

The Church of Saint-Gervais-sur-Couches

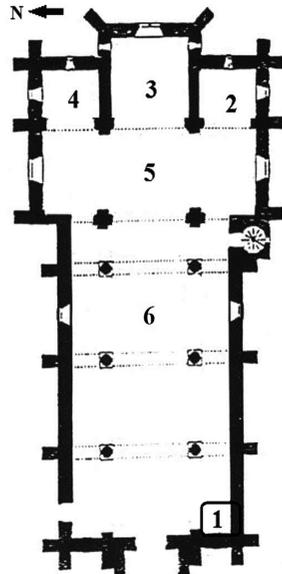
It is an early gothic church erected in one go between 1200 and 1260. The stone is local, being mostly granite and limestone, the general outline is stocky, with impressive buttresses reinforcing the edifice.

The church of Saint-Gervais is sacred to **St. Gervais and St. Prothais**. It is composed of a four span nave with narrow side-aisles, plus a transept and a span for the choir, closed by a flat chevet.

The intersecting ribs of the nave rest on corbelled consoles. The aisles have longitudinal barrel vaults rather exceptional in Burgundy at the time.

The nave continues with a transept jutting out on either side and a choir decorated with a large retable.

At the end of the 18th century, the church was regarded as a mere ruin, but, in 1911, it was officially scheduled, which allowed of an overall rehabilitation.



Inside

On the right, as you step in, the **font (1)**, slightly raised and railed off by means of wooden bars, a reminder that there is no entering the Christian community but through **baptism**.

In the **chapel of the Lady (2)**, you can see a retable showing the **Lourdes Virgin** (she appeared to Bernadette in 1858), a statue of **St. Marguerite Alacoque** apparition of the Holy Heart in Paray-le-Monial in 1675), a statue of **St. Theresa of the Infant Jesus** carrying roses. Two stand glass windows shed light into the chapel, one showing the **Virgin**, the other being a grisaille.

In the choir (3), on the left wall, the wooden statue of **St. Peter** - recognizable by his keys - dating from the XVI century and classified in 1918, along with the XVI century statue of **St. Nicholas** - saving three children- flank the **XV century** polychrome stone statue of **St. Mary Magdalene** by **Jean de la Huerta**, classified in 1918 and identifiable by her long hair and the pot of unguent with which she came to embalm the body of **Christ on the morning of Easter**.

The so - called **St. Denis's Chapel (4)** hosts the statue of **St. Joseph** in the niche just above the altar, and those of the **Ars Vicar**, of **St. Anthony of Padua** with the Infant Jesus on the book, of a holy bishop in the act of blessing (St. Dennis ?) A stained window is decorated with **St. Joseph**, the foster father of Jesus.

In the transept (5), framing in the choir, you can see the statue of **St. Michel overcoming the demon** and, on the right, of **St. Joan of Arc**, (canonized in 1920).

The pillars that bear the steeple are decorated with capitals showing plant-life motifs. On the right hand one, there can be discerned a quite charming diminutive figure, in fact a monk holding forth the **Eucharistic symbols of bread and wine**, the latter in a skin.

On either side the central altar, **stalls**, formerly occupied by clerics during the services, have been installed as a result of the **Vatican II Council** in order to allow of the congregation facing liturgy.

On the paving under the nave (6), you will see a number of tombstones, one of them with a calvary, a coat of arms and gothic inscriptions cut into it while another is dated from 1642.

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The retable

At the far end of the **choir (3)**, above the old-style altar, there stands a retable, a painted wooden panel from the XV century, classified in 1914 with, on either side, in scallor, decorated niches , the statues of **St. Gervais** on the left and **St. Prothais** on the right. These two brothers were martyred in the 1st century in the reign of Nero. The way this retable was made probably reveals some sort of connection with the Avignon School. The subject is a Pieta.

*“Center stage : a doleful **Virgin**, though with eyes fully reflecting the prescience of the **Glorious Resurrection**, is gazing on **Christ**, unconscious on her knees. **On her left** : two martyrs, green palm in hand. **On her right** : two bishops, dripping with pricey belongings, like gloves or finger rings, one of them however being less self-assertive, as if time had dimmed his glorious past.” **G. Valat** (Review of the “Societe Eduenne” , volume XXXIV) insists on the social strictures aimed at prelates, whose luxury and mores were not particularly appreciated but also underscores the fact that, in accordance to God’s will, they have a role to play on this earth.*

Outside

The **steeple** comprises two levels. It receives light through gabled openings and is covered with a saddle roof. The northern façade features a mysterious head carved on a stone. It contains two bells dating from 1824. A modillion cornice confers variety to the top rim of the rain-collecting wall.

The **western portal** is set off by an arcature featuring a head on either side. The tympan rests on two small columns with capitals showing delicately chiseled ox-eye daisies and is adorned with a **cross embellished with fleurdelis**.

In the vicinity

To the south, a cross and a tombstone laid on lions' paws are the only vestiges of the old churchyard.

To the north, a memorial cross with protective chains round it bears the name of Anne Monot and was erected on December 30th 1857.

To the west, facing the portal, the former vicarage, now in private hands, dates from the 18th century. The roof of the old dovecote has gone.

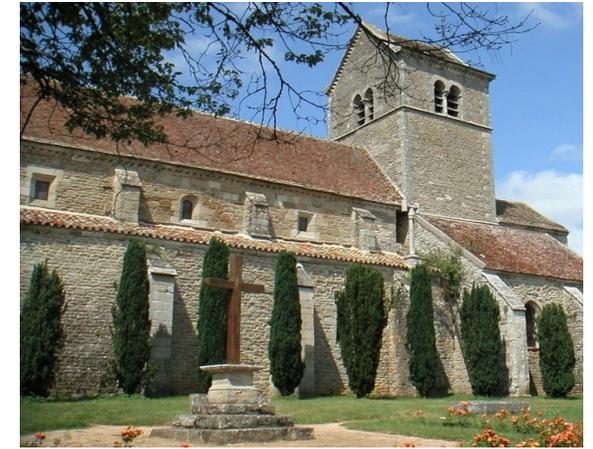
To the east, an oval shaped washplace, roofless.

Along the road to Epertully, a vantage point with indicator discloses a view over the Saône Valley framed in the foreground by the Mont Rome full on the right and the Mont Rême on the left with, in the background, the Mont des Trois Croix (mountain of the three crosses) or Mont de Sène in between.

The association of the friends of Saint-Gervais-sur-Couches church organizes concerts to participate in the rehabilitation and upkeep of the church.

*“ I am certain I'll see the benevolence
of the Lord on this earth of the living.
Raise your spirits and
place your hope in God “
(psalm 27, 16)*

The church of Saint-Gervais-sur-Couches is part of the **parish of Notre Dame de la Dree**, which comprises 14 villages and has **Epinac** for its center. It carries about 7800 people



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Epinac - La-Garenne-Morlet –
Saisy – Saint-Gervais-sur-Couches –
Saint Emiland – Saint Léger-du-Bois –
Saint-Martin-de-Commune –
Sully – Tintry*

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