

## THE SOVEREIGN MILITARY HOSPITALLER ORDER OF ST. JOHN OF JERUSALEM OF RHODES AND OF MALTA

was founded in 1048 in Jerusalem as a brotherhood for the care of the sick and the housing of the pilgrims. Somewhat later, the military Order of the pilgrims against the overwhelming power of the ottomans was added as a supplementary task. In 1113 an order arose from the brotherhood of the John's Knights. First it was called "Order of St. John of Jerusalem" after its patron saint and later "Order of Malta" after its domicile in Malta. After turbulent periods in its history, the Order again concentrated on its original task.

Presently the Order has six Grand Priors, six Sub Priors and 48 National Associations with more than 13.500 members and some 80.000 volunteers. As a sovereign state, it maintains diplomatic relations with 108 countries and supports some 15 million people worldwide.



## THE HISTORY OF THE CHURCH OF SAINT JOHN THE BAPTIST IN VIENNA

As early as 1217, the Knights Hospitallers had a hospital with a chapel on the site of today's church. In 1258 the building was destroyed in a fire. The current church is a mid-14th century building, as evidenced by the almost completely preserved attic. The Gothic building structure has a nave and a chancel, which may still be recognized. After changes of the church interior in the Baroque period, it was reshaped together with the façade in 1806 in a neo-classic style. The latest comprehensive renovation and restoration of the church was done in 1997/98, the magnificent organ in 2016/17. To this day the church belongs to the Order of Malta.

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### CHARITABLE ORGANIZATIONS OF THE ORDER

Today 2,200 members volunteer in the works of the Order of Malta in Austria.

These include visiting services, help for the elderly, the sick and the handicapped, regular pilgrimages, work with the homeless, transport, ambulance and emergency care service as well as international disaster relief and reconstruction aid. Christian values and the humanitarian principles of impartiality and independence are the foundation of the work.

**Malteser Hospitaldienst** Austria consists of around 2,000 exclusively honorary members, who provide more than 140,000 hours of service each year. The range of services extends from civil protection through the rescue and medical service to personal care services and pilgrimages for disabled, old and sick people. He is also active in the elderly and health service, in the Aids and palliative area as well as in the drug and in the refugee aid.

In **Johannesgemeinschaft** young people try to get to know the Charisma of the Order of Malta and strengthen their faith through retreats, regular prayer and also social services.

The Senior Citizens house, **Haus Malta**, offers a family home in a pleasant atmosphere with loving care to give the 35 residents a pleasant and fulfilling retirement.

The **Malteser Kinderhilfe GmbH** operates the Hilde-Umdasch-Haus in Amstetten, where eleven children, adolescents and young adults with a life-shortening diagnosis and highly complex care needs find security, relaxation, companionship and a life in dignity.

The **Malteser Care GmbH** offers a professional health care and care management structure for sick and elderly in need of care of all care levels at home or in institutions throughout Austria.

## Church of Saint John the Baptist



# POINTS OF INTEREST

## IN THE APSE ...

you can clearly recognize the original Gothic nave. In the Baroque period and in the beginning of the 19th century the church was remodeled. The altar construction and the two large statues of the apostles St. Peter ("I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven ..." Mt 16,19) and St. Paul who was beheaded in Rome with a sword, date back to this period.



## THE ALTARPIECE ...

was painted by Johann Georg Schmidt in 1730; it shows the baptism of Jesus Christ in the Jordan. John the Baptist is the patron saint of the Order of Malta. The lamb on the bottom right hand side reminds us that St. John called Jesus "Lamb of God", in reference to His sacrificial death, present on the altar during Holy Mass (see front page).

## IN THE TABERNACLE ...

shaped like an antique temple, the Blessed Sacrament is kept. Above the tabernacle there is an Ikon of "Our Most Holy Virgin of Philermos", an image of the Mother of God, which is deeply venerated by the Order. The veneration started when the Order settled in Rhodes.



## IN THE CHURCH INTERIOR ...

at your left you have the flag of the Order, sign of the sovereignty of the Order. The flag on your right is of the works of the Order and its organizations: the Maltese cross in white on a red background. The eight points of the cross allude to the eight Beatitudes of the Sermon on the Mount; according to a more modern interpretation, they also refer to the eight miseries, that the members of the Order are to fight: illness and loneliness, homelessness and hunger, lovelessness and guilt, neglect and faithlessness.



On the left hand wall you will find the neo-classical memorial with the portrait of the Grand Master of the Order, Fra' Jean Parisot de la Valette (+1568). In 1565 he defended Malta victoriously against the numerically superior of the Turkish armada. The capital of Malta was called "Valetta" after him.

## IN THE NAVE ...

there are over 40 original escutcheons of important knights and the organ originally from the Baroque period. On the balustrade you can see the statues of the four Evangelists.



## IN THE ENTRANCE AREA ...

you will find the statues of St. Anthony of Padua – people pray to him especially after losing belongings – and of St. Jude Thaddaeus on the left – who is invoked in desperate situations.



The keystone in the Gothic cross vault with the motif of a lion breathing life into its cubs, has become the symbol for Jesus Christ who bestows eternal life.