

CHURCH OF SAINT PIERRE (LACHAPELLE)

The château chapel was built in the XIIth-XIIIth century. Its use was reserved primarily for Templiers, monk soldiers, and finally, following the dying out of this religious order, for Lords and masters of Lomagne and Auvillar. In the XVth century, after the destruction of the primitive village during the Hundred Years' War, the new town was created around the château whose chapel became the parish church.

In 1761, the Goulard brothers, one the parish priest, the other curate, decide to donate their substantial paternal inheritance to be used for the decoration of their church in a baroque style. To accomplish this task, they select a carpenter-cabinet maker Maraignon (aka « Champaigne ») from Lectoure. The work was finished in 1776.

Its style is inspired by the Baroque school which was popular at this time of Louis XVth, and more particularly, the method known as « Rocaille » or « Rococo », a mixture of vegetable and mineral decoration (shells such as murex). The word « baroque » comes from the Portuguese word « barrocco » meaning an « irregular pearl ». This style is also influenced by certain elements of Greco-Roman architecture: Corinthian columns, « flame-pots, comices... It appeared as a style of decoration in Catholic churches with the « Concile de Trento » (1545), in opposition to Protestantism which had a preference for an unadorned, austere decoration in their churches, e.g. the removal of statues.

In this church the walls are entirely covered with moulded wood carvings and embellished with Corinthian columns, topped with « flame-pots ». Impressive XIXth century paintings can be seen between the columns; the originals, dating from the XVIIIth century, were destroyed, excepting their frames, at the time of the Revolution.

The most original elements in the church are the galleries, which are also unique in the whole of France. They consist of three rows of concave and convex seating, which remind us of a Venetian style theatre. Each archway is topped with a cartouche sculpted into the wood which represents either plant-life or murex shells. Two of these represent faces which remind us the masks used by the « comedia dell'arte », or maybe represent the Goulard brothers. The paintings were restored between 1997 and 1998.

Sainte Quitterie statue (patron saint of Gascogne, martyred in the Vth century in Aire sur Adour), dates from the early XVIth century and has been restored in the XIXth century. Her memory is worshipped throughout the South-West and even in the fédération region..

Virgin Mary and child statue (XVIIIth century).

Stalls and pulpit (XVIIIth century), originally from an Auvillar convent.

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The lectern (XVIIIth century) is in the shape of 2 eagles which symbolise St John the Evangelist. Made of gold and silver decorated wood, it was saved from destruction, like the statues, at the time of the Revolution.

The altar (reredos) (XVIIth century) is made of wood decorated in gold and it represents two scenes from the gospel: the Annunciation and the Visitation. It was restored in 1986.

The chandeliers: the middle one is from the XVIIIth century and has always belonged to the church. The other two date from the same period but were bought by the commune to replace modern light fittings.

The baptistery beneath the galleries is a XVth century broken font, placed upside-down, which serves as a base for the XIIIth century upper element.

The harmonium is from the late XIXth century; it possesses 18 stops and has two resonance chambers. It was restored in 2000.

The present ceiling, restored in 1991, is covered with paper decorated a « trompe l'œil » motif (« caissons à cavet »). It is a reproduction of the XVIIIth century decoration which had badly deteriorated through roof leakage and was therefore covered in 1879 with decorated plaster ceiling, under the supervision of the then mayor, Mr Magelonne.

Opening times

- From 15 April to 30 June: 14h-18h everyday.
- From 1st July to 31st August: 10h-12h30 & 14h00-1830 everyday.
- From 1st September to 15 October: 14h-18h everyday.
- From 16 October to 14 April: 14h-17h Sundays and bank holidays (except 25/12 & 01/01).

By appointment for groups.

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