

The Chapel of Notre-Dame de l'Hermitage

During the construction of Notre-Dame de l'Hermitage, Marcellin and his Brothers built a first small chapel. It was used until 1836.

It was between 1836 and 1837 that a new Chapel was built, where we know it to this day. Today, only the small bell tower remains as a testimony to the past Chapel.

In 1875 the roof of the Chapel threatened to collapse. It was then decided to keep the walls but to raise the whole as well as to extend the nave by 15 meters. Herculean work since it is necessary to dig the rock against which the Hermitage is built.

It is said that Brother François had an attack the day after the laying of the first stone, imagining the Chapel so different from what the Founder had known.

However, the Chapel rose and was solemnly blessed on August 15, 1877.



Tabernacle

During the last restoration, in 1989, we preserved the essentials: the altar, the tabernacle, the Virgin, all memories of Father Champagnat.

According to the tradition, the tabernacle comes from Saint-Maurice Cathedral in Vienne, in Dauphiné.

At the end of the Revolution, Pope Pius VI died in Valencia prison.

Dechristianization knows all the excesses. We sell church furniture.

This tabernacle was purchased by a woman who, forty years later, gave it to Father Champagnat. To stay in the style of Corinthian columns, a cabinetmaker will make an altar with Ionian columns. The new base of the tabernacle and the top of the altar were the subject of very complete work, due to the skill of the "Companions of Duty". On the tabernacle, notice the triangle evoking the Trinity and the four Hebrew letters of the name of Yahweh.



The Virgin

This is the one of the chapel from 1824. It bears a metal heart where Father Champagnat placed the list of his Brothers at the start of each school year. The statue harmonizes well with the altar, the tabernacle and the entire choir.



Marquetry panel

They were made by Mr. Georges Faure. The one on the right is dedicated to the Holy Family. It evokes the spirit of Nazareth very present in Marist spirituality. The second evokes the resurrection and the ascension, the heart of Jesus radiating over the world.

The metal cross

Located to the right of the altar, it recalls the bronze serpent of Moses in the desert: "When you lift me up from the earth, I will draw everything to myself" (Jn 12:32).

The Stations of the Cross

It is the work of Br. Joseph Bossaert, from Belgium. This devotion, very strong at the origins of the Marist Brothers, continues today.

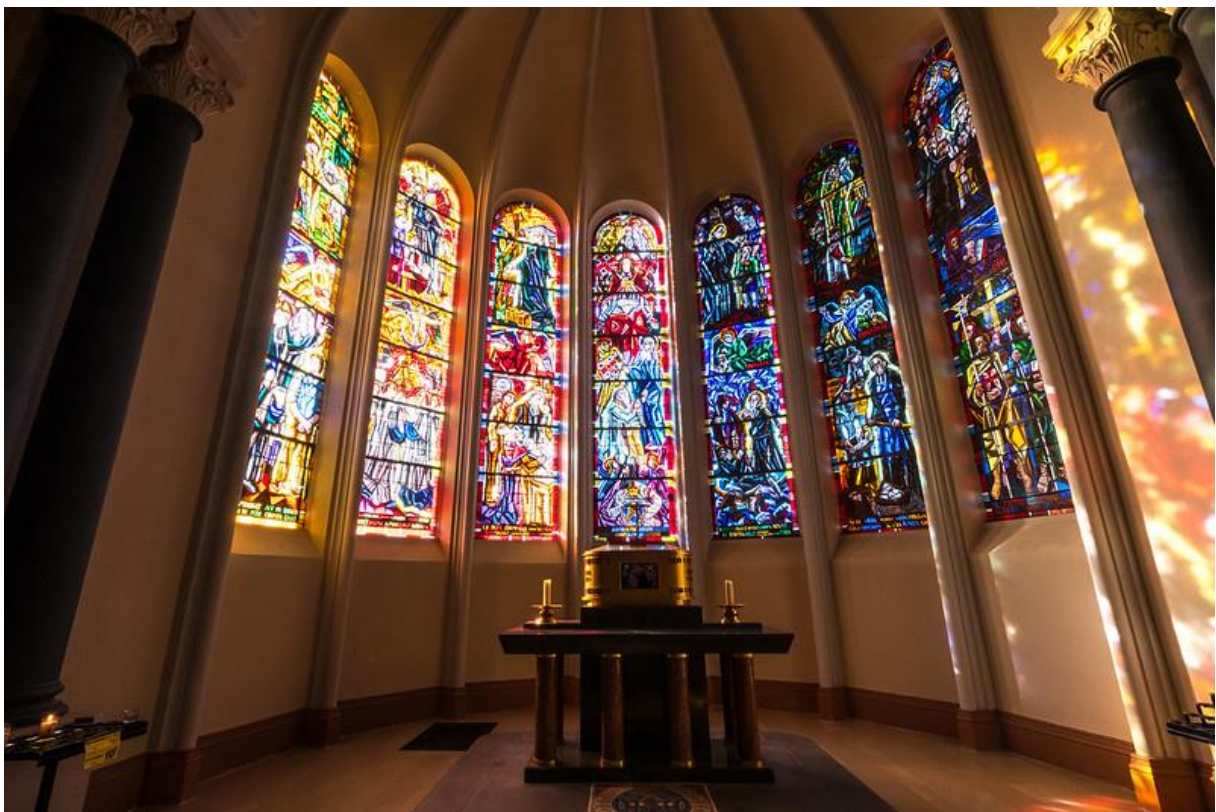
The chapel of the Champagnat reliquary

The apse of Father Champagnat was created in 1956, after the beatification. It contains his remains which were placed in a reliquary in gilded vermeil, decorated with very beautiful enamels. This reliquary was made in the workshops of Mr. Chéret, in Paris.

The stained-glass windows are designed by Gérard Hansen.

Halfway up, in the stained-glass windows on the left, we evoke the holiness of Marcellin which is based on the theological virtues: faith, hope and charity, practiced to a heroic degree. These virtues are represented by symbols: adoring angel (faith), angel holding anchor and star (hope), angel holding a flaming heart (charity).

In the three other stained-glass windows on the right, the Founder establishes his religious family on the three religious vows: poverty (putting everything in common), chastity (remaining a universal brother), obedience (doing the will of the Lord sought with a Superior and a Rule).



Brother François (tomb at the back of the chapel)

Brother François' cause for beatification was introduced in 1910, his life having been so obviously holy. In 1924, his remains were placed in the chapel.

Since joining the Brothers, he has held all the positions. After a few years as an instructor in Marhles, Vanosc and Boulieu, he came to the Hermitage as nurse, master of novices, director and above all right-hand man of the Founder before being his successor, as Superior General for twenty years. He will spend another twenty years at the Hermitage, edifying all those who come to the chapel, with his piety and his incredible contemplation which led several witnesses to even speak of ecstasy.



Relics of Saint Priscillian

Opposite the tomb of Brother François, we find the relics of Saint Priscillian. The rediscovery of the catacombs in the 19th century earned the Hermitage the precious gift of the relics of this 4th century Roman martyr.

They were given to Mgr Epalle, this little catechist of the young Marcellin Champagnat in Marhles. In local tradition, people come to ask him for success in exams.