

The church of Deutschsanktmichael

The Catholic church of Zillasch is dedicated to St. Raphael the Archangel.

In 1807 Count von Rauth donates a chapel to his settlement, the village Rauthendorf. 20 years later the first simple church was built. This church, made of mud, thatched with straw and without a tower, burns down in 1891 due to a storm.

In 1895 the present church in neo-Gothic style is completed, as well as the priests house across the street.

The altar of the church of Deutschsanktmichael was ordered in 1896 from the famous altar builder Nándor (Ferdinand) Stuflesser from the Gardena Valley in Tyrol and consecrated in the same year at Christmas. The descendants of the altar builder still carry on the renowned legacy of woodcarving art under the "Ferdinand Stuflesser 1875 OHG", see also at www.stuflesser.com.

In the center of the altar is Raphael as a pilgrim with a walking stick. He accompanies Tobias on his journey and points to the healing innards of the fish that Tobias has caught. In this sense, Raphael is not only the angel who heals wounds, but also the patron saint of travelers. "Raphael" was celebrated in the Catholic Church on October 24 from 1924 to 1969. The Zillascher 'Kerwei' or 'Kirchweihfest', the church consecration festival of Deutschsanktmichael then fell on the 1st Sunday in November.

The organ, an instrument of the organ builder János Soukenik from Szeged in Hungary, was taken over from the old church. After the organ could not be renovated properly, it was sold at the beginning of the 20th century and replaced by a reed organ from Leipzig.

In 1956 a storm destroyed the spire tower. Since then the tower has the well-known hipped roof.

In 1975 the Catholic church of Deutschsanktmichael was extensively renovated. At that time Zillasch was served by the parish of Freidorf and Canon Dr. Johann Heber as a branch.

Unfortunately, in the course of this remodeling, the formerly magnificent wall and ceiling paintings were painted over, following the example of the Freidorf parish church.

Since 1969, Raphael was no longer celebrated in the Catholic church on October 24, but on September 29 for the "Feast of the Archangels Michael, Gabriel and Rafael". All three saints each have the syllable "El" in their names, meaning "God" derived from the Hebrew Elohim. Specifically, this means:

Michael: is like God, plunges the adversary of God into the abyss.

Gabriel: announces the birth of John the Baptist and the birth of Jesus.

Raphael: "God heals", he is companion of Tobias and heals him from his blindness.

This threefold veneration may well have been the reason why the blind windows in the altar room, in addition to the altar figure of Raphael, have depicted the archangels Gabriel and Michael since 1975. The artistic painting above the sacristy and on the opposite side was done by our local Anna Schmitz (married Sanger).

On the left, directly next to the entrance, the Holy Sepulchre was always set up in a separate room during Holy Week. This room was otherwise closed and due to the doors with dark glass always mysterious for us children. In the course of renovations in 1975, the room was designed as a memorial to the 39 missing and killed in 2nd World War and the 9 victims of the subsequent Russian deportation. The memorial for the victims of the 1st World War is in the Zillasch Cemetery Chapel.

In summer 1980 I asked Canon Dr. Johann Heber about the church chronicle of Zillasch. At that time Zillasch was still a branch parish of Freidorf and Father Heber was the parish priest of Freidorf. Our family moved from Zillasch to Freidorf in 1969, and since then I was in regular contact with the priest and the local organist Gertrud Sklenarik, my music teacher, through playing the organ and being part of the church choir, but also because of my interest in good

books from the parish library. Pastor Heber had a special affinity for Zillasch, since after the death of Pastor Haubenreich he was faced with the decision of possibly taking over Zillasch as a parish instead of Freidorf. The discussion about common ancestors complemented the mutual common interest.

After the first inspection of the church chronicle in 1980, there was another opportunity in 1981 when my cousin from Germany photographed the few pages of the chronicle in Freidorf. At that time I recorded the list of Roman Catholic local clergy with the help of Father Heber as follows:

1819 Daniel Marczell	1891 Demele Ferencz
1822 Wurum Ferencz	1892 Prieszter Agoston
1827 Sackelhausen care	1893 Boldizsar Ferencz
1833 Zagrodczky Jozsef	1895 Matyas the locksmith
1842 Peterffy Karoly	1912 Horvath Lenard
1847 Pichler Jozsef	1912 Urban Janos
1854 Dert Denes	1937 Spanlang György
1855 Stenczer Jozsef	1948 Josef Haubenreich
1874 Wieselmayer Gyula	1961 Franz Kräuter from Timisoara IV
1891 Castle Matyas	

So far the records of the chronicle. After that followed:

1963 Franz Hönig (Timisoara, Fabric city district)
1974 Dr. Johann Heber and Jozsef Hajdu (Freidorf)
1982 Father Lucas Michael Jäger (Timisoara, Elizabeth city district)
1989 Johann Dirschl (Freidorf)
2009 Laszlo Wonerth (Freidorf)

With the exodus of the Danube Swabian population, the former Catholic priest house, after years of misuse as a post office, 'dispensary', 'Camin' and 'Matt' (tavern), becomes the dwelling for the first Romanian Orthodox parish priest in Zillasch and in 1986 the home of the Romanian Orthodox chapel 'Adormirea Maicii Domnului' (Assumption of Mary). An additional belfry is built in front of the house. The first Orthodox priest was Nicolae Otican. After his retirement in 2016, his son-in-law Toma Albai took over the parish.

In addition, other Pentecostal Christian parishes have found fertile ground in Zillasch.

On June 7, 2009, the Roman Catholic Diocese of Timisoara also abandoned the Catholic church and handed it over to the Romanian Orthodox community. Most of the inventory, such as the altar, the pews, etc. remained for the time being in the church, the reed organ found other owners.

For a long time the church building was structurally in a deplorable condition. It was only in 2015 that Pastor Otican initiated fundamental renovation and maintenance measures. First, some work and structural changes were made to the tower. Then, in 2018, Pastor Albai completed the repair of both the facade of the church and the rectory. Both now have a new face of their own.

In 2021, a major renovation and redecoration of the interior will be undertaken.

Videos available in the media from the 'Ruga' (Romanian church consecration) gives glimpses of today's place of worship.

In front of the church rises a new, large wooden cross as a visible sign of the Orthodox faith. To the left of it still stands the socket of the cross donated by Katharina and Josef Holz in 1896. Unfortunately, the cross has been missing from it since it was damaged at the end of the last century. The Orthodox parish has lovingly cared for the sign remaining from Catholic times and planted flowers between the two crosses.