

ASEM EDU SOM I **OCTOBER 15 – 17. 2018**

DÜRNSTEIN ABBEY

The story of the Church began in 1372 when Elizabeth von Kuenring founded a Chapel within the walls of her Castle dedicating it to the Assumption of the Virgin Mary. In 1400 she made a gift of half of her former family home, to the Augustinian Canons of Wittingau in Bohemia for it to be used as a Monastery.

The Canons then worked hard constructing the Cloister and the Monastery complex and the Church and the Crypt which was built around the former chapel and which was finally consecrated in 1410.

THE INSIDE OF THE CHURCH

The tabernacle

In 1710, exactly 300 years after the foundation, Hieronymus Übelbacher was elected as the new Prevost. Under his leadership, his theological vision was brought to life in the then new Baroque style. Some of the most famous architects, stucco artists, sculptors and painters of the Age created what we see today: Joseph Munggenast designed the portals, Jakob Prandtauer the Church and Quad, and Matthias Steinl the steeple. The tower represents the resurrection and overcoming of suffering in a freer, celestial world hence the colours of blue and white.

In the Church, the Italian, Santino Bussi, created all the cherubs and also the stucco reliefs on the ceiling that depict the six festivals of the liturgical year.

In the middle side altar on the north of the nave is one of the only visible remaining artefacts from the previous Gothic Church is the statue – the Madonna of Dürnstein.

Above this and on the opposite side of the nave are two paintings, St. Monica and the beheading of St. Catherine, and these are the work of M.J. Schmidt. This famous Austrian artist who was known as “Kremser Schmidt” (Krems) and who started his career in Dürnstein.

His father Johann Schmidt, was the sculptor whose wonderful woodcarvings fill the Church including the high altar and the Globe like gilded wooden Tabernacle that rotates on its own axis and has 44 scenes depicting the 33 years of Jesus Christ’s life.

Kremser Schmidt’s teacher was the painter Karl Harringer whose masterpiece, the Assumption of the Virgin Mary, takes pride of place above the high altar.

The Baroque or Southern German style organ with its 860 pipes was made in 1724 by the Viennese Master, Christof Pantzner and it is the last working example of his art. It has two manuals and pedals with 16 registers,.

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The cloister

The baroque cloister, contains two art history treasures, the all too life like crib made by Johann Schmidt and the Antonio Galli Bibiena's famous Holy Sepulchre which is represented in the manner of a stage of that era (1731) for us, the audience to reflect over.

1745 the Church also became the centre of secular worship as the Parish Church of Dürnstein and is consecrated "The Assumption of the Virgin Mary", which is celebrated on the 15th of August.

In the late 80's, an extensive renovation of the entire Monastery was necessary. Special attention was given to the cloister, crypt and steeple and these were restored with the support of numerous donors. The upkeep and restoration is an ongoing process and this is now to a great extent covered by the entrance fee.

Since its dissolution in 1788 it was incorporated into the Augustinian Monastery of Herzogenburg, to whom it still belongs today.