



2023

Guided tour of St George's Church and the Castle district

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INSIDE THE CHURCH***

Municipality and Parish of Châtenois

2023

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Châtenois, June 2023

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The Chancel

1. The altar

The Baroque style altar consists of different elements. Only the altar itself (1760) and the **six candlesticks** in gilded wood date from the 18th century. The tabernacle, delicately crowned with angels and cherubs, dates from 1930-1935. The ensemble has an airy grace about it; it manages to retain a degree of solemnity, which prevents it from overshadowing the impressive painting of Saint George in its Louis XIV frame. The painting was done by Mathias Jehl in 1765 and was restored by J. Schlienger in 1868. The altar facing the congregation and the ambo, which are in the same style as the main altar, were made in 2009. They were designed and made by master carpenter Jean Eblin in partnership with Marc Frohn, who is renowned for sculpting church furnishings.

The chancel walls - Decoration

2.1 The chancel walls

The imitation marbles dating from 1760 were restored in 1997. The wall on the left is the original wall whereas the wall on the right was fully renovated in keeping with its original style. The gilding and imitation marbles are the work of master painter Roland Dontenville in partnership with Pierre Fritsch from the Higher Institute of Painting and Decorating of Alsace. The **painting** on the left depicts the Virgin of the Apocalypse crowned with stars (unsigned), and the one on the right represents Christ on the cross (signed by Jung).

2.2 A/. The chancel walls - Statues

On the two lateral walls there are **wooden polychrome statues from the 18th century** representing the martyrs Saint Stephen and Saint Lawrence, Bishop Arbogast and Pope Urban, the patron saint of winemakers.

2.2 B/. Saint Lawrence of Rome

Saint Lawrence of Rome was born around 225 in Huesca, in the province of Aragon in Spain, and studied humanities in Caesaraugusta (Caesar Augustus was the name of the first emperor), the present-day Saragossa, where he met the future Pope Sixtus II. The latter called him to Rome, where he became one of the Pope's seven deacons; he was the custodian of the Church's treasury, part of which was distributed to the poor. During the persecution of Christians committed under the reign of Emperor Valerian, the Pope and his seven deacons were captured. The Pope was sentenced to death in 258. Before his execution by decapitation, he tasked Lawrence with distributing all the treasures and sacred vessels and vestments to the poor before they could fall into the hands of his persecutors. The holy chalice (out of which Christ drank at the last supper), which was part of the treasure, was sent to his parents in Spain; it is currently in Valencia Cathedral. Lawrence died a few days later on a torture rack (represented on his statue). He is venerated as a saint and martyr by the Catholic Church on 10 August and is the patron saint of the poor.

2.2 C/. Saint Stephen

Saint Stephen (Stephanos in Greek, which means one who is crowned) was born in 5 AD to a Jewish family, but later converted to Christianity. He is mentioned in the Acts of the Apostles. He was arrested for preaching the Gospel of Jesus Christ and was brought before Saul and the Sanhedrin of Jerusalem (the traditional legislative assembly of Israel as well as its supreme legal court). He was accused of blasphemy for claiming that Jesus was the Son of God and

was executed by lapidation around 35 AD. He thus became the first Christian martyr. As for Saul the persecutor, he converted to Christianity after meeting Christ on the road to Damascus. Going by the name of Paul, he was to become the Apostle to the Gentiles (or the pagans); with him leading the way, Christian communities were created all over the Roman Empire: it was the beginning of the Universal (Catholic) Church. In the 5th century, the Empress Eudocia, wife of Theodosius II, had a church built on the site where the lapidation had taken place; it contained the remains of the saint. The cult of saints began with Saint Stephen: he is celebrated on 26 December by both Catholics and Protestants and on 27 December by the Orthodox Church. He is, amongst other things, the patron saint of deacons. He is represented here carrying the martyr's palm and the stones of his lapidation.

2.2 D/. Saint Arbogast of Strasbourg

Saint Arbogast was born into a noble family in Aquitaine at the start of the 7th century. In the first instance, he retreated to the old Diocese of Coire/Chur in Switzerland, where he lived in a cell with only the barest necessities. He then went to live as a hermit in the forest of Haguenau, which has been known as the "Holy Forest" ever since. Along with some monks and the evangelist abbot Saint Deodatus (Saint Dié) of Nevers, whose collegiate church would give rise to the town of Saint Dié, Arbogast had a church and a monastery built in Surbourg at the northern end of the forest of Haguenau, financed through endowments made by King Dagobert II (629-639).

Despite his pleas, he was named as successor to Rotharius, the Bishop of Strasbourg, when the latter died; he would remain just as humble whilst carrying out this new mission. The first cathedral dedicated to Our Lady was built on the site of an ancient Roman temple dedicated to Mercury, who was Christianised in the 4th century. To ensure that his clergy were virtuous, he developed Christianity in his diocese. It was a period when dukes and kings favoured the development of Christianity by building abbeys, which were sometimes in competition with the diocese. When Arbogast died on 21 July 678, he was already venerated; by this time, his reputation had spread throughout the Rhine area. He was canonized and his relics were shared between Strasbourg (the Montagne Verte area where he had a cell) and Surbourg. He is celebrated, particularly in Alsace, on 21 July.

2.2 E/. Saint Urban, the pope who is the patron saint of Alsatian winemakers

Saint Urban, who was born in Rome, became Pope Urban I in the year 222 on the death of Pope Callixtus I. He was the 17th Pope of the Catholic Church. He died on 23 May 230 and his tomb is said to be in Rome, in the Catacombs of Saint Callixtus, in Via Appia. Saint Urban was venerated by the Germanic world (which Alsace was part of until the 17th century) as the patron saint of winemakers and invoked as protector of the vineyards (shown here with a bunch of grapes). He is celebrated on 25 May, which is an important date because, according to popular belief, the quality of the harvest depends on the weather conditions on that day: "fair weather on Saint Urban's Day heralds a good wine harvest".

This date also marks the end of late frosts, called "Cold Sophie" in Alsace, which cause so much damage to the vines, as well as being the day when the first diseases appear in the vineyards. Moreover, it is around this period that the previous year's wine finishes its "ageing" process and can therefore be bottled.

In Central Alsace, the Guild of Saint Urban is especially celebrated in Kintzheim, where the saint's statue is paraded through the village in May. Mass is followed by a procession, allowing onlookers to admire the floral arrangements and the "loyala", which are small wine barrels in honour of wine.

2.3 Two stained glass windows dedicated to two prominent Alsatian saints: Saint Odile and Saint Léon/Leo IX

2.3 A/. Saint Odile

Born around 660, **Odile of Hohenbourg**, otherwise known as **Saint Odile**, was the daughter of Etichon-Adalric, who was the Duke of Alsace. Born blind and consequently rejected by her father, legend has it that she recovered her sight when she was baptized in Baumes-les-Dames or Moyennoutiers. This miracle is perceived as a symbol of the christianisation of Alsace at that time: her eyes opening up to the true religion (that is what the eyes on the bible in the stained glass window are alluding to). From then on, she was called Odile (God's light). When she returned to her father, she refused to get married and devoted her life to helping the poor and the sick. Moved by his daughter's dedication, her father ended up giving her Hohenbourg castle, which she transformed into a female convent on the mount that would come to bear her name, the Mont Sainte-Odile. Revered for her deep spirituality and devotion to the disinherited, she became an object of veneration upon her death in Hohenbourg in 720 and her cult spread throughout Europe. She was canonized in the 11th century by a descendent of the Adalric family, Pope Léon IX himself, who officially launched the pilgrimage trail in 1049. Even to this day, the trail continues to attract a large number of pilgrims. In 1946, Saint Odile was proclaimed the "Patron Saint of Alsace" by Pope Pius XII. There is a water source just below the monastery, which is said to heal eye diseases.

2.3 B/. Saint Léon IX was born **Bruno d'Eguisheim-Dabo** in Eguisheim in Alsace or in Dabo (Dagsburg) in the Vosges on 21 June 1002. He came from a highly noble family; his father was the Count of Nordgau, in Alsace, and his mother belonged to the aristocracy of the county of Dabo. When he was the Bishop of Toul, the German Emperor nominated him as Pope. The Roman clergy accepted his nomination, and he was crowned Pope on 12 February 1049, becoming Pope Léon IX. His pontificate was marked by the start of the Gregorian Reforms, the object of which was to address several abuses within the Church, including simony (the buying or selling of sacred things or church offices) and nicolaitanism (clerical marriage). In 1054, Léon IX sent his legates to Constantinople to reconcile the two Churches of the East and West, which, due to theological discords and power struggles, had been divided for a very long time. In fact, the outcome was the final separation between the two Churches, in spite of Emperor Constantine IX's efforts. On 16 July 1054, three months after the pope's death (he died on 19 April 1054), the legates excommunicated Patriarch Michael I Cerularios and his supporters. The latter retaliated by excommunicating all the Latin legates, thus opening the schism between Eastern and Western Christianity. Léon IX was recognised as a saint by the Roman Catholic Church in 1087.

3. A processional cross

A processional cross decorated with beautiful marquetry and mother-of-pearl inlays stands at the entrance to the chancel; it was made in Jerusalem in 1763 for the Order of Friars Minor Recollect of Saint Anthony friary in Sélestat. During the Reign of Terror (1793-1794), it was placed in Châtenois Parish Church.

4. The Virgin of the Apocalypse

This gilded wooden statue by an unknown artist dates from 1780-1785. Its author very realistically represents a passage from chapter 12 of the Apocalypse of Saint John: this woman "clothed with the sun, the moon under her feet, crushing the snake's head (symbol of Evil), and upon her head a crown of twelve stars" gave birth to Christ, the Messiah. She symbolises the Church, that is to say, the religious community. While taking refuge in the

desert, she receives God's support when confronted with the dragon (Evil) and saves the community of believers, represented by the Church. It is an allegory of the victory of God over the forces of Evil. Later, she would frequently be identified as being Mary, the mother of Jesus. This is also the subject of a mural painting on the left wall of the chancel.

The statue was admirably restored in 2020 by Victor Karpenko, who restores works of art in his Strasbourg workshop.

The Nave

5. Castinetum

In front of the chancel, on the right-hand side, there is a gilded sandstone baptismal font, which dates from 1762. It originally had a wooden lid surmounted by a statuette of John the Baptist. Its base has a chestnut tree on it; this is the local coat of arms, and it is also where Châtenois gets its name from (it was called Castinetum in Roman times).

6. The grand chandelier

The grand Baccarat crystal chandelier was made by the company Delihus of Strasbourg as a "Pompadour style chandelier with 52 bronze lights made to look like gold" for the sum of 1 163 Francs, which included the price of the mechanism itself, the cost of assembling and installing it, and the workers' travel expenses. It was financed in 1869 by a donation from Miss Odile Conti, the spinster daughter of the grocer Dominique Conti.

7. Two polychrome bas-reliefs

On the first pillars there are two polychrome bas-reliefs: one, which depicts the Birth of Jesus (on the left) and the other, which depicts the adoration of the Magi (on the right). They date from the first quarter of the 16th century and are the work of Jean Bongart, who was a student of Schongauer (1445/1450-1491); he was a renowned painter and engraver from Colmar who lived at the end of the Middle Ages (Alsace was part of the Holy Roman Empire at that time). The artist also went by the name of Hans von Kolmar. These two works of art were originally in the Franciscan Church in Kaysersberg.

8. The four Saints

The painted and gilded wooden pulpit is a beautiful Baroque ensemble dating from the second half of the 18th century; it features the four apostles in gilded wood with their respective symbols.

From the end of the 2nd century, Irenaeus of Lyon started the tradition of comparing the apostles to the four hundred animals surrounding God's throne, as mentioned in the Apocalypse of Saint John: "the first animal resembled a lion, the second a young bull, the third had a human face, and the fourth animal looked like an eagle in full flight." This tradition was unanimously adopted in the 5th century: Mark is the lion, Luke is the bull, Matthew is the man and John is the eagle (which symbolises the prophet).

9. A/. The Silbermann organs

There has been an organ in Châtenois Parish Church since 1618: traditionally, it was the schoolmaster who was in charge of it. The people responsible for activating the organ bellows were paid by the municipality.

When the church was being reconstructed, it was decided that a new organ should be built; the instrument was financed by logging. Jean André Silbermann (1712-1783) was commissioned with building the organ; he had taken over the family business at the age of 22

after learning the ropes from his father, André Silbermann (1678-1734). His father, who was born in Kleinbobritsch in Saxony and died in Strasbourg, was already renowned in Alsace for the 34 organs he had built. His two most famous organs can be found in the abbeys of Marmoutier and Ebersmunster and are extremely well preserved. Four of his 13 children went on to become organ builders, among them Jean André, who built the organ in Châtenois Parish Church.

It took Jean André Silbermann two years, from 1763 to 1765, to build the Châtenois organ. In addition to his restoration and enlargement work, he built 57 organs between 1734 and 1783, principally in Alsace, Lorraine and Germany. Two centuries later, the vicissitudes of the past (World War I, among other things) and the need to adapt the instrument to modern tastes made it necessary to restore the organ. An organ builder named Alfred Kern carried out the restoration work in 1973, the year in which the instrument was listed and classified by the French Historic Monument Association. This classic French instrument was restored to its former glory; however, several adjustments were required to adapt it to use during mass. It is a magnificent instrument with excellent acoustics, still used today to give occasional concerts, which are always extremely popular.

9. B/. Saint Faith (Sainte Foy)

Saint Faith was born in Agen at the end of the 2nd century. Like Saint George and Saint Sebastian, she was martyred in Agen in 303 during the reign of co-emperors Diocletian and Maximian because she was a Christian; she was only 13 years old. Saint George and Saint Sebastian were martyred in the same year. In the 9th century, her relics were transferred (stolen by a monk called Aronide from Conques, according to legend) to the Abbey of Conques, which is situated on the Pilgrimage Route of Santiago de Compostela, where her cult developed significantly.

But why does a saint venerated in Conques in Rouergue feature here in Châtenois? In fact, it was in Sélestat in the 12th century that people began to venerate Saint Faith. It all began at the end of the 11th century, when Hildegard of Bûren (the grandmother of the first emperor Hohenstaufen) gifted the church she had built in Sélestat to the Abbey of Conques. Monks came from Rouergue to run it and in the following century a priory was built there: it governed the town, which had become an imperial town in the 13th century, for almost three centuries. Today we can still see the very beautiful Romanesque Abbey Church of Saint Faith (Eglise Sainte-Foy), which was partly financed by the Emperor Frederick Barbarossa. In the centre of the dome there is a painting that depicts the crowning of the Virgin Mary.

The side-aisles

10. The side altars

The side altars display the three characters so typical of Baroque art. While the pediment has survived from the Renaissance period, the columns, engaged or not, are now purely decorative. The separations between the three sections of the altar are emphasised by marked overhangs. Each element is sumptuously decorated with swirls and plant-like patterns, which add movement and fantasy to the ensemble, as well as with imitation marble. A special mention should be made of the “turquoise” (cyan blue) medallion on the altar, which was very highly valued in the 18th century.

10.1 A/. The side altar on the right

There are two paintings of Saint Sebastian, who is the second patron saint of the parish. The bottom one dates from the start of the 19th century and shows the saint holding the martyrs’

palm branch in his right hand. Above it, we can see a medallion in which an angel is handing a palm branch to Saint Sebastian, whose body is pierced with arrows; it was painted in 1958 by the watercolour artist René Kuder, who came from a village next to Villé. A very beautiful statue of Saint Anne stands on the altar – the artist is unknown.

10.1 B/. Saint Sebastian

Saint Sebastian was born in Narbonne, Gaul, in the 3rd century. He was raised in Milan as a Roman citizen and lived at the same time as Saint George; like Saint George, he was a soldier, and he also shared the same fate as Saint George in the same year. He was held in high esteem by Diocletian and his co-emperor Maximianus Herculius, who promoted him to serve in the first Praetorian Guard, unaware that he was a Christian. During the Great Persecution it was revealed that he was a Christian, whereupon he was ordered to make sacrifices to the Roman gods. When he refused, the rulers sentenced him to death for defending the faith of his fellow Christians and for performing several miracles. First of all, he was attached to a post and pierced with arrows before finally being clubbed to death after miraculously healing from his first wounds. Christians began to honour his memory in the following century. He is the patron saint of archers, soldiers and the Swiss Guard. He is also, along with Peter and Paul, the third patron saint of Rome. Christians pray to him for protection against plagues and epidemics.

10.1 C/. Saint Anne

Saint Anne was the wife of Joachim (according to the – unauthenticated – Protoevangelium of James, dating from the start of the 2nd century) and was thought to be the mother of Mary, who gave birth to Jesus. She was a Jew and was thought to have lived in Sepphoris near Nazareth in Galilee before moving to Jerusalem. Devotion to Saint Anne first developed in the East, at the same time as the cult of the Virgin Mary. She is venerated in many countries. In Brittany, the pilgrimage of Saint-Anne d'Auray is particularly renowned. The large and very beautiful statue of Saint Anne was intended for the small chapel in the cemetery that bears her name. A befitting place was found for it in the church.

10.1 D/. René Kuder

René Kuder was an Alsatian painter born on 23 November 1882 in Villé (a few kilometres away from Châtenois). In 1905, he won a scholarship from the city of Strasbourg, which allowed him to pursue his studies at the prestigious Academy of Fine Arts of Munich. He specialised in pictorial art, which was considered to be of minor importance at that time; he made it prestigious. After gaining a solid reputation in Bavaria as “one of the most talented painters of the young generation”, he returned to Alsace in 1918 – which was once again French – where he lived firstly in Villé, and then in Strasbourg. He painted church tympana, ceilings, and the Stations of the Cross, notably in Val de Villé and other places such as Châtenois. During World War II, while in retirement in Auvergne, at the request of de Lattre de Tassigny and other generals, he painted frescoes and wall panels in military schools. He painted numerous watercolours of the bridges of Paris, and, above all, the streets, squares and bridges of Strasbourg, where he lived until his death in 1962.

10.2 The side altar on the left

The Holy Family

The altar on the left features Jesus' family, who lived in Nazareth in Galilee, in the north of Israel. The Christian doctrine states that he was conceived by the Holy Spirit in the body of his mother Mary, who was the daughter of Anne and Joachim. According to the Catholic

faith, his birth was without sin (this is the dogma of the Immaculate Conception of 1854). Mary's husband was Joseph, Jesus' adoptive father.

The concept of the Holy Family within the Church only dates from the first half of the 17th century, when the "immediate" family (with parents and children) began to take precedence; prior to that period, the "family" would have included all the relatives, and even the servants. The medallion contains a watercolour by René Kuder depicting Mary and her son Jesus.

11. Saint George

George of Lydda was born around 275-280 in Mazaca in Cappadocia (Turkey) into a noble Christian family of Greek origin. When he was fifteen, he became an officer in the Roman army. The emperor Diocletian, who had been his father's brother-in-arms, put him in charge of the Praetorian Guard, and then made him a military tribune. As a commander of military regions, he was promoted to the very high rank of camp prefect. The emperor, who wanted to preserve the unity of the empire, started attacking Christians, and on 24 February 303, he ordered the destruction of their churches. George resigned; he was arrested for destroying a tablet with the imperial edict obliging citizens to worship Apollo. The fact that he miraculously survived torture inspired many people to convert to Christianity. He was sentenced to death and was finally decapitated on Friday, 23 April 303; he was only 22 years old. Saint Sebastian, the second patron saint of Châtenois Parish Church, who, like Saint George, also commanded the Praetorian Guard, was executed in the same year.

Nineteen years later, the Emperor Constantine made him the patron saint of the Byzantium militia and built a church dedicated to his memory. Pope Gelasius I, on behalf of the Universal Church, canonized him in the year 494. The cult of Saint George developed in Rome at the end of the 7th century, then in the West in the 9th century, when he became the patron saint of England. As the patron saint of Christian knighthood, during the Crusades he also became the patron saint of various orders of knighthood, such as the Knights Templar, the Teutonic Order and the Order of the Garter... From the 12th century, Saint George became one of the 14 saints Christians prayed to for protection against epidemics.

Saint George is traditionally portrayed as a knight slaying a dragon, symbolising the victory of the Christian faith over the devil, of good over evil. He is the patron saint of numerous churches on military sites.

12. Altarpiece

These two Renaissance masterpieces were part of a four-panel wooden altarpiece carved in the style of engravings by Albrecht Dürer (1471-1528). Dürer was a German draughtsman, engraver and painter and one of the greatest European Renaissance masters. His engravings can be seen in Paris, in the *cabinet des estampes* (Prints and Drawings Department) of the National Library of France. The panel on the right depicts the birth of the Virgin Mary in a typical 16th century setting; the panel on the left represents Mary's coronation following her Assumption (rise to Heaven). The second and third panels are kept in the Unterlinden Museum in Colmar; they depict Mary visiting her cousin Elisabeth and the Birth of Jesus. This faithful reproduction of Albrecht Dürer's engravings was the work of Maus, a sculptor from the studio of Tilman Riemenschneider (1460-1531), who was a major Renaissance sculptor and contemporary of Albrecht Dürer. Riemenschneider was one of Martin Schongauer's students. The frames date from the 18th century.

13. The Holy Sepulchre

Essentially, this beautiful ensemble dates from the 15th century, i.e. from the Renaissance period; between 1997-1998, it was restored and rearranged in such a way as to faithfully reproduce the original work.

It would no doubt have been in the old church, but at some point in the past, it was disassembled; the statues were recessed into the wall at the back of the cemetery chapel in front of Christ's body lying on a slab, and the sleeping soldiers were recessed into the ramparts.

The restoration work was entrusted to the Schicke workshop in Colmar. The municipality, who wished to see these sculptures of great artistic value reinstated in the church, requested that a beige sandstone tomb be reconstructed below the slab on which Christ's body lay. The three statues represent the three Marys: Mary Magdalene, Mary of Clopas and Mary Salome, the two latter Marys being the half-sisters of Mary, the mother of Jesus. The sleeping soldiers were put back on the tomb. Contrary to what is written in the Gospels, they were not Roman soldiers; they were in fact Jewish guards. Following rumours about Jesus' possible resurrection, the high priest had asked Pilate to have the tomb guarded to prevent the body from being stolen.

Grave slabs

14.1 The grave slabs on the right aisle

The magnificent grave slabs of the Burst couple can be found here. The grave slab of Marie Engel, wife of bailiff Georges Burst, who died on 7 April 1701, is made from beautiful buff-coloured sandstone. That of the bailiff Georges Burst, who died on 9 May 1713 aged 81, bears his coat of arms: a lion. Georges Burst became a civil servant (Collector for the Grand Chapter of Châtenois) in 1658 and was then appointed as bailiff in 1682.

Georges Burst was born on 16 April 1632 in Sélestat. He was the son of a Sélestat farmer named Georges, originally from Mussig. He spent several years in Paris, where he learnt French; while he was there, he served as a private tutor to the President of the Parliament's children. In 1658, he was appointed Collector for the Grand Chapter of Châtenois, and in 1682, he subsequently became bailiff of the Seigneurie of Frankembourg-Châtenois; in his capacity as a lawyer, he was also a member of the Sovereign Council of Alsace. It was he who welcomed King Louis XIV to Châtenois in 1673. In 1659, he married Marie Engel (1645-1701), the daughter of Valentin, a dignitary in Saint Hippolyte, and Marie Wagner. For 55 years, Georges Burst played a leading role in the administration of Châtenois. His grandson Daniel Luc Weinemer succeeded him as the bailiff of Châtenois in 1713, an office that the Weinemer family held until 1789. The Burst-Weinemer family governed Châtenois for 107 years! Several of the Burst couple's offspring were ennobled.

14.2 The grave slabs on the left aisle

The funerary monument of Helene Beer, wife of Michel Rimmelin, is very elaborate; her husband was the bailiff of Châtenois and Frankembourg, and the Provost Marshal of Rosheim. She died on 7 July 1617, and is represented with her bailiff husband at the foot of the cross. The couple lived right next to the church, in the town hall (*maison bailliagère*), which was destroyed in 1632 by the Swedish; all that remains of it today is the central pinion. At the top of the funerary monument, the coat of arms shows a dog and a bear, which is a reference to the name Beer, as well as to the Rimmelin family's coat of arms.

Michel Rimmelin was born around 1537, he was appointed bailiff of Châtenois on 22 March 1572, and he died in 1584. He was the son of Jean-Bernard Rimmelin, who was a lawyer for the Grand Chapter of Châtenois. The Rimmelin family descended from a long line of renowned jurists dating back to the 15th century. In his deed of appointment, it is noted "that

he will reside in the house the Seignery owns in the Castle District, that he will benefit from the same privileges as enjoyed hitherto by the Provost who lived there. However, he must protect both the Kirchhoff (fortified cemetery) and its inhabitants and notify the authorities of all necessary repairs to the doors, walls or trenches, as well as to the dwellings within the Kirchhoff". The fact that there were such highly placed civil servants in Châtenois bears witness to the village's administrative role.

14.3 Memorial plaques outside the church

To the left of the main entrance, fixed to the wall, are the gravestones of Jean-Jacques Graff (born in 1690 in Obernai – died in 1743 in Châtenois, Collector of the Grand Chapter) and his wife Marie Barbara Goldstein (born in 1699 in Châtenois – died in 1729 in Châtenois). The couple were married on 9 November 1717 in Ebersheim where Graff's brother was the parish priest. Jean-Jacques Graff exercised his functions in Erstein first of all, then in Châtenois from 1727. His great grandson Michel Nicolas Auguste Graff (1812-1884) was the Minister of Public Works for two months in 1877.

The stained glass windows and the Stations of the Cross

15. Stained glass windows and the Stations of the Cross

The **Stations of the Cross** is also one of the church's works of art. It was painted in 1884 by Wolf Kunemann of the Munich School of Art and was placed in the church the following year at the initiative of Minister Joseph Frühauff, with the permission of Bishop Pierre Paul Stumpf. The Châtenois joiner Louis Dussourd made the frames for it and the locksmith Rapp made the fixations to hang it on the wall. Alphonse Gerber from Marckolsheim painted the frames and did the decorative gilding. The Stations were blessed on 8 February 1885.

The stained glass windows in the nave date from 1901-1902. All ten of them, along with those in the chancel, were made by the Ott company in Strasbourg. It is the oldest and most prolific producer of stained glass windows in Alsace, producing works of unrivalled quality; together with Werlé, Heitzmann and Ruhlmann, it is one of the four great Alsatian glassmakers. The Ott brothers not only made a large number of stained glass church windows in Alsace, they also produced painted glass for civil buildings. The company was also frequently entrusted with producing prototypes provided by artists. The stained glass windows in the nave were financed by families from Châtenois and depict their patron saints. The rector Butz, who initiated the project, financed the stained glass window dedicated to Saint Andrew (in the middle of the wall on the left).

16.1 Historical background

Alsace was under Roman rule from the 1st century B.C. to the 5th century A.D., as is borne out by coins, numerous fragments of roof tiles and Roman bricks found in Châtenois (or Kestenholz). A hypocaust, which was a Roman heating system, was probably used until the 13th century, which was when the first enclosure was built.

In the 5th century, which was characterized by a succession of invasions, notably by the Alamanni, Alsace became part of the Germanic world. A large number of Merovingian sarcophagi with Gallo-Roman tombstones were found in the immediate vicinity of the Castle District. Following the Treaty of Mersen in 870, which brought eastern Lotharingia under the rule of Louis the German, Alsace became politically part of the Germanic world. Alsace was then a province of the Holy Roman Empire of the German Nation until the 17th century. However, given its location on the fringes of the French-speaking world, for centuries, it was

particularly influenced by the regions of Lorraine and Burgundy (the architecture of the Church of Sainte Foy in Sélestat reflects a Burgundian influence). The noble von Kestenholz family had its residence here – perhaps a castle – from around the year 1000 up until the 14th century. In 1648, with the signing of the Treaty of Westphalia which brought an end to the Thirty Years War, Louis XIV acquired the south of Alsace and subsequently the rest of the territory through successive annexations. As a province of *l'étranger ordinaire* (familiar foreign land), Alsace was under French political and military administration; however, as a free zone, it retained close economic and cultural ties with the Holy Roman Empire.

16.2 Construction of the parish church of Châtenois 1759-1761

An early church already existed in Châtenois, probably on the site of the Roman hypocaust building, as borne out by a 10th-11th century cemetery adjacent to it. This church would have been devoted to Sainte Marie. The Romanesque church was built in the 12th century on the site of the present-day church. All that remains today is the bell tower that flanked the nave. The old church's chancel was located approximately 10 m back from the present entrance to the church – in keeping with tradition, the Romanesque church's chancel faced east and its entrance faced west, towards the mountains. It was already dedicated to Saint George.

In 1758, after 20 years of sterile debate on the need to rebuild a new church to replace the existing one, it was decided to rebuild Châtenois's Romanesque church; according to the deliberation records of the then local dignitaries “the joke among all those who see it...is that it required too much maintenance because of its height...”.

Two architects were called upon to provide their designs: Joseph Elmerich, originally from Au near Bregenz in the Vorarlberg (Austrian Tyrol), who had married and settled down in Villé, and the Swiss architect Balthasar Dorgler, probably from Berneck near the Vorarlberg, who lived in Ebersmunster, where he was working on the reconstruction of the abbey church. Joseph Emerich's plan was chosen; it was similar to that of the church of Villé for which he was the contractor from 1754 to 1758 under the direction of the architect Chassain, the inspector of public works. In Châtenois, Balthasar Dorgler was the contractor in charge of supervising all the various tradesmen. The construction work on the present-day church took place between 1759 and 1761. Part of the southeast section of the first enclosure had to be demolished, obliging the locals who had gardens there to sell them to the municipality. The restoration work carried out on the church's supporting framework and roof in 2015-2016 cost EUR 750 000 and was the most substantial since its construction more than two centuries earlier.

To the south, the church stands next to the ramparts of the fortified cemetery; to the north, it looks onto a square shaded by lime trees, the place where the cemetery used to be until it was transferred out of town in 1854. The old mortuary can be found to the left of the church.

Visit of the exterior

17. The Romanesque tower

The 41 m high Romanesque tower (11th-12th century) was probably built on the same spot as an old Roman watchtower. Around 1535, an upper storey was added, complete with gemel windows and a hip roof whose watchtowers give it a very distinctive style (it is listed as a historical monument). The exterior covering which reinforces its substructure dates back to 1854. The supporting framework of the belfry, in which eight bells hang, dates back to 1630 and consists of impressively large chestnut beams; it is a masterpiece of carpentry. A model made by the *Compagnons du devoir* (skilled workers guild) can be seen at the back of the church. The main gate dates back to when the church was first built.

The lower part of the steeple, hidden by the buttress, is significantly older than the section of the building just above the Romanesque windows. The 12th-13th century tower would have replaced the steeple of the early church built on the foundations of a Roman building. The original masonry at the base of the steeple can only be seen from its interior as the steeple's base was reinforced with a sandstone overlay in 1843 and again in 1855, making it impossible to see the old walls from the outside. It is not possible to detect the re-use of mortars of Roman origin at the base of the steeple; these can however be seen in other parts of the site. On the ground floor there are two slotted windows dating back to the oldest part of the tower and which bear witness to the military role it played. The wooden watchtowers, which were dated to 1535 using dendrochronology, were built following the fire, which destroyed the church roof during the bombardment of Châtenois Castle in 1525 during the Peasants' War. Above the belfry, a plank of chestnut wood bears the date of its construction, 1630, and the initials of the members of the municipality at that time.

18. A/. The fortified cemetery

Located between the mountains and the plain, the fortified cemetery sits on the southern edge of a glaciais formed from piedmont mudslides dating from the periglacial period, and even from the last few centuries if Saint George's fountain buried under two meters of sediment is anything to go by. The low glaciais drops in elevation from 230 m to 200 m at the church grounds as it runs down from the fault line to the Upper Rhine Graben (the so-called Rhine fault line, characterized here by a clear break in the slope between the Vosges mountains and the glaciais). The modest-sized fortified cemetery (100 m by 50 m) was constructed on the edge of the glaciais, midway between the mountains and the plain, at the point where the plain begins to widen and where the first village founded in Gallo-Roman times was located. Recent excavations have shown the continued occupation of the site since Roman times; it was possibly occupied long before then. A hand axe dating from around 70 000 B.C. was discovered on the site.

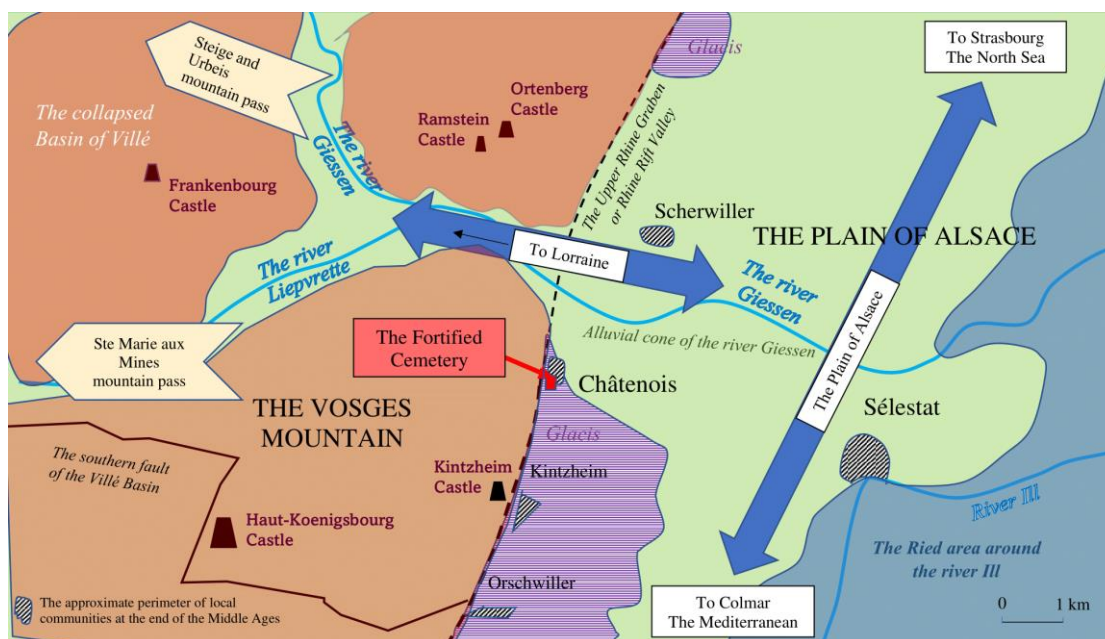
The fortified cemetery's location is rather remarkable. To the east, it sits only about 10 metres above the plain (which is in fact the alluvial fan of the river Giessen at the end of which Sélestat was built), its perched position emphasized by the construction of its ramparts in the 13th century. Around 700 m to the north, it looks onto the start of a large Vosgian valley, which leads to Lorraine through the lowest mountain passes of the massif. It was therefore very strategically placed on what was for centuries a major crossroads, as illustrated by the presence of five medieval castles within a radius of only 5 km, including the imperial Haut-Koenigsbourg castle, the stronghold of Sélestat dating from the 17th century, or indeed the artillery mounts carved into the mountainside from when Alsace was under German Imperial Rule (1871-1918). In spite of its modest nature and low defensive value, the site was a place of power, not least for the bishops of Strasbourg, which justified it being fortified as early as the 13th century.

18. B/. The fortified cemetery – Geographical details

The Vosgian piedmont is formed from what are referred to as the sub-Vosgian foothills, which are fields of fault lines (terraces). However, in central Alsace there is one notable exception to this: over a distance of around a dozen kilometers, between Blienschwiller and Orschwiller, there are no hills (except for a few which are barely outlined or already far off on the plain); instead, there are soft-sloping glaciais 1 to 2 km wide made up of piedmont deposits (glaciais produced by solifluction or mudflows). The Rhine fault line, which dips down to the Rhine Graben (it began to collapse 35 million years ago), is unique in this part of central Alsace. It can be seen from a few hundred meters above the fortified cemetery and is characterized by a very clear break in the slope between the mountains and the glaciais. The

reasons for this can be traced back to the primary era, when, between 400 and 260 million years, the African plate (Gondwana) and the Laurasian plate (North America-Europe-Asia) collided, giving birth to the part of Europe which runs from Bohemia to Portugal, encompassing most of the French territory (the Hercynian folding). The scar produced by this major geological episode has remained visible, and still locally active; it can be seen in the “Landgraben” (sunken region) on the plain, in the collapsed mountain basins of Villé and Saint Dié, not to mention the famous Lalaye-Lubine fault line where the ridge of the Vosges Mountains drops from 1 200 m to only 600 m. The absence of Vosgian foothills can be explained by the collapse and tilting from east to west of the Villé Basin, exposing the granite bedrock which constitutes the Bernstein massif situated to the north of the river Giessen. The tiered fault lines can only be seen locally, as they are hidden by the deposits which form the piedmont glacis and the sediment flows of the plain. The Rhine fault offset is about 2 000 m, a displacement process which is still ongoing.

There is a gap in the middle of the glacis nearly 2 km wide where the Giessen-Liepvrette valley emerges; on their way down from the massif to the plain, the meandering waterways destroyed the piedmont deposits on their banks as they were being formed. Hence, at Châtenois the glacis only starts to widen 700 m further south (see illustration). The rather small-fortified perimeter (100 m long by about 50 m wide) was established on the edge of the glacis, just above the plain, where the first Gallo-Roman village was founded; the glacis is more than 200 m wide at this point (nearly 2 km wide at Kintzheim). The overhang must have been accentuated during the construction of the ramparts, since the ramp leading to the church only dates back to the 1930s.



19. Our Lady of Lourdes Grotto

Marie-Bernarde Soubirous – known as Bernadette – was born on 7 January 1844 in Lourdes, in the Hautes-Pyrénées department, into a very poor family. When the young shepherd girl was 14 years old, she claimed to have experienced a series of visions in the Grotto of Massabielle, a cave on the banks of the river Gave where the animals went to drink. A lady who called herself “the Immaculate Conception” appeared before her eighteen times between 11 February and 16 July 1858. Four years earlier, Pope Pius X had proclaimed a dogma, that is to say an article of faith shared by Catholics, stating that Mary, the mother of Christ, was conceived without original sin. It was a belief already shared by certain Fathers of the Church

in the 4th century. The supernatural character of these apparitions was recognized from 1862: the grotto was inaugurated on 4 April 1864 and quickly became a place of pilgrimage. Bernadette Soubirous then joined the Order of the Sisters of Charity in Nevers, where she died on 16 April 1879.

The sanctuary in Lourdes is the most important Catholic pilgrimage site in France: between 2 and 6 million pilgrims visit it each year. Soon after the apparitions in Lourdes, a large number of replicas of the Lourdes grotto were produced, particularly after the death of Bernadette Soubirous in 1879, then after her canonization in 1933. There are 133 Lourdes Grottos in Alsace, almost 800 in France and more than 300 in the rest of the world.

The Lourdes Grotto in Châtenois is located to the northwest of the fortified cemetery adjacent to the parish church. The statue of Sainte Bernadette was produced by the *Union Artistique de Vaucouleurs* (the Artistic Union of Vaucouleurs), as attested by the inscription on the cast-iron base. The statue of the Virgin Mary is made of terracotta. The statues and the entablature were restored in 2011 by the Churchwardens Committee.

The Chapel of the Holy Cross

20. Chapel of the Holy Cross

The chapel was built between 1705 and 1712. It supposedly housed fragments of the True Cross (a certificate of authenticity was delivered by the Vatican on 6 August 1801), leading to it quickly becoming a much-visited place of pilgrimage. Its folk Baroque decorations partly disappeared during the French Revolution but the chapel itself escaped destruction. Some local families bought it in an auction on 15 May 1792 for the sum of 8 050 “livres”. However, the objects of worship made of precious metals were requisitioned and probably melted down. On 15 January 1815, the chapel was returned to the parish priests by the descendants of the families who had acquired it in 1792. Throughout the 19th century, its interior decoration was restored and enhanced. In 1854, the Sisters of Niederbronn took possession of the dwelling adjoining the chapel and ran a hospital there until 1891. Some of the decorations from the Baroque period can still be seen today: the high altar, the pulpit, the ceiling paintings and the side altars, whose paintings were repainted by J. Schlienger in 1869.

Local volunteers built the chapel next to the defensive ditch, which encompassed the village. In 1844, the chapel, on the verge of collapse, was restored. The nuns made it their home and established the hospital there in 1854 following the outbreak of the cholera epidemic, which affected 286 people, killing 110 of them.

The Saint Anne Chapel

21. Saint Anne’s Chapel

The chapel was built at the end of the 17th century at the initiative of Madame Burst, the bailiff’s wife. In a decision dated 26 July 1698, the municipality undertook to maintain the chapel in perpetuity. The chapel had its own treasury and occasionally lent money to the inhabitants of Châtenois. In 1854, following a cholera epidemic which claimed the lives of 110 people in the village, the churchyard was moved to its present location; that is when Saint Anne’s Chapel became that of the cemetery of Châtenois. It was restored in 2002 thanks to the remarkable work of a group of volunteers (Châtenois pupils born in 1937).

The name of Georg Burst Amtmann (bailiff) appears on the painting behind the altar. Prior to World War I, the bell tower housed a bell, which was confiscated by the German administration in 1917. When the chapel was restored in 1922, Joseph Ottenwaelder and his family donated a new bell.

22.1 Baroque art

Baroque art was born in Italy in the mid-16th century and ended in the mid-18th century. After the Renaissance with its focus on classicism, the Baroque style was characterised by the exaggeration of movement, an overload of decoration, dramatic effects, exuberant shapes, sometimes pompous sizes and lots of contrast. It impacted all art forms, ranging from sculpture to painting and music.

The architectural style first appeared in Rome at the same time as the Society of Jesus (the Jesuits), namely in 1537. Their mother church, the Church of Jesus, served as a model in many European countries at the start of the 17th century and during the first half of the 18th century. Under their influence, the movement mainly impacted the Catholic countries of the Counter-Reformation; it had less of an effect on the protestant countries, England, or indeed France, where classical art was predominant. Late Baroque, or Rococo, emerged in Germany, Austria and Bohemia at the end of the 17th century. The ornamentation became very luxurious and fanciful, almost to the point of becoming too overloaded.

The Baroque style is opulent: the naves are larger, the columns are engaged, different sections are separated by embossments, etc. The decoration is abundant: imitation marbles and stucco, sculptures of angels and cherubs, domes, spirals, shell and coral designs, cartouches, trompe-l'œil, etc...

22.2 The Baroque style in Alsace, in Ebersmunster and Châtenois, under the influence of the Holy Roman Empire

There was a revival of Baroque art in the Holy Roman Germanic Empire, where it flourished at the end of the Thirty Years War. It reached its peak between 1690 and 1720; the heart of the movement was in Vienna and Prague, at a time when the Habsburg monarchy was asserting its power. The Jesuits invented a new concept: wall-pillar churches. The buttresses are placed inside the edifice in the form of columns or pillars: this is referred to as the "Vorarlberg style" since it was the Vorarlberg School of Architecture that developed this distinct design. The vault, typically a barrel vault, rests on a horizontal entablature supported by transverse arches; the high bay windows between the arches allow natural light to come in from the sides and a vast central space is thus cleared, making it is easy to decorate in the Rococo or Neoclassical style. The church in Ebersmunster was part of this movement. The abbey, which was left in ruins after the Thirty Years War, was completely rebuilt between 1680 and 1712 under Abbot Bernard Roethlin (1675-1715). The construction manager was Peter Thumb (1681-1766), who had become famous in the south of Germany for building several Baroque churches. Shortly afterwards, Saint George's Church in Châtenois was built based on the same model: a basilica plan with interior pillars, a barrel vault and galleries. Dorgler, the company responsible for building St George's Church, had worked on the construction of the abbey church.

However, although the church was still subject to the jurisdiction of the Diocesan Chapter, it did not dispose of the same means. Compared to the splendour of the church in Ebersmunster, St George's Church in Châtenois appears to be more soberly decorated.

23. The restoration of Saint George's Church in Châtenois

The restoration work (repairs, maintenance, consolidation and renovation work...) began in the 1990s, spearheaded by the parish priest, Jean Schwederlé. The Parish Council and the municipality of Châtenois teamed up with the Regional Directorate for Cultural Affairs (*Direction Régionale des Affaires Culturelles – DRAC*) for the renovation of the listed parts of the church. Between 1991 and 1998, the stained glass windows and the main entry doors were renovated, electricity was installed, and the church was fully insulated; between 1996 and

1997, the paintings in the nave and the chancel were restored, as were the pews and confession boxes, and the church was soundproofed.

At the entrance to the church

24. Models

As you enter the church, on the right, there are two models on display:

- one of the belfry (and its stand) made by the *Compagnons du Devoir* (guild of skilled workers) for their masterpiece at the end of their apprenticeship;
- one of the “Castle District”, which was given as a gift to the Parish Council: its creator gave free reign to his imagination, producing an ensemble whose layout helps us to understand the configuration of this part of Châtenois.

25. Nave - complementary information

The 1925 mission cross hangs above the arch at the entrance to the chancel; Saint Helen and Saint Theresa can be seen to the left of it and the holy Priest of Ars and Saint Peter Canisius are to the right of it.

The medallions on the upper walls of the nave depict saints associated with Alsace: the first medallion on the left, at the same height as the organ, features Saint Faith of Conques (in the Aveyron), the patron saint of the Church of Saint Faith (Eglise Sainte-Foy) in Sélestat, whose abbey gave rise to the town of Sélestat in the 12th century.