

THE ORNAMENTATION IN THE 17TH AND 18TH CENTURIES

The rather modest interior decoration is supposed to have been designed by Jean-Baptiste de Champaigne (1631-1681), the nephew of the famous painter. It pays tribute to St Louis : French coat of arms, crown of thorns, in the cupola. During the Revolution, the church was looted, the only statues that remained are those of the Virgin Mary and St Genevieve in the flat transept. It was closed in 1791 and sold as national property, in 1798, to a parishioner who soon allowed it to be reopened.

19TH AND 21ST CENTURIES' IMPROVEMENTS

The City of Paris repurchased the church in 1817 and embellished it with numerous paintings from churches destroyed during the Revolution and new stained-glass windows in the chevet dedicated to St Louis. Father Napoleon Bossuet, the great-grandnephew of the bishop of Meaux, who was the parish priest from 1864 to 1888 spent his fortune on the many works of art that adorn the chapels. Some parishioners also contributed to these improvements (chapel of the Souls in Purgatory). The rich gilding on the pillars and arches dates from that time. The last major improvement is the 'German' organ made by the organ builder Bernard Aubertin, set up by the City of Paris in 2005. Its gilded case adds a contemporary touch to the baroque appearance of the church.

THE CHURCH IN THE HISTORY OF PARIS

Saint Louis-en-l'Île is now one of the smallest parishes in Paris. Since 1993 it has been housing one of the eight 'Maisons' of the diocesan seminary of Paris : the 'Maison St Louis'. Several famous characters preached in this church : St François de Sales, St Vincent de Paul (who opened up the first house of the Daughters of Charity in rue Poullétier in 1632), Pope Pius VII who celebrated mass here in 1805, the tiara and St Peter's keys adorning the main altar are reminders of that event. Auguste Czartoryski (1858-1898), beatified in 2004 was a parishioner of this church.



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SAINT-LOUIS EN L'ÎLE

THE HISTORY

This church is dedicated to Saint Louis, the king of France who was canonized as early as 1297 (Louis IX, 1226-1270). He would come and pray on this, at that time, uninhabited island, from which he is said to have proclaimed the eighth crusade. The interior decoration pays tribute to him.

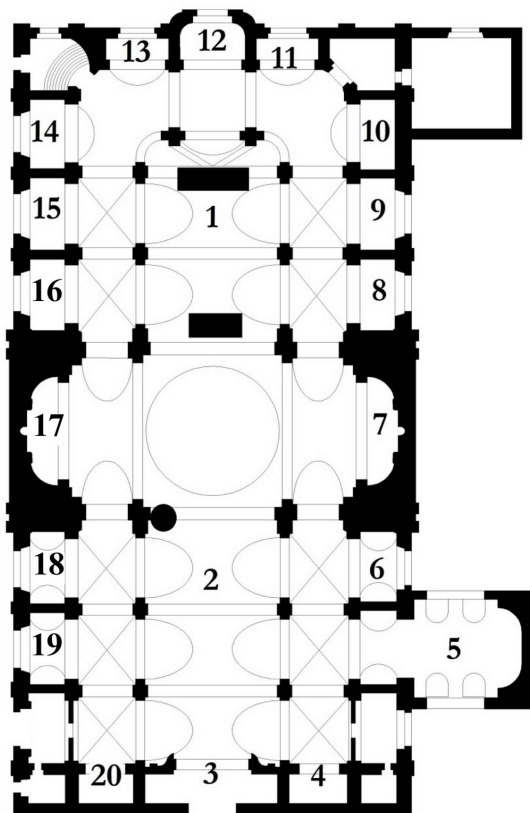
URBANISATION OF THE ISLAND AT THE BEGINNING OF THE 17TH CENTURY AND THE FIRST CHAPEL

In 1614 Christophe Marie, the general contractor of the bridges of France was asked by the king to build a bridge and to subdivide into lots the Ile Notre-Dame that had been connected to the Ile aux Vaches. In 1623 the inhabitants obtained the creation of a parish and a chapel, named Our Lady of the Island, dedicated to St Louis in 1634.

VISITING THE CHURCH

On the plan, you can read about the main works of art. Take time to admire the others as well and to pause in front of our Lord, present in the tabernacle, with a red light.

Through their masterpieces, artists usher us into Christ's life so that we can make it ours.



1 - CHOIR

Maître-autel, 1805

2 - CENTRAL NAVE AND TRANSEPT CROSSING

Crossing cupola supported by pendentives, high relief painting with Passion instruments in the spandrels, the French Coat of Arms (18th century) depicted in the centre. Pillars : Twelve Apostles : oil paintings on copper (17th century).

Leaflet laid out by the Saint-Louis-en-L'Île parish in 2023,
translated by Martial Riou.

Plan kindly designed by Julien Rovarino.

3 - ORGAN AND ORGAN LOFT

Organ by Bernard Aubertin, 2005

Painting : *Mystical Marriage of Saint Catherine*, attributed to Erasme Quellin (Flanders, 17th century)

4 - COMMEMORATION OF THE DEAD CHAPEL

5 - COMMUNION CHAPEL (1715)

Altar : *The Pilgrims at Emmaüs*, by Charles Coypel (1745), *The Resurrection of Christ* by Peyron, *The Nativity* by Perrin (1784)

6 - CHAPEL OF THE SACRED HEART

On the right : *The Dormition of the Blessed Virgin* (Flanders, 16th century). Italian panels (15th - 16th centuries)

7 - CHAPEL OF THE VIRGIN MARY

The Virgin and Child, by François Ladatte (1741)

8 - CHAPEL OF SAINT MARY-MAGDALENE

9 - CHAPEL OF SAINT VINCENT DE PAUL

10 - CHAPEL OF SAINT TERESA OF AVILA

11 - CHAPEL OF THE BLESSED ISABELLE OF FRANCE

12 - CHAPEL OF SAINT LOUIS

Stained-glass window and murals : *Episodes from the life of Saint Louis*

13 - CHAPEL OF SAINT FRANCIS OF ASSISI

Stained-glass window : *Blanche of Castille*

Stained-glass windows chapels 11, 12, 13 by Pierre Jollivet ; master glazier : Joseph Vigné

14 - CHAPEL OF SAINT FRANCIS DE SALES

Saint Francis de Sales Presenting St Jeanne de Chantal with the rules of her Order, by Noël Hallé (18th century)

15 - CHAPEL OF COMPASSION

16 - CHAPEL OF SAINT DENYS

17 - CHAPEL OF SAINT GENEVIEVE (1735)

Statue of the saint by François Ladatte (1741)

18 - CHAPEL OF SAINT JOSEPH

Italian panels (19th century)

The Pilgrims of Emmaüs, Titian school (16th century)

Saint Peter healing the Lame Man, by Carl Van Loo (1742)

19 - CHAPEL OF THE SOULS IN PURGATORY

Stained-glass window : *The Resurrection of Christ* offered by the Czartoryski princes (1866)

20 - BAPTISM FONT CHAPEL

Christ's Baptism, by Jacques Stella (1645)

Panels : *Scenes from Christ's Life* (Germany 16th century)

Above the main church entrance

The Last Communion of Saint Louis, by Ary Scheffer (1823)

THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE CHURCH IN THE 17TH CENTURY

As new inhabitants settled on the island, the chapel proved too small. François Le Vau (the brother of Louis Le Vau, the Versailles architect) drew up the plans for a new and very luminous church, to be built in the spirit of the Counter-Reformation. Works began in 1647 but were delayed owing to foundation problems and the first stone was laid in 1664, the construction was slow, depending on parishioners' generosity. The choir and altar were consecrated in 1679, the old chapel still being used as a temporary nave.

COMPLETING THE CHURCH IN THE 18TH CENTURY

In 1701 a hurricane destroyed the roof of the chapel, killing a number of parishioners. A royal lottery provided the money necessary to complete the church. The works were finished in 1725 and the church was consecrated in 1726, the island being then renamed Ile St Louis. Four architects played their parts : F. Le Vau (died in 1676), Gabriel Le Duc (died in 1702), followed by Pierre Bullet and Jacques Doucet. A small belfry, struck by lightning in 1740, was replaced in 1765 by an openwork bell-tower, in the shape of a pyramid. With its rectangular plan and plain exterior, the church is hardly visible from the street. Several entrance projects were thought of but never carried out : the church has kept its blank western wall.