

After the turmoil of the Hundred Years War, the end of the fifteenth century saw a demographic and economic boom. Aups was crowded within its walls and the old church Notre Dame de l'Assomption (does not exist today) no longer met the needs of the population. Therefore it was decided to build a much larger church outside the walls of the medieval city.

Under the direction of the English architect Broulhony the construction started in 1489 and lasted til 1503.

Construction is underway, when the bishop of Frejus erects the new church in "Collegiale", ordering the Canons of the old chapter of Valmoissine, on the road to Moissac-Bellevue, to reside in the midst of the population and to celebrate the liturgy.

Shortly before the building was completed, a wealthy drapier from Aups brought back from Rome a relic of St Pancrace. The church will keep its name Notre Dame de l'Assomption until last century, but will also be dedicated to St Pancrace.



During the wars of religion, the church is hit twice. In 1574, the spandrel and the carved portal were destroyed.

The decorations and the furnitures are therefore of later date, including, among others, six 17th century altarpieces, one of 17th century and different statues and woodworks. The triptych of the altar St Eloi is anterior and comes, probably from the old church as well as one of the bells, dated 1475, and the door of the current museum of religious art.

After the wars of religion, the Council of Trent suppressed the concelebration, so the church was enlarged on its south side in order to create new altars for the Canons.

Our Lady of the Rosary Chapel



This chapel, dedicated to the worship of the Virgin Mary, has one of the altarpieces of the 17th century. It is surmounted by a small, older, painting the Virgin Mary with open arms.

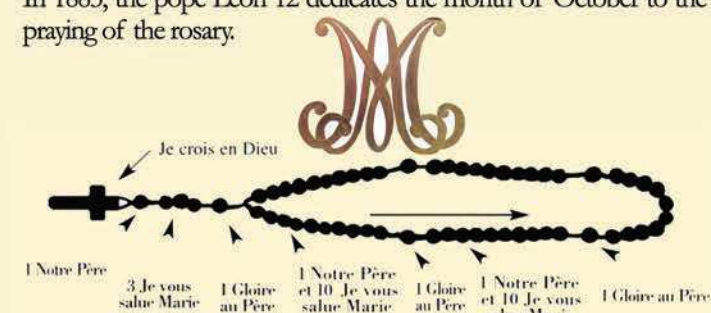
The main painting, work of Joseph Villevieille (1869) represents the Virgin Mary and the Child-Jesus, confiding the rosary to St Dominic and St Catherine of Siena.

The painter has placed this scene in a local environnement: in fact, the landscape in the background represents the "three cugillons" (ripples in local language), the three peaks of the crest barring the horizon north of Aups. On their flanks one can see the Collegiat Church and the chapel Notre Dame de la Delivrance.



The rosary-prayer, which takes its name from a girland of roses, is known as early as the 13th century and was spread by Blessed Alain de la Roch, disciple of St Dominic. On the eve of the battle of Lepanto, pope Pius 5, himself a Dominican asked the faithfuls to pray the rosary in 1571. As a result of this naval battle, won in the Mediterranean against the Ottomans, the pope instaur the feast of Our Lady of the Rosary, October 7.

In 1883, the pope Leon 12 dedicates the month of October to the praying of the rosary.



saint Eloi Chapel



This chapel is also called "Chapel of the dukes of Blacas", reminding that the closed bench was reserved for them.

It has an altarpiece of the 17th century in the same style as the other altars, with blue columns decorated with gilded vine and surmounted by a pediment with a statuette of St Eloi.

The altarpiece serves as a frame for an older triptych, 15 – 16th centuries. In its center, St Eloi, goldsmith, then bishop and a well-known adviser to king Dagobert in the 7th century. He is surrounded by St Agathe, virgin and martyr, and a bishop called St Pons, but it is more likely St Marcel.



saint Joseph Chapel

The St Joseph chapel has also a Baroque altarpiece from the 17th century. The four columns, light grey this time, are orned with gilded vines.

The central painting represents the agony of St Joseph surrounded by Virgin Mary and the Child Jesus. From this image comes the tradition of invoking St Joseph patron of the good death: "obtain for me to have a peaceful death, like you, in the presence of Jesus and Mary". Above the pediment, a St Family in gilded wood.



To the right of the altar is "un enfeu", a mortuary niche embedded in the wall. The inscription engraved in the wall makes reference to Sabran, important family of Provence.

chapel of the deceased



The alarpiece of this chapel is more recent, 18th century, classically represents the scene of the Last Judgment, painted on wood and lightly carved.

Enthroned on the globe, Christ, facing the viewer, dressed in a red cloak, unveiles his wounds. He is surrounded, on one side by the Virgin Mary and St Pierre and, on the other side, St John the Baptist and St Paul. Below, to the left, the archangel St Michel weighing the souls.



Opposite to it is a painting representing the Child Jesus with St Francois and St Clair. Unlike works of Rubens or Domenichino, Jesus is not put in the arms of St Francois but seems to play with him.

chapel of the blessed Sacrement



The 17th century altarpiece has two gilded columns decorated with vine leaves, grapes and animals framing a painting representing a chorus of angels worshipping the Blessed Sacrement.

The tabenacle, where the Blessed Sacrement is kept, is adorned with a gilded "Christ is insulted", holding the instruments of his Passion. It is surmounted by a wooden glory composed of four angels holding a royal crown.



To the right of the altarpiece is a large painting from 1534 representing St Antoine, St John the Baptist and St Christophe.

chapel of the Sacred Heart



Next to the todays sacristy, this 17th century altarpiece is dedicated to the Sacred Heart. It is composed of three panels, framed by four columns, supporting a triangular lintel, Trinitarian symbol, which carries a round-hump in the image of God the Father.

The left panel houses a statue of St Augustin and the right panel one of St Catherine of Alexandria, both of them holding, in their

Un vitrail, déplacé au XVIIème siècle, lors de la construction de l'hospice voisin, représente saint Joseph et saint Louis, protecteurs de la famille de Bressc, dont les armes figurent dans la partie supérieure.

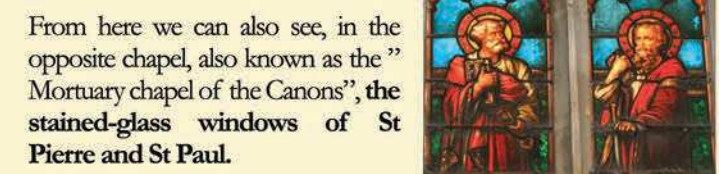


Advancing a little, we can see, in the choir a very large, anonymous, painting of the Assomption of Virgin Mary.



The choir, fully panelled in walnut, has 44 mobile seats parted in two rows. The first seat on the left side, sculpted, was intended for the priest.

A 17th century lectern is placed in the middle of the stalls. From the same period was an altarpiece in marble, now replaced by a wooden one.



From here we can also see, in the opposite chapel, also known as the "Mortuary chapel of the Canons", the stained-glass windows of St Pierre and St Paul.





collegiate church of St Pancrace Aups



Crédits photos : dignois.fr ; paroisse Saint-Pancrace

Baptismal font



In the baptismal font, the Aupsois receives baptism and enters the Church under the gracious eyes of the two cherubim angels and the parents of Virgin Mary – St Anne and St Joachim.



Above the door is an ex-voto recalling an episode in the life of the Ursuline nuns of Aups in the 17th century.

"ON SEPTEMBER 8 1651, THE MONASTERY OF ST URSULA, ON THE PRESENCE OF THE LADY OF THIS CITY OF AUPS, WAS MIRACULOUSLY PRESERVED BY THE INTERSESSION OF THE MOST HOLY VIRGIN FROM THE DANGER OF BEING SWEEP AWAY BY THE FLOODING WATER".



st Pancrace Chapel



Like in the other chapels, this one, also in baroque style, **the altarpiece is in the Aix-tradition of the 17th century**. It is formed of four twinned columns, adorned with windings of golden vines. On the left of the pediment, a statue of Archangel St Michel, dressed as a soldier. His spear has been lost. On the right a guardian angel gives its hand to a child. Both are framing a Virgin with the Child.

The painting, painter unknown, represents the **decapitation of the young Pancrace** to whom the Virgin presents a crown and the palm of martyrdom.

The original 16th century bust was stolen in 1975 during the patronal feast. It is replaced by a bust sculpted by an inhabitant of Aups.

St Pancrace is one of the many martyrs during the diocletian persecution between 284 and 305. Born in Phrygia in a noble, pagan family, very early he became an orphan and was taken care of by his uncle Denis with whom he went to Rome.

Seduced by the Christian religion they demanded to be baptized. By that time persecution raged in Rome. The young teenager was arrested and brought to court where the judge demanded him to repudiate his Christian faith. Unyielding, Pancrace refused.

In accordance with law, he was brought outside the city and decapitated in 304 on the Via Aurelia. He was 14 years old. He was put to rest in the cemetery of Calepodio. He is celebrated on May 12.



st Clair Chapel



The only witness of the dedication to St Clair, bishop and martyr of Aquitaine, is a bust of him in the museum.

The chapel is also known as **the chapel of the Marquis of Fabry-Fabregues**. Native to Aups, it is one of the oldest families of Provence, known since the 13th century in the region, in diplomacy and local life.

This family has significantly contributed to the embellishment of the church by the old master-altar, the large stained-glass window of the Immaculated Conception, rose window above the porch as well as the painting and the predella of St Barthelemy.



In 1641, Gaspard de Fabry, lord of Fabregues, neighboring hamlet of Aups, ordered an imposing ensemble for the altarpiece of his own chapel by **the painter Jean Daret from Aix**. The main painting depicts the **martyrdom of St Barthelemy** and the predella, seen under the stained-glass window in the next chapel, tells the story of how he was sent out to christianise India, were donated to the Collegiale. The date and the circumstances are not known.

The little altar in white marble, 19th century, has probably been installed after the painting.



Between St Mary Magdalene and the executioner, **the Lord Fabry can be seen sitting on a horse.**



On the opposite wall, a Pieta is exposed.

canons' mortuary Chapel



This chapel does not have any altar but is decorated with a painting of the Presentation of Jesus in the Temple. Painting by **Michel-Francois Dardre-Bardon** (1700-1783). Born in Aix, student to Jean-Baptiste van Loo, he was one of the masters to the painter Fragonard of Grasse.

From this chapel you enter into the former sacristy, today a **museum of religious art**.

Here you find, among other things, the relic of St Pancrace, different pieces of artwork from 14th (processional cross) to 19th centuries. Admire especially the liturgical vestments decorated by Ursuline nuns of Aups in the 17th century. On top of the show-cases there are several reliquaries. The wooden door in the entrance comes from the ancient parochial church.

Chasuble



Reliquary saint Pancrace



saint Clair

choir



The large stained-glass window in the flat-bottomed chevet was installed after 1854, year the pope Pius 9 proclaimed the dogma of the Immaculate Conception. The Virgin is holding a lily and, to her left, King Salomon, holding the beginning of the psalm 126: "If the Lord does not build the house. In vain do the masons toil". On her other side, St Augustin, bishop and Doctor of the Church.

Under the stained-glass window is a painting of **the Last Supper** and an escutcheon of an old Aupsoise family, les Gassiers.

The other stained-glass windows depict **St Pancrace** with sword and falcon, and **St Roch** with his dog.



Eight small windows of the choir and the nef are adorned with stained-glass windows depicting the saints of the region: bse Delphine, St Honorat, St Marthe St Sebastien, St Roscline, St Leonce, St Marie-Madeleine and St André.



On the keystone a gilded rose surrounded by fleurs-de-lys, bears the devotion of Aups: **"Vive partout"**.

By turning towards the entrance, on our right we see **the chair in walnut** with its abat-voix (sounding-board) and its wrought-iron banister from 1754. In front of it you find **the bench reserved for the administrators of the parochial factory**. (i.e. the material assets of the parish)



The grandstand overlooking the entrance was built in early 19th century to receive an **italian organ**, ordered in 1830. It was manufactured by **Giosué Agati**, renowned factor in Tuscany. In the 1920s the instrument was dismantled, and in 1997 completely rebuilt by the factor Yves Cabourdin.