

# Welcome to the parish church of Notre Dame du Bellay

**We are pleased to welcome you in the place where our community gathers to pray every Sunday.**

This building, built in the XVth century, is the former chapel of the Château. It gained the title of “Collégiale” when led by canons. It was given to the community and transformed into a parish church at the start of the XIXth century. This followed the abandonment of the former church of Saint Peter which was situated in the Nobis Priory but which had fallen into ruin.



In 1863 a bridge was built above the moat to allow direct access to the church without having to go through the Château courtyard.

**Noteworthy aspects of this building:**

**Plantagenet arches (see details on the board in the church entrance). The funereal band: the black strip around the nave.**

**This leaflet gives you a 10' guided tour of the church**

## The font

It is where baptisms take place. It symbolises the entry into the Christian community, this is why it is traditionally placed at the entrance to the church building.

Its round shape is fitted into a square stone. This concept signifies that the infinite (the round shape) meets the earth (the square shape).

Baptism is a sacrament by which one becomes a child of God.

The dipping into the water symbolises the passage from death to life.



## The painting of Saint Sebastian



Saint Sebastian is one of the best known Roman martyrs. An officer in Diocletian's army, he was a Christian. When this was discovered, he was asked to renounce Christ and to worship the Emperor but he refused. Consider if they have something in common?

Tied naked to a tree trunk, he became the target of his own soldiers and was killed by their beating. His cult dates from the IVth century. The Basilica built above his tomb is one of the seven main churches in Rome.

It is said that Saint Sebastian was a martyr. Martyr means witness. He was a witness to his faith as he remained faithful to Jesus Christ right up to his death.

Not all the saints died martyrs. To be canonised (to be declared a Saint) you must have led an exemplary Christian life and have performed two miracles recognised by the church .

## **The Tabernacle**

This is the safe which is closed by a small ornate door with a blue cross. You will find it at the end of the church behind the altar. It contains the consecrated host (and a host is the unleavened bread which the priest has blessed). For Christians, the host signifies the presence of the risen Christ.



## **The Altar**

**The altar is the place where the priest celebrates the Mass. It is a table which calls to mind the last meal that Christ had with his disciples before being crucified.**

*Here stop for a moment to look at the stained glass.  
Sit on one of the front chairs and look up.....*

**Central window: The death of Christ on the cross.**

**Look at the vivid colours.....**

**Locate Mary, the apostle John and the angels.**

**Notice the different objects which evoke the story of the Passion (the purse that Judas was awarded for his treason; the cock which crowed after the disavowal of Saint Peter; the spear that pierced Jesus' side; the ladder used to bring down the body from the cross).**

**Side window: The Annunciation.**

**Notice the colours of the high rose window.**

**Notice the gestures of the people represented.**

Consider if they have something in common?

The story of the Annunciation describes the visit of the Angel Gabriel to Mary when she was told that she was going to bring a child into the world who would be called the Son of God. You can read the whole story in the Bible (the Gospel according to Luke, chap. 1, verses 26-38).

## The chapel of the Virgin Mary.

Here you can light a candle and reflect as this light will lift your requests, your sufferings and your thanks towards heaven.

The plaques on the wall around the statue of Mary are called ex-voto. They are in thanks for benefits obtained through the help of Mary when requested in prayer. (cures, matrimonial matters, problems with children, etc...).



## Pictures of the Assumption



At the Assumption, Christians remember the taking up into heaven of the body and soul of Mary. The feast of the Assumption is on 15th August each year which is also the festival day of this Church. This is why there are in this church numerous pictures and sculptures which represent this event.

But be careful! Do not confuse this with the Ascension. The Christian faith is founded on the resurrection of Jesus Christ and at the Ascension we celebrate the taking up into heaven of Christ 40 days after Easter.