





Week Three Report 10/14—10/20/2019



This week we began our walk ten miles before Maulbronn. We walked a total of 601 miles this week and stopped various sites in our tour. We ended the week in The Czech Republic on the way to Velehrad, near southern border with Slovakia. Our first stop was at Maulbronn Monastery, pictured left. This is a UNESCO World

Heritage Site. Maulbronn Monastery was founded in 1147 and is one of the most complete and well preserved medieval monastic complexes north of the Alps. Of particular note is the town's monastery, Maulbronn Abbey, which features prominently in Hermann Hesse's novel, *Beneath the Wheel*.

As is often the case in older places, several different architectural styles were used as the monastery grew. Maulbronn Monastery's most distinctive architectural structures include oak relief on its high altar, a Gothic choir stall, woodcraft masterpieces and its famous Madonna of Maulbronn, a beloved Madonna with a child figure held in the church's chancel. Founded in 1838, the monastery emerged from a settlement which belonged to the Neckar Community in the Kingdom of Württemberg. In 1886, Maulbronn officially became a German town and was an administrative center until 1938.

Legend has it that the settlement was founded by monks who followed a mule to a valley with a source of clean water. The valley was also blessed with large deposits of soft sandstone for building. The monks built the original abbey and erected a fountain to honor the mule. The town name means mule fountain.



After exploring the Monastery we headed south to Stuttgart which is the capital and largest city of the German state of Baden-Württemberg. We attended Mass there at St Eberhard's Cathedral (left). Since 1978, it has been co-cathedral of the Roman Catholic Diocese of Rottenburg-Stuttgart, whose main cathedral is Rottenburg Cathedral. St Eberhard's Cathedral's promotion marked the 150th anniversary of the diocese and its renaming as the Diocese of Rottenburg-Stuttgart. The parish dates to the Medieval era while the current building was completed in 1955, eleven years after it was mostly destroyed by Allied air raids in 1944. Stuttgart is located on the Neckar river in a fertile valley known locally as the "Stuttgart Cauldron"

The Roman Empire conquered the area in 83 AD and built a massive fortress near Bad Cannstatt, making it the most important regional center for several centuries. Stuttgart's roots were truly laid in the 10th century with its founding by Liudolf, Duke of Swabia, as a stud farm for his warhorses. Initially overshadowed by nearby Cannstatt, the town grew steadily and was granted a charter in 1320. The fortunes of Stuttgart turned with those of the House of Württemberg, and they made it the capital of their county, duchy, and kingdom from the 15th century to 1918. Stuttgart prospered despite setbacks in the Thirty Years' War and devastating air raids by the Allies on the city and its automobile production during World War II. However, by

1952, the city had bounced back, and it became the major economic, industrial, tourism and publishing center it is today. We continued due south to Oberammergau.



Southwest of Munich lies the small Bavarian town of Oberammergau, population about 5500. This town owes its world-famous reputation to the famous Passion Play that has been performed every 10 years (with only a couple of exceptions) in the town since 1634. The play has its origins in the middle ages when the Bubonic Plague, or Black Death, ravaged all of Europe and by some estimates decimated almost half of the entire population. It was said that you could have lunch with your friends and dinner with your ancestors, so fast did the disease take its toll. By 1632 the plague had even reached this remote area. The local inhabitants had quarantined the village of Oberammergau to keep the plague from entering, but one

night a local farmer who had been working elsewhere sneaked back to the village and brought the disease with him. Soon 20% of the villagers were dead. The villagers met in the Parish church and vowed to perform Passion Plays every 10 years if only God would spare them any future deaths. From that time forward no one died and the villagers have kept their promise.

The play tells of the suffering, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. The next scheduled performance is in 2020. If we were traveling this way a year from now, we could have attended a performance which are given 5 times weekly from May through October. The actors are all local villagers and they begin growing beards and preparing for their parts about a year ahead of time.



But just because the Passion Play is not being offered didn't mean the site wasn't worth a visit. The imposing 4,800 capacity Passion Play Theater offers a guided tour which we took while there. And the picturesque houses decorated with so called "Lüftlmalerei" (wall paintings) have also contributed to Oberammergau's popularity. See picture left.

In Oberammergau, the traditional art of woodcarving is one of its notable attractions. About 120 wood sculptors work there today, selling carvings ranging from figures of saints to household goods. In addition, cuckoo clocks are also sold. We were able to observe craftsmen creating wood carvings of all kinds.

Oberammergau offers a great home base for exploring this part of Bavaria. It is a picturesque area at any time of the year. We also visited King Ludwig's famous castle (Neuschwanstein), left.



Next we went to Kloster Ettal, to see Ettal Abbey (below left) a Benedictine monastery close to Oberammergau in Bavaria, Germany. With a community of more than 50 monks, with another five at Wechselburg, the Abbey is one of the largest Benedictine houses and is a major attraction for visitors. Next, we headed northwest toward Munich



where there a few more sites to visit before we leave Germany.

Our first stop, southwest of Munich was the in Andechs, Germany to see the Andechs Monastery and Brewery. The Monastery, pictured below left, dates at least as far back as the Tenth Century and contains many relics that have made it a popular pilgrimage destination over the years. Among the many relics here are a skull fragment belonging to St. Hedwig of Silesia; the remains of Saints Paulina and Serena;



reputedly one of the thorns from the Crown of Thorns to name a few. Over 30,000 pilgrims make the trek here each year according to the Monastery's website.

Another of the popular attractions is the beer garden. A liter of beer and a lunch of roast pork with sauerkraut gave us something to talk about when we get back home.



A word of warning: the walk is a bit difficult and the beer is very strong! Because of the latter, we didn't want anyone driving after enjoying the beer garden. And even walking back down the hill was a bit taxing for some of us!

We left Andechs and continued 56 miles further on to Munich.. Standing tall as the oldest parish church in Munich, St. Peter's Church features 229 steps to the top of its dome with spectacular panoramic city views and, on a good day, groups can even catch a glimpse of the Alps. St. Peter's Church was constructed in the 11th century and features various masterpieces, such as five stunning Gothic paintings by Jan Polack, altars by Ignaz Günther and a ceiling fresco by Johann Baptist Zimmermann.



The monks who lived in the monastery called the hill, Petersbergl or Peter's Hill. The city is named after these monks. Munchen is from the German word Monch meaning monk. A Bavarian Romanesque structure was first built in 1180. It burned down in 1327. The present church dates to 1368. The Steeple topped spire and Baroque choir were added in the 17th century. The building was severely damaged during World War II but carefully restored later to resemble the original structure.

A popular attraction among visitors is the gilded skeleton of St. Mundita that is adorned with precious stones. Visitors can climb 306 steps to reach the upper platform of the steeple to get breathtaking views across Munich and as far as the Alps on a clear day. A few of our more intrepid walkers did make it to the top! Color-coded circles at the lower platform give an indication about

the view from the top! While we were there, we got a great view of the glockenspiel clock in action in Marienplatz, without having to jostle with fellow tourists.

Next we visited the Ludwigskirche, a Catholic parish and university church located in the Ludwig Strasse in Munich. It is famous for its altar fresco that is the second largest in the world.



The Ludwigskirche was commissioned by King Ludwig I of Bavaria as part of his plans to improve the city of Munich. The church was built between the years 1829 and 1844. The bombs of World War II severely damaged the exterior and the present structure is the result of careful rebuilding and restoration completed in 1952.. It has two steeples with six bells. The main feature in the interior is the fresco of the Last Judgement by Peter Cornelius over the high altar. It is 62 feet high and has a width of 38 feet. Cornelius also painted the three other large frescoes, 'the Creator', 'Nativity' and the

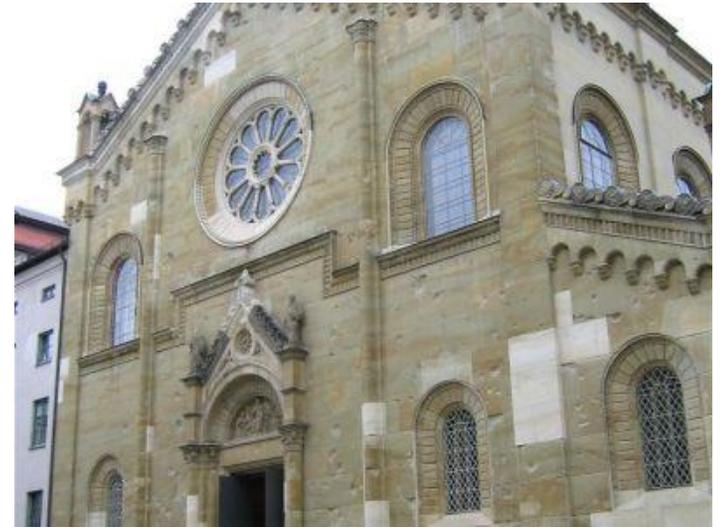
'Crucifixion' found inside the church.

The Theatine Church of St Cajetan, just a few steps away, was our next stop. The church is a Rococo structure that was the first Baroque style religious building in Munich. It was originally built for the order of Theatines from Italy. The church is clad almost entirely in white stucco giving it a bright, airy Mediterranean appearance.

The design of the Theatine Church later influenced the architecture of many churches in Southern Germany. It has a 232-foot-high high dome and two 230-foot-high towers. The great black altar was designed by Andreas Faistenberger. The crypt of the Theatine Church holds the graves of Max Emanuel and his parents and a small chapel within the church holds the graves of King Maximilian II and his consort.

There are many churches with fascinating interiors in Munich, and this one stands out among the others - the white interior. The white marble with beautiful ornate work is very beautiful in natural light, while the exterior is famous for its yellow color and rococo style.

Next, we went to the Asam Church (right), officially named the St. Johann Nepomuk Church. This small church has the most opulent interiors among religious buildings in Munich. The Asam Church was built by brothers Cosmas Damian and Egid Quirin Asam. It was constructed between 1733 and 1746 and dedicated to a Bohemian monk named Johann Nepomuk who was revered for





his noble deeds. He was drowned in the Danube on the orders of King Wenceslaus for refusing to divulge the confessions of the Queen. The Asam Church is one of the finest examples of late German Baroque architecture. The interiors are covered with frescoes painted by Cosmas Damian Asam. A lavish fresco in the ceiling portrays the drowning of Saint Nepomuk. The high altar has four twisted columns with a glass shrine containing a wax figure of Saint Nepomuk. There is a beautiful sculpture depicting God the father bending over the crucified Christ in the cornice. The interior

ornamentation today is the result of careful restoration between the years 1975 and 1982.



The Frauenkirche is the seat of the Archbishop of Munich and Freising. Its two towers are landmarks of the city and command spectacular views over Munich and the Alps. Prince Sigismund of Bavaria ordered the construction of a church dedicated to the Holy Virgin on the site in 1468. The two towers with onion domes were added in 1525. The church was damaged during the World War II bombings. It was restored after the war and is a popular place of worship in the city. The striking Gothic structure of the church is

simple and dignified with little ornamentation. Windows are cleverly hidden behind columns making it look as if the church has only one window above the chancel.

Following our church tour, we visited Wittelsbacherplatz, a Christmas market for those who want to try something different. The atmosphere was unique and transported us back to the

middle ages. The atmosphere here is reflective of a traditional Bavarian Christmas fair. Authentic handmade goods, pigs on a spit and roasted game give the market the character of a medieval village. Impromptu performances by jesters, jugglers and musicians make for an enchanting atmosphere.



From the Christmas market we went to the Old Town Hall which was the seat of the Municipality of Munich until the construction of the Neues Rathaus in 1874. It stands on the eastern side of Marienplatz and was left untouched, unlike many other buildings that were demolished to make way for the New Town Hall. The Old Town Hall was built between 1470 and 1480 It had a late Gothic style at the time of its construction. It was remodeled several times and was altered to a neo-Gothic style between the years 1861 and 1864. Two tunnels were built through the building to make way for traffic between 1877 and 1934. The Altes Rathaus was severely damaged during the World War II bombings and was extensively restored based on its 15th-century design.

We left Munich and headed slightly northwest to Dachau, famous of the site of the first concentration camp in Germany and the prototype for the other camps. While visiting there is a sobering experience, your tour guide believed it was important to experience and understand Dachau. Dachau, the first Nazi concentration camp in Germany, established on March 10, 1933, slightly more than five weeks after Adolf Hitler became chancellor. Built at the edge of the town of Dachau, about 12 miles north of Munich, it became the model and training center for all other SS-organized camps.

During World War II the main camp was supplemented by about 150 branches scattered throughout southern Germany and Austria, all of which collectively were called Dachau. (This southern system complemented the camps for central and northern Germany, at Buchenwald and Sachsenhausen.) In the course of Dachau's history, at least 160,000 prisoners passed through the main camp, and 90,000 through the branches. Incomplete records indicate that at least 32,000 of the inmates died there from disease, malnutrition, physical oppression, and execution, but countless more were transported to the extermination camps in German-occupied Poland.

The composition of the inmates reflected the Nazis' changing choice of victims. The first inmates were Social Democrats, Communists, and other political prisoners. Throughout its existence, Dachau remained a "political camp," in which political prisoners retained a prominent role. Later victims included Roma (Gypsies) and homosexuals, as well as Jehovah's Witnesses. Jews were brought to Dachau after *Kristallnacht* in November 1938. Initially, Jews could be freed if they had a way out of Germany. When the systematic killing of Jews began in 1942, many were sent from Dachau to the extermination camps. Dachau received Jews again after the "death marches" of the winter of 1944–45. These marches, following the forcible evacuation of the extermination camps, were one of the final phases of the Holocaust. Some 30,000 Jewish males aged 16 to 60 were arrested. To accommodate so many new prisoners, the concentration camps at Dachau, Buchenwald, and Sachsenhausen were expanded.



Historical picture of the entrance to the prisoners' camp

On March 22, 1933, a few weeks after Adolf Hitler had been appointed Reich Chancellor, a concentration camp for political prisoners was set up in Dachau. In the twelve years of its existence over 200.000 persons from all over Europe were imprisoned here and in the numerous subsequent camps. 41.500 were murdered. On April 29, 1945, American troops liberated the survivors.

The Memorial Site on the grounds of the former concentration camp was established in 1965 on the initiative of and in accordance with the plans of the surviving prisoners who had formed the Comité International de Dachau. The Bavarian state government provided financial support. Between 1996 and 2003 a new exhibition on the history of the Dachau concentration camp was created, following the leitmotif of the "Path of the Prisoners". We left Dachau, feeling heavy of heart to trek to Erding, home of the Eucharistic Miracle in the Church of the Holy Blood

`In the 17th Century in Erding, there lived a peasant who seemed to have no success in life. Although he worked hard, his crops never yielded in any great quantity, and his livestock did poorly as well. Noting that his neighbor seemed to do very well, he asked him what his secret was. The neighbor replied that he kept the Blessed Sacrament in his house (meaning, he kept Jesus in heart). The simple peasant misunderstood this to mean the actual host and decided that all he need to do was to get a consecrated host and keep it in his house as some sort of lucky charm.

One day at Mass, he took the host but did not consume it. Instead, he placed it in a clean linen cloth that he had brought for that purpose. As he walked home, though, he began to be stricken with conscience at what he had done. He had little religious education, but instinctively felt that his actions were sinful (and not only that, they were illegal). He decided to turn around

and return to the church to confess his sins. As he was walking toward the church, the host flew out of the linen cloth, up into the air, and then landed on the ground. When it hit the ground, it disappeared.

Panic-stricken, he ran to the church, where the priest was greeting the local congregants and confessed to the priest. As soon as he heard his confession, he set off down the road to find the host, with much of the town behind him. The priest spotted the host on the ground, gleaming white. As he got there and tried to pick up the host, it again flew up into the air, landed on the ground and disappeared, just as it had done before. When the local Bishop was informed of what happened, he came to the spot where the host disappeared and, once again, it was found gleaming on the ground. And, again, it flew up into the air (this time for a longer period than the previous two times) and then fell to the ground and disappeared. It was never seen again.

After this third time, the Bishop and the townspeople then decided to build a chapel in honor of the Eucharistic Wonder. There were so many crowds of pilgrims that flocked there that in 1675, local authorities decided to construct a new and bigger sanctuary in the baroque style. On Sept 19, 1677, Bishop Kaspar Kunner of Freising blessed the new church, which was dedicated to the Most Precious Blood. Various relics were brought to the sanctuary among which was that of the Most Precious Blood of Christ. Since 1992 the sanctuary has been under the care of the monks of St. Paul of the Desert.

Next, we traveled to Altotting, directly east of Munich. There we visited the Lourdes of Germany” Shrine of the Black Madonna. In the heart of Bavaria.. It is often called the “Lourdes of Germany” due to the thousands of pilgrims who come here every year in search of healing. The shrine’s reputation began in 1489 when a 3-year old boy drowned in a nearby pond. Her mother rushed the dead body to the altar where a statue of Our Lady (the Black Madonna) stood. As the mother pleaded for his life to be returned to him, he opened his eyes and was restored to life.

Another somewhat similar miraculous healing occurred a few years later and involved another young person, this time a child had been crushed under a cart. Once again, a distraught mother brought her child to the chapel and, once again, the child was restored to life.

Today the shrine attracts over 1 million pilgrims each year. The many crutches and other votives on display there testify to the healings attributed to the intercession of Our Lady of Altotting. In 1980 Pope John Paul II made a pilgrimage here. Many young people from Germany make pilgrimages here in the summer, often walking for 50 miles or more on their journey. The chapel (left) is in the middle of the square in Altotting. The small chapel barely holds 100 people.



From Altotting, we headed east to the Czech Republic. Saints Cyril and Methodius, two brothers from Thessaloniki, arrived in the Great Moravian Empire in 863 at the behest of the second ruler of the empire, Prince Rostislav. In order to make their mission to

spread Christianity among the Slavs more successful, they conducted their services in a Slavic tongue, for which Cyril created a new alphabet, the Cyrillic Alphabet. Both future saints had an enormous effect on the development of learning and the spread of Christianity in this part of Europe.

Here in the Western portion of the Czech Republic (which is also known as Bohemia) at Svata Hora is a shrine dedicated to Our Lady that is one of the most popular in Europe. Although the Infant Jesus of Prague may be more well-known outside the country, this shrine of Svata Hora dates back many centuries. Svata Hora itself means “holy mountain” since the shrine is on a hilltop overlooking the town of Primbram, about 30 miles south of Prague.

Svatá Hora is the oldest and most important Marian place of pilgrimage in the Czech Republic. The chapel on Svatá Hora, originally a simple Early Renaissance building, was built in the early sixteenth century. According to a legend, Archbishop Arnošt of Pardubice is the author of the local



sculpture of the Virgin Mary with the Infant from the mid fourteenth century. The sculpture was brought to *Svatá Hora* in the sixteenth century. Soon afterwards many pilgrims began to walk in procession to this place. In 1647 the Jesuits took charge of the administration of the place and initiated the renovation of *Svatá Hora*. The church was completed and consecrated in 1673. The image of the Virgin Mary of *Svatá Hora* was crowned in 1732. In 1861 the Redemptorists took over the administration of the place and stayed until 1950. Forty years later, after the fall of Communism, they

returned to *Svatá Hora* which received the title “Basilica Minor.” Next, we head to Prague.

Prague is one of Europe’s most popular travel destinations. Most of the buildings were saved from the destruction of World War II and therefore the city possesses an old-world charm not found in some other Eastern European cities. During the thousand years of its existence, Prague grew from a settlement stretching from Prague Castle in the north to the fort of Vyšehrad in the south, to become the capital of a modern European country.

Prague flourished during the 14th-century reign (1346–1378) of Charles IV, Holy Roman Emperor and the king of Bohemia. As King of Bohemia and Holy Roman Emperor, he transformed Prague into an imperial capital and it was at that time by the area the third-largest city in Europe.



We started with a walking tour of the city center at the famous astronomical clock. The Prague astronomical clock was first installed in 1410, making it the third-oldest astronomical clock in the world and the oldest one still working. The clock is mounted on the southern wall of Old Town Hall in the Old Town Square. The clock mechanism itself has three main components: the astronomical dial, representing the position of the Sun and Moon in the sky and displaying various astronomical details; statues of various Catholic saints stand on either side of the clock; "The Walk of the Apostles", a clockwork hourly show of figures of the Apostles and other moving sculptures—notably a figure of Death (represented by a skeleton) striking the time; and a calendar dial with medallions representing the months. According to local legend, the city will suffer if the clock is neglected and its good operation is placed in jeopardy; a ghost, mounted on the clock, was supposed to nod its head in confirmation. The four figures flanking the clock are set in motion on the hour and represent four things that were despised at the



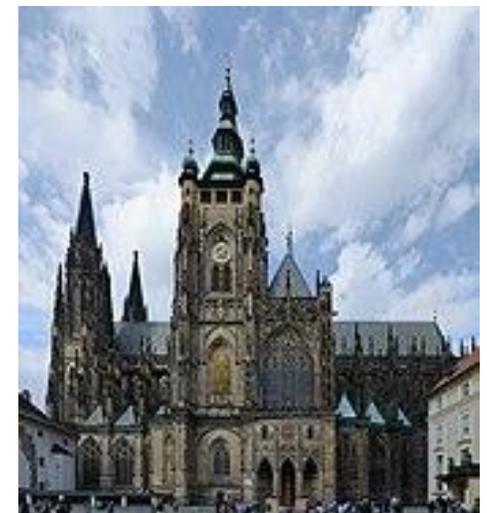
time of



the clock's making. From left to right, the first is Vanity, represented by a figure admiring himself in a mirror. Next, the miser holding a bag of gold represents greed or usury. Across the clock stands Death, a skeleton that strikes the time upon the hour. Finally there is a figure representing lust and earthly pleasures. On the hour, the skeleton rings the bell and immediately all other figures shake their heads, side to side, signifying their unreadiness "to go".

Every hour of the day, twelve statues of Apostles appear at the doorways above the clock. The Apostles appear in the left and right windows of the astronomical clock as viewed from the square in this paired order: James and Peter, Andrew and Matthias, Thaddeus and Philip, Thomas and Paul, John and Simon, Barnabas and Bartholomew. We sat at a café drinking coffee and waited till the stroke of the hour to see the Apostles emerge. It is quite spectacular!

Next we headed for the castle and to see St. Vitus Cathedral (right) at Prague Castle. The Gothic Saint Vitus Cathedral was constructed within the largest of the Prague Castle courtyards, on the site of the



Romanesque rotunda there. Prague was elevated to an archbishopric in 1344, the year the cathedral was begun. The Chapel of Saint Wenceslaus is without doubt its main attraction, with thousands of precious stones and magnificent paintings adorning its walls. It is probably the most sacred place in the Czech Republic and attracts thousands of pilgrims each year. Among its other attractions are Czech King's tombs, the Coronation Jewels and many outstanding pieces of artwork.

Perhaps you know his name from the Christmas carol, "Good King Wenceslaus" but he was a real person who exemplified Christian values at a time when there was much political intrigue in Bohemia. He was born in 907 near Prague, son of the Duke of Bohemia, and raised by his grandmother Ludmilla. His rule was marked by efforts toward unification within Bohemia, support of the Church, and peace-making negotiations with Germany, a policy which caused him trouble with the anti-Christian opposition. His brother Boleslav joined in the plotting, and in September of 929 invited Wenceslaus to Alt Bunzlou for the celebration of the feast of Saints Cosmas and Damian. On the way to Mass, Boleslav attacked his brother, and in the struggle, Wenceslaus was killed by supporters of Boleslav. Although his death resulted primarily from political upheaval, Wenceslaus was hailed as a martyr for the faith, and his tomb here became a pilgrimage shrine. He is hailed as the patron of the Bohemian people and of the former Czechoslovakia.

Often referred to as the “Crown of the Kingdom”, St. Wenceslas Chapel holds the relics of the first Czech saint. The lower portions of the walls are decorated with over 1300 semi-precious stones and paintings depicting the Passion of Christ. The upper area of the walls have paintings depicting the life of St. Wenceslas. The Chapel is not open to the public, but we could see into it



from the doorways. A small door with seven locks, in the southwest corner of the chapel, leads to the Crown Chamber containing the Czech Crown Jewels, which are displayed to the public only once about every eight years.

Next, we saw remnants of the Hunger Wall, a substantial fortification wall south of Malá Strana and the Castle area, was built during a famine in the 1360s. The work is reputed to have been ordered by Charles IV as a means of providing employment and

food to the workers and their families. Charles IV died in 1378. During the reign of his son, King Wenceslaus IV (1378–1419), not to be confused with Good King Wenceslaus, a period of intense turmoil ensued.

In 1744, Frederick the Great of Prussia invaded Bohemia. He took Prague after a severe and prolonged siege in the course of which a large part of the town was destroyed.^[44] In 1757 the Prussian bombardment^[44] destroyed more than one quarter of the city and heavily damaged

St. Vitus Cathedral. However, a month later, Frederick the Great was defeated and forced to retreat from Bohemia.

The economy of Prague continued to improve during the 18th century. The population increased to 80,000 inhabitants by 1771. Many rich merchants and nobles enhanced the city with a host of palaces, churches and gardens full of art and music, creating a Baroque city renowned throughout the world to this day.

In 1784, under Joseph II, the four municipalities of Malá Strana, Nové Město, Staré Město, and Hradčany were merged into a single entity. The Industrial Revolution had a strong effect in Prague, as factories could take advantage of the coal mines and ironworks of the nearby region. A first suburb, Karlín, was created in 1817, and twenty years later the population exceeded 100,000.

World War I ended with the defeat of the Austro-Hungarian Empire and the creation of Czechoslovakia. Prague was chosen as its capital and Prague Castle as the seat of president Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk. Prague became a true European capital with highly developed industry. By 1930, the population had risen to 850,000.

During WWII, Hitler ordered the German Army to enter Prague on 15 March 1939, and from Prague Castle proclaimed Bohemia and Moravia a German protectorate. For most of its history, Prague had been a multi-ethnic city with important Czech, German and (mostly native German-speaking) Jewish populations. From 1939, when the country was occupied by Nazi Germany, and during the Second World War, most Jews were deported and killed by the Germans.

In February 1945, Prague suffered several bombing raids by the US Army Air Forces. 701 people were killed, more than 1,000 people were injured and some buildings, factories and historical landmarks (Emmaus Monastery, Faust House, Vinohrady Synagogue) were destroyed. Many historic structures in Prague, however, escaped the destruction of the war and the damage was small compared to the destruction of many other cities in that time. At daybreak on 9 May,

the 3rd Shock Army of the Red Army took the city almost unopposed. The majority (about 50,000 people) of the German population of Prague either fled or were expelled by the Beneš decrees in the aftermath of the war.

Prague became a territory controlled of the Soviet Union . The 4th Czechoslovak Writers' Congress held in the city in June 1967 took a strong position against the Soviet regime. On 31 October 1967 students demonstrated. This spurred the new secretary of the Czechoslovak Communist Party, Alexander Dubček, to proclaim a new deal in his city's and country's life, starting the short-lived season of the "socialism with a human face". It was the Prague Spring, which aimed at the renovation of institutions in a democratic way. The other Warsaw Pact member countries, except Romania and Albania, reacted with the invasion of Czechoslovakia and the capital on 21 August 1968 by tanks, suppressing any attempt at reform. Jan Palach and Jan Zajíc committed suicide by self-immolation in January and February 1969 to protest against the "normalization" of the country.

In 1989, after the riot police beat back a peaceful student demonstration, the Velvet Revolution crowded the streets of Prague, and the capital of Czechoslovakia benefited greatly from the new mood. In 1993, after the Velvet Divorce, Prague became the capital city of the new Czech Republic. From 1995 high-rise buildings began to be built in Prague in large quantities. In the late 1990s, Prague again became an important cultural center of Europe and was notably influenced by globalization.

There were three Catholic sites in Prague we chose visited. The first was the Saint Vitus Cathedral which we already discussed. The second was Loreto Prague (below left), which is one of the most famous of the Marian sites in the Czech Republic. It is a stunning replica of the Holy House of Loreto, Italy. The shrine was consecrated in 1631 and became a popular place of

pilgrimage. It is a simple, stone-walled building and has a copy of the statue of Our Lady of Loreto inside.



As time evolved a church was built surrounding the Holy House: The Church of the Nativity, which was consecrated a little over 100 years later, in 1737. As a result, the shrine is located in the middle of the courtyard complex between the church and the cloisters, surrounded by six chapels. In the tower of the church is a 27-bell carillon that plays the Loretan Marian song “A Thousand Times We Greet Thee” every hour from 9 am to 6 pm daily. We made sure we were there at a time to hear the carillon. We attended mass while we were at the Church of the Nativity.

One of the most well-known devotions for Catholics throughout the world is to the Infant Jesus of Prague. According to tradition, the statue was made by a Spanish monk who saw it in a dream.

Shortly after transforming his dream into reality, a small boy with a similar face appeared to the monk, pointed at the statue and said, “It is I.”

It is said that St. Teresa of Avila and St. John of the Cross had great devotion to the Infant statue. It was first brought to Prague in 1556 by a Spanish woman who came to marry a Czech nobleman, and the statue was part of her dowry. It was presented to the Church of Our Lady Victorious by the daughter of the original owner in 1628, after she became a widow.

The Carmelites began to venerate the statue of the Infant Jesus, remembering the words of the gospel “Unless you become like one of these little children, you will not enter the Kingdom of



Heaven.” From the beginning, many miracles and extraordinary events were attributed to this devotion. When the Saxons pillaged the church and the monastery, they broke off the Infant Jesus’ hands and threw the statue behind the altar among the debris, where it stayed, forgotten for several years.

In 1637, the Carmelite Father Cyril came to Prague from Munich. He searched for and found the broken statue and began praying before it. One day he heard these words, “Have pity on me and I will have pity on you. Give me my hands and I will give you peace. The more you honor me, the more I will bless you.” For the first time Father Cyril noticed that the statue had no hands. He begged the prior to fix the statue but to no avail.

A wealthy benefactor who was ill came to Prague and donated funds, but the prior chose to purchase a new statue rather than fix the old one. The first day that this new statue was on display a falling candlestick struck it and shattered it. This

reinforced in Father Cyril’s mind that the words of Jesus must be obeyed. Later Father Cyril heard these words: “place me near the entrance of the sacristy and you will receive aid”. A few days later a stranger stopped by the church and donated the funds needed. It became so well-known and because so many graces were received by those who invoked the Divine Child, it became known as the “Miraculous” Infant Jesus of Prague.

The statue is nineteen inches high and is made of wax and wood. It represents a three-year old child with thick curly hair, clothed in a long white robe with only bare feet visible. It is clothed in valuable dresses of all colors, changed by the Carmelite nuns according to the liturgical seasons of the year, and on various feast days. The wardrobe contains over sixty dresses, donated by the faithful from all over the world.

Having enjoyed our time in Prague, we started a long trek south toward the border with Slovakia to see the Monastery at Velehrad. Unfortunately, we had to stop 5 miles away but will resume our pilgrimage there next week!