

## **Redemptorist Monastery Bickesheim**

Around 1900: As much as Benefiziat Engelbert Kleiser tried hard to take care of the pilgrimage, little could be done by the elderly and visually impaired priest alone. As in the 18th century, the founding of a monastery in Bickesheim and the transfer of the pilgrimage to a religious order were considered again. The Archbishop's Ordinariate in Freiburg negotiated in this sense with the Capuchin Order and reached fundamental agreement with it.

But the First World War and its consequences thwarted this plan.

The circumstances of the time brought a new solution for Bickesheim. After Alsace had become French through the Treaty of Versailles in 1919, all German inhabitants who were not Alsatian-born were expelled from there.

This also affected the Redemptorist Father Robert Kiefer from Pfaffenweiler/Breisgau, who had been active in Bischenberg/Elsass since 1894. His order then wanted to order him to Switzerland, where he did not receive a residence permit. For a short time Kiefer was accommodated in Bühl and probably from there came into contact with Bickesheim. Already in October 1919 he asked his superior to be allowed to settle at a place of pilgrimage in the archdiocese of Freiburg.

After negotiations with the Capuchins, who were actually already intended for Bickesheim, Archbishop Nörber granted the Redemptorists permission to establish a branch in Bickesheim on 17 February 1920. In June of the same year, four other members of the order moved in and temporarily lived with Father Kleiser in the chaplain's house. In 1925/26 the present monastery was built for them, which could be occupied on Corpus Christi day 1926. Its further history is described in the Heimatbuch published in 1980.

The Redemptorist priests helped out with pastoral care in the surrounding parishes and looked after the pilgrimage in Bickesheim.

After the Second World War, the monastery also had a Progymnasium for a time.

After the founding of the parish curate of St. Bernard, from which the present-day parish of St. Bernard emerged, the Redemptorists took over its leadership.

In 2010 the Redemptorist monastery was closed due to a lack of young people. The Brothers and Fathers were distributed to other locations of the Order.

Thus ended a decades-long blessed and highly respected work of the Redemptorists in Bickesheim.

