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Church & Jardin des Carmes

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A unique heritage dedicated to university life, culture and spirituality.



Saint-Joseph-des-Carmes church, the garden of the Carmelites and all other buildings are located in the Latin Quarter, at the heart of the Catholic University of Paris.

Saint-Joseph-des-Carmes Church

Saint-Joseph-des-Carmes Church, which was consecrated in 1625, experienced a number of important historical moments and uses before becoming a church at the heart of the ICP site, where key moments of academic life are celebrated: solemn mass at the start of the year, ICP Patronal Feast (Immaculate Conception), Feast of Saint Thomas, the patron saint of theologians. It is also the site of regular celebrations by the Carmes Seminary, the ICP student Chaplain, the neighborhood's Sunday community, and a number of prayer groups. It is under the responsibility of a rector appointed by the Diocese of Paris.

Saint-Joseph Church is exceptional both for its architectural quality and as a symbol of the historic, intellectual, and spiritual heritage (members of the Carmelite order, the martyrs of 1792, Lacordaire, Ozanam) on which the ICP is based.

The entrance to the church is located at 70 rue de Vaugirard. Guided tours of the church are held every Saturday at 3:00 pm (except during August). Group visits are also possible on weekdays (contact).

Visit the Saint-Joseph-des-Carmes website: www.sjdc.fr.

Le Jardin des Carmes



Frederic ALBERT

Jardin des Carmes, extending the architectural context of the church and the Carmelite Seminary, is an oasis of greenery in the heart of the 6th arrondissement. At the end of the 18th century, the garden was for cultivation of lemon balm whose monks were shooting a drink of their invention "melissa water Carmelite."

A Little History

1625

Carmes church, which was dedicated on December 21, 1625 to Saint Joseph, was built for Discalced Carmelites, who emerged from the reform of the Carmelite order by Saint Teresa of Ávila. They came to France at the request of pope Paul V after the death of Henry IV. They were welcomed by Marie de Médicis on a large plot adjacent to the rue de Vaugirard, where the queen laid the first stone for a new church on July 20, 1613. Construction was completed in 1620. **It was the first Italian dome built in Paris**, and is painted with a trompe l'oeil fresco. A number of great families connected to the Carmelite order helped fund the interior decoration. The exterior walls of the convent's buildings are covered in bright white paint, a color that is known as "Blanc des Carmes" (Carmelite white). Members of the order produced lemon balm water, which became famous under the name "Eau des Carmes" (Carmelite water).

1792

Under the Revolution, in August 1792, the church served as a prison for "refractory priests" refusing to take an oath of allegiance to the Civil Constitution of the Clergy.

Over 160 priests were detained there. On September 2, after a mock trial, approximately 115 priests and bishops were executed by knives in the garden. The relics from the martyrs of September 2, 1792 are honored in the crypt. The front steps, where some of the executions took place, is another place of remembrance.

1797

The Carmelite nun Mother Camille de Soyecourt bought the convent and the church after the revolution, and proceeded with restoring the site. The church facade, which was redone identically in the mid-nineteenth century, contains two statues of Saint Teresa and Saint Joseph displayed in alcoves. The church's crypt is home to the tomb of the Beatified Frédéric Ozanam (1813-1853), the primary founder of the Saint Vincent de Paul Conferences.