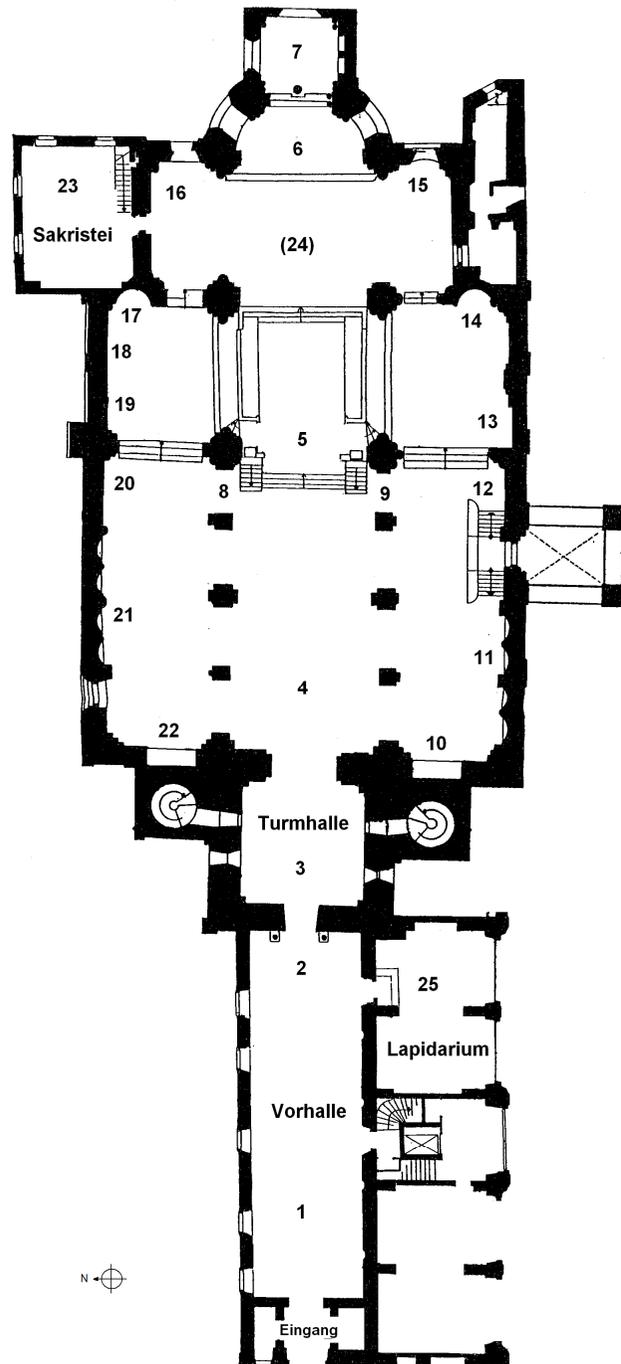## ground plan of the abbey church

N
entrance

Abbey Brauweiler, short guided tour of the church

1 **entrance hall:** built about 1780 as part of the baroque monastery buildings. Statues of saints in niches are made of terracotta. The so-called Kevelaer-Madonna comes from the torn down Laurentius-chapel.

2 **west portal:** partly 12th century after Italian examples. Low reliefs in niches with cherub and St Medardus, on the left painting of St Nicholas. Round arch niche with wooden figure of St Nicholas from 1491.

3 **tower hall:** basement of the mighty west tower. The painting from 1657 shows the founders Ehrenfried and Mathilde with Pope Benedict VIII., patrons of the church, 10 children of the founders and St Benedict, the founder of the order.

4 **nave:** pillars with paintings from the 14th century, round arches, sham arcade, vault with gothic painting from 1514. Baroque main organ with 21 registers.

5 **celebration altar:** ambo and sedilie 20th century, baroque choir stalls and choir screens, choir organ with 10 registers.

6 **high altar:** romanic block altar 12th century, restored in1984. The sacrament stele is placed in front of the only marble column in this church. Its capital shows the four paradise rivers.

7 **Bernhard`s chapel:** in 1147 Bernhard of Clairvaux said mass at the altar.

8 **Sculpture of St Nicholas:** about 1180. This pilgrimage figure is said to be the oldest one in the Rhineland.

9 **Madonna of Brauweiler**: important work of lower rhine art from the 15th century.

10 **altarpiece** of the first baroque altar from about 1665, after Peter Paul Rubens` Assumption of the Virgin Mary.

11 **statues of bishops:** they were part of the baroque high altar taken down at the end of the 19th century.

12 **sepulchre of abbot** Heinrich II Vridach (1401-1428). Remnants of stonework belonging to the church built by Queen Richeza (+ 1063). Wrought-iron bars (1627) to fence off the choir area.

13 **sepulchre of abbot** Matthias I Franken''' (1709-1722)

14 **Antonius altar:** from 1552, important renaissance work showing Antonius surrounded by four female saints. Predella with relief of Benedictus and holy bishops.

15 **Lady altar:** created about 1180 for the main altar of the crypt. Maria as Queen of Heaven with her son, church patrons Nicholas on her left and Medardus on her right. Further to the right the sepulchre of the founders Ehrenfried (+1034) and Mathilde (+1025). Nearby the portal of the southern high choir with a sculpture of Mathilde.

16 **Oilpainting** above the altar of the north choir showing the martyrdom of St Laurentius under emperor Valerian. Above the entrance to the sacristy: figure of the founder Ehrenfried.

17 **Michael`s altar** from 1561 in renaissance style. At the top Christ as judge on doomsday. Archangel Michael fights infernal evil, on either side six apostles. Below: the Mother of God and four saints.

18 **brass memorial slab** of abbot Adam I von Herzogenrath (1467-1483)

19 **sepulchre of abbot** Edmund Schmitz (1722-1731)

20 **sepulchre of abbot** Arnold Quadt (1428-1458)

21 **group of three confessionals** from 1725 in the style of Aachen-Lütticher baroque. In the middle God the Father, on the left St. Peter and the cock, on the right Maria Magdalena.

22 **missionary cross**: baroque masterpiece by Gabriel de Grupello (1644-1730) made of chalky sandstone and blackened bluestone from Aachen.

23 **sacristy:** from 1669 with baroque furnishings, a well preserved Cologne ceiling and paintings of the founder family of the abbey and all abbots.

24 **crypt** from 1051, unused burial chamber for the Polish Queen Richeza behind wall to the west.

25 **lapidarium:** treasure chamber with low reliefs in niches, baroque communion bench, Bernhard`s chasuble, liturgical devices, missals etc. (admission only during a guided tour).

History:

The area around Brauweiler belonged to the Lorrainese Count Palatine Hermann. Here his son Ehrenfried (called Ezzo) married Mathilde, daughter of Emperor Otto II and Empress Theophanu, in 991. Ezzo and Mathilde had ten children. Their three sons were bestowed important offices in the empire. One daughter, Richeza, married and became the first Queen of Poland and benefactress of Brauweiler Abbey. Six daughters were abbess of important nunneries. In 1024 Pope Benedict VIII allowed Ezzo and Mathilde to found a Benedictine monastery in Brauweiler and gave them relics of St Nicholas. Poppo, abbot of Stablo and Malmedy, was engaged to found the monastery. In 1028 archbishop Pilgrim consecrated church and monastery to the glory of St Nicholas and St Medardus.

The monks lived by the rules of the Benedictine order and the principle *ora et labora*. Times of flourishing spiritual life alternated with difficult situations, epidemics, wars, crop failures. Poor and rich, pilgrims and kings enjoyed the monks` hospitality. In 1147 Bernhard of Clairvaux visited the monastery. In 1520 Emporer Karl V stayed here overnight after his coronation in Aachen. In 1794 French revolutionary troops occupied the rhineland and lived in the abbey. In 1802 Napoleon dissolved all cloisters and chapters. The monks`church became the parish church of Brauweiler and the French administration used the abbey for the detention of beggars. In 1815 the rhineland came to Prussia and the former abbey was turned into an institution, something between detention centre and prison.

During the Third Reich the Gestapo used some of the buildings for their terror. After world war II the former monastery became a DP-camp for displaced foreigners until their return to other countries. Finally the institution was changed into a psychiatric hospital which was closed in 1978.

After years of restoration the LVR (Rhineland Regional Association) installed a number of cultural offices in the former abbey buildings. As for the buildings the former monastery today presents itself very similar to what it looked like when the monks left.

The religious heritage was taken over by the catholic parish of St Nicholas. In the old romanic church mass is celebrated just as it has been done for nearly 1000 years. But this venerable place of worship can also be enjoyed during concerts.
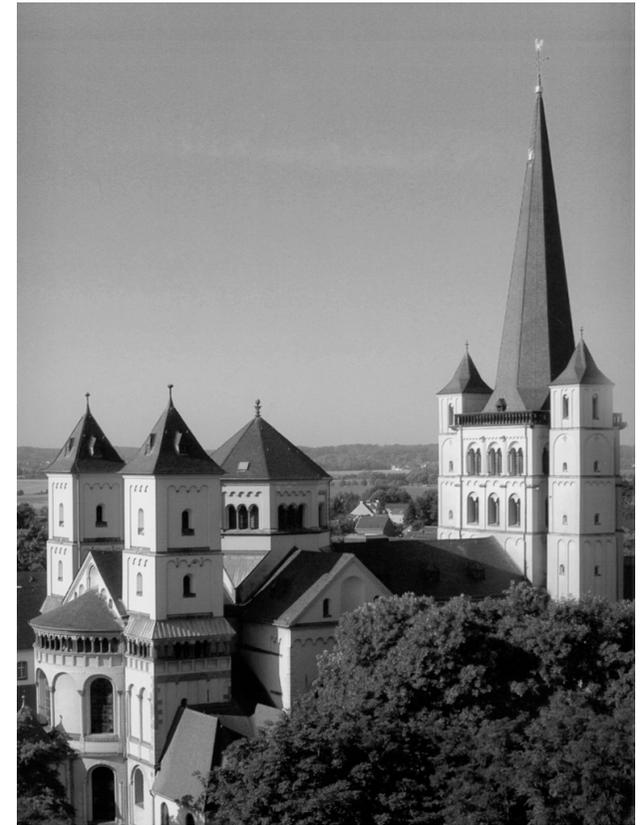
Abbey church:

The first church built at the foundation of the monastry probably was not very stable. Because of a generous donation by Queen Richeza, daughter of the founders Ezzo and Mathilde, a new and bigger stone church could be built. The foundationstone of Richeza`s church was laid in 1048.

Remnants are included in the present church whose choir was modified about 1200 AD following the example of Groß St. Martin in Cologne. The painted gothic vault replaced the romanic one in 1514. The keystones are covered with carved wood panelling showing St Nicholas and the Mother of God and the infant Jesus. Valuable altars, elaborate capitals, importand devotional figures, sepulchres of the founders and abbots contribute to the sublime beauty of the romanic abbey church, as well as the splendid organ, the choir stalls, confessionals and baroque paintings. 67 metres high the mighty west tower dominates the roof and the other five towers. The magnificent display of the inner rooms is continued outside with supplements from the 16th and 19th century. Only accessible from the outside in the east is a Lady chapel with a pieta from the 19th century.

Church windows:

Nearly all old windows were destroyed during the war. Only in the transept and the northern side aisle survived windows from 1902. About 1965 Franz Pauli created the new glass paintings. Subject of the choir windows are the Holy Family, legends of saints and the history of the abbey. The windows of the side aisle show scenes from the old testament.

Abtei Brauweiler

Short guide

to the former Abbey Church, now parish church

ST NICHOLAS AND MEDARDUS

Englische Ausgabe 09 V0.1