



The Church of the Assumption in Markt Indersdorf

– church guide –

*We welcome you to our beautiful, hallowed church, formerly a monastery founded by the Confederation of the Canons Regular of St. Augustine (C.R.S.A.).
This church is the central church of our parish.*

List of references:

- <https://kirchenundkapellen.de/kirchen/aaa-frame4kirchenundkapellen.htm> (12/25)
- Die Kirchen im Pfarrverband Indersdorf, Dr. Dieter Morsch, 2014

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HISTORY

The name "Indersdorf" was recognized in the 10th century as "Dorf des Undeo" (or, "Village of Undeo"; "Undeo" was the surname of a deacon or priest who lived here). Father (or Deacon) Undeo preached at a small church near the market square.

- 1111** The establishment of the monastery begins in 1111 A.D. During the "investiture controversy," King Heinrich V arrests Pope Paschal II in Rome. Because of his involvement in the plot, Count Otto IV von Wittelsbach—the King's bannerman--is excommunicated along with his king. Pope Paschal II's successor, Pope Calixtus II, agrees to reinstate Count Otto IV as a Catholic in exchange for an act of penance: he has to found a monastery for Regular Canons.
- 1120** the monastery for the C.R.S.A. is established.
- 1126** Some Augustinian canons move from their location in Marbach in Elsass to the newly built monastery in Indersdorf.
- 1128** Bishop Konrad of Salzburg christens the church in honor of Mary on August 15, the feast of the Assumption, and to the honor of the apostles Peter and Paul.
- 1130** Otto von Indersdorf, the last aristocratic lord of the town, living near the market place, joins the C.R.S.A. and transfers all his property to the canons care and responsibility. Little by little, other nobles in the area follow his example and supply for the Augustinians out of generosity. Notable among them is the Wittelsbach family, who are awarded the right to be buried on the grounds of the monastery and in the church itself. Near the altar there is a large collective crypt for the Wittelsbachs.
- 1264** Following a destructive fire, the monastery is rebuilt as we see it today, enclosed in protective walls. This style was inspired by the Roman 3-naved basilica. However, it was adjusted slightly to traditional Bavarian tastes: there is no corridor running along all 3 chambers of the church. Notice the 3 apses (arches), all measured to almost exactly the same height; at this time there was a flat wooden ceiling, and only the north tower. The Roman "portal," or double entrance chamber, is also common to this period.

The Indersdorf Monastery shows the rich history of the Augustinian canons here through a mixture of architectural techniques in its expansions and repairs over the centuries. Elements of Gothic, Renaissance, and Baroque art and architecture lead up to the current Rococo style of the complex. The monastery has survived three periods of prosperity and three periods of decline.

- 1306-1355** First heyday during the jurisdiction of Provost Konrad II, who regularly heard the Confession of Holy Roman Emperor Ludwig ("the Bavarian") IV. Monasteries and other religious institutions were tax-free.
- 1412-1470** Provost Erhard Prunner (1412-1442) and his half-brother Johann Rothut (1442-1470) guide the monastery through a second golden age.

- 1432** Provost Prunner commissions the building of a shallow barrel vault attached to the nave and a cross vault for each of the side aisles. A second tower (south tower) and the Rosary chapel are built. The frescoes of *Mary in the Family of Jesse* over the altar beside the chancel and *Death of the Mother of God* at the antependium over the Rosary altar are also part of this expansion.
- 1673-1693** Provost Georg Mall builds the Anna Chapel, the sacristy, and the eastern altar in addition to outfitting the church with a new high altar. This marks the beginning of the third golden age.
- 1748-1768** During the time of Provost Gelasius Morhardt, the church receives a stunning renovation in the Rococo style.

Despite the numerous changes, the interior of our church breathes unity and harmony. The various styles show that the Canons Regular of St. Augustine wished, in every time period, to design and update this house of God as best they could. The furnishings—especially the piece done by plasterer Franz Xaver Feichtmayr (1698-1763) of Wessobrunn; the frescoes by Matthäus Günther (1705-1788) and his friend and student Johann Georg Dieffenbrunner (1718-1786); and the altars built in various styles—are of high quality. The Indersdorf Monastery is a testament to Baroque piety, which declares above all the joy to be found in faith and calls others to follow God as well. So may the church in all its glory offer a potential encounter with the presence of God. Therefore, the church is no ordinary museum; rather, it has served as a house of worship for the last 900 years, the spiritual home—from baptism to burial—for Markt Indersdorf and its residents. Through celebrations of Mass, the sanctuary encourages celebrants to look beyond our mortal world and ruminate on eternity. The church is the dwelling place of God and a place of encounter for our community.

During the Baroque period, the church was equipped and decorated according to popular beliefs about what the Kingdom of God looks like--Heaven with all its angels and saints. This church follows the example of the Roman collegiate church (German: "Stiftskirche") in Rottenbuch. The frescoes in both churches have almost identical motifs.

The church structure is, as mentioned, a three-naved basilica with no cross-corridor in the Roman style. The twin west towers have roofs built in the late Gothic style. The bells, installed in 1450, still invite churchgoers to Mass.

One enters the **late Gothic foyer** through the western portal and continues into the **sanctuary**, which has seven bays crossing the ceiling. The four western bays form the "lay church;" the eastern three form the ceiling over the choir balcony joining the **square altar house**.

The high altar was, until the current day, the centerpiece of the church, because the sacrifice of Christ was celebrated here through Holy Communion. Today that honor belongs to the "people's altar" ("*Volksaltar*"). Beyond that, a monastery requires multiple side altars, in this case, eight. This allowed every priest to read a Mass every day. In Indersdorf, almost all of the Gothic altars are preserved as they were in the Baroque era, thanks to the carved wooden panels on them. The structures of the altars, specifically the columns, cornices, cherub statues, and embellishments are all polychrome and gilded wood.

All frescoes tell the story of the the life, works, and glorification of St. Augustine. Canons and congregants are encouraged to preach the goal of every Christian: the eternal and holy bliss of Heaven.

Ceiling Frescoes

Painted by Matthäus Günther



Fresco 1 offers church visitors insight into the central themes of all art in the church. St. Augustine is a meaningful representative of the Catholic faith. Here, he is throned among the clouds in the presence of the Holy Trinity. Divine power flows out of his burning heart to the church, represented by the Pope pointing at him in the left corner. To his right, Günther painted an Augustinian canon, shown praying to his patron. Further to the left of the Pope, scrolls written by heretics are burned.



Fresco 2 is considered Matthäus Günther's *magnum opus* thanks to its technical qualities. It shows St. Augustine as an intercessor between God and humanity. A powerful flame, fueled by love, blazes out of his heart, aimed upward at the Trinity, which is symbolized by the triangle in a halo. The four known continents pay homage to him: The woman in the white dress resembles the most powerful woman in the world at that time, Empress Maria Theresia von Habsburg; she represents Europe. At her feet there rest two symbols of power, a crown and a cardinal's hat. The woman with the incense bowl embodies Asia; the woman with the parrot is the Americas. The woman with the turban represents Africa. Because St. Augustine was born there, she is elevated

above the other continents. Heretical teachers are cast down from the saint's presence. On the left edge of the painting we read, "Matthae Gündter pinxit [*painted*] 1755." This fresco indicates St. Augustine's teachings being accepted by the Church at all levels, from the highest authority to the average church attendee.



Fresco 3 depicts St. Augustine as the great founder of the Order. Angels carry the book containing the rules that will govern not just the C.R.S.A, but several other Orders of St. Augustine. Present for this divine inspiration are a Pope, Cardinal, Bishop, and Prelate coming from various Augustinian orders. The plate in the middle of the fresco is removed at Pentecost and a wooden dove, representing the Holy Spirit, is lowered into the church. In the last few years, rose blossoms are

falling down at Pentecost, as a symbol for the tongues of fire.



Fresco 4 shows the mystical unification of St. Augustine with Christ. Blood from the wounds of Christ and milk from the breast of Mary fall on Augustine. This shows that his teachings are accepted not just by people, but by the powers of Heaven and the Holy Trinity as well.



Fresco 5 is over the high altar on the inside of the dome. The Lamb of God is surrounded by the the hosts of Heaven. Blood flows down to the altar where the sacrifice of Jesus on the Crucifix is celebrated.

Side Frescoes at the high nave wall (6-19)

Designed by Matthäus Günther, painted by Johann Georg Dieffenbrunner

14 scenes show the way of life from St. Augustine. The basis is his autobiography, written by himself and titled "Confessions". We see:

Farewell from his mother Monika (6), studies in Rome (7), St. Augustine meets St. Ambrosius (8), encounter with monasticism (9), conversion to Christianity: *Tolle et Lege*, take and read (10), Baptism of St. Augustine (11), priestly ordination in Hippo (12), founding of the Order (13), consecration to the office of Bishop in Hippo (14), writings on the Holy Trinity (16), writing *The City of God* (17), sickbed of St. Augustine (18), St. Augustine dies (19).

The High Altar (A)

is an altar built in typical Old Bavarian Baroque style. The **altar painting** was done by Andreas Wolff, the official court painter in Munich, in 1691. It shows the Assumption of Mary into Heaven. In a smaller painting above the altar, God the Father awaits Mary. Beside the main painting are Sts. Peter and Paul. Below them are St. Giuliana, St. John the Baptist, St. John the Evangelist, and St. Katherine.

The **Roccoco Tabernacle** was built in 1900 by Josef Elsner from Munich.

The Roccoco **choir stands** are built of oak in 1760 in the monastery's carpentry shop.



The Side Altars (B)

Ursula Altar (E): Shows the story of St. Ursula, who was martyred in Cologne for refusing to marry a Hun prince. It was painted by Josef Winter, also an official painter to the court in Munich.

Barbara Altar (F): Painted by Andreas Wolff. Barbara was locked in a tower by her father after converting to Christianity.

Altar to Mary the Intercessor (C): Bears a copy of a painting from Innsbruck titled *Gnadenbild Mariahilf* ("Picture of Mary's Grace and Help") in a Roccoco-style frame.

Anthony Altar (D): There used to be a painting of St. Anthony here, but in 1900 the fresco *Mary in the Family of Jesse* was discovered and restored. A pregnant Mary sits in front of the cross, and the Crucifix rises from her heart. At her feet there are her parents Joachim and Anna. The painting of St. Anthony hangs on the side wall.

Augustine Altar (J): The painting shows St. Augustine writing his book about the Holy Trinity.

Nicholas Altar (K): The patron Otto IV of Wittelsbach offers St. Nicholas the plan to build the monastery. On this site there was a chapel to honor St. Nicholas, who is shown approving the Count's pious plans.

The Martyrs (Holy Remains)

Felix, Lucius, Julius, and Innocence are the so-called "*Katakombenheilige*," or catacomb saints. Their bones were found in the catacombs of Rome and brought to Germany because they were believed to have died as martyrs. They were bound and decorated with jewels and gold and put in glass sarcophagi. During the early 18th century, having the remains of a saint on presentation in the church has been a sign of prestige.



Anna Chapel (H)

Built between 1721-1728, the Anna Chapel is the only altar that hasn't been changed. Andreas Wolff painted St. Anna teaching Mary as a child. The Holy Spirit shines above them. In the light of the Holy Spirit, the form of a baby can be seen, alluding to Mary accepting the word and will of God. The Anna Chapel is also the baptism chapel. The Gothic baptismal font is located here, with a wooden Baroque cover showing Jesus and St. John the Baptist.

The Chancel (B)

Built between 1721-1728. St. Augustine is depicted as a teacher on the awning. Two tablets containing the Greatest Law are mounted on the front: "You shall love the Lord, your God, and your neighbor as yourself." At the foot of the chancel we find the words, "Do this, and you shall live."

Benefactors' Portraits

On the right wall near the Nicholas Altar hangs a large oil portrait from 1640 of monastery founder Count Otto IV von Wittelsbach. He is painted in Turkish-inspired fashion, which was popular among nobles at the time. The smaller, oval-shaped portraits show other benefactors and patrons of the church and were painted by Johann Georg Dieffenbrunner.

Organ (G)

The first organ was donated in 1574 by Caspar Sturm from Schneeberg by Chemnitz. Most of the current organ can be traced back to 1755; the most recent pieces were installed in 1988. It has 33 ranks.

