

SCHÜTZENPORTAL

Together with a porch that was later demolished, the **south portal of the Minster Church of St. Quirinus** formed an important part of the late Romanesque church. Elaborate decorative elements – such as the rich floral interlacing and an eagle capital modelled on Upper Italy – show the influence of Staufer art in the Rhineland. The townspeople and pilgrims from abroad used to enter the church through the south portal. The abbess of the neighbouring aristocratic convent and the high clergy entered through the west portal. The nuns entered the church from the north side, where the convent was located until 1802.



Minster Church of St. Quirinus from the south, postcard, around 1910



Inauguration of the Schützenportal on 20 August 1995 with Prof. Elmar Hillebrand, Senior Pastor Dr Hans Dieter Schelauske and Hermann Wilhelm Thywissen (Photo: Andreas Woitschützke)

Designed by sculptor **Elmar Hillebrand** (1925–2016), the Schützenportal (English “Marksmen’s Portal”) has adorned the southern entrance to the Minster since 1995. It is through here that marksmen now enter the church every year for the festive high mass on the **shooting festival Sunday**. The idea of creating a visible sign of the connection between urban tradition and Christian sentiment with the Schützenportal goes back to the parish priest **Msgr. Dr Hans Dieter Schelauske** (1936–2012). The portal was financed by donations from Hermann Wilhelm Thywissen (1917–2008), former president of the shooting club and honorary citizen of the City of Neuss, the St. Quirinus’ Schötzejeselle and other Neuss citizens and institutions.

The two doors are decorated with four **relief panels** depicting scenes from the Marksmen’s Festival. The aim was to portray the essence of the Marksmen’s Festival as a “mixture of civic pride and tradition, community spirit and cheerfulness” in contrast to “militant behaviour”. High barrel vaults serve as a structuring element, creating a connection to the interior of the church. The panels are complemented by eight fully sculpted figures of saints relating to the Marksmen’s Festival.

The four fields are framed by a floral decorative band in which 16 **plaques** are embedded. These are the badges of the 10 corps, the committee of the Neusser Bürger-Schützen-Verein, the pioneers and the St Quirinus’ Schötzejeselle. Besides these badges, the coat of arms of the Thywissen family and two dedications can also be found here. The portal is arched over by a **tympanum** on which the heavenly Jerusalem can be seen as a place of peace and the goal of all earthly life and celebration.

(Sources and texts: Neuss municipal archives)



South portal, photo, around 1920

