Art historians have almost unilaterally reached similar conclusions about St. Lazare. The identification of Gislebertus as the sculptor goes unchallenged, but perhaps the famed signature did not belong to the artist? Scholars have also been baffled by the strange positioning of the cathedral and the reason for its original construction. By examining the design, the patrons and the politics of the 12th century church, I challenge outdated hypotheses to solve the mysteries of the 900-year-old cathedral.

**The Sleeping Magi:** The angle of the king's arm and the axis of the pointing finger of the angel, are both placed deliberately, identifying St. Lazare's positioning using astronomical readings, to the location of the original cathedral of St. Nazaire.

**The Gift of the Magi:**
- The gold filled coffret carried by the magi representing summer, is at an angle of 8°, as is the pot of incense carried by the magi representing spring. The date that corresponds to this 8° degree difference, from the summer equinox and the true east/west axis is June 1st, St. Reverien’s saint day.
- Once again, the angles generated on the capitals, position the location of, and the relationship between the two churches, St. Nazaire and St. Lazare demonstrating the sculptor’s knowledge of astronomy.

**The Offering of the Church:** I believe this represents the donation of the private chapel of Robert 1st to Etienne de Bagé, Bishop of Autun, supervised by an angel offering heavenly approval for the Duke’s generosity…..and the forgiveness of his many sins!

**The Orientation:**
- Most churches are situated on an E/W axis. St. Lazare axis is N/S, but 8° off true N/S axis as well, most unusual. The explanation lies with the extant cathedral of St. Nazaire. St. Lazare was built with its main portal facing the main portal of the existing cathedral.
- The cathedral is situated at a latitude of 47°.
- The solstice of the setting sun at the summer equinox is 54° N/E, both represented in the angles.
- 8° is the degree of difference between the angle of the sunrise at the summer solstice and June 1st the saint day of St. Révérien, identified as the saint the old cathedral (St. Nazaire) was dedicated to.
- It is represented by the angle created by the angel’s right hand finger and a line from the center of the sun.

**The Capitals:**
- The ratio of length to width of the church at the time of the capital’s carving, is the identical to the size of the rectangular container being offered to Jesus, which might be coincidence, but then again maybe not.

**The Sculptor:** Gislebertus hoc fecit….or did he?
- Perhaps Gislebertus was not the sculptor, but a patron, or a revered Crusader of the same name. The famed signature is on this tympanum of the western portal, shown below.

All drawings: La cathédrale d’Autun et ses mystères, by Daniel Minard. Photos by Debora Alcide.