comprises the nave and four aisles. Plain ribbed vaults cover the aisles in contrast to the richly decorated nave and transept where 18<sup>th</sup> century Baroque and Neoclassical elements, overlapping a Gothic structure, combine in a mixture of styles. The result is a harmonious balance of impressive beauty.

It is worth mentioning the doorway to the vestry made in stone and jasper.



High Altar by Jácome Baccaro. Christ on the Cross by José de Arce.

The building has a quadrangular layout. Thick pilasters divide it into a nave and for aisles plus a sixth one called the transept. The intersection of the nave and the transept is covered by a luminous and graceful octagonal dome which rests on a very wide ring and is crowned by a small dome. There are beautiful stone statues on the arrises of the octagon. They are taller than life-size and represent the holy Doctors of the Latin Church.

Both the nave and transept are 20 metres high, the aisles 13, and the lowest aisles resembling chapels 8 metres high. The dome is 40 metres high if measured from the floor surface of the church.

The church is completely built in stone except for the aisle vaults where the stone was replaced by bricks. All the stone is from Sierra de San Cristóbal.

The construction of the church was long and expensive and it was mostly financed by the Spanish Kings Charles II, Louis I and Charles III who contributed with part of the tithes they used to collect from the wine brewed in this area. Pope Innocent XIII and Benedict XIII also helped with the so-called grace of the "misas alcanzadas"(obtained masses).



Hall leading to the Vestry

Apostle by José de Arce



The Trinity by Bocanegra