

Journal Entry 11— Versailles and Giverny, France (July 23, 2011)

I toured the gardens of Claude Monet and the Palace at Versailles. Monet had two gardens in which he, along with several assistants, worked. Monet painted every day and frequently with Renoir. Both would paint the same scene then marvel how different their impressions were. They would discuss how much like any life experience this was. They were both sensitive to the changing colors of a scene with the change of light throughout a day. Monet would return to paint the same scene at different times of the day.

Versailles Palace was huge, as were the gardens. The chapel alone would be larger than many churches in France. Certainly the Hall of



Mirrors (*left*) was the most impressive part of the palace. However, I think the Palace was most impressive because of its size rather than its beauty.



I have been inside many church buildings in Hungary, Austria, Germany, and France constructed from every kind of material from red stone to wood and located in small villages to large cities and one built on a barge along the river. In every case there were worshiping congregations in these churches save the chapel at Versailles.

It has been an interesting experience and I look forward to the time before me to reflect on all that I have seen.

Pastor Mac

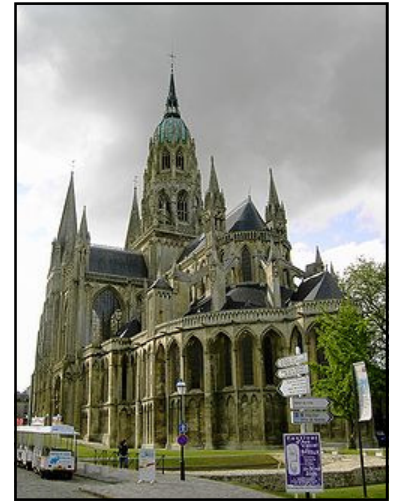
Journal Entry 10— Rouen and Normandie (July 19, 2011)

I left the ship early and made the two hour trek to Normandie. With a stop in Bayeux I had time to look at the wonderful Notre Dame church located in the center of the small town. The eleventh century church with incredible stained glass windows offered a moment for prayer and reflection.

On to the beaches at Omaha and Utah that claimed the lives of over 9000 young American men on D-Day--average age was 22. As I walked through the cemetery I



saw several crosses with names of young men one from Indiana one who lost his life on July 4, 1944. I wonder how many of those young men, and women, might have been the inventor which would have made life richer and better had they lived a longer life. It is a source of sorrow for me to realize that we fought two world wars to settle differences among Europeans dating back to the Holy Roman Empire.



As I think more about war I realize how often war arises from something as little as a person being slighted or treated rudely. I listened to a wonderful violin duo in the evening and noticed that in the midst of an incredible piece a woman got up and walked out with a glass of wine in one hand and a cell phone in the other--rudeness. It seems small but is the kind of thing that builds over time and leads to something more catastrophic.

Surely the challenge of our day is to restore civility to discourse on all levels and learn to honor those who are giving their best in whatever area of life they may endeavor.

Grace and peace,
Pastor Mac

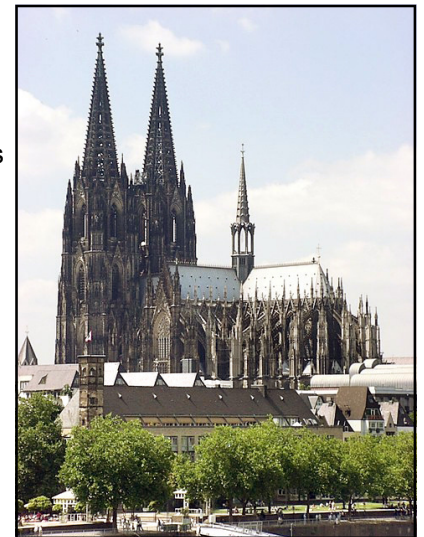
Journal Entry 9— Cologne, Germany (July 16, 2011)

The vast part of Cologne was destroyed during World War II. As a result, though it is a bustling city of one million people, it lacks the charm of the smaller cities I have visited along the way. The center piece of Cologne, of course, is the Cathedral. The Cathedral construction began in 1248 and took another 600 years before it was completed.



The stained glass in this gothic cathedral is beautiful. The glass tells the stories of Jesus' life, the prophets, Church Fathers (Augustine, Jerome, Basil, etc.), and some of the life and times of Cologne's leadership during the Cathedral's construction.

I sat for awhile in the Cathedral, as I have done in each one I have visited, took some time for prayer and reflection—the words that have been spoken in this place over the centuries, the music ringing from its walls, the other prayers uttered, the cries of infants as they felt its waters sprinkled on their heads, and the muffled cries of those mourning the loss of those they loved.



Pastor Mac

Journal Entry 8— Heidelberg, Germany (July 14, 2011)



I traveled to the University of Heidelberg and the castle which symbolizes its presence. (*photo left*) The University, established in 1386, is the oldest university in Germany. This beautifully preserved Baroque city is filled with charm and is perhaps best known to many Americans courtesy of the musical *The Student Prince*.

Holy Spirit Church (*photo right*) is constructed of the beautiful native red stone. Once a Catholic church it is now solely Protestant. For several years the church went back and forth between the two depending on the choice of the ruling authority. There was even



a time when a wall was constructed through the middle of the church building--the Protestants on one side and the Catholics on the other. They would alternate the use of the chancel altar each year.

I enjoyed a light lunch of goat cheese, and bread, then one of the great apple strudels that can be found at Gundel's wonderful bakery. It has been a relaxing day good for my soul in so many ways.

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Journal Entry 7— Wertheim, Germany (July 13, 2011)



Wertheim's claim to fame is a 13th century castle that is well preserved. Though it provided some protection its most notable contribution was as a lofty perch for protestants to keep track of the Catholics in the village below. When the Reformation swept 16th century Germany, it was like a fruit basket upset where the Catholics were out and the protestants were in - both in converts and congregants.

The simple church building in Wertheim (14th century) was formerly Catholic (it still contained the crucifix), now become protestant. The pulpit was moved from the middle of the nave to the front -- preaching almost overnight occupied the central part of the worship moving the sacraments to a lesser position. Too bad.

Wertheim is known for its glass making. Indeed, much of the glass made for chemists is made here, along with prosthetic eyes.

It has been the one day that we experienced any rain, but it was a delightful day to scale the steep road to the castle and view the beautiful valley below.

Grace and peace,
Pastor Mac

Journal Entry 6— Wurzburg, Germany (July 12, 2011)

Wurzburg, a modern day city of about 160,000, had at its beginnings, like so many medieval towns, a Cathedral known today as the Dom of St. Kilian, which was constructed in Romanesque style beginning in 1040. Under two Prince Bishops, it was completed in the 12th century. The interior contains statues to many of the popes over the centuries.



A prince bishop, like the pope, had both temporal and spiritual powers which made them a formidable presence at any table. Their threat could be at once political and spiritual in that if you did not agree with them politically they could excommunicate you (ban you from heaven for eternity). Case closed.

Since the prince bishop was among the few who could read and write, their power to read and understand scripture was nearly absolute. The serfs (who could neither read nor write) who may not have liked their elaborate living, were kept at bay by two things. First, there was the absolute power of the prince bishop both spiritually and politically. Second, the prince bishop paid each of his subjects, man, woman, and child, five liters of wine per day each. Wine in that day was sometimes used as a currency. So if you didn't spend it, surely by the end of an arduous day's work, you could anesthetize yourself.

I think one can begin to understand why the merger of political issues and an insistence on religious orthodoxy as one and the same is so dangerous. An overview of the Middle Ages is a good reminder of why that period is sometimes referred to by using the phrase "Dark Ages." While there was some wonderful art, poetry, music, and architecture during this period, its absolutism thwarted invention, inquiry, and tolerance.



Lest the reader think this was an entirely dark day, I had a wonderful tour of the prince bishop's residence constructed in the 18th century. This extravagant mansion with its crescendo of rooms, each one more spectacular than the last, was amazing. At the same time its opulence did very little to give the average citizen much confidence in the Church of that day.

Pastor Mac

Journal Entry 5 — Bamberg, Germany (July 11, 2011)

I visited Bamberg this morning, a town founded around 1000 A.D. Today it has a census of 70,000 people. Bamberg is built on seven hills with a church at the top of each hill. I visited the baroque Roman Catholic Church of Sts. Peter and George. It was unusual for several reasons. First, it had two chancels (where the altars reside). The altar at the east of the nave was for the clergy and the west chancel for the nobility. Second, they built the structure atop a well which still functioned in a lower level beneath the building. They had constructed a small worship area around the well where baptism has been practiced for over 800 years.



Finally, in the west chancel was a chair reserved for the Archbishop. Behind the Archbishop's chair is the tomb wherein lies the body of the only pope to be buried outside of Rome -- Clement II. Clement II occupied the papacy for nine months. A few years ago scientists convinced the pope to let them exhume the bones and examine them to see if the cause of his death could be determined. After examination it was determined that Clement II had been poisoned. That's a pretty harsh critique of his homiletical skills -- tough crowd.



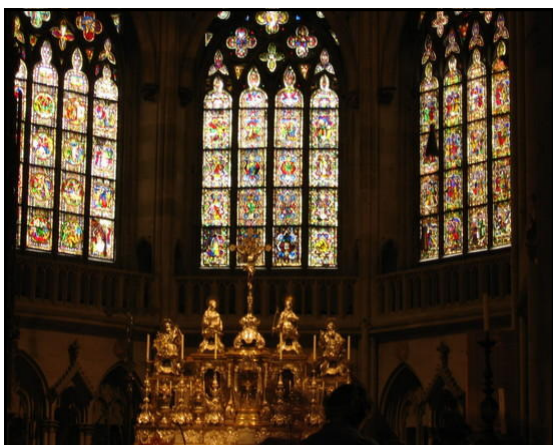
I took some time to look at the rose garden outside of the church building. It was beautiful! There were over one hundred different kinds of roses. I found one--Gloria Dei--that was incredible in its beauty. Seeing its beauty and color was striking against the sandstone shades of the church's blocks, darkened by the wearing of time.

Pastor Mac

Journal Entry 4 — Regensburg, Germany (July 9, 2011)

Regensburg, Germany is one of the oldest towns in Europe dating back the Emperor Octavius in 174 A.D. The Emperor built a garrison here and a stone bridge that remains to this day. The stone bridge provided the Romans a source of revenue since it was the only bridge crossing the Danube and saved a great deal of time for merchants carrying their wares to the north.

St. Peter's Cathedral (*right*) was constructed during the Middle Ages and has the oldest stained glass windows outside of Chartres Cathedral. The people removed the windows early in World War II and were able to save 70% of the stained glass. No one knows how medieval artisans were able to stain the glass. Their color and complexity is amazing.



The cathedral inside is rather dark and musty. Though there is a congregation that worships there, I would imagine it provides a great deal of challenge -- sitting on the hard benches. I have yet to see a padded pew in any of the church buildings I've visited.

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(Regensbert, Germany continued)

The altar is a solid piece of silver bedecked with jewels. Though I believe we could afford to be more opulent when it comes to the edifices we build to the glory of God today, this was a bit over the top. It's interesting that with the incredible silver altar adorning the chancel area, the sacraments never rest upon it. The sacraments instead are placed on a more plain and simple altar that rests in the midst of the congregation. This is the way it should be. It provided a wonderful contrast to the rest of the nave.

The town has high towers which were erected by wealthy medieval business people as a sign of their wealth and power. Today these towers are largely occupied by university students. By the way moving to Germany and/or Austria might be a good idea when you get a son or daughter that decides to attend college. A semester's tuition in Vienna is \$250. In Passau it is free. They just raised the tuition in other parts of Germany to \$350 per semester, and the hue and cry has yet to die down.

While we have traveled the narrow, cobbled streets of the medieval town we have learned a lot about Regensberg. They build the BMW 1 and 3 series here, and Siemens has a large plant here. Regensberg's unemployment is 3.5% and continues downward. They obviously have done some things right when it comes to the economy.

Grace and Peace,
Pastor Mac

Journal Entry 3 — Passau, Germany (July 8, 2011)

We sailed into the city of Passau which rests on the confluence of three rivers: Ilz, Danube, and Inn. Today the rivers are tranquil; but in the spring with the melting snows of the Alps rushing down, the Inn River has been responsible for some of the worst flooding in Europe.



At noon I entered St. Stephen's Church (*left*), a church reconstructed in the baroque style in the early 17th century following a fire that destroyed the town. I was moved to tears as I heard the world's largest pipe organ played beautifully for forty-five minutes. The organist chose selections that displayed the possibilities of this organ from Bach's Praeludium and Fugue to a contemporary masterpiece that was absolutely thrilling! Listening to the concert while gazing at the incredible statuary of this baroque building was deeply moving for me.

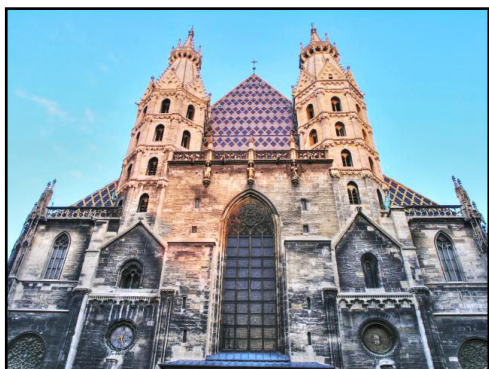


I was able earlier in the afternoon to enter and pray in a smaller church established in 1050 (during the Crusades) but again rebuilt following the devastating fire of the early 17th century. I have been struck in each of these church buildings with the dynamic presence of pulpits. There was a power ascribed in their ornate presence to the spoken word as well as to the one speaking them that is absent in the more informal style which I and others use today. I wonder sometimes if my informality might deprive a congregation of the respect and honor due to the Word which many of us have been called to speak. This is something I will continue to contemplate throughout this tour.

Grace and Peace,
Pastor Mac

Journal Entry 2— Vienna, Austria (July 7, 2011)

For those who have already seen Vienna it will be no surprise that I found this to be a beautiful city. The west bank is the old section with the churches, university, and civic buildings. The east side is newly constructed for business and professional buildings begun in the 1970s. There were four church buildings I saw during the brief day in Vienna--St. Stephen's a gothic structure that attracts the tourism; St. Charles built in the baroque style; St. Augustine's a very simple structure in which the weddings of the Hapsburg family were held; and St. Francis a beautiful building along the Danube River. All of these church buildings house worshipping congregations.



St. Stephen's Church



St. Charles Church or Karlskirche



*St. Augustine's Church or
St. Augustinerkirche*



St. Francis of Assisi Church

The first three church buildings I mentioned (St. Stephen's, St. Charles, St. Augustine) were noted by our guide as the most important. Yet I found the simple but beautiful sanctuary of St. Francis to be the most vibrant. While in St. Francis, I lit a candle with prayers for those who are struggling with illness, and a second candle in celebration of the Castleton congregation.

Blessings,
Pastor Mac

Journal Entry 1— Budapest, Hungary (July 5, 2011)

We departed from Budapest, Hungary this morning with the music of Strauss' The Blue Danube playing after spending a day strolling its streets and viewing several of its church buildings one of them dating back to the 12th century. Perhaps the most striking of the church buildings were St. Matthias (*below left*) and St. Stephens (*below right*) - both quite different in their architecture, but beautiful in their own right.



It is moving to think about the history of Hungary that has known so many occupiers. The Germans destroyed most of their bridges at the end of World War II. The Russians rebuilt some of buildings but in a very plain and stark architectural style. Fortunately, many of the older more architecturally rich buildings remain. The Hungarian people have progressed rapidly since their emergence from Soviet occupation.

Perhaps one of the side benefits of getting away is discovering a larger world and at the same time realizing that our future is in cooperating to tackle the global issues we all face.

Next stop, Vienna, Austria.

Blessings,
Pastor Mac