



South Tyrol – Land of Myths and Legends

A Waggoner Donates a Leonard's Chain

At the ancient Church of St. Leonard in Unterplanitzing, near Caldaro (Kaltern), there was once a St. Leonard's Chain that passed around the entire outside of the church. They say that a waggoner, who had the intercession of St. Leonard to thank for his life, had donated the chain.

The man had been driving a heavily laden vehicle, in winter, from Ora (Auer) and Gmund up to Caldaro. There was a wild snowstorm, and you could barely see ten paces ahead. The man wasn't familiar with the area and lost his way in the swirl of dense snow near the Klughammer Farms, on the eastern shore of Lake Caldaro. He came down onto the frozen lake and continued across it. He realised his fatal mistake only when the ice suddenly broke through. He was way out onto the lake and his heavy cart began to sink. The man promised Saint Leonard, the protector of waggoners, that he would donate an iron chain to the nearest church dedicated to the saint if he would be saved. Through the saint's help, the waggoner managed to reach the shore safe and sound.

The waggoner made true his vow and had a heavy iron chain hung around the Church of St. Leonard in Unterplanitzing. Unfortunately, this chain was sold in around 1785, and the proceeds were used to cover the cost of restoring the church. A small piece of the donated chain was still retained, though: this metre-long piece of chain still hangs above the main entrance of the church in Unterplanitzing.