

The Late Gothic Parish Church **Assumption of Mary in Mariasdorf**

In 1388, in a mortgage bond issued by King Sigismund of Luxembourg (King of Hungary and Croatia since 1387) concerning the royal castle of Porostyan (= Bernstein), Mariasdorf was first mentioned in a document as "Menhard" (= Meinhard). This reflects the ancient Hungarian custom of naming a village after its owner (possibly also after the related dynasty). Later on the place was called Marcharstorff (1464), Marcherstorf (1576), Moristorf (1674; this name is still commonly used today), and Mariastorff (1697).

Archaeologist Dr. Ilona Valter argues that there was probably already a Romanesque church in Mariasdorf, because there is a semicircular, walled-up doorway on the south wall of the Gothic choir between the two buttresses. This doorway is likely to have been the entrance to the Romanesque church. Ground-penetrating radar measurements taken in 2000/2001 confirm the presence of foundations of an older church.

With the "Pfandbrief von Bernstein" (Bernstein mortgage bond) of 1388, the Bernstein domain, along with all its associated villages, including Mariasdorf, passed as a pledge to the Archbishop of Gran and Royal Chancellor Johann Kanizsai (1350-1418) and his brothers Nikolaus and Stephan. In 1392, it was transferred to them as a gift from Queen Mary of Hungary (from the House of Anjou) with the "Donationsbrief von Bernstein" (Bernstein donation letter).

The church was evidently built in two phases. Construction began on the choir around 1400. The late Gothic nave with its two southern stair towers, the unfinished west portal with its tympanum (the inscription on it probably reads either 1409 or 1490), the sacristy in the north with the ossuary beneath it, the tabernacle with the inscription 1483 (the original wrought iron door is in the Diocesan Museum in Eisenstadt), and the sacrament niche on the north wall were all then built in the last quarter of the 15th century. The vault of the nave was executed in a simplified form (perhaps a net or star-ribbed vault was planned originally). The cross-ribbed vault is unusual and unfashionable for the last quarter of the 15th century (was there a new construction management in place?). The inscriptions on the gallery parapet, bearing the five dates 1400 (start of construction), 1409 (expansion), 1666 (Baroque conversion), 1882 (re-Gothicisation), and 1899 (completion of re-Gothicisation), were only added in 1899 during the painting work at that time (see below). In her art topography, Adelheid Schmeller-Kitt compares the Mariasdorf church with the churches in Kirchsclag and Wiener Neustadt based on the detailed forms on the west and south facades.

Visitations

The condition of the church between the Counter-Reformation and the re-Gothicisation can be traced in the "Canonica Visitationes." Here, the visitation by the Archdeacon of Eisenburg, Stephan Kazó, in 1697, provides much information: The church is roofed with tiles and vaulted, with the exception of the choir, which has a paneled wooden ceiling. Above the west portal is a wooden bell tower with two bells. The cemetery is well fenced with a stone garden wall. Eight old wooden panel paintings are also mentioned, which may have been the remains of a Gothic winged altarpiece. The church has three "elegant" altars, including the high altar with an image of the Most Glorious Mother of God.

The 1757 visitation by the then Archdeacon of Eisenburg, Josef Batthyány, records that the church was renovated in 1724 and 1741. The choir was now also vaulted. It also states that Count Christoph Batthyány (1637–1687) commissioned the marbled high altar with the painting "The

Assumption of Mary." Two side altars are mentioned again, although these are now described as magnificent Baroque altars. From 1777, Mariasdorf belonged to the newly founded Diocese of Steinamanger (previously the Diocese of Raab).

The 1779 visitation by Bishop János Szily of Szombathely noted that the choir had a "modern" (= Baroque) vault, the nave vault was old (= Gothic), and that the church was in good condition. An organ with five registers was documented as well. A wooden tower in the middle of the roof was also mentioned, which was however in need of repair. Count Anton Batthyany (1762–1828) allegedly had this tower moved above the choir. During the 1812 visitation, the tower was described as being in ruins; it underwent renovation works in 1832. However, there are two drawings from 1825 by Joseph Auracher von Aurach showing the church with a tower on the west side. The fire on January 28, 1849, destroyed the tower, along with the bells and a large part of the roof. Since the fire, a larger dormer window has been added to the west side of the church, facing south, to house the bells. The high altar was renovated in 1864. In 1876, Flóris Rómer (Hungarian archaeologist and art historian; 1815-1889) noted that the church was in poor condition and in need of complete restoration.

Re-Gothicisation 1882 – 1899

Alois Baumgartner acted as parish priest in Mariasdorf from 1874 to 1903. He initiated the re-Gothicisation and thus saved the dilapidated church. He meticulously recorded the progress of the major works and the many difficulties from year to year in his "*Historia Parochiae Mariafalvensis*." Pastor Baumgartner asked the Hungarian Royal Minister of Culture and Education, Ágoston Trefort, to have the church renovated. Emmerich Steindl, Professor of Architecture and Art History at the Technical University of Budapest (and later architect of the Hungarian Parliament), was commissioned by the minister in 1878 to carry out the planning work.

In 1880, the ministerial decree ordering the beginning of the church's restoration was issued, but work did not actually begin until 1882; primarily on the west façade with its new balcony, a new rose window filled with tracery, three circular hatches in the gable, and a new statue of the Virgin Mary (1883). Also in 1883, the new zinc-plated roof turret – richly decorated with pinnacles and crabs made of sheet metal – in the center of the roof, along with the cross, was completed. Steindl wanted a neo-Gothic reconstruction in the spirit of historicism. This led to the removal of the Baroque additions (e.g., the choir vault, the altars, etc.) and the implementation of structural changes. A net-ribbed vault was added to the choir, the two stair towers were raised by an upper story, and the previously low tower roofs were given new pyramidal roofs that protruded above the church roof. The vestibule at the entrance on the south side was removed and the sacristy was redesigned in a neo-Gothic style (windows and east portal).

The neo-Gothic high altar, made of colored majolica (1884; enthroned Mary with the Christ Child, left: St. Elizabeth of Thuringia, right: St. Francis of Assisi), the pulpit (1888; Luke, Mark, Matthew, John, Peter, Paul), and the baptismal font come from the Zsolnay ceramics factory in Pécs/Fünfkirchen in Hungary and are unique in European art history. In 1886, Ferdinand Peppert from Szombathely built the organ with one manual and pedal and nine stops (complemented in presumably 1941 by the Gamba 8' stop). The pulpit's sounding board comes from Bártfa/Bartdorf (now eastern Slovakia) and was created in 1887. The wrought iron lid of the baptismal font and the grilles in front of the high altar and on the stairs to the sacristy were designed at the Hungarian Polytechnic and executed at the State Trade School in Budapest (1888). The two stained glass windows on the south side were made by Maximilian Roth in Budapest in 1888 according to plans by Steindl (St. Emmerich, St. Martin and St. Margaret of Hungary as well as St. Gerhard, St. Stephen of Hungary and St. Adalbert). On October 27, 1888 – after the interior of the church was completed – the church was consecrated by Karl Stegmüller, titular abbot and canon of Szombathely (representing Diocesan Bishop Kornél Hidasy). On October 19, 1889, the side altar

was consecrated. The altarpiece depicting St. Joseph with the Christ Child had been in the church since 1850 (after the fire), but dates already from the mid-18th century and was donated by Countess Franziska Batthyány. In May 1899, the Budapest painter János Glaser began painting the church and finalized the work in two months. In February 1902, the Stations of the Cross were blessed (terracotta paintings from a French company, which were painted by the Innsbruck company Müller). The majority of the re-Gothicisation was financed from the Religious Fund (a fund – created by Joseph II. in 1782 and administered by the state – which was endowed with the proceeds of the sales and auctions of the property of the then abolished monasteries).

Further Renovations

In 1929, the entire church was repainted. In 1972, the roof turret made of wood and iron sheet was renovated. From 1991 to 1995, the church underwent a comprehensive renovation, which also included the opening and reglazing of the bricked-up window on the north side of the choir. The new wooden people's altar, ambo, and sessio were created in 2005 by the Burgenland artist and sculptor Thomas Resetarits. From 2008 to 2010, under the direction of parish priest Pater Mag. Alfons Jestl, CSsR, the majolica furnishings (high altar, pulpit, and baptismal font) were renovated by restorer Klára Csáki from Pécs. In 2013, the organ underwent a complete overhaul by the Bodem company.

*Publisher: © Roman Catholic Parish of Mariasdorf, Kirchenstraße 15, 7431 Bad Tatzmannsdorf
Tel.: +43 3353 8289 Email: badtatzmannsdorf@rk-pfarre.at www.pfarrebadtatzmannsdorf.at*