

Metropolitan Basilica of Notre-Dame des Doms



The Metropolitan Cathedral of Notre-Dame des Doms is the cathedral church of the Avignon Diocese and the archbishop seat. It ever has been dedicated to the Blessed Virgin Mary. Its name Notre-Dame des Doms may derive either from the Latin "De domo" (church of the bishop's house) or more simply from the Provençal word meaning "height." Its origins are very ancient, and its architecture preserves medieval elements (porch, bell tower, frescoes). Major works were carried out in the 17th century (galleries, chapels, apse). Restored to worship and renovated after the damage suffered during the Revolution, it was re-established as a cathedral in 1836, and was elevated to a minor basilica in 1854.

Saint-Pierre Basilica

Erected in the early Middle Ages, Saint-Pierre owed its reconstruction to the pontifical period. Cardinal Pierre des Prés, Bishop of Palestrina, obtained from Pope



Innocent VI its elevation to a collegiate church and the creation of a chapter of ten canons in 1358; he had the church's chevet and cloister built. The construction was resumed in the 15th century, completed with the bell tower in 1495. The church has undergone numerous embellishments: a rich façade (1512-1527), superb gilded woodwork (17th century), and numerous paintings. The building

was enlarged in the 19th century with a south aisle. In 2012, Pope Benedict XVI elevated Saint-Pierre to the rank of minor basilica.

Collegiate Church of Saint-Agricol

Considered the oldest and first church of Avignon for housing the remains of Saint Agricol, 7th-century bishop and patron saint of the city, this church benefited from the largesse of Pope John XXII who elevated it to a collegiate church with a chapter of canons in 1321. Rebuilt in the 14th c., it underwent significant alterations in the following century (façade and forecourt, side chapels). The bell tower, square in plan like Provençal cathedrals, built in 1537, was raised in 1746. Composed of a nave and two aisles, it contains an important collection of furniture, sculptures, and paintings from the 16th to 18th c..



Collegiate Church of Saint-Didier

Of ancient foundation and located in the heart of the city, the church benefited from the generosity of Cardinal Bertrand de Déaux, papal legate, who at his death requested its elevation to collegiate church, given by Pope Innocent VI in 1355. The building was rebuilt from 1356 to 1359, dedicated to Saint Didier and the Transfiguration; very homogeneous, with a single nave bordered by small chapels, it is closed by an apse lit by large lancet windows. The bell tower, openwork, is of the Avignon type; it has a carillon. The Church, which was completely emptied during the Revolution, saw in the 19th century the restoration of its furniture and decorations, enriched by the recent discovery and restoration of the choir murals; it has received many remarkable works of art.



Church of Saint-Symphorien – Les Carmes

Currently placed under the patronage of Saint Symphorien, title inherited from a disappeared church, the Carmelite Church is from the former Convent of the Great Carmelites of Avignon, a mendicant order est. in 1267, which benefited from Pope John XXII generosity for the church and convent construction, around 1320. The conventual church wasn't consecrated until 1520, under the title of Our Lady of Mount Carmel. This church, now the largest in Avignon, experienced some setbacks requiring the reconstruction of the framework, the south wall, and then the vault. Its numerous side chapels recall that it housed many trade confraternities. Having become a parish church as early as 1792, this church received in the 19th century important decorations and works of art from various churches in the city. The cloister of the former convent is one of the few to have survived.



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SPIRITUAL & CULTURAL

The altar

It is the Table of the Lord, covered with a cloth, where the Liturgy of the Eucharist (oblation and meal) is celebrated. The high altar or main altar, fixed and raised by three steps (recalling the Trinity), is often made of marble and adorned with sculptures. The modern altar, closer to the faithful, allows the celebration of Mass facing the assembly. All altars, including secondary altars, are consecrated and have a sacred stone under which relics are deposited. When placed against a wall, altars may be surmounted by sculpted reredos in stone or gilded wood, and by a painting.

The Baptismal Fonts

Reserved for baptisms, it is always located at the entrance of the church, as baptisteries were in ancient times. Baptism by infusion (pouring water on the forehead) is performed in a stone or metal basin, often decorated.

The Pulpit and the Rood Screen

Rood screen and pulpit are places of the Word. Most rood screens - partition walls separating the choir from the nave, surmounted by a gallery where the Epistle and Gospel were read - have been destroyed and replaced for readings in the choir by ambos, sometimes bearing the symbol of Saint John's eagle. Pulpits, in stone or carved wood, topped with a sounding board, were placed on one side of the nave to allow the faithful to hear sermons well at a time when there was no sound system; some have been preserved.

Stained Glass Windows

They are signs of light, whether in white glass, grisaille, or colors. They take the form of rose windows or large windows. In the South, windows on the north side are often walled up because of the mistral wind.

The Organ Gallery

Singing and music naturally accompany prayer, through the joy, recollection, or sadness expressed by sounds and words. The location generally chosen to place the great organ is a gallery, built at the entrance of the church. But some organs have been placed near the choir according to the Italian tradition.



ARCHITECTURAL

The Forecourt

For centuries, cemeteries were located around the church, in close proximity to the dead, buried near the church in hope of resurrection, and the living. Today, the forecourt or porch is the place of welcome *par excellence*, preceding the door that opens onto the nave.

The nave

It is the part of the church, between the portal and the choir, where the faithful gather. It can be in one piece, in vast proportions, or accompanied by aisles or side naves serving as circulation corridors. Traditionally, it faces east, toward the rising sun, sign of the Risen Jesus Christ, Light rising from the night of death.

The choir

The choir, also called sanctuary, is the place where the bishop and priests stand for liturgical celebrations; located opposite the main façade, it is traditionally separated from the nave by a low partition, formerly a communion rail. The high altar and the altar allowing the celebrant to celebrate Mass facing the assembly are highlighted (candlesticks and candles); the red light signifies the presence of Christ in the tabernacle. The choir may have a flat chevet or be equipped with a rounded apse.

Chapels

Often arranged in the spaces left free outside between the church's buttresses, the side chapels offer reserved spaces for gathering and prayer, formerly entrusted to trade confraternities, devotional confraternities, and family burials, more generally today dedicated to the Virgin, to saints whose relics they may house, to particular devotions (scapular, Blessed Sacrament, and veneration of the Cross).

The Bell Tower

The bell tower, whose use dates back to the 11th century, can be square in shape (reserved in Provence for cathedrals and major churches) or in the form of an openwork spire revealing the bells (Avignon-type bell towers). Bells signal services and events, but are also signs of awakening, gathering, and prayer. They bear a name and are entitled to baptism.