

The church of Viré

The church, dating from the 12th century has undergone various transformations and renovations which have resulted in the loss of some of its ancient features. A number of these were reused in the course of works carried out in the 19th century. **The church is dedicated to St Cyricus and St Julitta.**

The Romanesque apse, at the east end, was demolished because it projected 3 metres into the road. A new entrance was constructed which copied the Romanesque style of the former portal. A new choir with a bay was created at the west end. Some columns and capitals of the demolished part of the church were re-employed at the entrance and in the apse.

The interior

The interior consists of a single **nave** paved with flagstones, roofed with a barrel vault and lit by six windows. There is an **ante-choir** and **choir** in apsidal form and two **side-chapels**, one dedicated to the **Virgin Mary** and the other to the church's patrons **St Cyricus and St Julitta**. **The choir and the transept** were decorated in 1901 by the Mâconnais painter Victor Bussi re. *The same artist also decorated several neighbouring churches - among them those of Senozan and Hurigny - and the H tel de Ville at M con.*

Stained glass

In the nave, to the right is the **Cur  d'Ars**, opposite **St Germaine Cousin** (a shepherdess born in Pibrac in 1579, who died at the age of 22). **St Charles Borromeo** (1538-1584) comes next, represented with a penitent's cord round his neck. Opposite him is **St Mary Magdalene**, identified by her long hair and the jar containing the ointment with which she went to **Christ's tomb on Easter morning**. Next is **St Louis** (Louis IX) bearing on a cushion **the crown of thorn**, the relics for which

he had the Sainte Chapelle built in Paris. Opposite him is **St Joan of Arc**, who was burnt at the stake in 1431 and canonized in 1920.

In the choir, the windows, the work of a Parisian master craftsman, are divided into two registers, an upper and a lower. On the left is **St John the Baptist** bearing the **mystic Lamb** above the "**Baptism of Christ**" – note **the dove of the Holy Spirit**. In the centre is the **Sacred Heart** above the **appearance to St Margaret Mary Alacoque at Paray-le-Monial**. To the right is **St Joseph**, the foster-father of Jesus, holding a carpenter's saw, above the "**death of Joseph**" in the presence of Jesus and Mary.

In the ante-choir, on the right is **Moses** carrying the **tablets of the Law**, facing **David** on the left chanting the psalms to the accompaniment of his lyre.

Furnishings, statues and paintings

In the nave, on the left as you enter is the **Baptismal Font**. A grill symbolically separates the person to be baptized from the Church which he or she will enter through receiving **Baptism**. Dominating the bowl of the font is a sculptured group representing the **Baptism of Christ by St John the Baptist** (damaged), a **dove** on the door of the small tabernacle symbolizing the **Holy Spirit**. In the floor is the truncated **funerary slab** of a former parish priest with a monstrance, chalice and cross, symbols of his ministry.

The statue is of **St Theresa of the Child Jesus**, who became Carmelite at the age of sixteen and is the patron saint of missions. She had promised to send a shower of roses down to earth, which is why she is represented with roses in her arms. *(Her parents Z lie and Louis Martin were canonized on 18 October 2015).*

In the choir, there is a statue of **St Antony of Padua**, a saint invoked for finding lost objects. **St Barbara** is identified by the tower in which her father imprisoned her for being a Christian. She is the patron saint of firemen and miners. **Among the paintings on the left** is a representation of **Christ bound**, **Jesus** being supported by a dignitary. On the right is a portrait of **Jesus blessing a loaf**, symbolic of **the Eucharist**.

Chapel of the Virgin on the left : in the niche above the blind arcading is a **Piet ** (the Virgin Mary receiving the body of Jesus at the foot of the cross). A statue of the **Virgin and Child** dominates the altar, the front of which is decorated with a representation of the **coronation of the Virgin** in heaven. Facing the altar is a picture of a **Piet **.

Chapel of the patron saints on the right : In the niche is a statue of **St Cyricus and St Julitta**. Their statue, too, dominates the altar, the front of which bears two palm branches, symbolic of their martyrdom. Opposite is the confessional.

St Cyricus et St Julitta

According to Jacques de Voragine in the Golden Legend (1266), Julitta was arrested at Tarsus in Asia Minor for being a Christian. She was accompanied by her son, Cyricus, who was three years old. While the court was playing with Cyricus, the child kept insisting « I am a Christian too ». This irritated the prefect so much that he threw the child down the steps, breaking his skull. Julitta thanked God that her son had preceded her into the kingdom of heaven. After terrible tortures, she was beheaded. This took place in the 3rd century AD.

Exterior

The lateral south walls preserve the former Romanesque portal which is now closed. It is in the Cluniac style with a blind arcade in the tympanum decorated with horseshoe-shaped foils with capitals carved with plant motifs and fluted pilasters.

The base of the bell-tower is Romanesque. The first level is decorated with Lombard arcading ; the second is pierced by two biforate windows resting on small columns. The corners are adorned with fluted pilasters. The steeple is decorated with glazed tiles added in 1869. The new apse, which was created during the works carried out in the 19th century, presents three reused Romanesque elements : the cornice and two columns semi-inset with their capitals.

Environs

In the village of Vézizet, which today belongs to the commune of Viré, is the church of Saint Symphorien, which dates from the 13th century and was enlarged in the 14th and 15th centuries. Its fortified bell-tower, a landmark in the countryside, served as a watch-tower.

Adjacent to this church are several buildings which belonged to the former chateau of the bishop of Mâcon. (In this period the present single diocese of Autun consisted of three dioceses : Autun, Chalon and Mâcon, which were later amalgamated).

The white wines of Viré, AOP Viré-Clessé, are made from the Chardonnay grape. The countryside of the parish is planted with vines on the east-facing slopes.

For St Germaine Cousin, consult the website www.pastourisme71.com, under the rubric « Les saints de nos églises ».

*« The Holy Spirit descended upon
Jesus in bodily form like a dove.
And a voice came from heaven,
« You are my Son, the Beloved ;
with you I am well pleased. »
(Luke 3, 22)*

The church of Saint Cyr and Sainte Julitte forms part of the parish of Notre-Dame-des-Coteaux-en-Mâconnais, which covers 19 villages around Lugny comprising about 11000 inhabitants.

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*Azé, Bissy-la-Mâconnaise, Burgy,
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Fleurville, Grevilly,
La Salle, Lugny, Montbellet, Péronne,
Saint-Albain, Saint-Gengoux-de-Scissé,
Saint-Martin-Belleroche, Saint-Maurice-de-
Satonnay, Senozan, Viré.*

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VIRÉ

Church of St. Cyricus St. Julitta


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