

## Church of St Peter

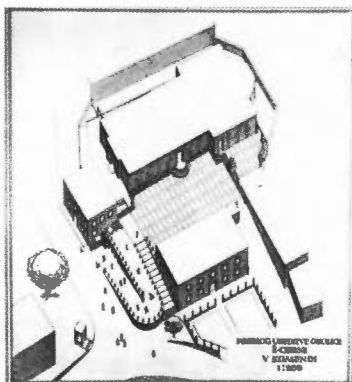
<i>IRN</i>	231
<i>Location</i>	Komenda
<i>Renovation</i>	the square 1996, restoration of the high altar 1981-1984, Plečnik's tabernacle 2001
<i>Chief conservator</i>	Maja Avguštin

The first church in Komenda is recorded in a document dating from between 1147 and 1154, which mentions the local priest Altvin. In 1510 a new church in Komenda was commissioned by a member of the family "von Latern de Schalis". The exterior of this structure was depicted by Valvazor. In 1704 Baron Peter Jakob de Testaferrata arrived in Komenda. In 1726 he undertook the construction of a new parish church, for which he turned to the Ljubljana architect Gregor Maček, who produced the plans for the new building. He modelled it on the Ljubljana cathedral. He surrounded the vaulted nave with a series of chapels and designed the presbytery as a square with truncated corners. The new church was consecrated in 1729. It was completed in the late 1750s when it was furnished. Franc Jelovšek contributed the designs for the high altar and the pulpit (completed in 1758 and 1760 respectively).

The Komenda municipality invited Jože Plečnik to design the square in front of the church and to construct a new access to the building before the Eucharistic Congress of 1935. The plans were completed in 1934 and 1935.

Plečnik conceived the access as a combination of a narrow staircase immediately next to the chaplaincy and a ceremonial slope rising towards the square and the church. On the curve of the slope he placed a lantern, for which he drew inspiration from a lantern in the graveyard from 1510. A preserved photograph shows the original situation with the lantern in place as chosen by the architect. After the Second World War the lantern was moved to the church square without its base.

Plečnik's original plan  
of the square, 1934





Access ramp

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The square included a monument to the victims of the First World War. From it, Plečnik hung a large cast iron bell as a symbol of war and death, because during the First World War many bronze bells were melted down and replaced with cast iron ones. Plečnik intended to place the monument between the access slope and the stairway, as is evident from the plan. Today the monument stands in front of the entrance to the cemetery.

In 1996 the originally sandy platform with strips of concrete tiles was paved with granite cubes and concrete tiles according to the plan of Feliks Hribernik. In the middle of the slope, a replica of Plečnik's lantern from the Žale cemetery was placed.

During the earthquake of 1895 the high altar in the church was heavily damaged. In the 1950s the Komenda priest Viktorijan Demšar decided that the high altar must be renovated owing also to the decayed wood. He turned to Jože Plečnik, who came up with a design for a new tabernacle. The tabernacle was crafted by the coppersmith Alojz Pirnat. Plečnik found inspiration for his design in Glavar's Baroque fountain in front of the mansion behind the church. He combined the composition of the holy vessel with a raised lid with two lanterns and angels from the old tabernacle, creating a refined whole. He indicated the difference in age and design between the tabernacle and the wooden altar by selecting a different material.

The final restoration of the high altar was carried out from 1981 to 1984 under the supervision of the Kranj Institute for Monument



High altar with Plečnik's tabernacle

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Protection. It was implemented by Dinko Gregorin of the Ljubljana Restoration Studio. At that time, the altar architecture and statues were restored. From the beginning of the restoration of the high altar remained the dilemma over what to do with Plečnik's tabernacle. The expert committee (composed of the priest Nikolaj Pavlič, Dr Emilijan Cevc, Director of the Institute for the Protection of Natural and Cultural Heritage Olga Zupan, Director of the Restoration Centre Josip Korošec, Prof France Kokalj, sculptor Momo Vukovič) convened on 30 November 1995 to consider the reconstruction of Jelovšek's tabernacle and to find a new location for Plečnik's tabernacle. The priest Nikolaj Pavlič proposed the construction of a new chapel on the northern side of the nave, which would be accessed through the baptistery built by the architect Janez Valentinčič. The committee adopted the plan for the reconstruction of the Baroque tabernacle. It also proposed the construction of a new chapel to the north of the nave. In October 1997 the new director of the Institute for the Protection of Natural and Cultural Heritage Vladimir Knific and the chief conservator Damjana Pečnik called for the meeting of a new expert committee, which was composed of Dr Emilijan Cevc, Dr Nace Šumi, Dr Borut Košir, Dr Damjan Prelovšek, Prof Marjan Ocvirk, the priest Nikolaj Pavlič, France Vardjan, Josip Korošec and Prof France Kokalj. The members of the committee failed to reach a unanimous decision. Some of them maintained that the moving of Plečnik's tabernacle would be justified if a suitable place for it were to be found in the church; others believed that Plečnik's masterpiece was exceptionally well in tune with Jelovšek's altar, which was 200 years older than the tabernacle, and that the construction of a chapel would destroy Valentinčič's baptistery. The Institute for the Protection of Natural and Cultural Heritage maintained that Plečnik's tabernacle should remain part of the Baroque altar.

"... a successful coexistence of artefacts from different time periods, such as that of Plečnik's tabernacle and the Baroque composition of the altar, is a rare achievement and is therefore worth preserving..." (Vladimir Knific, Delo, 21 October 1997)

In March 1999 the Cultural Heritage Administration of the Republic of Slovenia issued Approval for the Construction of the Tabernacle Chapel to the North of the Church of St Peter in Komenda. The structure was built and today Jelovšek's altar features a reconstruction of his tabernacle, whereas Plečnik's tabernacle, along with the baptismal font, is kept in the chapel to the north of the nave.

#### MAJA AVGUŠTIN

*photos: page 44, top MAJA AVGUŠTIN, bottom BERNARDA JESENKO FILIPIČ drawing MARJAN TEPINA*

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