

60th anniversary of construction of the Chapel Notre Dame de la vigne et du Rosaire Cairanne, France

STORY

It was on Sunday October 15, 1961 that the chapel dedicated to Notre Dame de la vigne et du Rosaire, (*Our Lady of the Vine and the Rosary*) was solemnly blessed by Monsignor URTASSUM, Archbishop of Avignon.

We can say that by fulfilling the promise made during the war, the Cairanne parish built a monument dedicated to the Virgin which is very original.

Back to History ... In 1944, a crucial year for our country! In the midst of the anguish and worries of this sad time, at the beginning of Spring, the Virgin through Notre Dame du Puy, by a happy initiative, visited most of the diocese parishes, attracting many believers.

Welcomed at the village gate, the Virgin was carried in procession to the church in the village (the old village to day) where a beautiful ceremony took place. Everyone wanted to pray the Virgin who was a symbol of hope.

The moment seemed right, and Father Denis PLANTEVIN, then parish priest of Cairanne (1937-1945) consecrated the parish to Notre Dame and, in agreement with the parish council, made a wish thus recorded in the parish archives:

"When passing Notre Dame du Puy's in Cairanne, the solemn and public promise to build a Chapel was made. The Chapel will be built in the lower part of the village as soon as circumstances will permit. It will be dedicated to the Immaculate Heart of Mary in order to obtain the protection of the Blessed Virgin in bad days and to promote the religious upliftment of the parish. Monsignor LLOBET, consulted, fully approves the project by his letter of March 23, 1944".

A few months later, Cairanne was in grave danger. A shootout between resistance fighters and occupiers, the latter seeing themselves threatened, aimed the DCA guns on the village. But by a miracle, a few shells were lost in the mountain without causing damage to the village. The Virgin had diverted the danger by granting the wish!

WHY THIS PLACE?

The Cairanne church was rebuilt in 1853. At that time the village had around 1,200 inhabitants and the majority of them were gathered within the village walls. It was restored by Father Pierre CHEVALIER being in Cairanne from 1949-1960. Its dimensions allows most of the large ceremonies. However, after its reconstruction, most of the inhabitants moved to the hill foot a more favorable and less steep place. A new center was created at the two main crossroads. Schools, town halls and trading houses were built there, while many farmers moved to their farms all over the territory. At the end of the 1939-1945 war, the old

village church is visible from far but it remains surrounded by ruins with only about twenty inhabitants around the antic Templiers watch tower bearing now a belfry.

In those days, almost all of the faithful had to take a long walk and climb the hill to attend church services. Also, there were no devotional exercises on weekdays. It can be pointed out that the funeral procession represents almost a four kilometer walk from the church to the cemetery. It was a hard time!

At that time, it was impossible to envisage the church transfer which still remained as the village parish with its Sunday mass and ceremonies place.

But during the following years, the idea of fulfilling the promise by building a right-sized chapel in the new center, would greatly promote the fulfillment of religious duties. This is why a large number of parishioners met Father Pierre CHEVALIER, suggesting him to be involved of this idea. The location which seemed the most favorable could not be obtained. A new opportunity was offered for a land close to the parish hall, not far from the new center, outside the road traffic. Thanks to the generosity of some and the understanding of others, it was acquired in 1957. Generous donations made it possible to begin work immediately.

M. MOGNETTI of Avignon was appointed as the architect.

Monsignor URTASSUM came to bless the foundation stone of the future chapel on March 21 1958.

THE NEW CHAPEL

Three years were necessary for the construction of the chapel. Let us recall here who the artisans were. First, the donors in the field and the subscribers, without whom nothing could have been done. We will not quote names, there are many and certainly they wouldn't have wished for that. Our Lady knows them, she will not let herself be defeated in generosity and will know how to reward them. Father Pierre CHEVALIER took this work to heart; a lot of problems were solved successfully but he had to leave by obedience before the chapel achievement.

Father Auguste CHARLES was able to continue the work with problems to solve. He had roses but also the thorns!

Volunteer parishioners, devoted men and young people of the village, ensured the transport in carts of the materials, gravel and pebbles from the Aygues river and made the excavations and the foundations with picks, shovels and elbow grease. M. Fontana, entrepreneur in Villedieu, was in charge of masonry.

The building is 20 meters long and 10 meters wide (double square). There was a stone quarry nearby which was exploited to build the village walls and gates in the past. However all the houses in the village were built with large pebbles from the Aygues.

M. MOGNETTI proposed to use stones leaving the stones visible but carefully jointed, which was agreed by the committee. Father Marcel ROY, a master glassmaker of great talent, introduced light in the chapel. Visible timbers were provided by the AUGIER company from Vaison. The front door was made by M. CAIRE, carpenter from Cairanne. The steeple, a simple arcade which dominates the roof, is in Vaison stone. The altar stands out thanks to the luminous background. It was made of a slab of stone from Vers, carved by M. BOUVAS from Bourg-St-Andéol who also carved the sanctuary steps and paving. It is the very simple table of sacrifice, where mass can be celebrated either in the traditional way of the time, or in front of believers. It was offered by a generous family in memory of a very painful event

THE WINDOWS

What makes the charm and unique ornamentation of the chapel are undoubtedly the stained-glass windows, the master work of Father Marcel ROY (Master glassmaker). They are made of glass slab tinted in the mass, the thickness of which is around three centimeters. To fully understand and love this work, some explanations are necessary. The stained glass windows of a religious building should not distract the attention of the faithful. In a place consecrated to God and to his worship, they are essentially the means of creating an atmosphere favorable to meditation and prayer. It is necessary, of course, "to see it clearly enough", but only what it takes: a certain sifting of the light, a soft penumbra, are favorable to the soul elevation towards God. It seems that the main concern of the master glassmakers, who were monks, was to give an atmosphere to the building through the modulation of colors. Physically, red exalts the joy of the heart, blue peacefulness, yellow glory and life.

North and South sides, the stained-glass windows are not figurative. Don't look for some hidden meaning. The rhythm can be compared to that of a Gregorian song which accompanies prayer without distracting attention. On the gray walls, they form a frieze of multicolored lights, a kind of modern "Greek". In a non-figurative stained-glass window, the colors, each of which has its own life, aggressive or calm, respond to each other, complement each other, collide and finally harmonize. From their relationship is born expression and, through this, the work content lives and provokes a resonance in the one who sees it, because it transforms the chapel by its presence.

As for the large luminous fresco in the background, you should see it vibrate under the sun rays in the afternoon. It is a wonder that we never get tired! The Virgin and Child, Christ on the Cross are then radiant with glory. We clearly understand here the symbolism of Our Lady of the Vine and the Rosary: for Christ, the understandable theme: "I am the vine, you are the branches". We immediately have the "idea" of these schematized vine branches which rise towards the holy Christ wounds colored against the background

Such richly "clad" walls, a simple altar but of noble material, isn't that enough for the believers who come to pray their Creator and greet the Queen of Winegrowers?

THE BELL

The bell which was baptized, after the chapel blessing has also its own history, let us recall it here. Although recently released, redesigned and rejuvenated, from the PACCARD foundry in Annecy, its brass had already vibrated and announced many joys and sorrows on the Comtat borders at the Rochegude bell tower, clearly visible from Cairanne. She was irreparably cracked, victim of popular joy, when announcing the 1918 armistice. Shortly afterwards, the marquis de Rochegude donated a new bell to his parish, keeping however the cracked bell that his great-grandfather had offered to the parish just before the Revolution. During forty years, she had been silent on the terrace of the château de Rochegude. A committee member dared dealing with the marquis of Rochegude about the cracked bell. At that time he was the chateau owner. He very kindly offered it to the parish of Cairanne. Recast and slightly thinner, it weighs almost three quintals and takes its place in the steeple which has been reserved for it, from where it calls the faithful to prayer. Here is the inscription that was engraved on the bronze:

"I was given to the parish of Cairanne by the Count of Béarn de Rochegude, recast by the sons of Georges PACCARD.

"Ninety families and Friends of Cairanne, represented by Mr. Frédéric Alary have allowed me to ring again the joys and the sorrows.

"My name is Anne-Marie, I was baptized by His Excellency Monsignor URTASSUN, Archbishop of Avignon, on October 15, 1961.

"Father Auguste Charles, parish priest, having succeeded Father Pierre Chevalier, Marie-Louise DANIEL was my godmother, Germain AUBERT de Valréas, was my godfather"

Text taken from *"A wreath of memories"* by M. Frederic ALARY President of the Parish Association at that time.

Updated and completed by M. Christian IMBS, President of the Parish Association (2000 until now) in cooperation with the *Association Cairanne et son vieux village*.

Bishop FONLUPT François of Avignon inaugurated and blessed posters on October 24, 2021, for the 60th anniversary of the chapel.