

# Church of Saint Vincent

**Choir:** Paintings by **Jacques Gamelin** (1738-1803); 1/ *The Deluge with Noah's Ark*; 2/ *Peace between Heraclius and Syroes*; 3/ *Heraclius bearing the Cross* (the 2 pages: Gamelin's sons, two women: the oldest his nurse and the other his wife); 4/ *The Invention of the Cross*; 5/ *The Authentication of the True Cross*; 6/ *David on the Mount of Olives* (Cl. M.- H.)

**Choir:** Lectern with "The Eagle", in gilded wood, (18th century). Saint Vincent is represented on the base. (Cl. M.- H.)

Above the stained glass, 15th century inscription in the language of Oc, indicting a tomb.  
Statue *Our Lady of the Parade*, in gilded wood, (19th century)

**Chapel of John of Ark:** reliquaries (18th century) of Saint Blaise and Saint Gertrude.  
Painting: *The Lord's Supper* (17th century.) (Cl. M.-H.)

Pulpit in multi-coloured marble, the angels on the sounding board are in gilded wood (18th century.)

**Chapel of Saint Roch:** Paintings: in the centre, *The Triumph of the Holy Cross*; on the right: *Saint Roch among the Plague-Stricken*, **Jacques Gamelin** (1738-1803).  
Under the altar, wax statue containing the remains of Saint Hermès, a Roman martyr.

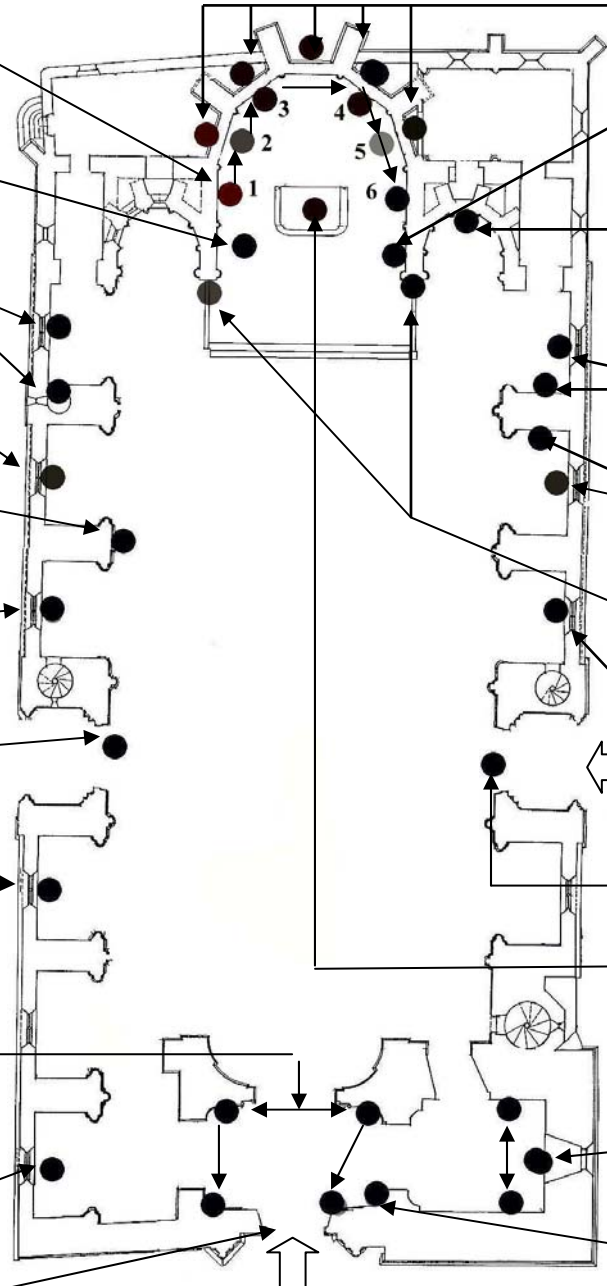
Painting by **Pierre Subleyras** (1699-1749), *The Communion of Saint Jérôme*.

**Chapel of Our Lady of the Angels:** statue *Our Lady of the Angels* in gilded wood (18th century.), marble altar (18th century.),  
On the right, *The Washing of Feet*, signature illegible, donated by a parishioner.  
On the left: *The Holy Face*, Jacques Ourtal, 1932. Painting from

Under the tribune, four stone statues formerly framing the main door on the outside: **Saint Louis** (the oldest known representation of this king), **Saint Vincent** and two apostles: perhaps **Saint Peter and Saint Paul**.

Baptismal fonts: colonnades and beautiful marble basin, Charles X period.

Rosettes: 10 + 1 above the main door (19th century).



**Choir:** stained glass window with large figures by the master glassworker Chatain de Clermont-Ferrand (19th century.)

**Choir:** *Virgin with Child*, statue in stone, formerly polychrome (15th century). Jesus as a child is holding a bird, a symbol of life, meaning that, as a man, he is the son of Mary but remains God and is the creator of life. (Cl. M.- H.)

Painting: *The Ordination of Saint Vincent as Deacon*, **Jacques Gamelin**. All the priests of the time are represented with, in the centre, Priest Raucoule de Saint Vincent. (Cl. M.- H.)  
Louis XV altar from the chapel of Lérans Castle of the Dukes of Lévis-Mirepoix (Cl. M.- H.)

Ancient reliquaries.  
The heart of Priest Raucoule has been behind the marble plate since 1809.

**Chapel of Saint Anne:** reliquaries (18th century) of Saint André and Saint Jacques. Case for the hand of Saint Anne de Calliat de Lyon (19th century), the reliquary was stolen in September 1984.

On the pillar, wooden *statue of Saint Vincent*, once gilded, by the sculptor **Mélair** (17th century).  
His pendant represents Saint Laurent (19th century).

**Chapel of Saint Joseph:** stained glass window by **Jac-Damon**, *The Flight to Egypt*, based on a painting by Henry Rousseau

Painting: *Christ on the Cross between the Virgin and Saint John*, **Pierre Mignard** (1612-1695), (Cl. M.- H.).

**Choir:** Louis XV altar with marble marquetry with angels in adoration (Cl. M.- H.).

**Chapel of Our Lady of the Rosary**, formerly Our Lady of Slavery.  
Paintings: *Nativity of the Virgin* and *Presentation of Jesus to the Temple*, **Gamelin junior**

Empire-style pulpit in gilded wood (Cl. M.- H.)

Carcassonne

# Church of Saint Vincent

## A little history

Until 1247 Carcassonne consisted of the City and the two market towns surrounding it. The first church dedicated to Saint Vincent was located in the north of the City and the Church of Saint Michael was in the south. These churches were demolished in 1240 at the time of the unsuccessful attempts of Raymond II de Trencavel to take over the City and the subsequent reprisals.

Seven hundred years later Saint Louis ordered the construction of a new market town on the river's left bank. Two parishes were to share it: to the south Saint Michel and to the north Saint Vincent. Consequently two churches were erected according to the ancient topography.

In this new town, laid out like a draughtboard, the new Church of Saint Vincent very soon became too small and was also probably built in unstable materials.

In 1308 King Philippe IV authorised the purchase of four *domunculas* so that the church could be extended rather than rebuilt. Unusually, the works began by the western side, that is to say by the porch and the nave in the 1320s, with the choir only completed at the end of the 14<sup>th</sup> century.

Part of the church's history is not known due to the lack of written records, but we do know that its history was closely linked to that of the town. Its tower was used as a lookout tower during the 16<sup>th</sup> century and it had to be restored after being shaken by canon fire during the religious wars.

In 1794, the Revolution transformed it into a foundry to manufacture artillery mountings. Several large double forges were installed in the chapels and two single forges in the apse.

At the demand of the population, it again became a place of worship on 26 August 1795.

In 1905, as required by the new law on separation between the Church and the State, an inventory of the church's assets was to be carried out. The parishioners and the parish priest. Abbot Peyre, did everything they could to prevent this. The church door had to be beaten down with an axe so that the officials could enter but then they were faced with the silent opposition of numerous parishioners who had spent the night inside the church... The inventory was suspended. To commemorate this event, the parishioners gathered pieces of the door and made a sort of painting.

## Description

It is a Gothic church in the Languedoc style. It is today composed of a single nave with five bays. Its "chevet" (apse and ambulatory in the east end of a church) is composed of a five-sided apse, flanked by two seven-sided apsidioles. The same plan is found in the Cathedral of Saint Michael.

**The nave** took 60 years to build. The first four bays were constructed in the first half of the 14<sup>th</sup> century, as we can see from the sculptures on the keystones and capitals, whilst the last two bays, dating from the second half of the 14<sup>th</sup> century, show the influence of the early flamboyant style.

The lateral chapels and the choir have their original stone vaults. The nave, on the other hand, is covered in wood beams resting on stone traverse diaphragm arches. It is only after the construction of the tribune (1737) that work began on the nave vaults. The church had to be closed for a year in 1753 so that these works could be carried out.

**The chevet** is more recent, (late 14<sup>th</sup> – early 15<sup>th</sup> century) as are the sacristies, but they still followed the original 14<sup>th</sup> century plan. In the main apse, light streams in through five windows with flamboyant tracery.

## The carillon

This is inside the tower. In 1710 there was a 7-bell carillon, then 8 in 1712. They were melted to make a new 17-bell carillon, blessed in 1773.

Today there is a 54-bell carillon, one of the largest in the Region, its peals delighting Carcassonne's inhabitants and visitors.

## The large organs

In 1737 that the Saint Vincent churchwardens decided to build a new organ and a huge tribune. Completed in 1739 it was the work of Christophe Mouchereau.

**The very ornate case** is surmounted in the centre by the Statue of Saint Vincent martyr, holding a palm, symbol of victory (*vincens* in Latin means « victor ») and the martyr. Trophies of musical instruments (flute, lute, viola, tambourine, etc.) were sculpted on each side of the façade base. Unfortunately the choir organ back case, forming a protruding part in the centre of the cast iron balustrade, disappeared in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. **The instrumental part** was modified several times (1761 Joseph Cavaillé; 1807 Dominique Cavaillé-Coll; 1842 Prosper Moitessier). In 1874 Théodore Puget completely rebuilt the instrument in a symphonic aestheticism. The organ has 45 registers distributed over 3 keyboards.

Classed a Historical Monument, the instrumental part and the case were restored by the organ maker Jean Daldosso (2006) under the aegis of the Town of Carcassonne and thanks to the action of the Friends of the Organ. The restoration repaired the 19<sup>th</sup> century sound structure and gave back the 18<sup>th</sup> century woodwork its original red and gold colours.

## The church furniture

Under the tribune the four stone statues represent two apostles (perhaps Saint Peter and Saint Paul), Saint Vincent and Saint Louis. It would appear that the same sculpture workshop executed these statues and the tomb of the Bishop Pierre de Rochefort (who died in 1321) in the Cathedral of Saint Nazaire and Saint Celse. They date from the 1320s. The statue of Saint Louis is the most ancient known representation of this king. This group of statues were once around the monumental western door. This door is the only church door in Bas – Languedoc to have been decorated with statues. They could not be left outside due to their condition and were placed in the narthex in 1956.

This church houses numerous paintings, of which nine by **Jacques Gamelin**, *Christ on the Cross between the Virgin and Saint John* by **Pierre Mignard**, *The Communion of Saint Jérôme* by **Pierre Hubert Soubleyras**.

It also has several remarkable statues of which one in wood of Saint Vincent by the sculptor **Mélair** and **Our Lady of the Parade** which has, in particular, attracted many devout as can be seen by the numerous *ex-votos* dedicated to it.

## The exterior

**The western facade** was erected in the 1320s at the same time as the church tower. The monumental door of this façade is crowned by a large entasis, its brilliant decoration restored the last year. It was once framed by the four full-length statues (Saint Louis, Saint Vincent and the two apostles) surmounted by a dais.

**The tower** was built in two phases. The first corresponds to the first two floors erected in the second quarter of the 14<sup>th</sup> century (dated 1327 in the second room). They were constructed according to a square plan, whereas the other floors have an octagonal plan and date from the first half of the 15<sup>th</sup> century, just as the north-east oriel tower.

The tower rises to a height of 54 m. It was used a lookout tower in times of war and it was at its summit that Cassini and his sons executed their famous map of France, which today bears their name. It also served as a geodesic point for Maichain and Delambre when determining the length of the earth's southern meridian.

The church, owned by the Town of Carcassonne, has been listed as a historical monument since 1907.