

Haus Sankt Ulrich
stands on a historic site



HAUS SANKT ULRICH

The Basilica of St Ulrich and St Afra stands outside the city walls on a burial ground, dating from the Late Antiquity period, situated on the “Via Claudia” Roman road that leads south. The believers built a small wooden church on the site of the tomb of the martyr Afra (who died in around 304) possibly back in the Late Roman period. This was superseded by a really impressive early Romanesque church made of stone in the 6th or 7th century.

Five other new structures followed this, up to the one that stands today — a Late Gothic building dating back to 1467/1603. The other monastic buildings also underwent several construction phases until they were rebuilt in the late 16th century. The abbots then started converting the rooms to a Baroque style from 1667 onwards.

Pictured:
Copper engraving of the Abbey of St Ulrich and St Afra
by Daniel Manasser, 1627



A community of clergymen has organised a pilgrimage to the tomb of St Afra since the Early Middle Ages. The other patron saints, Bishop Simpert (around 778–807) and Bishop Ulrich (923–973), also found their final resting places at this site where other early Augsburg bishops were laid to rest.

It was probably in the early 11th century (1012 if tradition is to be believed) that the Benedictine monks superseded the worldly canons. After the monastery's long struggle for independence from the Bishop of Augsburg, it was finally elevated to the rank of Imperial Abbey in 1643.

Pictured:

Entire complex of the former Imperial Abbey of St Ulrich and St Afra before the Second World War.

Augsburg City Archive (FS Stadtbild Pos FS 3023)



The secularisation of 1803/06 brought about an end to the Imperial Abbey. The monastic buildings became the possession of the State of Bavaria, which used them for military purposes and changed their structure accordingly. The monastic church was now only used as a parish church. Major parts of the former monastic buildings in the south of the Basilica of St Ulrich and St Afra were used as barracks during the Second World War. They were destroyed in 1944, while the Late Gothic Basilica was spared. Over the following decades, the parts that remained became increasingly dilapidated owing to the complicated details of ownership. It was on these foundations that the Diocese of Augsburg built the St Ulrich Conference Centre between 1972 and 1975, although the remaining ruins were unfortunately not incorporated into the new build.

Today, only the ruins of a medieval chapel, which may date back as far as the 8th century, can be seen in the south east. It was originally the Chapel to St Mary and later held the patronage of Saint Gotthard (960/61–1038), who was the Provost of Niederaltaich from 996 and the Bishop of Hildesheim from 1022. St Gotthard's Chapel is one of the oldest church buildings in the Swabian region of Bavaria.

Canon Dr Thomas Groll,
University Chaplain and historian specialising in Diocesan history

Pictured:

The cloister of the former Imperial Abbey, pre-1944.

The St Ulrich and St Afra parish office

Remains of the arcades of the cloister, 1966.

The Bavarian State Office for Monument Protection in Munich

