

● **Front cover:**

Church Guide

St. James, Coesfeld

Text on stone outside main entrance:

The church of St. James was a gathering point in the Middle Ages for pilgrims on the way to Santiago de Compostela, 2672km distant in the north west of Spain.

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A little tour through our parish church of St James at Coesfeld

Bishop Hermann 2nd who led the diocese of Münster from 1173 to 1203, built an episcopal chapel south of the Berkel about 1195, which was dedicated to the holy apostle James. A few years later this church, built in the Romanesque style, became the parish church of the newly established parish of St James. The present day parish of St. James at Lette had already ceased to be a parish before 1264.

In the year 1925 the church of St. Joseph at Stevede was built, which in great part, consists of areas within the former parish St James. After WW2 the parish of St. Lawrence was established in 1952, which was entirely a part of St James. In 1967 the new parish of Maria Frieden was created on the southern part of old St James. The care of the Harle peasantry (*Bauernschaft*) of St Lambert was assigned to it.

It was on 21st March 1945 when bombs totally destroyed the 750-year old Jameskirche. Jesuit Father Wünsche, a priest of the parish, met his death beneath the rubble. Many years passed before the new House of God could be built. On 15th August 1954, on the Feast of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary, the new St James church was consecrated by Bishop Michael Keller. During the years 1981 to 1983 it was renovated and repainted. It now met the requirements of the liturgy as revised by the Second Vatican Council.

We enter the church through the main entrance and stop under the organ loft. Our gaze wanders to the High Choir with the great

wooden cross (about 1700) which previously stood in the old James cemetery (now the war memorial on the Letter Strasse). Beneath the cross stands the altar.

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Let into the face of the altar, facing the congregation, is a picture of Christ as the Paschal Lamb (a former keystone taken from the old portico of the destroyed church).

Relics of St Boniface and several other martyrs, behind a pane of armoured glass, may be seen on the back of the altar. Left, in front of the Choir, stands an old stone statue (c. 1480) of St Mary. It stood in a crucifixion group outside the church until the bombardment. Our parish patron St. James (1696) stands on the right, in front of the Choir, recognisable by the pilgrim's attire, namely staff, bag, pilgrim's bottle, pilgrim's coat and hat, with the scallop shell. A richly adorned shrine is to be found in the pedestal containing a relic of the patron saint of our parish.

Moving into the choir area, we come to the precious *Schnitzaltar* (c. 1520) created in Antwerp. The wings by Theodor Stracke, sculptor at Bocholt, were added in 1892. A major part survived the war since

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it was placed into safety before the bombing. Scenes from the life of the Mother of God are depicted in the altar figures, which is why it is called the St Mary altar. On the rear are picture panels also from the life of St Mary. These pictures by Steffgen, a painter from Trier, did not appear until 1889.

In 1987 Albert Bocklage of Vechta designed the 12 windows in the choir area; this is a bequest by Dr Franz Middendorf (deceased). They symbolise first the 12 Gates of heavenly Jerusalem, with the names of the 12 tribes of Israel in Hebrew script. Apart from that, there are stone tablets below the arches bearing the names of the "Twelve Apostles of the Lamb" (Revelation 21: 12 and 14). In the lower corner are the symbols representing the two apostles – Peter, the keys; James, the scallop shell. In the other corner is depicted a small flag on which the 12 sentences of the Apostles Creed may be seen in the Latin of the Middle Ages, which according to a 6th century legend, each attributed to an apostle. The windows document

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In the side chapel (Lady Chapel) stands an old *Vesperbild* of 1400 – an image of the Virgin Mary – as a place of remembrance for all the victims of violence, especially for Chaplain Fr. Heinrich Wünsche who died on 21st March 1945 beneath the rubble of the collapsing St James' church. This glorious work of art stems from the former James cemetery chapel. Next to it is the grave stone for Wilhelm Ketteler, the 49th Prince Bishop of Münster (1553-1557) who, after his abdication, lived for 24 years in St James' as the "Father of the Poor" and was laid to rest here in 1582.

The picture of St Nicholas (front, left) shows the saintly bishop going to the aid of the three girls in their great distress. This picture is on loan from the hospital. It originates from the former Varlar monastery. Our last view is once more of the three windows in each of which a special sign points to the Joyful, Sorrowful and Glorious Mysteries of the Rosary.

We leave the side chapel and turn to the right. There, on bronze tablets, the events of the Stations of the Cross are depicted.

We now go to the side exit where three plain figures of saints stand; Saint Anthony, holding a large wafer in his hands, on which an image of the Christ Child is shown, and Jude the Apostle who is grasping a cudgel (he was slain with a cudgel) and in his left hand a book. This is said to be a reminder of his epistle which belongs to the scriptures of the New Testament. On the wall opposite St Anthony hangs a carved wooden figure of Mary.

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Through the glass door we arrive in the porch, called *The Paradise* (see P.11). There are several statues: The Mother of God; Mary Magdalena who is clinging to the stump of the Cross, and St John the Baptist. Numerous remnants mounted on plinth stones bear witness to the artistic decoration of the demolished St James church. At the bottom of the tower is Coesfeld's oldest and finest structure and work of art, the Romanesque portico (c.1230). By great good fortune, restoration of this was possible even after the destruction in 1945. Connoisseurs claim this as the "*finest Romanesque stepped portal in the whole of the North German region*".

Returning into the church we discover in the distance, high up on the left, a St James figure as a stained glass window. We pause for a moment before the picture of the "*Everlasting Succour*". An old picture of this type would be called an ikon in Russian. Believers who have a concern, pray here and light sacrificial candles. In a wall-niche to the right, next to the picture of the Mother of God, stands the image of St Joseph, a wooden figure of c. 1750. Our church tour ends at the centre aisle from where the stained glass windows in the outer walls can best be viewed. The series of pictures begins at the front on the right side, with Christ the Easter Lamb, from whose wounded side the seven sacraments well out, which are represented in the seven following windows: Baptism (water) Confirmation (tongues of fire) Eucharist (ears of wheat and grapes). On the left side:

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Reconciliation (serpent, eagle and fish) Extreme Unction (olive branch and oil bottle) Holy Orders (Bible, chalice and crozier) and Marriage (rings).

In search of a life of fulfilment, ally thy faith with ours

The holy apostle, James, the elder

When the bishop of Münster, Hermann II built a chapel south of the Berkel in Coesfeld in 1195, he placed it under the patronage of the holy Apostle, James. A St James church built by the same bishop, formerly stood in Münster, too. The reason for this choice of patronage is doubtless the centuries old widespread veneration of this apostle and pilgrimages to his shrine in "*San Diago di Compostela*", which for a time, were more numerous than to those of the apostles in Rome or in the Holy Land. The shrine of Saint James in San Diago di Compostela in Spain was not venerated before the 7th century. What do we know of Saint James, his life and death? He is named in many passages in the Gospels according Matthew, Mark and Luke. His vocation led him away from his boat, his nets and from his father, Zebedee, to Him, Jesus Christ. And his mother, Salome served Christ and his disciples from Galilee to the foot of the Cross. James is favoured by Christ, together with Peter and John his younger brother and is a witness with them to the raising of the

daughter of Jairus and at the Transfiguration of the Lord on the mountain. James, Peter and John are

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taken close to Christ in the Garden of Gethsemane. James and his brother John plead with the Lord to be in the first places on his left and right. Together with the two other brothers, Peter and Andrew, they ask about the end of the World, also asking the Lord whether they should call down fire and brimstone upon the villages of Samaria for their lack of hospitality and thereby gain the nickname *Sons of Thunder* because they had not understood Jesus's purpose of salvation.

But love, faith, adherence to Jesus and the martyrdom for Jesus remain unimpaired in the case of James. He was the first apostle to give his life for his faith in Jesus Christ. Great was his veneration in Spain during the fight for the faith against the Moors; he is still the patron saint of Spain today. But the rest of Christendom revered St James in the High Middle Ages and diligently went on pilgrimages to his shrine. Many churches dedicated to St James were built along the many pilgrims' ways in the 12th and 13th centuries because he had become the patron saint of pilgrims. Thus also in Coesfeld, there are good reasons for conjecture that the second storey of the St James tower of the destroyed church was a pilgrims' resting place.

Romanesque Portal

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The most important symbol of St James the Apostle is the scallop shell, which is why our parish magazine is called "Die Muschel". The holy water stoups at the church doors are shaped like the shell. Our parish seal shows the shell.

The pilgrim James reminds us of our pilgrim existence on Earth. We are "Pilgrims between two Worlds".

Thus we pray in our patronage hymn:

**"Lord, leave thy disciples not alone at this time.
May James accompany us, at our side, helping us"**

Hymn of St. James:

(Text: Friedrich Kienecker. Melody: Gustav Biener 1977)

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"Paradise" – the church's entrance hall or porch.

German text by Pastor Dieter Frintrop (retd.).

Layout and photographs by Alfons Dörken

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- 1 Marriage of Mary and Joseph
- 2 Joseph's dream
- 3 The Search for Shelter
- 4 Disciples at Mary's Dormition
- 5 Circumcision of Jesus
- 6 The Annunciation of the Blessed Virgin Mary
- 7 The Visitation of Our Lady
- 8 Our Lady is crowned Queen of Heaven
- 9 The Dormition of Mary
- 10 A portrayal of Christmas
- 11 Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary
- 12 The Presentation of Christ in the Temple
- 13 Adoration of the three Magii
- 14 The Flight into Egypt
- 15 The Holy Family
- 16 The Finding of Jesus in the Temple
- 17 The Death of Joseph

- I Joachim's stay with the shepherds
- II The Eucharist
- III The meeting at the Golden Gate (the gate of Heaven?)
- IV Reconciliation
- V Confirmation
- VI Marriage
- VII Baptism
- VIII The Sacrament of the sick
- IX Ordination
- X Christ in the House of His Parents

text by Syd Swan