

The statue of the Virgin in the shrine of N.D. de Colombier

The original wooden statue of the Mother of God was destroyed during the Religious Wars in the 16th century. Sometime later a beautiful statue mysteriously appeared in the sanctuary of Notre Dame, which the villagers of Montbrun deemed miraculous. As a result, pilgrimages in Our Lady's honour were conducted for centuries, with numerous miracles ascribed to her intercession.

These miracles are hinted in a few lines from a poem by Jacques Brun: "Notre-Dame spreads her signal graces: Preparing for faith, for amazing awakenings." (Jacques Brun, Lézignan-Corbières, *The Chapel of Colombier*, Montbrun 8 juli 1950.) This statue of Notre Dame de Colombier, which is still standing today, was blessed by Bishop de La Bouillierie (1810-1882). It is likely that this must have happened when he was bishop of Carcassonne from 1855 to 1872. (R.P. Jean-Emmanuel B. Drochon, *Histoire illustrée des pèlerinages français de la Très Sainte Vierge Marie*, E. Plon, Nourrit et C^{IE}, Imprimeurs-éditeurs, Paris, 1890.)

Renovation and maintenance

The annual government grant is insufficient for the renovation and maintenance of this 11th century monument. Your voluntary contribution towards saving this building of significant cultural heritage is therefore very welcome and will help to keep this chapel open to the public. By doing so, you also enable the hermit, Theo van Osch, to continue his calling in this chapel.

Of course, it is also possible to donate a small amount weekly or monthly by automatic transfer. This way you will hopefully not feel it in your wallet and you will be doing a great service!

This leaflet is offered to you free of charge and may therefore be freely taken and distributed. Of course, there have been costs in printing it. Thank you therefore for your voluntary contribution in any form whatsoever. To this end, you are welcome to leave a donation here on site or transfer (using the QR code) to the account of:

Stichting Amis Notre Dame de Colombier,
IBAN number: NL20RABO 0157575225
Langgevel 10, NL - 5406 CJ Uden,
☎ (0031) (0)6 38 31 41 02

The foundation is registered in the Chamber of Commerce ("K.v.K.") in The Netherlands under VAT number: 6492057.

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INFO CHAPEL



Location

The 11th century Romanesque chapel of Notre Dame de Colombier is located one kilometre north of the southern French village of Montbrun-des-Corbières, in the Department of Aude (Region Occitania), in the valley between the Pyrenees to the south and the Montagne Noire to the North, and between the cities of Narbonne and Carcassonne. She belongs to the churches of the parish of Saint Régis en Lézniganais. Until the summer of 2018 there was hardly any activity in this chapel, to which a beautiful legend is attached. The full details of this story can be read on the chapel's website.

Name

The name *Notre Dame de Colombier* is connected with this legend. *Notre Dame* means 'Our Lady', the name by which Mary, the mother of Jesus Christ, is known in popular devotion. *Colombier* literally means 'dovecote'.

Legend

The legend recounts how the Lord of Montbrun was in deep mourning at the loss of his wife. In the hope of processing this loss, he joined a crusade to the Holy Land. Every night for years, his two sons stayed on the lookout from the castle tower for their father. Hopeless of his return, they decided to ensure the family's succession by each choosing a bride. To this end they gave a grandiose feast, but to the chagrin of the clergy, they held it

on an unfortunate day: on Holy Saturday, the day of silent commemoration of the death of Christ. During the feast, under the intoxication of wine and feminine beauty, they twice refused to grant hospitality to a poor pilgrim who had arrived at the castle gates seeking their help. Finally, they set the dogs on him, which tore him apart. Too late, the two young lords recognized from the seal ring on his finger, from the features of his blood-stained face and the account of the Crusade in his pocket, that this deceased pilgrim was their own father come back to the family home. While they were expressing their remorse for their cruel act, a flight of doves appeared out of nowhere. One of the doves settled itself on the body of the deceased father, soaked its beak in his wounded heart, and with the blood drew the contours of the chapel and the place where it was to be built: the place where it still stands...

Monument

The historic value of this legend is uncertain. However, the true historic value of the chapel itself cannot be overestimated because, as an architectural type in this region, this chapel is of unique size, value and meaning. Since it has become more and more unused as a church building, this important monument has fallen into disrepair. That is why Father Theo van Osch created a Foundation in 2015, to add support to the small and needy Montbrun community in rescuing its

monument. In France, the state (i.e. the municipality) owns the church buildings.

Foundation

The Foundation 'Amis Notre Dame de Colombier' aims to mobilise funds, collect resources and recruit friends for the renovation, preservation and maintenance of this chapel. As the Foundation was established in the Netherlands, according to civil law, its address and corporate entity are also there.

Calling

In the course of 2016, Father Theo has been increasingly drawn to this chapel. From his adolescence he has cherished a great love for France and its culture. His vocation to become a priest began in Lourdes in 1981 and eventually resulted in his receiving ordinations in 1988 and 1989 in the Diocese of Den Bosch, The Netherlands. 28 years of active and intense pastoral work in the Diocese of Den Bosch followed. After being a Dean for 10 years, in the course of 2016 and 2017, Father Theo became aware of a 'second vocation', taking him away from the practical, active pastoral work of a parish priest to the more contemplative life and prayer apostolate of a hermit at this ancient pilgrimage chapel. After a period of guidance in the 'discernment of the spirits' and a trial period in residence, Father Theo, in the autumn of 2017 at the age of 57, embarked upon a new path, so he might pursue his 'second calling': the hermit of Notre Dame de Colombier.

If you would like to receive his newsletter approximately three times a year, sign up at info@notredamedecolombier.com.