

## *The Pilgrimage Church of Mary (Gartlberg)*

A special symbol of the town is the Pilgrimage Church of Mary on the Gartlberg, the „Gartlbergkirche“.

This two-spired baroque building dominates the Pfarrkirchen townscape from all directions and was erected between 1661 and 1715 from designs by the Italian church builder Domenico Zuccali.

The choir stalls and high altar were built by Giovanni Battista Carlone and Paolo d`Allio from stucco marble. Both artists also carried out important work in the cathedral at Passau. The stucco in the nave was created by Ehrgott Bernhard Bendl – one of the artisan Bendl family from Pfarrkirchen. The church was renovated in 2008. There is a lovely example of the 15 Stations of the Cross, built in 1888, to be admired on the footpath up to the Gartlberg. In 1972 the old carved Stations from the town's parish church were integrated.

As to the origins of the pilgrimage church: In 1659 the Pfarrkirchen hat maker Wolfgang Schmierdorfer nailed a religious picture of Mary, which can still be seen by the High altar, to a tree on the Gartlberg in order to be able to pray in peace. This was witnessed and in the course of time, more and more people came to pray to the Mother of God and implore her assistance. After an apparently lifeless girl was rescued from a pit of deep water and brought back to life with the aid of the Madonna, many pilgrims visited the spot and finally two years later the building of the church began.