

in fragments). These are followed by Christ in Limbo and a large Journey and Adoration of the Magi, also preserved in fragments, which is painted on the northern wall over an older painting with the same theme.

The niches in the bottom section feature saints, but due to humidity some of the paintings are preserved only in fragments: to the right of the apse's arch is the patron saint of the chapel of St Nicholas, with a book in his left hand and his right hand raised, accompanied by two deacons. The next niche shows St Dorothea with a flower basket and St Margaret with a dragon. The niche left of the entrance shows a holy abbot (St Louis of Toulouse). Next to him is a female saint with a crown, probably St Helena, who subdues a serpent with a cross. Next to her is St Magdalene with long flowing hair. The seventh niche features a Pieta, the Virgin Mary cradling the dead body of Jesus. The penultimate niche contains the remains of a destroyed scene of the Crowning of Mary, and the last, tenth niche was completely rebuilt during the renovation.

Originally, the altar space, i.e. apse, also featured paintings, but it was destroyed in the 19<sup>th</sup> century and today the reconstruction of the original is merely white-washed.

*The Throne of Mercy and the Passion Cycle: The Entry into Jerusalem, The Last Supper, Christ in Prayer on Mount Olive, The Bargain of Judas and The Judas Kiss, ar. 1400*

The frescoes were conserved and restored between 1978 and 1980.

Until 1864 the apse contained a Late Gothic triptych with images of St Nicholas and three Hungarian royal saints - SS Stephen, Emeric, and Ladislav - on the closed side, and scenes of the Annunciation, the Nativity, the Adoration of the Magi, and the Death of the Virgin Mary on the open side. The triptych is today in the Hungarian National Gallery in Budapest.



*The rotunda's exterior*

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*St Louis of Toulouse, ar. 1400*



**The chapel of St Nicholas in Selo**

The oldest architectural monument in the municipality of Moravske Toplice is a rotunda from the mid 13<sup>th</sup> century, dedicated to St Nicholas (*Nikolaj*). The name of Selo first appears in written sources only later, in the 14<sup>th</sup> century (in 1340 as *Lak/Selo*, and in 1365 as *seu valle Lak Sancti Nocolai /Selo* in the Valley of St Nicholas), but its architectural features indicate that the church is older. The circumstances of its origin are not quite clear, but oral tradition associates it with the Knights Templar. No written sources have indeed been preserved from before 1698, when, after the building had already served as a Protestant church for nearly a century, a description of it and data were recorded during a visitation.

The brick-built little church may be the remnant of a larger medieval architectural building complex. Its semicircular apse, windows, portal, articulated outer walls, and interior design follow the Romanesque style, and they became recognisable again after the conservation and restoration of 1956. During its existence the church was indeed rebuilt several times,



*Romanesque window and lesenes, mid 13<sup>th</sup> century*



most noticeably in the mid 19<sup>th</sup> century, when the original building was greatly altered.

Today the rotunda is a building with a circular ground plan, standing on a wall made of volcanic rock; it has a shingle roof and a wooden bell-tower. Its appearance and construction make it unique in Slovenia, and examples for it are found in the wider western Danube basin. A pattern of bricks shines through the thin layer of plaster, and the most outstanding decorative elements are the lesenes, narrow, low-relief vertical pillars which evenly divide its exterior. They reach from the base moulding to the attic's cornice in the form of two parallel bands, decorated with a saw-toothed pattern, with either three or four semicircular corbels. Three narrow, semicircular windows are cut into the southern wall, and the front door of the rotunda is covered by a shingle canopy.

The interior is semicircular, covered by a cupola; the bottom part of

*Journey and Adoration of the Magi, detail, first half 14<sup>th</sup> century*



the circular walls is articulated into semicircular wall niches, serving as seats. The altar space in the semicircular apse is vaulted with a semi-cupola and illuminated by the light coming through the window. The floor was originally made of packed earth.

The interior is painted with frescoes. The first layer of paintings, made in the Early Gothic linear style on the northern wall, is best preserved in a fragment of the Journey and Adoration of the Magi, probably dating from the first quarter of the 14<sup>th</sup> century. The extensive, theologically accomplished scenes on the wall and cupola date from around 1400. The Gothic paintings originally consisted of three bands, and a fourth band included the paintings in the niches. In view of its artistic features, the later cycle is attributed to the so-called "Ducal Workshop" (*Herzogs-werkstatt*) in Vienna.

In the cupola, an oval stretches from west to east, containing a painting of Our Lord Jesus Christ, standing on a rainbow, and the

*St Nicholas and two deacons, ar. 1400*



throne of Mercy (The Father with the crucified Son in his hands), the Sun, and the Moon. On either side of the oval are two symbols of the Evangelists.

Nine scenes of the Passion of Christ have been preserved on the walls. Above the portal and the window over it is the Entry into Jerusalem. It is followed clockwise by the Last Supper, Christ in Prayer on Mount Olive (painted opposite the altar space in the apse), the Bargain of Judas and the Judas Kiss, exactly opposite the portal. These are followed by Jesus before Pilate, The Flagellation of Jesus and the Crowning with Thorns (the last two scenes are heavily damaged); left of the door is the scene of Jesus Carrying the Cross. The last three scenes of the Passion are in the second band of paintings on the southern wall and are heavily damaged due to Baroque rebuilding: the Descent From the Cross (in the centre, below the scene of the Entry into Jerusalem), to the left the Crucifixion and to the right the Resurrection (all three preserved

*Crucifixion, detail, ar. 1400*

