
THE HISTORY OF

NOTRE DAME DE LARMOR

The Notre Dame Chapel of Larmor stands in an area full of history near the small port of Port Maria. Originally a place of pilgrimage for sailors, the chapel was attached to the Parish of Ploemeur, it became a Parish Church in 1912 and was classified an historic monument in 1990.

The first chapel, was founded in the 6th century by Saint Gildas the Good, born around 490 on the banks of the Clyde, he died around 570 on the Isle of Houat. This chapel was no doubt burnt several times before being destroyed by the Vikings between 820 and 940.

Re-built under the reign of Geoffrey 1st, (Count of Rennes and Duke of Brittany), the chapel became a place of pilgrimage for the sailors. The oldest part (the 4 large pillars of the transept) dating back no doubt to the 14th century).

Repaired, enlarged, the chapel often suffered from storms and a fire in 1502.

The main changes date back to the 16th century. The bell tower was built in 1615 and when the warships leaving Lorient blew their cannons 3 times, Notre Dame de Larmor replied "God speed to those who salute me" through the ringing of the bells and the hoisting of the flag.

North side

- A1 Central Reredos (ornamental screen) Notre Dame de Larmor 1685-1690 restored in 1989
Painting : Notre Dame saving the ships
Reredos altar, a distinctive feature above the tabernacle is a second safe closed by a door, what this was used for is an unknown quantity.
- AB1 Saint Efflam, Irish Prince, 16th century statue
- AB2 Louis de Rohan's Coat of Arms
- A2 Altar, The Evangelists (Guillevic 1996)
- A3 Pulpit, Icon of Christ (Guillevic 1996)
- B Reredos - Statue Notre Dame de la Clarté (XVIII century)
- C Reredos Statue of Sainte Anne and the Virgin Mary
- D Sacristy (originally Sainte Anne's Chapel) now closed
- E Reredos called the "Jews Altar" in polychrome wood – end of 16th century
The good on the right, the bad on the left
- EA Saint Joseph
- EB Notre Dame des Anges (painted wood XVII century)
- E2 Sacred Heart
- E3 Wooden Shrine
- P1 Saint Thuriën
- P2 Saint John the Baptist
- M1 Ship ex-voto Saint Jean (hanging ex-voto)
- M2 Ship with two decks « The Protector »

- M3 Ship with 3 masts Notre Dame de Larmor
 L Door to the bell tower. Closed for security reasons

North Stained Glass Windows

Blown out during the second world war 1939-1945, they were reassembled after the liberation. The Baptismal Font, St. John the Baptist is a new creation.

- V7 Sainte Anne and Nicolazic
 V6 Blessing of the Sea – Rector Le Néchet (1925-1935)
 V5 Saint John the Baptist

South Side

- AC1 Statue of Saint Barbe
 AC2 Louise de Rieux's coat of arms
 C Statue of Mary and Saint Anne
 F Reredos called « de la Pièta » Stone polychrome by Guillaume Pen Du (beginning of the XVI century).
 On the panel in front of the altar – Medallion of Saint Bavou, supposed to cure children from dribbling
 FA Statue Notre Dame de Larmor Vierge royale, she presents a starfish to the crowned Christ.
 FB Statue of Saint Roch, Saint Vincent Ferrier made him known in Brittany
 F2 Statue of Sainte Thérèse de l'Enfant Jésus
 R1 Statue of Saint Antoine de Padoue
 R2 Statue of Saint Martin, Archbishop of Tours
 S Statue of Mary teaching Jesus how to write
 T2 Statue Notre Dame de Lourdes

South Stained Glass Windows

- V1 Notre Dame de Larmor holds back the English
 V2 Two survivors clinging to wreckage are promised by Mary that help will come
 V3 The Virgin Mary and Sainte Anne
 V4 Saint Peter liberated from chains by an angel leaves prison (this stained glass window reminds us that Larmor depended on Ploemeur of which St Peter was the patron saint.)

The ex-votos

The ex-votos are placed in a church or chapel where the worshipper seeks grace or wishes to give thanks. Pilgrim destinations often include shrines decorated with ex-votos.

In addition to the ex-votos tablets in the south transept, three ships remind us that we are in a pilgrim chapel for seafarers.

To the south of the main door:

Le Notre Dame de Larmor – 3 mast boat from the middle of the 20th century.

On the other side of the “main door” above the memorial plate to the first rector of Larmor one can see The Protector, a double deck ship built in Toulon between 1756 and 1760 which participated in the United States War of Independence.

The Saint Jean, a 3 mast frigate, end of the 19th century, suspended from the ceiling, is said” to give the wind direction”.

The Bell Tower

The tower supporting the bell tower would be the transformation of a fortified 14th century house. The works began in 1613, they were finished in 1630 by Louis VII of Rohan. At the top of the tower ends there is a terrace surrounded by a parapet.

In 1666, the year Lorient was founded, the tower was surmounted with a granite spire to make it look like a bell tower.

The bell tower has 3 bells:

Fortunée Amandine 190Kgs (30 stone) blessed in 1784

A bell of 375kgs (59 stone)

Marie Florentine Marcelle baptised in 1951.

The Architecture

The Chapel is made up today of six roman arches and six gothic arches. These alterations were carried out with such taste that one is not shocked by the mixture of architecture.

The roof of the church was badly hit during the 1987 storm and was completely rebuilt in 1988. The tower, badly shaken when Lorient was bombed during the 2nd world war, was first consolidated before being completely restored in 1996.

Parish Church

The 13th January 1912, the area of Larmor was established as a parish. The chapel Notre Dame de Larmor became a parish church, but it is only in 1925 that the parish became a municipality.

The Apostles Porch

Situated exceptionally on the North side, the building of the porch started in 1491 and was finished in 1552.

On the keystone, the inscription “year 1552 was made this keystone” and the coat of arms of the “Chef du Bois” translation of Penhoat. The Lords of Penhoat lived in Lanveur, now attached to Lorient.

Above the entrance to the church : Christ attached with cords.

Statues of the 12 apostles in Tufa-stone except Saint Simon in granite.

On the left on entering:

- H1 Saint Peter (key and book)
- H2 Saint André (cross)
- H3 Saint Jacques the elder (shell and staff)
- H4 Saint Jean (cup)
- H5 Saint Philippe (cross and book)
- H6 Saint Mathew (open book)

On the right on entering

- H7 Saint Mathias (purse on the belt)
- H8 Saint Simon (saw)

- H9 Saint Jacques the minor (book and the mace of his suffrance)
- H10 Saint Thomas (has lost his two hands)
- H11 Saint Jude Thaddée (book)
- H12 Saint Barthélémy (book and knife)