

# CULTURAL FACT SHEET



France



Lithuania

## France — Lithuania Relations



### Claire Isabelle de Mailly-Lascaris



#### An Imperial-Born Monastery Founder

The entirety of the Pažaislis Monastery (1667–1730) captivates with its elegance and grandeur; it is a masterpiece of high Baroque architecture in Lithuania. The founders, Kristupas Žygimantas Pacas, Grand Chancellor of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, and his French wife Claire Isabelle de Mailly-Lascaris, dedicated the monastery of Pažaislis to the Camaldolese monks, known for their austere rule.

Chancellor Kristupas Žygimantas Pacas married in 1654 one of the most eminent French women of the Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth (Rzeczpospolita), Claire Isabelle de Mailly-Lascaris. At that time, this couple was among the most influential in the country. Claire came from a family of Byzantine imperial origin and was the niece and lady-in-waiting of Louise-Marie de Gonzague-Nevers, Queen of Poland and Grand Duchess of Lithuania, wife of King John II Casimir.

After the death of the Grand Chancellor in 1684, his widow oversaw the further construction of the church. The interior of the complex impresses with its splendor: the sculptures are remarkable, and approximately 140 frescoes remain inside the buildings.

On the central altar is displayed a painting of Our Lady of the Camaldolese, famous for its miracles. The painting was reportedly given to the Chancellor of Lithuania, Kristupas Žygimantas Pacas, by Pope Alexander VII in 1661.

The founders were buried in a crypt arranged in the church's basement.

