

## Saint Honoré d'Eylau's Church - Paris

The current location of the Saint Honoré d'Eylau Parish was covered with fields, vegetable gardens and several small houses interspersed with stone quarries about 181 years ago.



### *The Church on Victor Hugo Place*

In 1852, Eugène-Auguste Debressenne (1813-1893), the architect of Passy's district, was selected to build the church which was dedicated to Sacred Heart. The church, consecrated on 25 March 1857, was still surrounded by lots for sale when in 1860 it was annexed by the city of Paris along with 11 other districts. Two years later the chapel became "*Saint Honoré de la Plaine*" by an imperial decree of 15 August 1862 and by order of Cardinal Morlot the Archbishop of Paris (it changed to of Eylau in 1865, taken from the new name of the Charles X Avenue, as the Second Empire belatedly honoured Napoléon's 1807 victory at Eylau). In 1876, the City of Paris asked Debressenne to expand the Saint Honoré Church to its current state. This work was completed and on 10 February 1884, Cardinal Guibert, the Archbishop of Paris in the presence of the Duke of Nemours, Louis-Philippe's fourth son, blessed the church.

### *The Church of Saint Honoré d'Eylau (Chapel of Our Lady of the Parish City)*

The Chapel *Our Lady of the Parish City* was built by Paul Marbeau.

That could be realized thanks to the new architectural technique of iron which triumphed at the Universal Exhibition of 1889 with "Eiffel's Tower". The iron alloy produced by the new metallurgy, had advantages such as low-cost, durability, lightness of weight and ruggedness. In this way Paul Marbeau was able to cover a long nave with double aisles (a Parisian tradition dating back to the Cathedral of Notre Dame) and 13 bays with 52 fragile columns which while supporting a series of double arches did not obstruct the view of the high altar.

The three-level façade (**the façade with three levels**) has five doors above which are fifteen **blind arcatures** decorated by figures in mosaic executed by Henri Bicchi,

separated in trios by pilasters : the Virgin and Child surrounded by Saint Joseph and Saint John the Baptist and the twelve apostles. Just one year after the **ground breaking** the Chapel was consecrated on 21 May 1897 with of course, Cardinal Richard, the Archbishop of Paris present the day of Confirmation's Sacrament.

The interior's decoration remained intact until Vatican II (1965-1968) when liturgical prescriptions required changes. At this time the church was in grave danger. A real estate project would have involved its destruction and the construction of a partially underground church (The newspaper "*Le Monde*" announced the return of the catacombs...) and the subdivision of land on Avenue Raymond Poincaré. A petition organized by a group of very determined parishioners blocked the project that was to be given to André Le Donné.

In 1974, the church was emptied to allow for its renovation. However today, Saint Honoré has a beautiful variety of arts works, some of which were executed for the church either at the time of its construction (like the altar of the Saint Sacraments) or with the new liturgical instructions in mind.

### *The Stations of the Cross*

Saint Honoré is fortunate to own holy pictures of the stations of the cross which can be viewed from a distance. Joseph Aubert, a student

of Puvis de Chavannes, exhibited in the 1922 Salon of French Artists, a set of Stations of the Cross intended for the Church of Our Lady of the Deliverande in Caen. The Council Curial liked them and commissioned another series from the artist. Joseph Aubert does not use street scenes. There are no crowds and the figures are restricted to the essential ones : Christ, Mary, Pontius Pilate, the Cyrenean, Veronica. The landscapes, inspired by the Holy Land to which Aubert had made several pilgrimages, were simplified to the extreme. The combination of Camaieu brown contrasted with gold backgrounds for the sky and with white drapery used exclusively for Christ and Mary is a successful artistic innovation which was revealed during the 1987 restoration.

### *The Stained Glass Windows*

The church own an interesting set of 92 stained glass windows which are homogeneous, full of history and a recent discovery, are based on cartoons executed by Eugène Grasset and his students.

*(A brochure in French explaining the stained glass windows in detail is on sale at the reception).*

### *The Organs*

The Saint Honoré d'Eylau Parish has three organs : one in the old church, one in this church and one

in the Saint Theresa Chapel. The organ in the old church was built in 1903 by Charles Mutin, the successor of Cavaillé-Coll.

In 1897, the same organ's manufacturer installed in the newly-finished church an instrument enough similar in appearance and size to the other one. These two organs, still in their original condition, are good examples of the tastes of the period when they were built in terms of **resonance or acoustics** adapted to the church.

In 1934, the Cavaillé-Coll Establishment, headed at the time by Joseph Beuchet, expanded the

size of the organ by installing a third key board increasing the organ stop to 39.

A third organ was built for the Saint Theresa Chapel in 1937 by the Roethinger Establishment of Strasbourg.

