

# CHURCH OF SAINT-PIERRE



The small rural Merovingian church of Saint Pierre stands on the ruins of an ancient edifice. It was built in the 11<sup>th</sup> century and has been a place of worship for the town's faithful for centuries. The building was classified as a historic monument in 1984 and is exceptional for its architectural style, archaeological and anthropological contents and the stained glass windows painted by artist Arcabas.

The first mention of this imposing church dates back to 1016, when the Bishop of Grenoble, Humbert 1<sup>st</sup> of Albon, gave it to the Benedictine abbey of Cruas-en-Vivaraïs.

Discoveries made in the 19<sup>th</sup> century (fragments of 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> century epitaphs) triggered major archaeological and anthropological investigations. The findings, which include sarcophagi, collections of holy medals, rosaries, jewellery and fabric, provide precious insight to further our knowledge of the church and the sociology of the population buried therein.

Three construction phases have been identified spanning the 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> centuries. A Roman door on two double columns lodged in supporting pillars is surrounded by a Louis XV style tympanum and topped with an oculus. A pyramidal spire rises above the bell tower. These come from the modern era.

At the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the priory church was considered too small for the parish congregation. A new church was built in the town and inaugurated in 1911.

*The church stands in the centre of a circular space in low relief, characterised by an ecclesiastical enclosure, which housed the town cemetery until the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.*

