

When Montfort arrived in Saint-Laurent-sur-Sèvre in 1716, the current square did not exist.

The location was occupied by the tombs of the Petit Cimetière and the Chapel of Notre-Dame-des-Grâces. This building, dating back to before 1601, belonged to the Lords of the Manor of La Barbinière.

As part of his mission, Father de Montfort encouraged the residents of Saint-Laurent to come together as brotherhoods and sisterhoods. He founded the Confrérie des Vierges for unmarried women, and the Confrérie des Pénitents Blancs for the men of the town.

The Chapel became the meeting place for the men, and was thus renamed Chapelle des Pénitents.

During the War in the Vendée that followed soon after the Revolution, the chapel, the cemetery and the houses around it suffered as a result of attacks by the Republican army campaigns known as *Les colonnes infernales*.

Dozens of people were massacred, the houses burned and the chapel used as a grain store for the Republican army.

When this difficult period came to an end, it was time to rebuild.

1801 saw construction of the Supiot house, since demolished.

The Chapelle des Pénitents was in a parlous state and declared a ruin.

The Petit Cimetière, the last resting place of Brother Saint-Esprit Joseau - one of the first in Saint-Laurent to support the Daughters of Wisdom - fell into disuse.

In 1809, the local council bought the chapel, demolished it and replaced it with the Place des Pénitents.

At the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the square changed its name to the Place Saint-Gabriel, taking its name from the boarding school run by the teaching brothers.

