

Welcome to the parish church St. John Nepomuk

A Little History

The image of the Virgin Mary in the high altar today - a copy of the "Maria Pötsch" miraculous image - survived the fire in the house in which it had been located unscathed. It was then hung on a tree in Jägerzeile (now Praterstraße) for public veneration in 1730. When it also remained intact during a severe storm in 1734, a chapel was built on that site in 1736, dedicated to St. John Nepomuk. As the chapel became an obstacle to the increasing traffic in the Jägerzeile, it was demolished in 1780 and rebuilt on another site. In 1786, it was elevated to the status of a parish church.

Of the three plans submitted by Carl Rösner, the one that envisaged the creation of a total work of art in the spirit of the Nazarenes, was realized in 1841. Josef Geyling was responsible for the ornamental painting, Leopold Kupelwieser and Josef Führich for the frescoes. Leopold Schulz contributed the two frescoes on the end walls of the side aisles. In 1844, the tower cross was installed and the consecration of the four bells was celebrated - one of the godparents was soon-to-be Emperor Francis Joseph I.

On October 18, 1846, Emperor Ferdinand finally laid the keystone, and the church was consecrated. When the old chapel was demolished in 1851, the miraculous image of the Virgin Mary was placed in the new parish church.

The church suffered considerable damage during revolutionary fighting in March 1848. In 1941, the sky-blue painting on the ceiling was chipped off except for the parts in the presbyterium. Two air raids in 1944 and 1945 led to the roof truss catching fire, the collapse of the right aisle and severe damage to the tower. The restoration work lasted until 1952. In 1969/70, a renovation project resulted in the current design.

The Façade

The strictly geometric façade shows the statue of St. Ferdinand by Franz Bauer on the left and that of St. Mother Anne with Mary as a child by Josef Klieber on the right. They commemorate Emperor Ferdinand, who had the church built, and his wife Anna Maria. The centrally positioned 70-metre steeple slenderly towers above the façade with its octagonal shape.

The Interior

The approx. 43 m long, 23.5 m wide and 19 m high church is a three-naved, five-bay, cross-vaulted hall with a central nave twice as wide as the side aisles. The wooden high altar, designed by Carl Rösner, shows the four evangelists seated and four figures from the Old Testament standing. The simultaneous depiction of figures from the Old and New Testaments was rather unusual at the time. The miraculous image of the Virgin Mary was added in 1969.

The picture of the Virgin Mary in the side altar - a copy of the Mariahilf picture by Lucas Cranach the Elder - also comes from the old church.

The large bronze chandelier in the middle of the church, weighing a good 600 kg, survived the use of metal during the Second World War because it was painted as if it were made of wood.

The wooden pulpit stands out with its rectangular and closed shape. The stone baptismal font on the right-hand side dates from the time the church was built.

The organ, which had been largely destroyed during the war, was replaced by the current one in 1990. The case comes from the church of St. Veit an der Krems. The organ itself was built by the Kögler company of St. Florian and consists of 2 manuals and a pedal division. It has 27 stops, 1918 tin pipes and 129 wooden pipes.

The Frescoes

The entire altar wall is dominated by Leopold Kupelwieser's fresco of the Assumption of St. John Nepomuk into Heaven. The saint can be seen in the middle, with Christ surrounded by angels, Mary, and John the Baptist at the top. The apostles, whose names can be read in the halos, sit to the right and left in the middle of the picture. In the lower part, you can see the Vltava Bridge in Prague in the evening (partly obscured by the high altar).

The side walls of the presbyterium show four Doctors of the Church (Jerome, Gregory, Augustine, Ambrose), eight prophets (Isaiah, Daniel, Jeremiah, Baruch, Malachi, Ezekiel, Elijah, David) and the seven sacraments - all executed by Leopold Kupelwieser. The ornamentation was accomplished by Josef Geyling.

The frescoes on the end walls were painted by Leopold Schulz. They show the Adoration of the Christ Child on the left and the Resurrection of Jesus on the right.

The most important work of art in the church is probably the Stations of the Cross. From 1844-46, Josef Führich created the large pictures of the cycle with its almost life-size figures. Thanks to the engravings of the Stations of the Cross made by Führich himself, the pictures quickly found worldwide distribution. Today, there are various copies in around 1200 churches around the world.