

*"...try to be in Etten at Easter, things will be all fine once more when we're together again."*  
(Vincent in a letter to Theo, March 23, 1877)

## **Easter 1881, a turning point in Vincent van Gogh's life**

The Van Gogh family lived in Etten for 7 years (1875-1882). Vincent traveled extensively by then, searching... He regularly came home, especially during the holidays. Vincent loved the homey atmosphere and being with his family. But at Easter 1881 things took a turn for the worse.

Let's go back to 1880. Vincent failed as an evangelist in the Belgian mining area, the Borinage. He moves to Brussels. Here he enrolled at the Royal Academy of Fine Arts. Indeed, Vincent had just decided to devote himself fully to being an artist. Initially he intended to become an illustrator. In his small room he mainly worked with anatomical studies. He drew skeletons and muscles of hands, legs, torsos and heads. But the academy did not appeal to him. In October 1880 Vincent met the beginning painter Anthon van Rappard. They got along well. Vincent was able to make use of Van Rappard's splendid studio in Brussels. Until Van Rappard moves house. Vincent was out on the street again and had no money for another accommodation in Brussels.

"It was cheapest if I spent the summer in Etten, there is enough fabric there. If you find it desirable you can write to Pa about it, I am prepared to arrange for clothing or anything else as they see fit", he writes at the beginning of April to his brother Theo, who in the meantime has taken over the financial care of Vincent. Theo decided to make an effort to repair the disturbed relations between Vincent and his father (pastor in Etten). Father was deeply ashamed of Vincent's failure as an evangelist.

Easter 1881. Vincent arrived by train in Etten. In the parsonage, in the presence of Theo who had come from Paris especially for the occasion, Vincent and Dad had an extensive conversation. Vincent explained that he wanted to become an artist. The conversation went well although Dad had his doubts. Vincent was given his very first 'studio', the so-called 'teacher's room' of his parents' home. And so, at Easter, Vincent began his career as an artist. He was well acquainted with the area because Etten is close to Zundert, where he was born and raised.

On 30 April Vincent wrote to Theo about his first studies from Etten. "Since a few days I'm here & it's nice outside but the weather doesn't allow me to draw outside every day. In the meantime I have started on the Millets, Le semez is a & the 4 heures de la journée sketched. And now Les travaux des champs still have to come. [...] I am so glad that it has been arranged in this way that I can work quietly here for a while, I hope to make as many studies as I can because that is the seed from which later drawings will come."

As soon as the weather permits, Vincent goes outside with his drawing materials. To work in nature. From the beginning of May, he goes out daily. He was particularly charmed by the heath landscape around Etten.

The whole story - from Vincent's arrival at Easter to his departure at Christmas - is told in colorful detail in the Van Gogh Church. Until the end of May the church also houses the temporary exhibition 'Master forger'.

So in Etten-Leur you can experience a special chapter in the life of Vincent van Gogh. We look forward to welcoming you at our information point (and museum shop) at Markt 4.

[Tickets Van Gogh Church:](#)