



SIEBENQUELL

Reverence For the Old



SOURCE: ROSEMARIE MONNERJAHN 2017

Many of you will immediately identify the photo.

However, whether you recognise it or not – do you notice what immediately fascinated me as I recently stood before this church for the first time? The bright, sandstone façade contains in many places dark, almost black stones.

They originate from the ruins of the Frauenkirche in Dresden, which had burned down and collapsed as a result of the bombardment of February 15, 1945. The heap of rubble remained on the ground for many, many years, because efforts to restore the church remained without success, and then they were intentionally left as a symbol of the peace movement in the German Democratic Republic (East Germany).

Hardly had the wall come down in 1989, and already initiatives were started and endowments were established to rebuild the Frauenkirche. That this was finally achieved and that the church was able to be dedicated in 2005, seemed like a miracle.

How it occurred is at least as significant. Without the great visionary power of the heartfelt desire of many people, and without the patience and endurance for the long haul, this would not have been possible.

Two aspects especially touch my heart.

Those responsible for this enormous work of restoration chose a sequence of action well worth considering. After the sorting of the rubble the basement of the church was laid open and then rebuilt in a first step. In this way, it could already be dedicated in August of 1996. It was important for the people to have a place of prayer here again as swiftly as possible. Thus, all the services took place here, while above it the rebuilding took place for 9 years. This formed the foundation on which, spiritually and spatially, they could work on and form the building.

The second thing was the way they dealt with the rubble: Each stone, which could be recovered from the heap of rubble was integrated into the façade. Building stones from the first half of the 18th century are easy to identify in the outer walls of the »new« Frauenkirche. How much attentiveness was needed during the process of sorting through the rubble! How much respect for the old and love for the old shines through here – indeed, it strikes the eye! It is not conserved in a museum, but instead it carries the new within itself. The old is neither hidden nor disposed of in order to allow an immaculate new surface to shine forth. It is joined to the new and shown as it is. These stones tell of the construction of the earlier church almost 300 years ago, and of its life: They tell of bombs and fire, of destruction and wounds, desperation and senselessness, and, finally, of emptiness and endless waiting. All of this is visibly carried by today's Frauenkirche, and it conspicuously belongs to it. Therefore, these black sandstones also tell of resurrection and life. **All** of it belongs together and **all** of it may be seen.

May we be and become people, who lovingly gaze upon the old outside and within ourselves, who reverently touch it and joyous build with it!

Rosemarie Monnerjahn

Vallendar, August 31, 2017