

Short story of the church of Saint Little Theresa of Keszthely

Our church had been built due to the initiative started by the White Friars (Carmelite) holy orders primarily by the leading start of Brokárd Hász provincial father on the territory of a former churchyard from the city.

The monumental work began by the laying of the foundation stone in May 1927. In 1930 White Friars could move into one part of the monastery already, and on the 3rd of October, the day of the patron saint of the church, Little Theresa of Lisieux, the first consecration of the imposing sized church took its turn already.

The church and the monastery had been built according to the plans of Bruno Bruckwieser, architect from Vienna and Béla Marshall, architect from Győr helped him in the building of the work.

The size of the church: it is 53 metres long, 18 metres wide, 22 metres high and the height of the tower is 38 metres.

After the first consecration of the church the interior decoration advanced quickly. In 1932 the main altar reached completion. The statuary which is similar to that at Lisieux, represents the paying homage of Little Theresa to infant Jesus in the arms of Our Lady. All statues have been made by the artist Lajos Krasznai.

After the completion of the main altar all other altars have been made: in 1933 the altar of Virgin Mary of Carmelite, with the relic of Saint Little Theresa in the front of it. In 1934 the altar of the Holy Heart of Jesus has been completed, in 1937 the altar of Saint Joseph, in 1938 the altar of Saint Stephen was finished and the altar of Saint John of the Cross (Trinitarian) was completed during the war, and the altar of Saint Theresa of Avila was made only in 1967 – due to the death of artist Lajos Krasznai- according to the original plans of artist Charles Lorencz .

The organ was made by the Angstar house of Vienna in 1937.

The final consecration of the church took place on the 22nd Mai 1938. The consecration was celebrated by Piazza Adeodate, patriarch of Venice.

The church and the parish, founded in 1945, had been directed by the Carmelite Holy Order in Hungary. Then –for 40 years- the priests of the diocese of Veszprém administered the parish.

The arrangement of the interior decoration was done by Paul Bencsik abbot rector according to the plans and supervision of Alfréd Bardon professor at University of Technology in 1976. The painting of the church was carried out by György Stényi in 1988. The raising of the church to the rank „Basilica Minor” is associated also to name of Paul Bencsik in 1989.

From 1989 the White Friars received their right to work as before, so the administration of the church and parish was taken over by them again. The reconstruction of the meanwhile damaged tower has been just finished, as well as the received part of the parish building, also the crypt under the church and the canalisation has been reconstructed meanwhile. The statue of Saint Theresa of Avila has been made of marble of Carrara by János Faragó from Sopron according to the plans of Lajos Krasznai as it had been made only of gypsum formerly. *Now the complete reconstruction of the organ is necessary, as it had been completed originally in 1937 with 2 manuals and 38 registers, but became not only worm eaten, but also ruined in its interior construction; and to avoid expensive repairs continually, its complete reconstruction began in our days: by Master István Váradi now it is enlarged with a positive part and has 3 manuals instead of 2. Completed, the new organ will be a great value not only of the church, but also of the city Keszthely.*

On the front of the main altar the coat of arms of the holy order can be seen with the motto of prophet Illés, the father of Carmelitans, and his message forewarns us as well: we should be unceasingly devoted to the concern of the Lord: that truth and love should rule the world.