



Visitor Center  
Nový Jičín

# Church Tower of the Parish Church of the Assumption of our Lady in Nový Jičín





# Parish Church of the Assumption of our Lady

**The Church of the Assumption of Our Lady in Nový Jičín is the focal point of the town and is an important element of the built-up area of what is now the urban heritage reserve. Like most churches, the church chancel has faced the east, the site of Jesus Christ's suffering, since the town's origins.**

The original wooden Gothic church had wooden panelling and shingles. It burnt down during the destructive fire of the town in 1503 and was rebuilt in the Late Gothic style.

The tower with its Renaissance gallery was constructed right next to the church in the 17th century.

The church underwent the most extensive modifications under Jesuit rule between 1729 and 1732, when the old, outdated church was rebuilt in the Baroque style, which is the appearance that has been preserved to this day.

In 1844 there was a catastrophe, which resulted in further repairs: lightning struck the tower and set the roof of the tower and the church itself on fire.



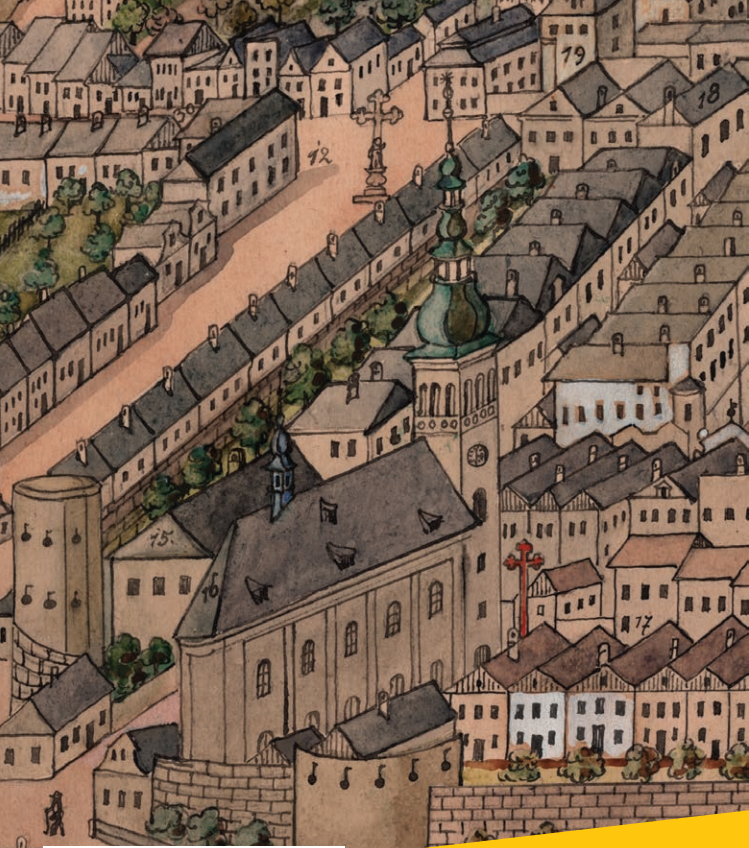
▼  
Veduta of Nový Jičín from 1730, ink drawing, detail.  
Photo: *Provincial Archive in Opava*

►  
Veduta of Nový Jičín by Jan Ignác Čapek dating from 1744, oil on wood, detail  
Photo: *Museum of the Nový Jičín Region*

►  
Fire of the tower of the parish church in Nový Jičín in 1844, oil on canvas  
Photo: *Museum of the Nový Jičín Region*

▲  
The tower and the parish church on the oldest colour photograph from 1939, diapositive  
Photo: *Private collection – Radek Polach*





## The origins of the church tower

**The church tower was built by the town between 1597 and 1618 and even though it adjoined the church building, it remained the town's property until the beginning of the 20th century.**

The date construction work began can be determined on the basis of the inscription of the year and the mark<sup>1</sup> of Thomas Heinrich, a burgher of Nový Jičín and also burgomaster in 1586, 1592 and 1596. The mark from 1587 is an emblem carved as a relief into the keystone<sup>2</sup> of the south door of the church. The emblem contains a mirror-image<sup>4</sup> with an elongated shank that splits into two at the bottom and an additional crossbar. The initials T.H. are inscribed at the top along the sides of the mark. The year 1587 is carved as a relief above the emblem.

►  
The mark of burgomaster  
Thomas Heinrich from 1587  
Photo: Ladislav Šmitke

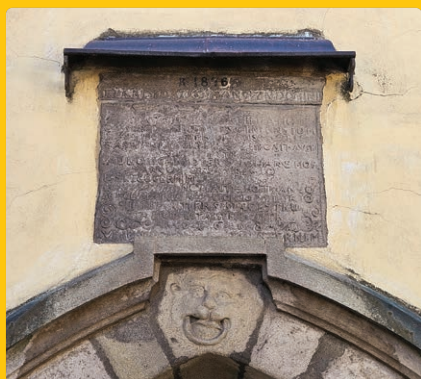


◀  
Veduta of Nový Jičín by Fulnek art-  
ist František Kledenský from 1817,  
detail Photo: Museum of the Nový  
Jičín Region

▲  
View of the church tower from  
the square after 1910 with a statue  
of Austrian Emperor Josef II.  
Photo: Museum of the Nový  
Jičín Region



►  
A coloured photograph of  
Zámecká Street from  
the period after 1925  
Photo: Museum of the Nový  
Jičín Region



#### EXPLANATIONS

<sup>1</sup> **Mark** – a carved personal or guild emblem (often bearing initials and a year), which identified the builder, owner or craftsman.

<sup>2</sup> **Keystone** – the centre stone in an arch or a vaulted ceiling, which assures the stability of the entire structure. It was often shaped or embellished.

<sup>3</sup> **Shaft** – the middle, vertical and usually elongated section of a column or other element.

## Latin inscription on the north side above the passage through the tower

This carved Latin inscription reads as follows in English:  
*“The strongest tower is the name of our Lord. During the reign of the merciful Matthias, Roman Emperor, under the honourable council of the town of Nový Jičín, the most dignified and judicious burgomaster Zachariáš Gertel, called Ostravský, and council members Pavel Schindler, Jan Hofmann and Jan Böhm, the pastor of the German Church M ...Czech... (illegible in the original) town scribe Baltazar Hofmann and rector of the municipal school Jiří Mlýnek, this tower was built at the expense of the town and successfully completed in 1618. The word of God will endure forever.”*

# The church tower in the Late Renaissance and Baroque periods

When the town was besieged by the armies of Jan Jiří Krnovský in 1621, the tower and the church were damaged by bombardment. The tower's current appearance, with its typical Renaissance gallery, was finished in 1629.

The tower's cupola is the characteristic focal point of the tower and practically the entire town of Nový Jičín. Unfortunately, on 12 March 1844 at six in the evening, the highest part of the cupola was struck by lightning and set on fire and the entire structure was soon in flames. Fortunately, there was no wind on that day, so the flames did not spread to other buildings. Ten years later, in 1854, the current cupola was erected on the tower according to the plans of Nový Jičín builder Ignác Klosse (1805 – 1881).



▼  
Parish Bastion and tower  
of the parish church on a veduta  
by Erwin Pendle from 1913  
*Photo: Radek Polách*



▶  
View of the church tower from  
the square at the beginning  
of the 20th century, detail from  
a coloured postcard  
*Photo: Museum of the Nový  
Jičín Region*



▼  
Battle of the town of Nový  
Jičín by Fulnek artist František  
Kledenský, probably from 1817,  
detail

▲  
Repairs to the parish church  
in 1912, photo Emil Schopf  
*Photo: Museum of the Nový  
Jičín Region*



# The church tower as the property of the town and church



The tower also contained a small space for the so-called tower guard (or crier or watchman). This was a small room where he stood watch when all the other residents of the town slept. This was a special night watch so that an alarm would be sounded if any unforeseen or extraordinary circumstances occurred in the town. In addition to announcing invasions by foreign armies, attacks by bandits, epidemics and thieves, the guard chiefly held watch for fires.



The purchase contract concluded between the town of Nový Jičín and the Roman Catholic office on 2 August 1927 meant that the tower's ownership was transferred,

together with the tower of the filial church of the Holy Trinity, to the parish office for Kčs 200,000. The town concluded a 20-year lease contract with the parish in 2024. This meant that the town was able to renovate the interior of the tower and open it to the public. In the 1920s, the tower underwent renovations during which a box with period sources from 1866, 1922, 1928 and 1936 was discovered. After the renovation work was completed, materials from the present time were added to the box and it was replaced in the tower so that future generations are able to reveal the secrets of the town's history.



Church tower on a historic colour photograph from 1938  
*Photo: Radek Polách*

Fire of the parish tower in the nineteen fifties  
*Photo: State District Archive Nový Jičín*

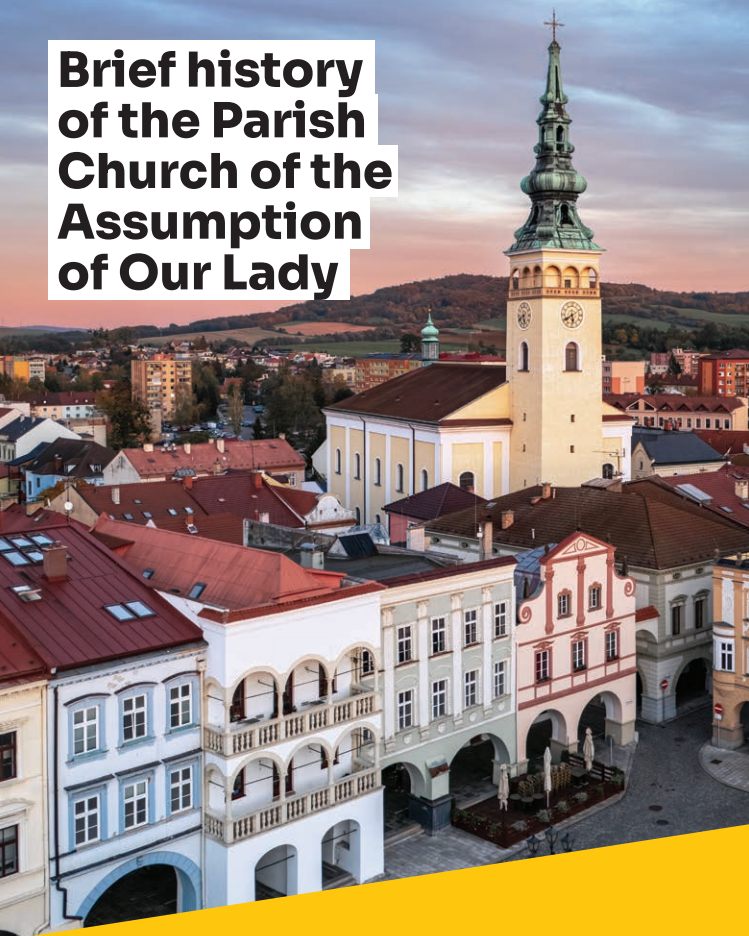
Removal of the main bell from the church tower in Nový Jičín in 1916  
*Photo: Museum of the Nový Jičín Region*

View of the Nový Jičín tower in 2014  
*Photo: Radek Polach*

Video from 1940: Böhmen – Mähren Streifzug durchs Sudetenland



# Brief history of the Parish Church of the Assumption of Our Lady



**1313**

First written mention of the town of Nový Jičín

**1503**

Fire of the original wooden church and construction of a new church

**1366**

The first record of the parish church

**1587–1618**

Construction of the church tower

1. WOODEN GOTHIC CHURCH

2.. STONE LATE GOTHIC CHURCH

1300

1400

1500

1600



**2024**

Lease Contract  
between the town  
and the parish

**2025**

Tower opened  
to the public

**1844**

Great fire  
of the church  
and tower

**1854**

Current cupola  
completed  
according  
to Ignác Kloss

**1952**

Last fire  
of the  
church  
tower

**1927**

the tower to  
the parish for  
Kčs 200,000

**1729-1732**

Modification  
of the church into  
the new Baroque  
appearance

CH

3. CURRENT BAROQUE APPEARANCE OF THE CHURCH

1700

1800

1900

2000

# Bells and ringing

## How long have bells been used?

Since ancient times, the use of bells has been documented in antiquity. The oldest finding of a bell is probably from Nineveh, from the 3rd millennium BC.

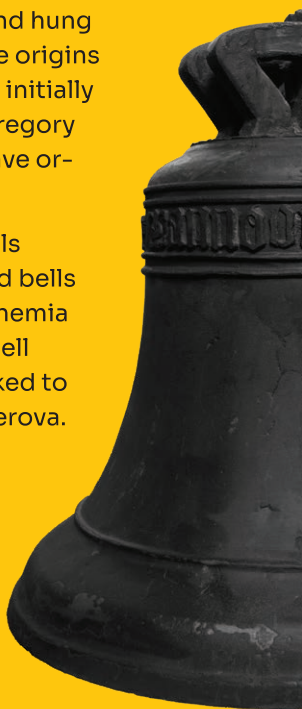
The first actual bells to be cast and hung in church towers are linked to the origins of the Christian church and were initially installed in monasteries. Pope Gregory the Great (+604) is reputed to have ordered the use of bells.

Evidence of the oldest Czech bells dates back to the 9th century and bells began to be manufactured in Bohemia in the 14th century. The closest bell workshop in modern times is linked to the Dytrich family in Brodek u Přerova.

## Why have so few old bells survived?

In times of war, bells were requisitioned (seized) and used as a raw material for war purposes.

This happened in Nový Jičín in 1795 during the Napoleon Wars and again in September 1916 during the First World War, when all the bells, with the exception of the death bell called the Sanktusník (in the small tower on the eastern side of the parish church), were destroyed. It was only in September 1928 that new bells were supplied from the bell foundry of Richard Kerold of Chomutov. However, these were seized again in April 1942 during the Second World War. Bells were also destroyed during major fires, such as the one that destroyed our tower in 1844.



## The musical aspect of the bell

The bell as a musical instrument is one of the most complex idiophones. It is said that a bell produces up to 100 tones, the larger the bell, the more tones it produces. Each bell is tuned and a harmony can be created if multiple bells are rung.

## The names of bells

Church bells are named during a bell baptism ceremony. The bells are most often named after the most popular saints and Czech patrons. There are currently three bells in Nový Jičín.

The oldest and smallest, which originally served as a death bell, bears the inscription “O rex gloriae veni cum pace” (Oh king of glory, come with peace).

The Bell of Our Lady is embellished with a relief of the Madonna and Child.

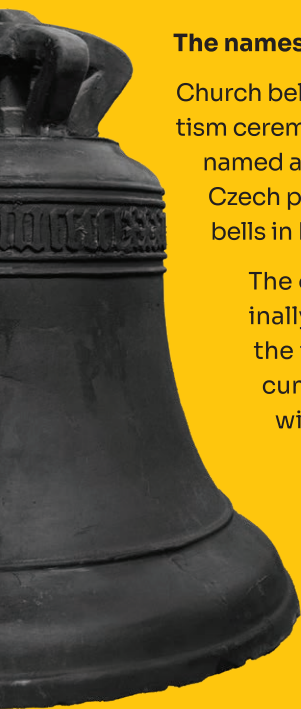
The third bell is dedicated to Cyril and Methodius and bears the inscription:

“Our Lord, preserve the heritage of our fathers”. The two

larger bells also bear the inscription “In the Marian year of 1987-1988”. They were cast by the Dytrych family of Brodek u Přerova.

## Why is it said that the 'bells fly to Rome'?

This saying is related to the Easter rituals. The bells ring for the last time on Maundy Thursday during Gloria, after which the ringing of the bells is replaced by the clapping of wooden clappers. The bells start ringing again during Easter Vigil on Holy Saturday.



# What were bells used for?

The use of bells can be divided into secular and church use.

## **The chief use of bells for secular purposes was:**

Until the 19th century to announce the time (morning, noon, evening, midnight). This is also one of the reasons why the church tower in Nový Jičín remained the property of the town until 1927.

Bells were rung during important events or when important festivals began.

As an alarm (fires, floods,...).

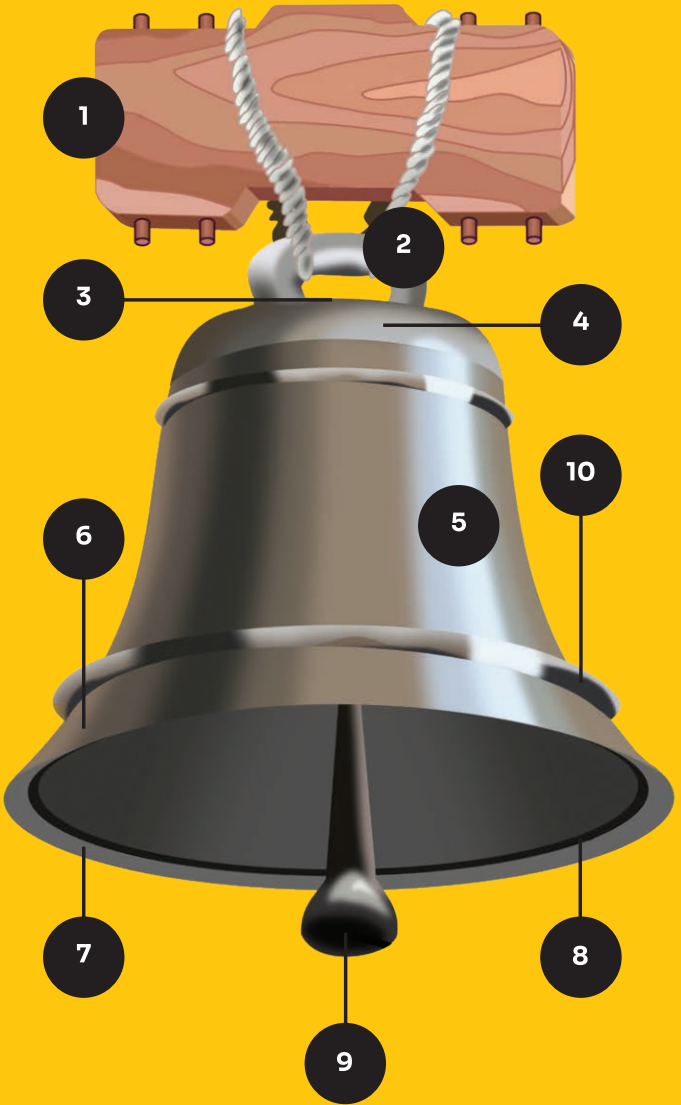
## **One of the bell's important purposes was to summon people to prayer:**

When the bells rang at noon and in the evening, believers interrupted their work and prayed, reciting the Angelus prayer.

The Sanktusník bell located in the small slim tower on the ridge of the roof of the church presbytery, roughly above the main altar (also on the parish church in Nový Jičín), was rung for church services. It is no longer used today.

## **When and how long do the bells of the parish church in Nový Jičín ring?**

Apart from exceptional circumstances, the bells ring regularly in the morning (6 a.m.), at noon and in the evening (6 p.m.) for approx. 3 minutes. The bells also ring quarter of an hour before church services for approx. 5 minutes (one bell on weekdays and all three bells on Sunday).



**Parts of a bell:**

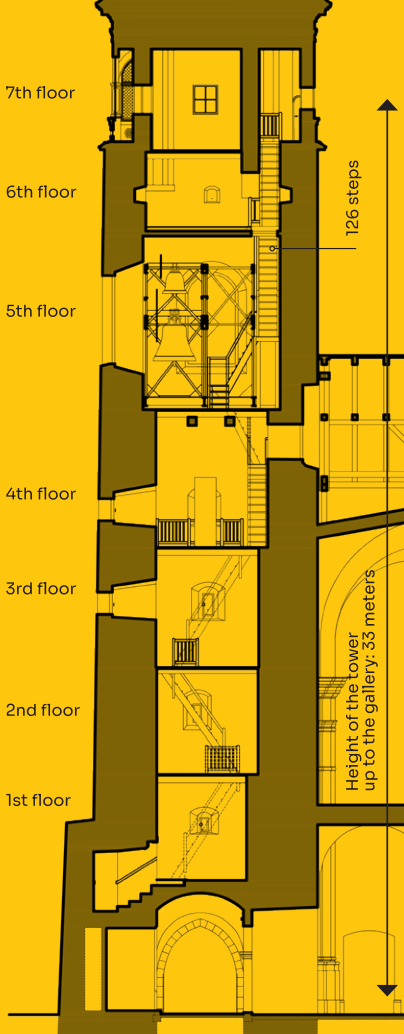
1. Yoke, 2. Canon, 3. Crown,  
4. Shoulder, 5. Waist, 6. Sound bow,  
7. Lip, 8. Mouth, 9. Clapper, 10. Bead line

## Tower guard's chamber (7th floor)

The guard's duty was to keep watch against fire during the day and at night, wind the church clock and ring for Angelus. He also warned of the arrival of people and epidemics, the plague and other epidemics for instance, which could affect Nový Jičín.

## CLOCK MECHANISM (4th floor)

The clock mechanism was installed during the first third of the 20th century and served until 2006. At that time it was replaced with a small digital mechanism on the 6th floor, which was replaced by four individual mechanisms installed inside the individual clock faces themselves in 2025.



3+

Visitors must be over 3 years old

36 cm

36 cm narrowest point

126

126 steep steps



the tour ends at fifty minutes past the hour

### Published by:

The Town of Nový Jičín  
and Visitor Center Nový Jičín  
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