

LADY OF THE ASSUMPTION'S PARISH CHURCH OF CHIOMONTE



The existing structure of the church with a nave and two aisles dates back to 15th and 16th centuries and it is the result of the evolution of the 10th century Romanesque style. During the centuries the structure had been further modified following liturgical precepts of the Council of Trent (1545-1563) and in order to meet local population's requirements. During the wars of religion in France the church was damaged and partly destroyed.

In the 17th century the structure was modified: the Penitent Chapel was built above the main entrance, a side entrance was opened on the church's square and the sacristy was built in a corner of the church. Many pieces in the church, e.g. the bell tower and the church furnishing, show a close stylistic resemblance with buildings in the area of Briançon and Embrun (Dauphin), the same area which Chiomonte belonged to until 1713.

The local artists specialized in wooden furniture in the end of 17th century were: Lard, Jesse and the Faure Family. Connections with the region of Maurienne were less frequent because, despite the fact that it was nearer than the Dauphin region, this area belonged to Savoy, often at war against France.

Apse and presbytery

The high altar was removed in 1760. In the middle of the wall at the end of the church there is the **painting of the Crucifixion [1]** (painted by a French artist in the end of the 17th century). you can see St. Peter (with the key), St. Paul (with the sword), **St. Sebastian** (patron saint of Chiomonte, pierced by arrows) and a Bishop.

The **wooden choir [2]**, the **three seats [3]**, and the **altar basement [4]** (formed by the pulpit) date back to the half of the 17th century and they were built by several carvers, one of them was from the village of Chiomonte.

The **balustrade [5]** dates back to the 18th century. Near the right altar there is the **silver staff-shaped Cross [6]**, used during the processions, which was built by a goldsmith from the south-east of France in the end of the 15th century.

Right altar [7]

The right altar is dedicated to the Rosary and it contains elements of the old high altar. A goldsmith from Antwerp cooperated with other artists for its realization. Nowadays its **tabernacle** keeps the Blessed Sacrament symbolized by the red lamp always lighted on the wall nearby.

Baptistery [8]

The baptistery is located on the right of the side entrance which is the usual entrance to the church despite the fact that it was built as a secondary door. The baptistery is carved in the stone with a Romanesque style. It shows decorative elements from the half of the 15th century, while the wooden covering dates back to the second half of the 17th century as other parts of the presbytery. On the left of the baptistery there is a wooden statue representing **St. Rocco [9]**. It dates back to the beginning of the 14th century and it was erected for the homonymous rural chapel located in the area near the railway station. The **holy-water stoup [10]** is from the beginning of the 16th century.

Painting of st. Anthony abbot [11]

In old times this painting was located in the altar frame where now you can see the Crucifix. It was painted by an artist of the Dufour Family who worked in Savoy and in the Chisone and Dora Valleys.

Confession chapel [12]

The Crucifix dates back to the end of the 17th century and it was carved by an artist of the French area of Grenoble. Others wooden elements came from the high altar or from the furniture of different parts of the church (e.g. the confessional).

Confessional [13]

The confessional dates back to the end of the 17th century as well as the "**banco dei Consoli**"[14] (the Consuls' bench) in the nave, near the entrance.

The pity altar [15]

The altar shape is still the original one of 1673 with the painting painted by an artist who worked at the Royal Court of Chambéry. The wooden parts were carved by a carver from Maurienne.

Sacristy [16]

The sacristy keeps a piece of furniture and a chest of drawers built in the end of the 17th century. There are also some crucifixes used during the processions: some are made of brass (end of the 15th century) while others are made of wood (1764).

In the high central part, in front of the main entrance, there is a **silver monstrance** (17th century).

Choir [17]

In old times it was called "the balustrade reserved to men". It is from the end of the 17th century and it is sustained by two massive wood columns carved in the same trunk.

Organ [18]

The first organ (built in 1770 by Giuseppe Solier from Chiomonte) was replaced in 1887 with the present organ made by the Collino Company (construction number 291) which was located in a higher position. In 1947 this instrument was modified (placed at the same level of the choir, electric bellows were added) and some other maintenance works were made in 1980. The prospect consists of 31 pipes, 58 notes in the manual, 27 notes in the pedal; the stops are activated by handles as follows: Double bas 16 (pedal), principal 8, octave 4, fifteenth, flute 8, Unda maris 8, gamba 8, trumpet 8, cor anglais 16, oboe 8, piccolo, Various repeatings, tremolo, glockenspiel). Pedal stops over the pedalboard: coupler, third hand, plenum, trumpet, mezzo forte

Penitent chapel – museum [19]

The Penitent Chapel was built in 1670-71 and it is located behind the organ. On the 29th of June 2005 this chapel was transformed in a museum. The museum keeps the altar clothes and holy vessels of the Parish of Chiomonte which are no longer used during the service. Among the many works of art it is worth to quote: a statue of the Virgin Mary, the antiphonaries (1623, movable type printing, four-line stave⁽¹⁾ with note without length of time for Gregorian chant), the wooden covering of the pulpit (with the symbol of St. Ignatius of Loyola), the painting of Pope Benedict XV, the picture of Pope John Paul II in Susa in 1991 for the beatification of Monsignor Rosaz with the parish priest Don Francesco Maria Gros, "Bertu's cane" used for the collection of the offerings, and the organ bellows (with electric or mechanic engines).

(1) Four-line stave = stave with four lines used before the actual five-line stave

The bell tower [20]

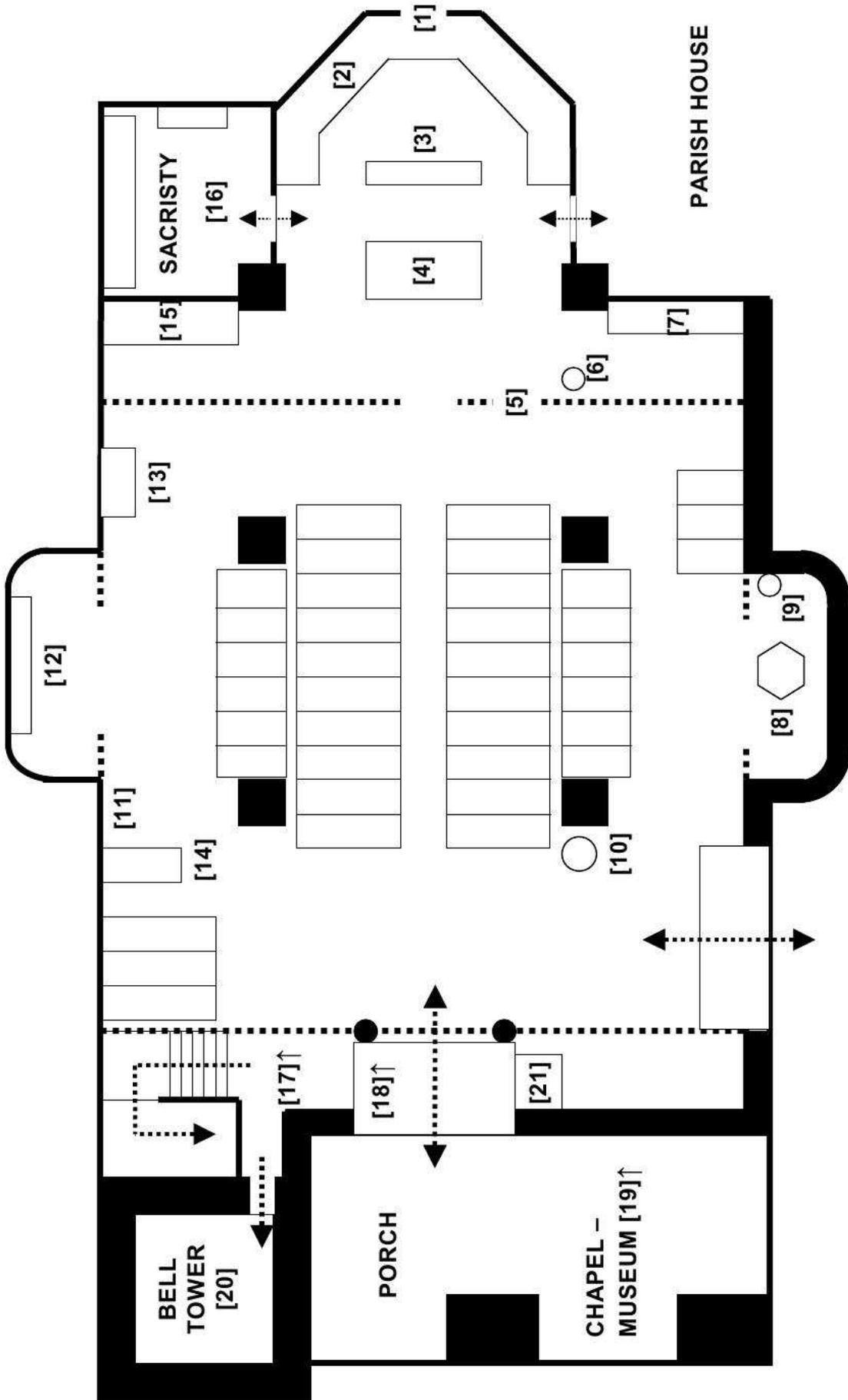
The bell tower building started in 1432: it is similar to the Embrun cathedral' one. In Susa and Briancon regions the Chiomonte bell tower is an example of Romanic style. It is around 40 m high, one of the highest in Susa Valley. Since 1964 the bell tower has been hostig five bells with following keys FA, SOL, LA, SI and DO. A specific electric control panel manages the bells; some defined songs or different manual themes, done on a keyboard, can ring. The main bell (key FA) is 700 kilos and it was built in 1698; the other four bell are lighter and more recent (1964) than the main one.

Old bell tower watch [21]

The bell tower watch mechanism was built before 1626. It was in place till 1964. The municipality of Chiomonte was in charge of maintenance, then it gave a money contribution to change the mechanism. The actual bell tower watch is electric and completely under control by religious community.

References:

L. Patria, P. Nesta, V. Coletto, Storia della Parrocchia di Chiomonte, vol. I, Borgone di Susa (TO), 1998.



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