Strahov Monastery

View of Strahov Monastery from Úvoz street.

Strahov Monastery (Czech: *Strahovský klášter*) is a Premonstratensian abbey founded in 1143 by Bishop Jindřich Zdík, Bishop John of Prague, and Duke Vladislav II. It is located in Strahov, Prague, Czech Republic.[1]

1 History

1.1 The founding of a monastery

Library of Strahov Monastery

After his pilgrimage to the Holy Land in 1138 the bishop of Olomouc Jindřich Zdík took hold of the idea of founding a monastery of regular canons in Prague, having the support of the bishops of Prague and the Duke of Bohemia Soběslav I and after his death, Vladislav II. After his first unsuccessful attempt to found a Czech variant of the canons' order at the place called Strahov in 1140, an invitation was issued to the Premonstratensians whose first representatives arrived from Steinfeld in the Rhine valley (Germany). Thus a monastery originated which has inscribed itself in the Czech political, cultural and religious history for all time.

The religious began to build their monastery first of wood, as well as a Romanesque basilica as the center of all spiritual events in Strahov. The building was gradually completed and the construction of the monastery stone buildings continued in order to replace the provisional wooden living quarters with permanent stone. In 1258 the monastery was heavily damaged by fire and later renewed.

1.2 During the Hussite Wars

The monastery continued functioning until the period of the Hussite movement when it was attacked and plundered by the citizens of Prague in 1420. Books, articles of worship and furnishings of both the church and the convent were burned. Although the building did not sustain great damage from the architectural viewpoint, the monastery took a long time to recover from this disaster.

The period of the Hussite wars, the years of the reign of George of Poděbrady and the time up to the end of the 16th century meant vegetation rather than life for the monastery. During that time endeavours were made once again to renew the original monastery and life in it, but that did not prove successful.

It was not until the arrival of the abbot Jan Lohelius that a turn came about. This cleric, originally of Teplá Abbey, became the abbot of Strahov in 1586 and all his abilities were devoted to the renewal of Strahov. He tried to raise the spiritual life of the monastery and, as a visitator circarie, also of the Premonstratensian order as a whole in Bohemia, he also devoted attention to the material aspect of things. He reconstructed the church, renewed the abbey buildings, established workshops, built a new dormitory and refectory and had the monastery gardens newly laid out. He regained many of the monastery estates and thus built up the material base of the monastery, so necessary for its maintenance and further development. Proof of his enormous endeavours and untiring activity also lies in the fact that already in 1594 a twelve-member community of religious could live in the monastery.

Basilica of the Assumption of Our Lady is the main cloister church
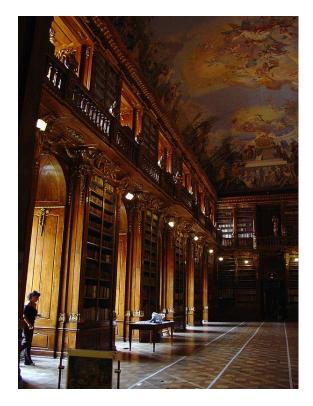
1.3 During the Thirty Years' War

In 1612 Jan Lohelius became the archbishop of Prague, his work at Strahov then being continued by the new abbot, Kašpar Questenberg. He continued in the expensive work started by Lohelius, completed the lower cloisters and prelature and even erected a new building in the form of St. Elizabeth's Hospital as well as outbuildings and a brewery. Furthermore, he founded the Norbertine seminary in the New Town, which was intended for the theological studies of members of the order. All this was achieved during the Thirty Years' War, when Kašpar Questenberg himself was forced by the violence to flee from Prague. The financial account of the costs incurred by his building activities amounted to about 100,000 tolars, which at that time was a very respectable sum for any building work. In this respect Kašpar Questenberg could calmly compete with such builders as his contemporary Albrecht of Wallenstein.

One of the biggest events in the history of the Premonstratensian order was the transfer of the remains of St. Norbert, the founder of the order, from Magdeburg took place under Questenberg's abbacy. This came about in 1627, and since then the remains of the saintly founder have laid at rest in the abbey church. During Questenberg's time the Church of St. Roch was also completed. Originally it was a votive church whose construction was

started by the Emperor Rudolph II in 1602 as an expression of thanks for the end of the plague in 1599. After numerous changes of fortune the church was completed, including its interior, by 1630.

When Kašpar Questenberg died in 1640 his successor was Kryšpin Fuk, who continued in his work. Moreover, he gained renown for himself through his participation in the making of the river Vltava navigable in the sector called St. John's Rapids (*Svatojánské proudy*). During this period the abbey was plundered by Swedish troops towards the end of the Thirty Years' War. The church and the library were looted. After the departure of the Swedes, Kryšpin Fuk had the damaged abbey repaired again, his work being continued by the Abbots Ameluxen, Sutor and Franck. The last-mentioned had the prelature reconstructed and a new St. Elizabeth's Hospital built, because the original one built by Kašpar Questenberg was demolished during the construction of Baroque fortifications in Prague.

1.4 The Theological Hall

The Theological Hall with stucco decoration and paintings from 1720s

In 1670 Jeroným Hirnheim, a philosopher and theologian became the abbot of Strahov. His greatest work, which has survived to the present days, was the building of the new library, so-called Theological Hall (*Teologický sál*) completed in 1679. During the 17th and the early 18th century other abbots continued in the reconstruction of the monastery. They also cared for the church, which was repaired and decorated several times during the given period. The monastery experienced other great building activity namely after the assault of French and Bavarian troops in 1742, when whole Prague was bombarded and seriously damaged. After this destruction of the monastery the abbot organized building works again in the course of which the church was rebuilt along with the monastery area.

The Philosophical Hall, built for the books coming from the southern Moravian Louka Convent (abolished in 1784)

1.5 The Philosophical Hall

In 1779 Václav Mayer occupied the abbot's throne and was the last to carry out great building activities. His most outstanding work was the building of the new library,[2] now in Classical style. Today it is called the Philosophical Hall (*Filosofický sál*). This work brought the extensive building activity at Strahov Monastery to an end and the following generations of abbots devoted their attention merely to minor architectural repairs, all under the influence of contemporary fashion, and to maintenance of the area as a whole.

The monastery survived in this way until 1950, when it was taken over by the communist regime, the religious being interned and placed in civil employment, very few of them being able to work in the clerical administration as priests of the diocese. The monastery was subjected to thorough archeological research and transformed into the Memorial of National Literature. In the course of the said archeological research the long since forgotten Romanesque form of the monastery was revealed and reconstructed in a sensitive way.

1.6 After the Velvet Revolution

After the shackles of communism were thrown off in 1989 the monastery was returned to the Premonstratensian Order, which began to realize a costly reconstruction of the building. By 1994 the church had been restored,

a new technical network constructed, the Strahov picture gallery newly built, and the Strahov library renewed. Other architectural restorations were also carried out.

2 Burials

- Vladislaus II, Duke of Bohemia
- Johann Lohel

3 Gallery

- 1440 Jan of Šelmberk's bible, on exhibition in Strahov Monastery's library.
- Church of St. Rochus.
- Czech lion.
- Medvedev in Strahov.
- Medal commemorating translation of Norbert's body to Prague in 1627.

4 References

[1] "*Abbey of Strahov*". *Catholic Encyclopedia*. Robert Appleton Company.

[2] Mary-Ann Gallagher, Matthew Gardner, Sadakat Kadri, *Vienna Prague Budapest*, 2nd, pg. 156, Cadogan Guides (2007), ISBN 1-86011-366-4

5 External links

- Royal Canonry of Premonstratensians at Strahov (Czech) (English) – official web
- Description and photos of the monastery on Prague-wiki

Coordinates: 50°05′10″N 14°23′24″E / 50.086°N 14.390°E

6   Text and image sources, contributors, and licenses

6.1   Text

- **Strahov Monastery** *Source:* https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Strahov_Monastery?oldid=656523455 *Contributors:* Magnus Manske, Delirium, JASpencer, Necrothesp, Larrybob, Darwinek, Rjwilmsi, Lockley, Karelj, SmackBot, Chris the speller, TheLeopard, Neddyseagoon, Cydebot, Matny1989, Nick Number, Waacstats, The Anomebot2, VolkovBot, Knepflerle, TIY, BWH76, Yelkrokoyade, MystBot, Addbot, Crowneprg3, Krenakarore, AnomieBOT, Ulric1313, ArthurBot, FrescoBot, Oashi, Jirka.h23, Daniel the Monk, Acomax, John of Reading, Cimmerian praetor, Crown Prince, JePGov, Rybec, Westfield2015 and Anonymous: 11

6.2   Images

- **File:Bibliothèque_monastère_Strahov_2.jpg** *Source:* https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/1/13/Biblioth%C3%A8que_monast%C3%A8re_Strahov_2.jpg *License:* CC BY-SA 3.0 *Contributors:* Own work *Original artist:* Yelkrokoyade
- **File:Commons-logo.svg** *Source:* https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/en/4/4a/Commons-logo.svg *License:* ? *Contributors:* ? *Original artist:* ?
- **File:Praha,_Hradcany_-_Strahovsky_klaster_(pohled_z_ulice_Uvoz).jpg** *Source:* https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/2/26/Praha%2C_Hradcany_-_Strahovsky_klaster_%28pohled_z_ulice_Uvoz%29.jpg *License:* CC BY-SA 2.0 *Contributors:* Own work *Original artist:* Matěj Baťha
- **File:Praha_2009-12-26-00.jpg** *Source:* https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/2/2c/Praha_2009-12-26-00.jpg *License:* CC BY-SA 3.0 *Contributors:* Own work *Original artist:* paddy (Patrick-Emil Zörner)
- **File:Sala_della_Teologia_-_Biblioteca_del_monastero_di_Strahov_-_Repubblica_Ceca.jpg** *Source:* https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/4/42/Sala_della_Teologia_-_Biblioteca_del_monastero_di_Strahov_-_Repubblica_Ceca.jpg *License:* Public domain *Contributors:* Own work *Original artist:* Peopanda
- **File:Strahov_Monastery_001.jpg** *Source:* https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/2/21/Strahov_Monastery_001.jpg *License:* CC-BY-SA-3.0 *Contributors:* http://pipimaru.dyndns.org/ *Original artist:* Y.Shishido

6.3   Content license

- Creative Commons Attribution-Share Alike 3.0