

# THE SAINT SIFFREIN'S CATHEDRAL

CARPENTRAS • COMTAT VENAISSIN



## THE OUTSIDE OF THE BUILDING

### THE FRONT

Is framed by octagonal turrets with pinnacled buttresses.

The wall has two long windows with flamboyant style nets. The lower part is classical in design : 4 ionic columns supporting an ornamented entablature.

The Central alley is closed by a gate framed in by grey marble columns with Corinthian capitals supporting a slightly curved pediment, the top of which is leaving room to a stone cross.

The side alleys are closed by gates framed in by red marble columns with Corinthian capitals and triangular pediments.

All were made in 1615 by Pierre Isnard and Pierre Mancarel at the request of Mgr Capponi, Bishop of Carpentras from 1596 to 1615, whose arms are shown on the walnut gates.

On the right, the steeple (58 m high) was built between 1899 and 1902 by Revoil.

The Palace which was built from 1646 to 1652 by François Royer de la Valfenière the Cardinal Alexandre Bichi, bishop of Carpentras from 1630 to 1657.



**THE JEWISH GATE  
(1470-1480)  
WORK OF BLAISE LECUYER**

Converted jews went into the Cathedral through that gate which leads into the fourth chapel in the south of the building. Between two pinnacled buttresses, one may see a bay with a "broken" arch, the pointed end of which is a "fleuron" ornamented with crisp-leaved cabbages. The coat of arms shows those of the Chapter and of Rostagni and is found below the "Rats'Ball". The gate is square with tribolite lintel supported by a stone pier with "Our Lady of the Snows", a cast-iron statue of 1855. On the tympanum a fresco shows the Holy Trinity (XVI<sup>th</sup> cent.).



The small columns in the gate recess reach up the arch curves. In the past, there were statues on beautiful plinths and canopies. Above the two windows give light into the Chapter Room. The Charity Bench was cut, but one can still see inside.

**THE ROMANESQUE CATHEDRAL**

At first, it was a nave with five alleys sheltering by a vault divided by arches with another one across open towards the apse. Romans arch integrated into the Roman Cathedrale. The Chancel bay had a dome sheltering in part the Treasure room ; it was built on overhanging stones with eight-sided cover and a steeple on the top. This one was restored several times and then destroyed in 1875.

The square cloister with vaults was pulled down in 1829. There are still signs of the destruction on the North wall.



*The Holy Nail or Holy Bit*

## INSIDE



### A) ENTRANCE

A tambour made of walnut wood by Leytier (1843).

On the right, the grave of Achille Gymnasi (d. 1954).

On the left that of Bishop Louis de Fortia de Montréal (1618 - 1661) by Barthelemy Giraud.

On the back of the front wall a gallery made of wrought iron by Pierre Ignace Mille (XVIII<sup>th</sup> century) ;

above a ptych with a wooden gilded frame by Jacques Bernus and painting by Pierre Blanc (1700)

wich was formerly in the chancel.

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### 1 - Christening chapel

The basin with marble edging was given by Bishop Horace Capponi (1596 - 1615). The cupola dates back to 1834. The stone made railing formerly barred the chancel.

### 2 - St Ann's chapel

A painted-wood altar screen was manycoloured (XVIII<sup>th</sup> cent.). On the right the discovery of the Holy Cross by St Helen and a flight to Egypt (1840).

### 3 - Saint Joseph 'chapel

Altar and creen in several marbles (XVII<sup>th</sup> cent.). Painting believed to be by G. Van Banken :

St Joseph death. Fresco paintings (1880) by Guilbert d'Annelle : on the right the flight to Egypt.

On the left, the Virgin 's wedding.

Wrought iron railing of XVII<sup>th</sup> century.

### 4 - Narthex

On the back ground, St François de Sales (XVII<sup>th</sup> cent.). The wrought iron tribune (1723) by Pierre Ignace Mille was a votive offering after the pest on

1720. Above, Emperor Constantin being given St Helen the Holy Bit forged on a nail of the Cross by G. E. Grave (mid VXII<sup>th</sup> cent).

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## 5 - Purgatory Souls chapel

A yellow-coloured Genoese marble altar with brownish marble columns framing the discovery of the Holy Cross by St Helen, a painting by Joseph Siffrede Duplessis. The whole was presented by Bishop Joseph de Beni (1776 -1802). The gilded wooden statues show St Sebastien and St Roch.

## 6 - Holy Heart chapel

The stained glass window - a gift of Michel Anglici (1452-1471) - shows St Siffrein between St Michael and St Catherine. An organ with 16 sets of pipes (1974, by Pascal Quoirin). On the right, the Virgin and the child, believed to be by Pierre Parrocel.

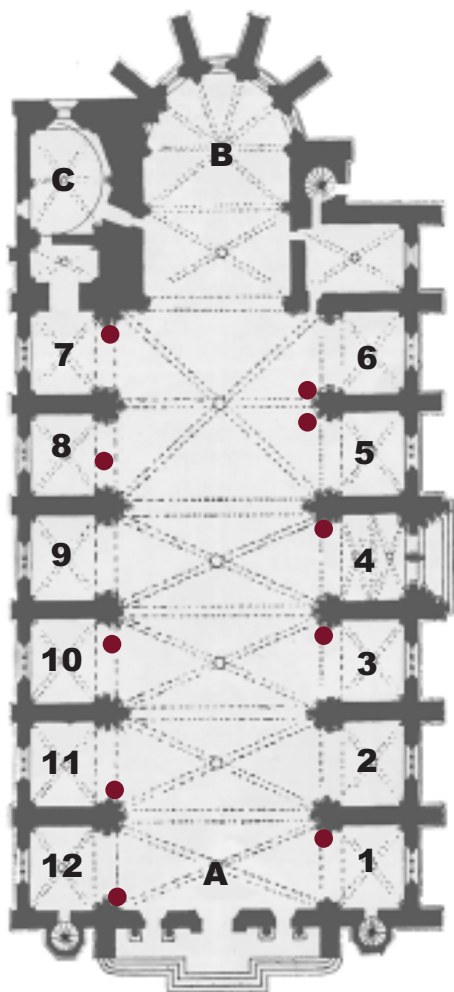
On the triumphal arch : statue of the Virgin by Jacques Bernus (1650-1728).

## B) CHANCEL

It is 16 m long, 11 m broad, 19m high, ogive vaulted ends in an apse with radiating vaults (7 in number). The galleries were added by Royer de La Valfenière, at the request of Mgr Bichi in order to make room for an organ (1645) on the right and for the choir-singers on the left. The gilded wooden decoration was ordered by Mgr Buti (1691-1710) to Jacques Bernus : it shows worshipping angels, theological virtues representation, angels and "glory" after that of Bernin in St Peter's in Rome. The major altar in white yellow-coloured antic marble, created by the Roches brothers in 1845. "The life and Miracles of St Siffrein" (1726) by Joseph de Villars have taken the places of paintings showing "St Laurent and St Siffrein watching the coronation of the Holy Virgin" by François Trevisani. On the left, a triptich from Quarton school (circa 1460) : "the coronation of the Virgin between St Siffrein and St Michael" ; above the gallery, St Helen handing the holy bit to Constantin (1629) by Guillaume Grève. XV<sup>th</sup> century stained glass windows ; wrought-iron railing with the



arms of Mgr d'Inguibert (1735-1757) by Claude Mille ; lamp consoles (1832) by Jean Baptist Mille. Mgr Buti's grave by Jacques Bernus.



● time-switches

### 7 - Holy Nail chapel

A grey marble altar (XVIII<sup>th</sup> century by Mazzetti brothers). Funeral inscription of Bishop Jacques Sacrati (1572 - 1593).

"Whitsuntide" by Joseph Siffrède Duplessis. A wrought-iron railing by Alexis Mille (1741-1829). The small chapel where the Holy bit or Holy Nail is kept in a shrine (1872) by Armand Caillat. The white marble altar is XIX century made. This holy relic was highly honoured in Constantinople till 1204 ; since 1260 in the City arms.

## **8 - St Siffrein chapel**

It shows : an altar and a screen made of painted wood (XVIII<sup>th</sup> cent.) restored in the XIX<sup>th</sup> century ; "the death of St Paul with St Antoine's assistance" by Louis Aubanel. "St Thomas of Aquin" believed to be by Nicolas Mignard ; a wrought-iron railing (XVIII<sup>th</sup> cent.) by Alexis Mille. The pulpit (Aug. 4, 1784) was made by Pansin.

## **9 - Holy Cross chapel**

With a painted and gilt altar (XVII<sup>th</sup> cent.) Bernus wokshop. "Jesus on the cross" by Antoine Cavalucci ; "the Magi in worship" (1777) by Charles-Joseph Natoire ; a wrought-iron railing (1831) by Pierre-Jean-Baptiste Mille.

## **10 - Holy Virgin chapel**

From the Carmel convent of Carpentras, an altar with screen made of several coloured marble with lime-stone statues, and Prophet Elie and St Therese of Avila (XVII<sup>th</sup> cent.) are to be seen. In the middle are "Virgin with child" by Orazio Andreoni, "Visitation" by Antonius Scaonians (1570-1610), on the left "St Bernard and St Louis at the feet of the Virgin" (1649) by Nicolas Mignard ; wrought-iron railing and consoles (XVII cent.).

## **11 - St Antoine of Padna's chapel**

Altar (carved wood) and screen (XVII<sup>th</sup> cent.) ; wooden statues : St Crepin (XVIII<sup>th</sup> cent.), St Blaise and St Jean Baptiste (XIX<sup>th</sup> cent.). Wooden titular statue (XVII<sup>th</sup> cent.).

## **12 - Chapel of St Therese of Lisieux and the Martyrs of September 1792.**

On may see : a white marble altar (XIX<sup>th</sup> cent.) Jesus Christ and worshipping angels (carved wood) (XVIII<sup>th</sup> cent.). On the right, an inscription to the memories of Abbots barret, Séguin, and Vitalis murdered in Paris on September 2nd, 1792 ; two paintings, "St Jeanne de Chantal and St François presenting the Virgin with their hearts" ; on the left "St François de Sales giving the rules of this order to St Jeanne de Chantal " by Pierre Parrocel (1670-1739). Lower are the tombs-tones of Michel Anglici, Almodie Laplon, Georges de Saint Gilles and M. de Camaret.

## How to visit St Siffrein's Cathedral in a short time

### HISTORICAL NOTE

On the site of two older buildings, the 3<sup>rd</sup> Cathedral of Carpentras was erected by Geoffroy de Garosse but collapsed at some period between september 1399 and march 1400. Only the square-shaped of the transept and the steeple above it remained.

On may 5th, 1404, Pope Benoit XIII ordered the rebuilding, the Chapter assuming the expenses ; work lasted till 1531.

The importance of the size can be explained by the statute of Carpentras, wich was capital of the Comtat Venaissin and the pilgrimage to St Mors of Constantin and St Siffrein.

This southern specimen of late gothic architecture is the largest church in the diocese : it is 58 m (480 feet) long - The nave is 42m long. 15,30 m broad and 23,25 m (144 feet) high.

It has six ogive arches on each side, with strong buttresses, chapels being built between them (they are each 6 m long, and 5,30 m board).

Light gets in throught 12 high windows, smaller on in the chapels, two others in the front wall and a round one on the top of triumphal arch.

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When going out, visitors ought to look at the front of the Cathedral and then, take the street on the left : it leads to St Siffrein's square where the jewish gate is to be seen, and farther on the romanesque Cathedral.

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### FETE PATRONALE DE LA SAINT SIFFREIN

november 27

Catholic mass performed by the "Schola Elzéar Genet", in honour of the patron saint of the city, who was monk in Lerins, before being bishop in Carpentras and Venasque in the beginning of the VII<sup>th</sup> cent.

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Réalisation : Service communication  
Ville de Carpentras

Impression : Imprimerie Chantron - Avignon