



A JOURNAL OF ORTHODOX FAITH AND CULTURE

ROAD TO EMMAUS

Help support
Road to Emmaus
Journal.

The *Road to Emmaus* staff hopes that you find our journal inspiring and useful. While we offer our past articles on-line free of charge, we would warmly appreciate your help in covering the costs of producing this non-profit journal, so that we may continue to bring you quality articles on Orthodox Christianity, past and present, around the world. Thank you for your support.

Please consider a donation to Road to Emmaus by visiting the Donate page on our website.



Benedictine Abbey of Einsiedeln.

III
MISSIONARY
SAINTS OF
SWITZERLAND



LORENZ FERS
QUINCALLERIE

IN THE COMPANY OF SWISS SAINTS

by Cornelia Delkeskamp-Hayes

Sion (Sitten): Sts. Amatus, Theodul, and Altheus

We depart from Agaunum/Saint-Maurice onto the highway that leads to Sitten, now called Sion. On the mountain above the abbey, we can see the ruins of a hermitage once inhabited by St. Amatus of Grenoble, who became a monk here in 581, and later the bishop of Sitten. He also founded his own double monastery in Remiremont, with nuns on a Vosges mountain-top and monks in the valley below.

With the Rhône River and Bernese Alps to the left and the Wallis Alps on the right, we reach Sitten with its two, steep fortress-bedecked hills framing the old city. One of the oldest bishop's seats in Switzerland, the town is surprisingly small, but boasts of lovely historical integrity.

The place had been settled since the Stone Age, and in 580, the bishopric was moved here from Martigny for better protection against barbarian invasions. The relics of the saintly bishop Theodul (also called Theodor or Joder) were also translated. In the eighth or ninth century, an austere church dedicated to him was built over an Arcosol grave (a trough hewn in rock, covered by a vaulted niche), the first resting place of the relics. In 1200, the relics were transferred to the Valeria Basilica on one of the town's hills, but lost during the French occupation of 1789. Veneration of this saint was widespread in the Alpine region, and the Bavarian monastery of Ottobeuren displays a very elaborate reliquary attributed to the saint in its Sts. Alexander and Theodor church. It is a lovely walk in the evening sun up to the Valeria fortress, church, and ruins of the bishop's palace.

In Sitten there is also a cathedral treasury with the relics of St. Altheus, a later abbot of St. Maurice Monastery (786-804) and bishop of Sitten. Perhaps this is the source of the holiness that this place breathes.

Opposite: Remains of Valeria Fortress and Basilica, Sion (Sitten).

Disentis: St. Sigisbert

The name Disentis derives from the Latin *desertina*, a deserted place, and such solitude and mild climate were sought out around 700 by St. Sigisbert, a pupil of St. Columbanus, who dedicated his own church to the Frankish St. Martin of Tours.

Sigisbert found a powerful sponsor in the Disentis' landowner Placidus, who was subsequently murdered by a neighboring ruler named Victor, who saw Placidus' support of a Frankish monastic settlement as a threat to his own position. His hasty deed backfired, however, when St. Sigisbert erected a chapel in Placidus' honor at the place of his death, proclaiming him a martyr. In time, Placidus' relics were transferred to the monastery's second church, dedicated to St. Peter, where Sigismund was also buried. Some years later the relics were moved to the crypt of the larger and newly-built St. Martin's church: the generous stipends that Victor was forced to pay the diocese to atone for the murder had been used to enlarge the very monastery he sought to destroy.

Having adopted the Benedictine Rule, the monks cultivated the ground, offered pastoral support for the surrounding area and established a German-speaking school for the Raetian youth. In this way, they qualified the boys for careers within the Frankish administration, which was reasserting its hold on the area. The monastery's position on an important shortcut to Italy would make it a popular stopping place for later Carolingian and German nobles, as well as a hospice for pilgrims. Sadly, after the Reformation and later French secularization, nothing but "ruins and debt" remained. The monastery stayed open, but could no longer accept novices. Finally, around 1880 the locals changed their minds about the benefits they had reaped from the atheist Enlightenment and supported a revival of monastic life and the monastery school.

Today, the monastery's white elongated buildings decorate the mountainside, and the abbey has returned to an earlier model of using the church nave as one side of the monastic square. The main and side naves of the church are about the same height, giving the interior a hall-like character, marked by wall columns where small chapels offer a bit of privacy. The reduced height of the choir and its columns create an impression of great distance. Later, I learn from the monastery's custodian that there are reliquaries of the arms of Sts. Sigisbert and Placidus behind doors to the right and left of the high altar.

Opposite: Disentis and its hillside abbey dedicated to St. Martin.





Having read about the existence of a crypt, I decide to ask if it is accessible. The custodian asks me to wait, and after some time a monk appears who takes me through the gate, down a long hall, and into the monks' private chapel, where in a glass niche below a modern altar rest two pieces of bone of the saints on a red pillow. The chapel benches face a glass wall, behind which are the exposed ruins of the excavated chapel – a marvelous placement as one feels right in the midst of the early remains. Neither the travel guide for the churches of Graubünden nor the local church booklet mention this.

Cazis: St. Victor of Tomils and Cazis

In Cazis, one of the oldest convents north of the Alps awaits us, built by Bishop Victor II of Chur around 700 as a proprietary monastery for educating young relatives and accommodating older unmarried ones. Already active during Roman times and a noted center of early Christian culture, the monastery was originally dedicated to St. Peter and situated in a field close to the seventh-century parish church of St. Martin. The monastery's rigid dependence on the bishops of Chur would have deprived this place of the rich donations other monasteries received from nobles and rulers traveling south in return for protection and supplies.

After its founding, the nuns lived as enclosed canonesses, without vows and entitled to keep their personal property, until the 12th century, when they adopted the cenobitic Augustinian Rule. The Reformation condemned the monastery to a slow demise by forbidding new novices, but with the Counter-Reformation in 1647, the foundation was renewed by Dominican nuns who founded a successful boarding school that still exists. By 1928, economic survival forced the sisters to abandon monastic seclusion and they took outside jobs in schools, kindergartens, and old peoples' homes. Today, they offer retreats in the guest house, and their own bread and ceramics are for sale.

The turbulent history of the monastery left the nuns with few treasures, but one they protect (and even shroud with silence in the monastery guides) are the relics of St. Victor of Tomils and Cazis. Born in 840 in the village of Tomils northeast of Cazis, the priest was unfortunate enough to possess a family vineyard in a very favorable spot. A local nobleman confiscated the land, and when Victor appealed the theft and censured the nobleman's unchristian lifestyle, the priest's head was promptly struck off. At the hour

Opposite: Dominican Convent, built circa 700 in Cazis.

of his death the priest's sisters, both nuns in Cazis, saw a vision of their brother ascending to heaven on a cloud of light. When they learned the circumstances of his death, they took their knowledge as a sign from God and transferred their brother's relics to Cazis. Many miracles occurred in Tomils and Cazis when local people asked for St. Victor's help, and Tomils built a chapel in his memory.

I had heard that St. Victor's relics are behind the Cazis church's high altar, but not wanting to presume, I find two women piling fresh black earth onto a new grave in the cemetery, and ask if I may walk behind the altar. They cheerfully welcome my appearance and answer: "My, yes, go to the saint and tell him to hurry and come back soon." I find the relics behind the altar, beautifully enshrined on red velvet in a glassed-in niche.

The Monastery Kitchen

The cheerful gravediggers next point me to the convent for more information.¹ From the moment I enter, I sense love in this place and understand the source of the kindness shown by the village women. This is the first time that I have ever stepped into a convent, and I begin to understand why Margaret likes being with nuns so much; it is as though one has entered the sitting room of a very dear friend. The guest-nun is not at home, so Sister Renate calls Sister Bernardina, whose white habit has a blue apron attached with a safety pin. Both rummage through old closets and climb up on chairs to search the top shelves for more booklets, but without success. During the search, we talk about the monastery's situation. There are many sisters, and some of them are revitalizing the now extinct Bludenz Monastery, an act of kindness returned, for in the 17th century it was nuns from Bludenz who resettled Cazis.

They tell me the story of their own sisterhood. In the early 13th century, St. Dominic was charged with setting Rome's assorted convents straight. This involved moving the Benedictines of Trastevere into the Dominican reformed monastery of San Sisto Vecchio. The Benedictine nuns were less than enthused, but finally promised to comply if their icon of the Mother

¹ Parking in front of the parish church of Sts. Peter and Paul, you can miss the convent, which is right next door, but easily seen approaching from the south. Close by, abutting an old barn (or its successors), is a 12th-century chapel dedicated to the German Saint Wendelin who is perennially popular for his help against animal diseases.

Opposite: View of Cazis, north of the Alps.





of God, attributed by them to the Apostle Luke, would consent. They would carry her to the new place and if she stayed with them in San Sisto (because, as we all know, icons sometimes wander away), the nuns would accept the reform. That seems to have worked out, and today that same icon is preserved and venerated in Rome's Church of Santa Maria del Rosario on Monte Mario.

Chur: Sts. Asinio, Lucius, and Valentian

Four hours from Cazis is the town of Chur, whose early settlements lay on the southwest side of the Plessur River. In the fourth century, the inhabitants withdrew to the opposite bank for protection from invading Alemanni. Shielded by the walls of a Roman *castell* and fortified mountains, Chur preserved its Christianity and strategic position as the only route into Italy.

The first known bishop here, Saint Asinio (consecrated around 451), as well as succeeding bishops, were subject to the ecclesiastical authority of Milan. This connection was advantageous for the acquisition of relics from Milan, which sanctified the first churches of the city, but this link was cut after Charlemagne's death, when Chur-Raetia was joined to the Frankish imperial church and subjected to Mainz.

At the charming Square of St. Martin, the Gothic church dedicated to St. Martin (successor to a Carolingian structure) has become Reformed Protestant: not even a single cross is on display. We climb the stairs through the tower gate to the Bishop's Court (on the site of the Roman *castellum*), which had a measure of legal immunity that kept the diocese from ruin when the Reformation was adopted "downstairs". Although physically preserved, the Bishop's Court only resumed real life in 1848 when Switzerland's federal constitution allowed Catholics once again to move into Chur, where they used the old cathedral as their parish church.

Inside is an astounding Romanesque basilica with early Gothic transept crossings between the nave and the elevated choir, starkly contrasted by cubes of white marble serving as an altar, ambo, and seats. The crypt houses a much later post-schism saint and there seems to be nothing in this church for us. Yet I feel a deep peace and prayerfulness that roots me to my place until we are motioned out.

Opposite: Church of St. Martin, Chur.

Later I read in the guidebook that under the east end of the nave of the present Cathedral of St. Mary of the Assumption are the remnants of a fifth-century choir, rebuilt in the eighth century. The deacon, whom I ask after mass the next morning, unfortunately knows nothing, while the priest does not seem to care even about Sts. Lucius and Emerita, although both are represented on the carved Gothic altar: he insists that they are both legendary. Even more unfortunately, there is no longer a cathedral museum, and the church's treasures are locked up with other cultural remnants of the canton until a new museum can be built. I wonder if the presence of holiness in this place might be due to relics hidden for centuries under the fifth-century choir.

Church of St. Lucius of Chur

Further up on the mountainside, the Church of St. Lucius seems scaled down to modern slimness. Access is possible via the attached seminary. At the time of our visit, the seminary was enveloped by scaffolding, and unfortunately, the doors to the church were closed without explanation. All we could do was enjoy the lovely view into the Rhine Valley.

The life of St. Lucius has been overgrown by many legends. A descendant from the local tribe of the Pritanni, he must have served as a missionary to the pagan populace during a time when there were already Christians in Raetia. Lucius probably worked around the environs of Chur, especially in the Mars Wood, where an early medieval church still remains. Another saint, Emerita, is usually associated with Lucius as a sister, though historians now assign her to the 10th or 11th century.

Up to the 16th-century Reformation there was also a second church to the north of St. Luzius, dedicated to St. Stephen, the First Martyr. The church's untouched late Roman Christian grave chamber was erected over another grave, possibly that of an early bishop such as Asinius. It is currently inaccessible because of construction work, although the barrel-vaulted chamber is supposed to be the largest and most eminent north of the Alps. In 500, a church was built over the chamber with access from the outside for pilgrims. Relics included bones of St. Stephen, whose remains were discovered in 415 in Jerusalem and distributed throughout the Roman Empire, including Milan by 431. Although early, these relics may indeed have been genuine, particularly in an area with strong ecclesiastical links to Milan.

Opposite: Tower of Cathedral Church of St. Mary of the Assumption, Chur.



SANCTVS

LVCIVS

LV MEN AD
REVELATIO-
NEM GENTIVM
PRÆDICAVIT
LVCIVS*

ET RHÆTICA
REGIO SOLEM
IVSTITIÆ ORI-
ENTEM EX ALIO
CONSPEXIT

The Church of St. Lucius itself was built in 1295, on top of a still older St. Andrew *memoria* built to house relics that had come from Milan prior to 386. When the church was erected, the Apostle Andrew was still the primary patron of the area, long before the veneration of Sts. Lucius and Emerita.

The guide in St. Lucius explains that there was a second burial place under the church for another early bishop, probably a St. Valentian, who had excelled in charity during the barbaric invasions of the sixth century. Later, in the Carolingian period, Victor, the nobleman we mentioned earlier who murdered Placidus of Disentis, used the church as a family burial place. Eager to obtain additional relics, but off-track in his attempt to recover good religious standing, he ordered his disciple, a priest named Otmar, to travel to St. Gallen and to steal St. Gall's relics. However, Otmar's horse (disapproving of the project) threw him off, so that Victor had to settle for the next-best solution of translating the relics of the holy missionary Lucius into this church. Lucius' relics attracted many pilgrims: another case of God's bringing good out of evil!

The church surprises with a simple wooden ceiling. The arrangement is similar to that of the cathedral, but here the view into the vaulted Romanesque crypt is unobstructed, and the visitor feels drawn along the nave and down the central stairs towards the crypt. Underneath the choir, along a small tunnel, is an altar with the reliquary shrine. Sadly, the remarkable bust reliquary of 1252 is part of the church's treasures that need to be locked away, although in the crypt I happily discover an icon of St. Lucius.

Beside the church, in a little house like a porter's lodge, I hope to get change to buy a guidebook. When I ring the bell, a friendly woman appears. As it turns out, she is an Orthodox Christian and the wife of Father Alexandru Dan, the local Romanian priest. He has been here for five years working on a doctoral thesis on the theological differences between the Carolingians and Orthodox (an area of great interest for me), while nurturing his fledgling Romanian parish. His wife already has a doctorate in theology, and as we go on, we discover common friends in Romania. It is suddenly as though I am among dear relatives. Father Alexandru is convinced that the relics of St. Lucius are still under the altar of the cathedral.

Opposite: Icon of St. Lucius from the crypt chapel in Chur.

Saint-Ursanne: St. Ursanus

After Basel, we follow the windings of the Birs River into the Jura Mountains, hidden under heavy grey clouds. Approaching Saint-Ursanne (Ursitz in German) along the Doubs River, we brave a single-lane mountain road with lorry traffic thundering past from the quarry ahead. We enter through St. Peter's gate, which leads right into the central square. Saint-Ursanne is dotted with cafes and ateliers of local artists – jewelry, paintings, and sculptures geared to high-level tourism, but on a weekday, it is peaceful and quiet, even a little sleepy. Brochures are available at a tourist kiosk, and we discover attractive little squares with fountains, rows of trees, and tall painted 16th-century houses.

Life of St. Ursanus

Saint Ursicinus (or Ursanus) lived here as a hermit around 600. According to his *Life* written in the 11th-century, Ursanus was a disciple of St. Columbanus and had followed him from Luxeuil to the land of the Alemanni. Perhaps like St. Columbanus, St. Gall and St. Sigisbert, he was also from Ireland. At first, he preached at Lake Biel, later withdrawing to the obscurity of the Clos du Doubs, with only the ruins of a Roman villa nearby. He practiced his asceticism in a cave in the rock, joined by a bear who became his companion (and possibly a welcome source of winter heat). His holiness and miracles soon drew other monks to him. Saint Ursanus is said to have built the first church in the valley, which was dedicated to St. Peter and served as a parish church until the 19th century, when the building fell to ruin. After the saint's repose, his companion Wandregisel (Wandrille) is thought to have formed a *cella*, a settlement for the brothers, near St. Peter's church. As early as 675, the holy Abbot Germanus of Granfelden also dedicated a church to St. Ursanus next to the bishop's own monastery.

The monastery that developed in Saint-Ursanne adopted the Benedictine Rule, but in the 11th century was transformed into a community of canons. Later, a new abbey church was built next to St. Peter's, which continued to serve the village that surrounded the monastery. Relative peace throughout the 16th century brought economic success, although both town and abbey were devastated a century later in the Thirty Years War. The 18th century

Opposite: View from St. Ursanus cell into the valley.





saw conflicts of power between bishop and canons that prepared the way for clerics' embracing Enlightenment ideals. When these ideals materialized in the French Revolution, the Catholic population sadly did not have much reason to regret the ensuing secularization of the monastery, after which the abbey church served as the village parish and St. Peter's fell to ruin.

The Abbey Church (Collegiale)

I walk the length of the abbey church over a graveled square shadowed by plane trees. One feels it to be a holy place and the 12th-century Gothic structure is highlighted in colors of delicate grey-pink; its Baroque interior has enough space to wander in unobtrusively. The oldest part of the church is the choir with its remarkable *trompe-l'œil* window paintings. Beneath the choir is the beautifully frescoed crypt with Romanesque columns, built as a shrine for the sarcophagus of the saint, which was moved to the high altar and today rests in front of it. There is a small window in the wall of the crypt offering a view of the sarcophagus. The famous gold and silver reliquary-bust seems to be enshrined elsewhere, and can be seen by making arrangements in advance.

Saint Pierre/Saint Peter Church

Next to the lovely late Gothic cloister are the remains of the Church of St. Peter built by St. Ursanus. Excavations below the church have brought to light a group of large stone sarcophagi from the 7th-11th centuries, as many Christians wanted to be buried close to the saint. Today, the church has been restored as a *lapidaire*, a museum for ancient carved stone remnants. The reconstructed cloister is used for art exhibits, underscoring the modern practice of reframing a holy place as a cultural remnant.

The Saint's Hermitage

We hoped to locate the site of the saint's hermitage, and following advice from the tourist kiosk to "go up behind the Collegiale," we find ourselves scrambling through overgrown vineyards. Along the way, we discover many caves with crosses inside – refuges for long-forgotten hermits – but eventu-

Opposite: Abbey church (Collegiale), St. Ursanne.

ally have to admit ourselves lost amidst the brambles. Locals direct us back to St. Paul's gate in the city wall, where a nice Baroque entrance leads up 180 steps past caves and old rebuilt chapels to the hermitage-grotto, decorated with sculptures of the saint and his friendly bear. One can sit there and enjoy St. Ursanus' own view of the silent valley.

Unfortunately, we have no time left to visit the nearby relics of St. Germanus of Granfelden in Delemont (Delsberg), the sacristy that contains his bishop's staff, or the famous monastery of Moutier-Grandval. As we drive away, we enjoy a magnificent view of the town from beyond the river, with a cross rising above the hermitage peak, as if to say that holiness is rooted here.

Saint-Imier: Apostle of the Northern Jura

Saint Imier (or Imerius) was one of the great, even exemplary saints and missionaries of Switzerland although, unfortunately, his relics dwell in a disappointing place. The sixth-century "apostle of the Northern Jura mountains" was from a noble family, and after giving his possessions to the poor, he moved with his servant Albert into the valley which today bears his name. The friends first tilled a small field to support their simple pious lifestyle, and Imier eventually undertook a pilgrimage to the Holy Land, where the patriarch of Jerusalem recognized his gift for languages and kept him on as a secretary. When he returned, Imier continued to live in the place of his earlier labors. Cutting off a branch from a tree and sticking it in the earth, he caused a healing spring to pour forth. Today, the well of that former spring still exists, but lies abandoned, dried out, and forgotten at the side of a busy road.

Soon the saint built a church dedicated to St. Martin of Tours and attracted brothers who formed a monastic community.² The present church on the site, still dedicated to St. Martin and built over the grave of St. Imier, was rebuilt three times before 1500, indicating a long-lasting and healthy settlement. In the 16th century, the community was persuaded by the neighboring diocese of Biel to adopt Calvinism. St. Imier's original church, which served the few remaining Catholics, fell apart with time and decreasing attendance, and only the tower remains today. The church nave was turned into a mill by the Protestants, and today serves as a cultural center. A surprisingly pointed modern fresco on the wall of the opposite house shows the saint against

² See remarks about this early period in Part I, "Over the Alps".

Opposite: Tower of the old St. Imier Church.



VEILLEZ CAR VOUS NE SÇEVEZ A QUELLE
HEURE DOIT VENIR VOSTRE SEIGNEUR



a background of religious ruins, beckoning into a deserted landscape of roughly hewn cubes, with businessmen in suits walking away, supervised by a Santa Claus on TV. The lovely Romanesque abbey church has been exhaustively refashioned according to Reformed principles.

Einsiedeln: St. Meinrad

Einsiedeln, the place of St. Meinrad's labors, was originally covered by dark, pathless woods, which disappeared from view over the years of his sanctifying influence. Today, such rustic landscape can only be summoned by using one's imagination to block out the modern buildings and the many tourists who flock to the city.

Saint Meinrad was born around 800 in the vicinity of Rottenburg to a family of lesser nobility and educated at the famous Benedictine monastery school on the island of Reichenau in Lake Constance. Here his uncle, Erlebold, served as a teacher and later became the monastery abbot. At his uncle's prompting Meinrad was ordained to the priesthood, and in 823 Erlebold advised his nephew to become a Benedictine.

Unlike the other monks who devoted themselves to cultural work in the service of the Carolingian empire (mostly copying and illustrating the famous Reichenau manuscripts), Meinrad preferred a life of asceticism based on St. John Cassian's experience with the desert fathers of Egypt. In spite of this, his uncle sent him to a small metochion situated at Lake Zürich in Babinchova, close to the village of Benken, where he served for some time as principal of the monastery school. In 828, Meinrad finally received permission to live as a solitary on the Etzel pass overlooking the southern shore of the lake, where he built his first hermitage. Today a Baroque chapel marks the place.

Soon his cell became crowded with people seeking the hermit's guidance, and he moved deeper into the woods where, assisted by his monastic brothers and Abbess Heilwiga of Säkingen monastery, he built a chapel, huts for visitors, and his own remote retreat where two ravens kept him company. In 861, after three decades of asceticism, brigands approached his hut, intending to rob him. Meinrad fed them, and understanding their intent, disclosed their plans aloud. Frightened, the brigands murdered the holy man, took his scant belongings, and fled. However, the two ravens followed them, croaking loudly until they reached Zürich, where the criminals were captured and

Opposite: Monastery of St. Meinrad. Einsiedeln, Switzerland.

beheaded. This is why, even now, Einsiedeln has two ravens in its coat of arms. Meinrad's relics were later transferred to the Reichenau monastery.

In spite of the holy man's demise, the monks in the "dark wood" multiplied. In 906, a Strasbourg canon named Benno moved here, and though he was later cruelly blinded by political opponents, he refused the king's offer of an abbey where he could be cared for, moving instead into Meinrad's old hermitage to guide the monks until his repose. As early as 934, Eberhard, a former provost of Strasbourg and a relative of Benno's, transformed the cell into a hermitage, and built a church and monastery with himself as its Benedictine abbot.

In 947, Abbot Eberhard (also venerated as a saint) received relics of Felix and Regula, the patron saints of Zürich, and these are still said to be present in Einsiedeln. There is also speculation that Meinrad's relics were transferred here from the island of Reichenau, and it is suggested that a piece of his skull is enshrined in the back of the altar. There may also be relics here from earlier altars, but it is not clear which saints are enshrined in which altars. There is also a Meinrad altar in the crypt which may contain his relics, but the crypt is inaccessible.

The site of the original monastery chapel survives today in the narthex as a chapel devoted to the Mother of God. Surrounded by pilgrims, the compact black marble structure with its brocaded black Madonna seems to be a place of many miracles. ✦

Opposite: Countryside Chapel of St. Meinrad on the site of his early hermitage near Bollingen, Switzerland.





MARIASTEIN MONASTERY AND THE BASEL RELICS

By Pda. Margaret Bauman

On my first trip to Europe to investigate the early Church in 2001, I was able to go to Basel, Switzerland, my mother's hometown and a beautiful old city on the Rhine River where France, Germany and Switzerland come together. I had first been introduced to its charms as a twenty-year-old student, when a cousin gave me a walking tour of its interesting old houses, and I spent the night in his parents' home on the Rhine, listening to the foghorns on the barges that floated downriver from Rotterdam.

Now, eight years later, my first stop was at the Münster, the former cathedral next to the Rhine whose colorful roof shows up in most pictures of the city. It was formerly a Catholic church dedicated to the Virgin Mary and St. Pantalus, the first bishop of Basel, but is now a Reformed Church and I found it disappointingly plain. I saw this starkness over and over again in Zürich, Romainmotier, and other places – the Reform movement of the 16th century had stripped the church bare of everything dear to the heart of a traditional Christian. I didn't expect icons, but where were the frescoes? the statues? the relics? Even, who is the patron saint of the church?

An earlier search for holy sites had led me to another church in Basel, this one converted to the Historical Museum on Barfüsser Platz. Here was everything that had once been in the churches, even a number of beautiful reliquaries! Later I learned that at the beginning of the 19th century, all of the relics that had landed in the Basel treasury after the Reformation were taken out of their cases, and the archivist was told to either throw them into

Opposite: The Rhine River with the Basel Cathedral in the background. Basel, Switzerland.

the Rhine River or to burn them! He couldn't bring himself to do either, so he carefully labeled and stored each relic. Later he gave them to a Benedictine monastery outside of town, where they were arranged and decorated by local nuns, and where many of the relics can be seen today. So the museum has the empty cases, and the monastery is honoring the real treasures – the precious bones of the saints!

In 2009, I went to Mariastein, the Benedictine Monastery which had received the Basel relics, with my Swiss cousin and a young friend. We took a streetcar from the Basel train station to the outlying town of Flüh, and just before we got out, had a friendly exchange with a local man on how to find the monastery.

A lovely half-hour hike uphill in the rain led us to the monastery church. On both the north and south altars were displays of many relics, each labeled with the saint's name. Since I couldn't read all of the names from where I was standing, I asked a monk if these were the relics from Basel and if there was a listing of them. Before I knew it, we were speaking with another monk, the monastery historian – the very man we had met in the streetcar and the same monk who had written the article about the relics that had brought me here! He showed us materials from the archives and the beautifully handwritten list of all the Basel relics, signed by the abbot who had received them in 1835. Among them were relics of St. Martin, St. Ursula, St. Pantalus, St. Fridolin, St. Verena, and the Apostle Philip, plus many others (a total of ninety-one relics).

The Mariastein Monastery is the second-most visited pilgrimage site in Switzerland after Einsiedeln, commemorating a miracle that happened in the 14th century when a young boy fell 150 feet off the cliff where the monastery is located onto a flat rock, and was saved in the arms of the Virgin Mary. A pilgrimage chapel was built, and in 1540 a second identical accident happened in which another child was also unharmed. Today you can climb down the fifty-six steps leading to the rock, and view the many ex-votos given in thanksgiving for intercession by the Mother of God. ✦

Opposite: Ursula Shrine with relics of the saints of Basel. Mariastein Monastery, Flüh, Switzerland.





PILGRIMAGE TO THE BEATUS CAVES

by Pda. Margaret Bauman

This morning we set out for the Beatus Caves, the traditional hermitage of St. Beatus who converted the area around Beatenberg in the Interlaken District. The caves lie along the famous Pilgrim's Way to St. James at Compostelo, and I had added them as a highlight of my 2014 trip. Although it is difficult to find the best place to enter the Pilgrim's Way or to determine how steep the ascent actually is, I was prepared to go alone by train and boat and then hike up. Fortunately, my friend Cornelia Delkeskamp-Hayes was able to come as well, and early one morning we arrive at Lake Thun (*Thuner See*) to await the boat.

The foggy morning casts a blue haze that makes almost everything invisible; the only definable objects are bright red geraniums hanging in boxes on the side of the pier. Two startlingly black loons suddenly glide into view, followed by our boat, which seems to appear out of nowhere. We climb up to the open deck to watch the fog nesting in the mountains that ring the lake; a Swiss village hugs the shore below. In awe of our surroundings, we speak softly, and traces of French, German, Swiss-German and Chinese waft over the deck. As the day emerges, we make out more of the lovely scenery until finally we see our destination: a sheer cliff with scattered groupings of pine trees rising out of the fog. Are we to climb that?

We debark at Beatenbucht, preferring the stretch of the Pilgrim's Way that takes ninety minutes to the caves, rather than a longer hike from Interlaken. The first few steps are so steep that I wonder if I can make it. My body slowly adjusts, and suddenly the path merges into a wider road – the steep part is only the cut to reach the actual Pilgrim's Way, and from here it is quite manageable.

Opposite: Cornelia Delkeskamp-Hayes awaiting the boat at Lake Thun.

Along the way, a group of happy twelve-year-old Swiss school children come hiking towards us, and as they pass, greet us in Chinese! Several such groups go by, some speaking to us in their native Swiss-German, and others in languages they are learning. They tell us that they are hiking by themselves to a further village: in Switzerland schoolchildren regularly have “*Wandertage*” (hiking days) with their teachers, and these are experienced enough to hike on their own, their teachers meeting them at the other end.

As we ascend the trail, the scenery is spectacular and sometimes frightening: to our left are woods and cliff, to the right a sheer drop-off to the lake. I find that I cannot look down unless I am on the far side of the path. The little red signs soon change from “*Pilgerweg*” (Pilgrimage Way) to “*Wanderweg*” (Hiking Trail), and we come to a split in the road – one going up and the other down. We keep going up, ignoring the tiny “*Wanderweg*” sign pointing down the other fork. As the road widens, we realize that this is no longer the hiking trail and retrace our steps, the real trail now mysteriously descending. As we approach the site of an old pilgrim’s hostel, we know that we must be getting close, and suddenly find ourselves climbing steep steps straight up to the caves. Here the scenery is truly spectacular, and above us, yet still below the entrance to the caves, is a thundering waterfall spilling over a sharp ledge in huge sheets of water. From a nearby chapel, bells call us to prayer.

At the ticket window, we are told that we may go to the cave entrance where the cell and grave of St. Beatus are located, and stay as long as we like. To our satisfaction, we have the holy place to ourselves, except for periodic tour groups passing through to view the towering stalactites and stalagmites. The caves themselves are quite extensive.

I try to imagine someone living up here alone, and there is a helpful display to show how St. Beatus might have lived: fishing nets and drying fish hanging on a rope, fruit on the side. It seems possible. We pray at the grave (the relics were moved during the Reformation and are now in Lucerne) and at the site of his cell.

Who St. Beatus was, precisely, is a mystery, and there are several different stories associated with this name. The Beatus called the Apostle of Switzerland represents the early spread of Christianity by the apostles; exactly who exemplified this spirit in the Swiss regions – and if he was named Beatus – is too far back to know.³

³ See remarks about this early period in Part I, “Over the Alps”.

Opposite: Pilgrim’s Way to the Beatus Caves.



2

St-Beatus
Cella de
Cello di S.
St. Beatus



St. Beatus - Grabstätte
Tombe de Saint-Beat
Tomba di S. Beato
Grave of St. Beatus

IACVISSE TRADUNT CORPVS S
VS REGIONIS PRIMVS APOSTO
PERMVITAE HELVETORVM
HELVETENS IN M

It seems quite likely that there was also a holy hermit named Beatus who lived in the Beatus Caves over Lake Thun: pilgrims streamed to the spot for six centuries, there was a chapel there (destroyed in the Reformation), and a grave and parts of a skeleton were uncovered in 1903.

It is believed by some that the hermit of Lake Thun was the Irish Abbot Beatus of Honau in Alsace, whose monastery sent missionaries to Switzerland; Abbot Beatus lived in the eighth century. Another theory is that he was the founder of the monastery of Interlaken: Seliger (Beatus in Latin) of Oberhofen.

Whatever his identity, there is no doubt that his veneration by the pilgrims who came here strengthened the faith of this region. In fact, they were not even stopped during the Reformation when they were held back at sword-point by followers of the reformer Zwingli! A stream of pilgrims mounted the cliff to his cave until the early 1900s.

We stay in the cave for almost an hour, praying and contemplating St. Beatus' life, and then sit in the little outdoor restaurant where we eat a hearty meal featuring local Swiss cheeses and "Roesti," a dish of fried potatoes. As we take the boat back to our car, the sun sets behind the mountains with streams of light piercing through the clouds, and we sit with peaceful minds and well-exercised bodies in the beauty of creation, of which God seems to have given Switzerland an abundant measure. ✦

Opposite: Grave site of St. Beatus.



ST. GALLEN: MEETING ST. GALL AND ST. OTMAR

by Pda. Margaret Bauman

St. Gallen Cathedral

In September 2012, a gathering of Russian, French, English and German speakers gathered in the old courtyard of the St. Gallen Cathedral in Switzerland. Our group included several Orthodox priests serving in Switzerland, pilgrims, and local townspeople, as well as myself (a priest's wife and American convert of German heritage) and my companion, Cornelia Delkeskamp-Hayes, a German philosopher and Orthodox convert. Cornelia had organized the tour of the cathedral, including sites usually closed to the public: the crypts of St. Gall⁴ and St. Otmar (Othmar)⁵, as well as a number of smaller reliquary shrines in the choir, and the St. Gall Chapel.

The Abbey of St. Gallen was built by St. Otmar in 705, on the spot where St. Gall had established his hermitage approximately a century earlier. The Abbey flourished for over 1000 years until it was secularized by local Protestant rulers in 1805, and the monks were expelled. Today the abbey buildings are still intact, and are variously used for the Roman Catholic Cathedral of St. Gall, the Abbey Library with its famous collection of old manuscripts, and other religious and governmental functions. Our purpose is to venerate the relics and honor the lives of Sts. Gall and Otmar.

⁴ For the *Life* of St. Gall see *Road to Emmaus*, # 41, or Maude Joynt, *The Life of St. Gall* (Llanerch Publishers, Wales, 1992).

⁵ St. Otmar's *Life* is not available in English, but can be read in German in *Die Lebensgeschichten der heiligen Gallus und Otmar* by Johannes Duft (Ostschweiz Druck + Verlag, St. Gallen, 1990).

Opposite: Cathedral of St. Gallen.

Saint Gall

St. Gall was born around 560-570. He probably grew up in Gaul with at least one Irish parent, and spoke Alemannian and colloquial Latin, as well as Irish.⁶ He entered the monastery of Luxeuil in Burgundy as a young man, under the Irish St. Columbanus, and later became a priest-monk, serving there for at least fifteen years.

Throughout his life, St. Gall was known for his love of fishing. According to a story that St. Gall himself frequently retold, his abbot once sent him out to a certain stream to catch fish to feed guests of the monastery. Thinking he knew better, St. Gall went to a different stream, but caught nothing. St. Columbanus sent him back to the original stream – and of course now, in holy obedience, he caught ample fish.⁷

I like to remember this story, as it demonstrates once again that sainthood and the virtues do not come full-blown, but are developed through many decisions, experiences, and struggles. And indeed, humility became St. Gall's outstanding characteristic.

Around 610 St. Columbanus lost favor with the young King Theodoric II, and was ordered to leave the country.⁸ He and several other monks including St. Gall began traveling east toward Italy, but along the way were asked by the Austrasian king to stay and convert the recently-con-



The Irish missionary St. Gall, Enlightener of Switzerland. Icon from St. Spyridon Skete.

⁶ Max Schaer, *Gallus: Der Heilige in seiner Zeit*, Schwabe Verlag, Basel, pp. 66-72.

⁷ George Metlake, *The Life and Writings of St. Columban*, Facsimile Reprint by J.M.F. Books, Felinbach, 1993.

⁸ There were apparently two issues which contributed to this: St. Columbanus' criticism of the king's promiscuity (Columbanus wanted the king to marry, but the king's grandmother Brunhilde was afraid this would diminish her power), and disagreements with the local Gallic clergy concerning the date of Easter and other matters.

Opposite: Abbey library in St. Gallen.





DEUM
INVOCO TESTEM

DEUM INVOCO TESTEM

quered Alemanni. The monks agreed and made their first attempt in Tuggen on Lake Zürich, where St. Gall, who spoke the language, first preached to the pagans, then set fire to their temple and threw the idols into the lake. The monks barely escaped with their lives; later they would learn more effective ways of evangelizing.

At their next stop (now Bregenz, Austria) they stayed for almost two years, but because here, too, they destroyed idols, a strong faction rose up against them, and at the death of their patron, they again had to flee.

Now, St. Columbanus decided to travel on to Italy; but before their departure St. Gall became seriously ill with a fever and could not accompany him. He was nursed back to health in Arbon on Lake Constance, and then began a new phase of his life in a hermitage in the deep woods near the Steinach River waterfall (now the city of St Gallen, Switzerland) where he was eventually joined by twelve other men.

Despite his seclusion, St. Gall's holiness and the power of his prayers became known throughout the region. Implored to heal the possessed daughter of a local duke, he did so, but quickly gave away the proffered reward. He later refused both the abbotship of St. Columbanus' monastery in Gaul and consecration as bishop of Constance, preparing a local deacon named Jonathan for the office instead. Each time the result was a confirmation of the simple life he had chosen.

It seems that God's providence was at work in St. Gall's illness, and although he had not willingly chosen to remain behind, he was able to embrace a life of humility that, from his hut in the woods (like St. Herman of Alaska), bore much fruit in true sanctity. Today, he is venerated as the Enlightener of Switzerland.

Saint Otmar

For a century after St. Gall's death, visitors to his hermitage steadily increased: hieromonks, hierodeacons, and simple monastics moved to the site to live as hermits; and increasing numbers of pilgrims came to pray, drawn by the many miracles that had occurred at St. Gall's grave. The loosely organized site was attacked more than once by robbers, until the duke on whose land the hermitages were located, invited a priest named Otmar to organize the assembly of hermitages into an ordered monastic community.

Opposite: Relics of Sts. Gall, Otmar, and other saints in the choir of the Cathedral of St. Gall, St. Gallen.

Saint Otmar (†759), whose relics are also enshrined in St. Gallen, was an Alemannian priest who restored St. Gall's hermitage a century after his death. Otmar soon attracted native Alemannian and Raetian monks and was named the first abbot of the monastery, which grew into the famous medieval Benedictine Abbey of St. Gall. Otmar also established a school, almshouse and hospital for the surrounding community, as well as Switzerland's first leprosarium, where he tended the sick. Near the end of Otmar's life, false accusations by local nobles resulted in his exile to the island of Werd in Lake Constance, but after the saint's repose his incorrupt relics and posthumous miracles testified to his holiness. Canonized in 864, his feastday is celebrated on the 19th of November.

Tour of the Cathedral

The first stop of our tour was the crypt of St. Gall under the cathedral altar, where one of the priests led us in prayer in Russian and German. We had brought along *troparia* verses from the service to St. Gall and the saints of Switzerland, and those of us who could manage the Russian tones sang the verses in German. As we venerated the relics, the Serbian priest sang a beautiful excerpt from the Slavonic *moleben* service.

After our visit to the crypt, I made a mental note that it is useful for a group to have a short talk on the saints and sites they visit beforehand, and to introduce the prayers they will use. Also, it is helpful to address the awkwardness some Orthodox Christians feel at venerating relics in a Roman Catholic church. Many Orthodox are not yet familiar with Orthodox saints of the West, nor with relics enshrined and visible within altars, as is a common European Catholic practice.

We then went up to the six small reliquary-altars lining the cathedral choir that are usually closed to the public. I was grateful to learn the dedication of each altar, and was asked by other members of the group to give some background on the lives of Sts. Gall and Otmar.

Our third site was another crypt, dedicated to St. Otmar, at the west end of the cathedral. As we progressed through the church nave, our group had begun to quiet down and now, as we stood in the silence of the crypt appreciating the closeness of the saint, the lights suddenly went out. I quietly began a hymn of praise to St. Otmar in English which Cornelia joined in, and then we repeated it in German. Just as suddenly, the lights returned and I suddenly felt very close to the saint.

Our final destination was the Chapel of St. Gall (*St. Gallus Kapelle*), which can be entered through the courtyard and marks the spot where the saint fell on his knees in the woods exclaiming, “This is it! This is where I will stay.” In fact, this small chapel with the saint’s relics is the most fitting place to *begin* a pilgrimage of the sacred enclosure, as it marks the original site from which the hermitage grew into the famous Abbey of St. Gall. Scenes from the life of St. Gall line the walls of the chapel, and provided a natural opportunity to explain more about his life.

When the tour finished, I went with Fr. Peter Sturm, a native Swiss priest of Russian parentage, and his Swiss Orthodox wife, to find the pond and waterfall where St. Gall had once fished. Some years before I had been thrilled to see that the pond was still full of fish like those the saint had caught; this time the pool was quiet and dark, and the fish far below the surface.

Our purpose as Orthodox pilgrims in Switzerland was to venerate saints from the period of unified Christendom and to experience the power and grace that they still pour forth in their native

lands. We are grateful that the Roman Catholic Church has preserved the veneration of these saints and their relics through many difficult centuries. This was the first time our guide had seen the Eastern Christian practice of venerating relics, and told us he was moved by it. May the power of these saints bring about a renewal of Christianity in their native lands. ✦



St. Gall and companion fishing at waterfall of Steinach River, the site of the saint’s hermitage. 1452 illustration from Codex 62, Monastery Library of St. Gallen.